

Riverdale Park East Top of Bank Improvements

Date: October 6, 2021

To: Infrastructure and Environment Committee

From: General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation

Wards: Toronto-Danforth

SUMMARY

This report responds to the request from City Council at its meeting of April 28, 2021, for the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation (PFR) to report on options for the scope of work for improvements to the top of the bank in Riverdale Park East.

The Riverdale Park East hill is a popular all-season destination for Torontonians, and top of bank and sidewalk improvements have been identified to address congestion and erosion issues, enhance user experience, and improve access to one of Toronto's most outstanding viewpoints. Improvements to Broadview Avenue along Riverdale Park East would also support recommendations within the Lower Don Trail Master Plan Refresh which identifies Broadview Avenue as the "Eastern Parallel Route", an alternate route for the Lower Don Trail.

PFR staff conducted a preliminary site analysis and prepared preliminary concept sketches to determine an appropriate scope of work for future improvements to the top of the bank in the park and other related circulation issues in proximity to this area.

Through this work it was determined that improvements to the Riverdale Park East top of bank would aim to remediate erosion, expand the pedestrian pathway adjacent to the sidewalk, and define activity zones for different uses of the top of bank and hill (e.g. walking, exercising, sitting, etc.), including by creating stepped seating zones that would serve as both gathering and viewing areas. Accessibility will be addressed through design development.

Efforts will be made to ensure the future design minimizes impacts on the hill's current appearance, and includes materials that reflect the industrial and natural characteristics of the Don Valley.

This project will require additional technical investigations, pre-engineering work, and public engagement activities prior to initiating design. Staff will begin carrying out this work through 2022 with the aim of issuing a Request for Proposals for detailed design works in late 2022, beginning design in 2023, and targeting construction for 2024. This schedule avoids conflict with Toronto Water works along Broadview Avenue, which are

anticipated to be completed in early summer 2022 and Toronto Transit Commission track work that is planned for construction and completion in 2023.

Moving forward with improvements to the Riverdale top of bank prior to the completion of the above-noted works in the road right-of-way (ROW) by Toronto Water and the TTC is not recommended. Proceeding with top of bank construction work which will also extend into the pedestrian zone of the ROW concurrently with other ROW works poses a number of issues that would be difficult to mitigate and are likely to cause project delays, increased project costs and safety issues for both pedestrian and vehicular traffic circulation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation recommends that:

1. The Infrastructure and Environment Committee receive this report for information.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Funding of \$0.150 million will be included in the Parks, Forestry and Recreation's 2022-2031 Capital Budget and Plan submission, for design of Riverdale Park Top of Bank Improvements. The design will inform the development of construction costs, as well as any operating impacts associated with the improvements, and both will be included in a future budget submission.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has been advised of the financial impacts associated with this multi-year capital project to be considered along with other priorities in 2022 and future budget processes.

DECISION HISTORY

Infrastructure and Environment Committee at its meeting on April 28, 2021 requested that the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation report back on options for the scope of improvements to the top of the bank in Riverdale Park East.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2021.IE21.14>

City Council at its meeting on March 10, 2021 requested that the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation review options for improvements to top of the bank in Riverdale Park East that could be considered with the reconstruction of Broadview Avenue.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2021.MM30.26>

COMMENTS

Existing Conditions

The Riverdale Park East hill is a popular all-season destination for Torontonians. The top of bank and hill is heavily frequented throughout the year by people enjoying the exceptional views of the city, picnicking or hill-running in the summer, and tobogganing in the winter. As it is currently designed, the sidewalk along the top of the bank is unable to accommodate the volume of pedestrians and park visitors at the busiest times, causing many people to walk on unpaved areas along the sidewalk, which leads to erosion. Top of bank and sidewalk improvements are required to address these issues and offer an opportunity to enhance the park user experience and access to one of Toronto's most outstanding viewpoints.

Lower Don Trail Master Plan Refresh

Improvements to Broadview Avenue along Riverdale Park East would support recommendations within the Lower Don Trail Master Plan Refresh. The plan identifies Broadview Avenue as the "Eastern Parallel Route", an alternative route for the Lower Don Trail that should be treated as a multi-use thoroughfare. Improvements on Broadview Avenue are recommended to support this, including increased planting, widened sidewalks, and a viewpoint at the top of Riverdale Park East.

Proposed Concept

PFR staff conducted a preliminary site analysis and prepared preliminary concept sketches to determine an appropriate scope of work for future improvements. Five initial objectives emerged from this work to guide future design development:

- Remediate top of bank erosion;
- Expand the pedestrian pathway adjacent to the sidewalk;
- Create intermittent stepped seating zones that would serve as both gathering and viewing areas;
- Define various activity zones for different uses of the top of bank and hill (walking, sitting, exercising, tobogganing, etc.) and design for each of these uses; and
- Ensure accessibility is addressed through design development.

Efforts will be made to ensure that the design minimizes impacts on the hill's appearance, and that materials that reflect the industrial and natural characteristics of the Don Valley (e.g. unpainted wood, weathered steel, stone, and brick) are included.

Next Steps

Staff will begin carrying out required technical investigations and pre-engineering work, including a topographic survey, geotechnical investigations, and archeological investigations. Given the significance of this location to the community, staff will also engage the public on the project in 2022, and refine the concept as necessary, with the aim of issuing a Request for Proposals for detailed design works in late 2022, and design beginning in 2023.

A request of \$0.150 million will be submitted for consideration through the 2022 Capital Budget Submission for design of the Top of Bank Improvements. The design process

will inform the development of construction costs and any operating impacts, which will be requested for consideration in a future budget submission

This schedule anticipates that PFR top of bank improvement construction will occur in 2024, after the completion of ongoing Toronto Water work along Broadview Avenue in early summer 2022 and Toronto Transit Commission track work planned for construction and completion in 2023.

Proceeding with Riverdale top of bank construction work prior to the completion of other works in the road right-of-way (ROW) noted above is not recommended. Carrying out top of bank improvements that include the pedestrian zone of the Broadview Avenue ROW concurrently with other ROW works poses a number of issues that would be difficult to mitigate and are likely to cause project delays, increased project costs and complications for both pedestrian and vehicular traffic circulation.

Anticipated issues include:

- Site access issues and increased construction traffic along Broadview Avenue related to the proximity of two construction sites;
- Pressures related to availability of space for construction staging;
- Coordination of construction activities between contractors;
- Constrained space for pedestrian and vehicular access along Broadview Avenue causing potential safety issues; and
- Combined contractor responsibility for safe pedestrian and vehicular access along two active construction sites could complicate responsibilities and determining liability.

Parks, Forestry and Recreation staff will continue to coordinate with involved divisional and agency partners, including Transportation Services, Toronto Water, the Toronto Transit Commission, and the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority through the design and construction process.

CONTACT

Ann-Marie Nasr, Director, Parks Development & Capital Projects, Tel: 416-395-7899,
Email: Ann-Marie.Nasr@toronto.ca

SIGNATURE

Janie Romoff
General Manager
Parks, Forestry and Recreation