

## **Review of City of Toronto Golf Courses**

**Date:** December 17, 2021

**To:** Infrastructure and Environment Committee

**From:** General Manager, Parks Forestry and Recreation

Chief Procurement Officer, Purchasing and Materials Management

**Wards:** All

### **SUMMARY**

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Parks, Forestry, and Recreation (PFR) has seven golf courses under its operational management. Two are leased out fully, and five are operated under a mixed model where golf course assets and turf are maintained by the City, green fees are set by City Council, and golf pro shop management and food and beverage operations are contracted out under two separate agreements.

On September 30 2020, Council directed the extension of the contracts for the existing operating model, now expiring November 30, 2022, with an option to extend for a further one year to November 30, 2023. This extension allowed time for a third-party review of golf course operations to inform the sourcing strategy for an operator for the 2024 season and to assess the impact and results of increased golf play through 2020 and 2021.

The City's operating model has faced a number of challenging trends in recent history, including decreasing rates of play and escalating costs. However, these trends shifted in 2020 as Torontonians navigated the COVID-19 pandemic with a heightened interest in outdoor recreation options. This upward trend in golf rates of play was experienced across the country, and reinvigorated interest in the sport. The impact of COVID-19 also generated discussion regarding how the City's green spaces could best serve Torontonians. The review was expanded to determine how, in the context of changing trends and public needs, to achieve optimal management and continue to deliver affordable and high-quality experiences in a financially sustainable manner.

PFR established the following project goals to guide the review:

- Continue to provide access to high-quality and affordable golf in the city
- Improve golf-related amenities (clubhouses, food and beverage offerings, customer service, etc.)
- Ensure responsible environmental stewardship and management of the sites

- Advance the parkland and recreational needs of non-golfers with innovative programming, shared use arrangements, and increased access to these spaces where possible
- Advance a winter use strategy to improve access and activation during non-golf season
- Maintain a sustainable and financially responsible model
- Balance multiple and competing desired uses

Strategic adjustments to the operating model were identified to improve user experience and operational performance while maintaining City stewardship of the course lands. The review recommends that the City advance an improved status quo model (hybrid model) whereby the City retains responsibility for site maintenance and Council approval of green fees, while a single contractor operates the golf, pro shop, and food and beverage offerings. The recommended hybrid model enables a shared approach to risk mitigation and revenue generation, with the City controlling the aspects of greatest importance to environmental management, park stewardship, and public access and accessibility. This hybrid model allows PFR to focus on the operational elements where staff has expertise and experience, while providing safeguards for access, affordability, and financial sustainability. Conversely, the model leverages private sector industry knowledge and expertise to deliver golf operations, improved and flexible programming, and food and beverage at the sites.

To advance these findings, this report recommends proceeding with a negotiated request for proposals (nRFP) process for the five City operated courses. This process would allow PFR to define the desired objectives and outcomes for the golf program in line with the review and allow the market to provide input into the optimal contractual arrangement to achieve them.

To address Council's direction to explore alternative and complimentary use potential at the courses, significant analysis and public engagement was completed. The policy and regulatory framework applying to the courses, the Division's strategic plans and objectives, the analysis of each course from the perspectives of "Play", "Place", and "People", and community engagement insights inform the recommendations of this report. Of the alternative and complementary uses explored, some opportunities can be implemented across all five of the courses, some opportunities are course-specific, and a strategic opportunity has been identified at Dentonia Park. The following opportunities should be advanced at all of the courses:

- Maintaining and improving golf play
- Enhancing environmental stewardship
- Supporting public access
- Growing the urban forest
- Restoring natural areas
- Identifying opportunities for Indigenous placekeeping, cultural practices, and/or economic opportunities
- Identifying opportunities for improved ravine access and trail connections
- Expanding complementary programming.

While there are opportunities to build on current work to improve public access to all the sites without impacting golf play, such as through increased off-season/winter access, Dentonia Park is identified as a unique opportunity to renew the golf offering while also addressing local parkland needs. This report recommends initiating a master planning process at Dentonia Park to better achieve golf outcomes and PFR strategic goals. Dentonia Park would continue to operate as an 18-hole par-3 course until the master plan is completed and budget is identified to advance any suggested alterations. Following the completion of the master planning process, Dentonia Park would be redeveloped to deliver an improved golf offering and new local parkland. The golf offering on the site would be more intentionally designed to deliver learn-the-game and skills development opportunities. Preliminary analysis, confirmed with input from the golf industry, is that a nine-hole par-3 golf course with improved practice amenities would deliver improved golf outcomes. It is anticipated that through this redevelopment the City would better serve golfers and local residents.

Staff will advance the nRFP as soon as possible in order to ensure that an operator is secured prior to the current contract period's end. It is critical that the City secure a stable operating arrangement in order to maintain access to high-quality and affordable golf and to advance broader project goals and strategic objectives. Discussions with the golf industry have also underlined the importance of bringing certainty to the operations of these important assets. As such, it is anticipated that the nRFP will be released in the second quarter of 2022. The specific contractual terms and contract duration are subject to negotiation and flexibility, and will be built out as part of the nRFP process. With the contracts set to end in 2023, advancing the nRFP is required to ensure continuous service while optimizing opportunities for the use of public assets.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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The General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation and the Chief Procurement Officer recommend that:

- 1) City Council direct the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation, in consultation with the Chief Procurement Officer, issue a negotiated request for proposals for the operation of the five City operated golf course operations, allowing for competitive bids for an improved status quo model ("hybrid model"), incorporating Indigenous economic opportunities as a scored element for consideration.
- 2) City Council authorize the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation to apply the Welcome Policy towards Junior Memberships at City operated golf courses.
- 3) City Council direct the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation to negotiate and execute agreements with relevant golf governing bodies and associations and not-for-profit organizations to deliver high-quality programming to expand access to the sport, on terms satisfactory to the General Manager, Parks Forestry and Recreation and in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor.
- 4) City Council direct the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation to initiate a master planning process for the future of Dentonia Park Golf Course, in consultation with Transportation Services, the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, local

stakeholders, Indigenous communities, golfers, vendors and area Councillors, among others, that reimagines an improved golf offering and increases parkland availability to the public, and report back to Council when completed.

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

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There are no financial impacts resulting from the recommendations in this report in the current budget year.

The 2022-2031 Staff Recommended Capital Budget and Plan for PFR, subject to City Council approval at the February 17, 2022 meeting, includes approximately \$8.878 million for state of good repair work, of which \$6.493 million is for the rehabilitation of the tees, traps, irrigation systems, pathways, bridges, and parking lots on the courses. The remaining \$2.385 million has been designated for related buildings including clubhouses, service and storage structures.

PFR's existing state of good repair (SOGR) backlog is estimated at \$748.2 million by the end of 2022. The SOGR pressure on PFR is projected to grow to \$940.3 million over the next ten years, which includes a backlog of approximately \$5.008 million in known golf related work, for buildings (\$0.633 million), parking lots (\$4.242 million), and pathways (\$0.133 million).

Any financial implications associated with new complementary programming, partnerships, potential capital projects, and other matters will be submitted for consideration through future operating and capital budget processes, subject to affordability and achievability.

Any financial impacts identified through the master planning process will be submitted for consideration through future operating and capital budget processes, subject to affordability and achievability.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

## **EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT**

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Maintaining golf at the golf courses supports affordable access to the game for Torontonians while public access to these parklands, facilitated primarily, but not exclusively, in the off-season creates opportunities for passive and active recreation such as hiking, running, or gathering. The proposed application of the Welcome Policy for Junior Membership, integration of Indigenous economic opportunities, and new potential partnerships will further enhance affordable access to golf for youth, Indigenous communities, and low-income populations who have historically faced barriers to recreational programming.

The proposed master plan process for Dentonia Park recognizes the need for greater parkland access for the equity-deserving communities of Crescent Town and Oakridge, two Neighbourhood Improvement Areas which are directly adjacent to the Dentonia Park golf course. A renewed Dentonia Park will maintain affordable access to golf in close proximity to rapid transit while creating space for year-round local access to the Taylor-Massey Creek ravine system. Re-envisioning Dentonia Park also creates an opportunity to link the fragmented multi-use trail through this ravine system, enhancing options for active transportation and recreation. Community engagement in this process will involve local residents, Indigenous communities, and golf community stakeholders.

## **DECISION HISTORY**

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City Council at its meeting of February 22 and 23, 2010, adopted report GM28.8 entitled, "Professional Services Contract for Five City-run Golf Courses".  
<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2010.GM28.8>

The Bid Committee at its meeting of December 14, 2011, adopted BD53.1, "Contract Awards - December 14, 2011 - Composite Report", recommending, pursuant to RFP No. 9155-11-7227, the award of the contract to Golf Plus Marketing Inc. to manage the Play and Pro Shops at the City Run Golf Courses and collect Green Fees on behalf of the City.  
<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2011/bd/bgrd/backgroundfile-43083.pdf>

City Council, at its meeting on January 31-February 1, 2018, adopted report GM 24.4 with amendments, titled "Future Options for City Operated Golf Courses", recommending the approval of an extension and amendment of the Professional Services Agreement with Golf Plus Marketing Incorporated (Blanket Contract 47020512) respecting the operation and management of the five golf courses, and Grenadier Group respecting food and beverage for the five courses, for a two year term from December 1, 2017 to November 30, 2019, with an option to extend for a further one year term, on terms and conditions satisfactory to the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation and the City Solicitor.  
<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2018.GM24.4>

City Council, at its meeting September 30-October 2, 2020 adopted report GL 15.14 with amendments, titled "Lease and Contract Extensions for City of Toronto Golf Courses, recommending the approval of an extension and amendment of the Professional Services Agreement with Golf Plus Marketing Incorporated (Blanket Contract 47020512) respecting the operation and management of the five golf courses, and Grenadier Group respecting food and beverage for the five courses, for a two year term from December 1, 2020 to November 30, 2022, with an option to extend for a further one year term, on terms and conditions satisfactory to the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation and the City Solicitor. Council also directed General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation, in consultation with the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, to assess opportunities for alternate recreational and community uses at City-operated golf courses in the context of demand for public recreational golf facilities, environmental conditions, parkland provision, and the requirements of the City Council Approved Facilities Master Plan, Parkland Strategy,

and Toronto Ravine Strategy and report the findings and recommended directions as part of a staff report on golf operations in 2021.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2020.GL15.14>

## COMMENTS

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This section of the report is organized as follows:

1. Operational Context
2. Scope of the Operational Review
3. Recommended Operating Model – Hybrid Model
4. Implementation - Negotiated Request for Proposals
5. Affordable Access and Partnerships
6. The Alternative and Complementary Uses Review
7. Alternative and Complementary Uses - Recommendations

### Operational Context

The City operates five golf courses and leases out two golf courses. Of the City operated golf courses, Scarlett Woods and Tam O'Shanter are on land owned by the Toronto Regional Conservation Authority (TRCA) and are managed by PFR under a long-term management agreement. The remaining three courses are on land primarily owned by the City with some portions owned by the TRCA. These courses vary from a par three facility to full length regulation golf courses. All five courses are designated as parkland and are governed by the City of Toronto Ravine and Natural Feature Protection by-law and TRCA regulations.

| Course                | Address           | Size (approx.) | Type   | Yardage | Primary Ownership |
|-----------------------|-------------------|----------------|--------|---------|-------------------|
| <b>Dentonia Park</b>  | 781 Victoria Pk   | 14.3 ha        | Par 54 | 2,176   | City of Toronto   |
| <b>Don Valley</b>     | 4200 Yonge        | 74.8 ha        | Par 72 | 6,163   | City of Toronto   |
| <b>Humber Valley</b>  | 40 Beattie Avenue | 43.0 ha        | Par 70 | 5,446   | City of Toronto   |
| <b>Scarlett Woods</b> | 1000 Jane Street  | 24.8 ha        | Par 61 | 3,749   | TRCA              |
| <b>Tam O'Shanter</b>  | 2481 Birchmount   | 42.5 ha        | Par 72 | 6,083   | TRCA              |

Under the current mixed service delivery model for the five City-operated courses, green fees are set by Council, golf course assets and turf are maintained by PFR, while pro shop management (e.g. collection of green fees, lessons, cart rentals, lessons) and

food and beverage operations are contracted out under two separate agreements that were awarded through an RFP process.

PFR has consistently provided high-quality golf courses for all Torontonians under this model. The courses promote junior, senior, and family golf through affordable fees and program offerings. The quality and maintenance standards of the courses have remained high, and commitments to naturalization and environmental stewardship have been incorporated at the sites where possible.

While PFR has provided high quality play and programming at the courses, the golf program has struggled to deliver consistent financial results and is facing a number of pressures. The majority of years since 2013 have fallen short of full operational cost recovery. The largest difference was in 2017, when there was a \$481,136 shortfall. By comparison, 2020 saw a net positive revenue of \$874,679 despite a shortened season due to COVID-19.

Prior to 2020, the City's current operating model was facing a number of challenging trends, including:

- Decreasing revenues
- Decreasing rates of play
- Escalating costs
- Ongoing and long-term capital costs for maintenance purposes

In 2020 however, these trends were significantly challenged and the City saw an increase in the amount of rounds played and subsequently increased revenues. There was also a decrease in operating costs as a result of a shorter COVID-19 operating season. This resulted in best year performance from a use and financial perspective since 2013, with 170,495 rounds played. This trend has continued into 2021, with the courses seeing 195,164 rounds played.

| <b>Operating Year</b> | <b>Season Open Date</b> | <b>Season Close Date</b> | <b>Total Operating Days</b> | <b>Total Rounds</b> | <b>Notes</b>   |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|--|
| 2019                  | 14-Apr-19               | 10-Nov-19                | 211                         | 159,910             | -  |
| 2020                  | 17-May-20               | 15-Nov-20                | 183                         | 170,495             | Courses could not open prior to May 17th                       |
| 2021                  | 01-Apr-21               | 21-Nov-21                | 200                         | 195,164             | Courses mandated to close on April 17th and re-opened May 22nd |

Access to a range of affordable recreational activities is a City / PFR strategic objective. The relative popularity of different recreational activities does not preclude support for those who enjoy them. However, through the years the inconsistency of the golf program financial performance has created divisional budget pressures for PFR as a result of underperformance against revenue targets. It is unclear if this trend will continue into future years or if 2020 and 2021 represent a "new normal". Given the uncertainty of future trends and the strength of recent performance, retention of existing

players and the attraction of new players, particularly younger players, over the next few years is paramount for the continued success of golf.

As is the case with many PFR assets and facilities, there are also significant ongoing state of good repair capital investments required to ensure effective operations can continue. There are also additional obligations under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act to achieve accessibility compliance. The 2022-2031 Staff Recommended Capital Budget and Plan for PFR, subject to City Council approval at the February 17, 2022 meeting, includes approximately \$8.878 million for state of good repair work, of which \$6.493 million is for the rehabilitation of the tees, traps, irrigation systems, pathways, bridges, and parking lots on the courses. The remaining \$2.385 million has been designated for related buildings including clubhouses, service and storage structures.

PFR continues to balance the priority of emerging state of good repair projects from across the division with an existing state of good repair (SOGR) backlog which is estimated at \$748.2 million by the end of 2022. The SOGR pressure on PFR is projected to grow to \$940.3 million over the next ten years, which includes a backlog of approximately \$5.008 million in known golf related work, for buildings (\$0.633 million), parking lots (\$4.242 million), and pathways (\$0.133 million).

### **Scope of the Operational Review**

To ensure due diligence on the long-term financial viability, quality of play, positive customer experience, and successful operations of the courses, PFR committed to completing a third-party review of operations. PFR contracted Ernst and Young (EY) to complete a review (the Review) of the existing five golf course operations.

PFR established the following project goals to guide the operational review:

- Continue to provide access to high-quality and affordable golf in the city
- Improve golf-related amenities (clubhouses, food and beverage offerings, customer service, etc.)
- Ensure responsible environmental stewardship and management of the sites
- Advance the parkland and recreational needs of non-golfers with innovative programming, shared use arrangements, and increased access to these spaces where possible
- Advance a winter use strategy to improve access and activation during non-golf season
- Maintain a sustainable and financially responsible model; and
- Balance multiple and competing desired uses

The Review evaluated operations and management of the golf courses, identified opportunities to improve operations and financial performance, enhance service levels for customers, and summarized the feedback of the community engagement program. The Review makes recommendations for how the City can best advance a procurement strategy to advance the City's stated goals, what operating model makes the most sense based on current experience, and highlights a number of operational elements which require careful consideration and/or improvement under the new model.

The Review was informed by historic information regarding rounds played, revenues, expenditures, capital costs and requirements, booking technology, existing policies, stakeholder and public input, comparative course studies, a market sounding, as well as EY's industry expert opinion and on-site secret shoppers (individuals who tested course assets, food and beverage, golf play, customer experience etc.). A copy of the Review's Executive Summary is available in Appendix 1.

## **Recommended Operating Model – Hybrid Model**

The core finding of the Review is that the City's current hybrid golf operating model can be modified to better deliver outcomes for the golf program around customer experience, environmental stewardship, financial performance, and recreational opportunities. This can be achieved while simultaneously supporting City / PFR strategic objectives and community interest in additional access to these park lands for non-golf activities.

The Review recommends that the City advance an improved status quo model ("hybrid model") whereby the City retains responsibility for site maintenance as well as Council approval of green fee rates while a single private entity operates the golf, pro shop, and food and beverage offerings. The recommended hybrid model enables a shared approach to risk mitigation and revenue generation, with the City maintaining control over the aspects of greatest importance to environmental management, park stewardship, and public access and accessibility. The hybrid model allows PFR to focus on the operational elements where staff has expertise and experience, while providing safeguards for access, affordability, and financial sustainability. Conversely, the model leverages private sector industry knowledge and expertise to deliver golf operations and food and beverage at the sites.

The hybrid model recommended by EY in consultation with PFR and industry representatives aims to achieve a number of objectives, including but not limited to:

- Continuing to support access with affordable fees
- Increasing participation through programming and partnerships
- Sustaining current golf programming (lessons, clinics, tournaments, leagues, etc.)
- Maintaining quality management of the green infrastructure in an environmentally sustainable manner
- Optimizing revenue sharing and food and beverage offerings
- Improving practice facilities and existing infrastructure (e.g. clubhouses, locker rooms, patios, etc.)
- Advancing new golf and complementary programming to the courses
- Facilitating winter use and public access during the off-season
- Addressing capital requirements including state of good repair investments
- Enhancing booking, point-of-sale processes, and data collection

The recommended approach blends and leverages the private sector's strengths with the City's critical expertise and responsibility for environmental and parkland stewardship. This allows for a sharing of risk and reward, with the City and future

operator providing the services most closely aligned with their respective interests and experience.

### **Implementation - Negotiated Request for Proposals**

PFR will work with PMMD to design and issue a negotiated Request for Proposals (nRFP) which would allow for proposals on an improved status quo "hybrid model". This nRFP will allow the market to have input on the operating solution. Importantly, PFR and PMMD will ensure that the ultimate operating model achieves PFR golf program objectives in a financially responsible manner. It is anticipated that through this process PFR will be able to maintain and/or surpass the level of customer experience and golf play currently enjoyed by the public.

Given recent changes in City procurement practices, there is opportunity to explore a more flexible and strategic approach to achieving favourable golf program results. Rather than defining all elements of the business model upfront, as is typically required for a transactional procurement, a Negotiated RFP (nRFP), consulting with Purchasing and Materials Management's Category Management & Strategic Sourcing Unit (CMSS), provides the flexibility required to address golf program opportunities. The benefits of working with CMSS to support this procurement include improved cost control, value-for-money contracts, focus on quality and expertise, and forming strategic supplier relationships.

The process will be based on collaboration with the Proponents through a series of commercially confidential meetings and presentations that will allow the industry to share insight on the various options for these golf course operation models for the City's consideration and evaluation in order to design the best-in-class solution.

The nRFP process would allow for flexibility in terms of a number of potential key contractual terms. The collaboration and negotiation may be focused on such aspects as:

- Revenue share/fee mixture
- Capital investment/contribution requirements
- Booking, tee sheet, and online payment management systems
- Operational timing (seasonality vs year round)
- Programming requirements
- Lessons and clinic requirements and revenues
- Partnership requirements with golf associations
- Tournament and league play allowances
- Pro shop management and sales
- Cart revenue and maintenance
- Food and beverage revenues
- Staff/volunteer access to the golf courses

The strategic sourcing process will begin following Council's adoption of this report. The process will implement the new operating model for the 2024 season.

### **Affordable Access and Partnerships**

The City of Toronto's Welcome Policy provides a fee subsidy to help individuals and families with low-income who live in Toronto access City-operated recreation programs. The Welcome Policy generally applies to registered programs and memberships offered by PFR, not drop-in recreation. The City offers junior memberships for ages 9 to 18 (priced at \$353.16 in 2021) which enable junior members to book tee times free of further charge at all five courses all season. In 2021, 368 junior memberships were registered. The junior membership offers an opportunity for Welcome Policy allocation and supports the expansion of the game while eroding the cost barrier to play. Staff will target implementation of the Welcome Policy for junior memberships for the 2022 season.

Affordable access at the sites is also achieved through junior and senior rates at the golf courses. Staff will be exploring potential partnership arrangements to deliver specialized programming targeting those who may need economic assistance to get into the game of golf. Golf Canada and Golf Ontario have communicated interest in exploring potential partnership programming at the sites (e.g. First Tee, Youth on Course). Flexibility to provide third-party partner programming at the sites will be embedded as part of the future operating model, allowing for the City to identify and advance partnership opportunities for the sites. These potential partnerships will further support affordable access to the game and help grow and sustain the sport.

### **The Alternative and Complementary Uses Review**

During 2020, the importance of public access to green spaces in the City was made clear as Torontonians navigated life in the City during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. This heightened focus on public outdoor spaces generated renewed discussions and new questions on how the golf courses, City-owned parkland assets, can best serve Toronto residents. At the direction of Council, the Review's scope was further expanded to include an assessment of alternative and complementary uses at the golf course sites, in alignment with existing City strategies.

In order to understand the scope of the opportunities at the five City-operated golf courses under review, staff undertook a policy and regulatory framework analysis, assessed the operational, physical, and demographic characteristics of each course and the surrounding community, and facilitated a multi-component community engagement program. Additional details on the alternative and complementary use analysis can be found in Appendix 2. A summary of the community engagement process can be found in Appendix 3.

### **Alternative and Complimentary Uses – Recommendations**

The policy and regulatory framework applying to the courses, the Division's strategic plans and objectives, the analysis of each course from the perspectives of "Play", "Place", and "People", and the insights gathered from the community engagement program underpin the recommendations. Of the alternative and complementary uses explored, some opportunities can be implemented across all five of the courses, some opportunities are course-specific, and a strategic opportunity has been identified at

Dentonia Park to achieve a range of City objectives while supporting a diversification of the City's golf offering.

### *Opportunities Applying to All Courses*

All of the courses under review are located in Toronto's ecologically sensitive ravine system. The City's strategic plans, namely the Parkland Strategy and the Ravine Strategy, identify the ravine system as a critical component of achieving PFR's divisional strategic objectives of ensuring the public has equitable access to, and uses, high-quality and connected parks and natural spaces as well as working towards a healthy and resilient urban forest and ravine system. PFR has also identified ensuring the public has equitable access to affordable and high-quality recreation programs and facilities as a strategic objective.

The following opportunities should be advanced at all of the courses:

- Enhancing environmental stewardship
- Supporting public access
- Growing the urban forest
- Restoring natural areas
- Identifying opportunities for Indigenous placekeeping, cultural practices, and/or economic opportunities
- Identifying opportunities for improved ravine access and trail connections
- Expanding complementary programming

The recommended operational model anticipates that PFR staff would retain responsibility for the maintenance of the course lands in partnership with TRCA. As such, staff would be well-positioned to implement enhanced environmental stewardship actions as part of existing Divisional activities and responsibilities. Action would be prioritized according to need. Similarly, as part of ongoing state of good repair and maintenance activities, staff would collaborate with TRCA to integrate green infrastructure solutions. In particular, restoring the natural areas adjacent to the watercourses would support stormwater management and erosion control objectives and mitigate future damage from extreme weather and flooding events exacerbated by climate change.

PFR has demonstrated success expanding the complementary programmatic offering of the golf courses by facilitating new uses such as disc golf and fling golf, supporting community programs such as nature walks, developing pollinator gardens and ensuring off-season public access to the courses by maintaining snow trail loops. This commitment to complementary programming will continue with programs such as movie nights, community runs, and winter activities.

The ravines and watercourses within and adjacent to the courses are significant places for Indigenous communities. These spaces were the sites of cultural practices, travelling and trading routes, and settlements of Indigenous peoples. They continue to be places of connection, community, and healing. As part of the City's Commitments to Indigenous Peoples, staff will advance opportunities, in collaboration with the Indigenous Affairs Office and Purchasing and Materials Management, for Indigenous participation,

recognition, and economic development. This work is aligned with PFR's ongoing collaboration with the Indigenous Affairs Office and Indigenous communities respecting placekeeping and the stewardship of our shared environment.

With regard to food-growing opportunities on the golf course lands, several challenges were identified through staff analysis including the risk presented by floodplain lands to food growing operations, as well as conflicts between golf operations and food growing. PFR is also working with other divisions on ongoing strategic plans and initiatives focused on food which are identifying more feasible opportunities and locations to advance food initiatives. For example, PFR is currently working with Social Development, Finance and Administration (SDFA) as an implementation partner on the Black Food Sovereignty Plan adopted by Council on October 1 and 4, 2021. Within PFR, the Division is also reviewing PFR-focused food growing offerings such as community and allotment gardens. Further work on the potential of integrating food growing infrastructure with park lands will be undertaken in alignment with these initiatives to support a comprehensive and collaborative response to addressing food security and access to food growing opportunities.

### *Opportunities Applying to Specific Courses*

Three of the courses under review – Tam O'Shanter, Don Valley, and Dentonia Park – are situated within ravine systems with existing multi-use trails. As a result of the limited access to the golf courses, those trail systems divert users onto adjacent roads or terminate as a result of the golf course. Further analysis is required to determine how increased trail connectivity could be accomplished at the three identified courses. Working in collaboration with Transportation Services, TRCA, and internally within PFR, this analysis would include a spatial review to identify optimal connection and/or path locations while ensuring the continuation of golf activities. The analysis would also include a risk assessment to understand how to mitigate safety concerns of active recreation adjacent to golf activities based on the existing precedents at Scarlett Woods and Humber Valley. Following this review, staff would integrate any proposed capital projects into future budget processes pending identification and availability of capital funding.

There is a signature opportunity to improve the golf offering at Dentonia Park while addressing local parkland needs. Dentonia Park is the smallest and least utilized course in the review, and is also historically the course which generates the least revenue. Market research and industry engagement clearly communicated that the same programmatic outcomes can be achieved with a 9-hole offering at Dentonia, with a focus on entry level and learn-to-play. Dentonia Park is surrounded by the Crescent Town and Oakridge Neighbourhood Improvement Areas. Feedback from local residents highlighted feelings of frustration with their inability to access the largest green space in their community and a strong desire for addressing this inequity and expanding parkland access and outdoor recreational and community activities.

Staff recommend undertaking a master planning exercise at Dentonia Park that improves the course as a specialized component of the municipal golf offering, and addresses community needs by redesigning a portion of the course as a fully publicly-accessible park. This reconfiguration would result in the creation of one of Toronto's

newest largest parks; adjacent to rapid transit, reconnecting the Taylor-Massey Creek ravine and trail systems, and facilitating access to green space for the city's most vulnerable residents.

Planning for the proposed reconfiguration of Dentonia Park would be undertaken in parallel with continued golf operations at the course. This would give potential operators, players, as well as partners in the golf community such as Golf Canada and Golf Ontario, the opportunity to directly collaborate with the City on what the renewed golf offering could be at the new Dentonia Park. Industry and golf community advocates indicated a desire for nine-hole play, skills amenities such as a driving range and/or practice areas, and academy uses for youth and/or new players. It is clear from industry input that golfers could be better served by a more intentional design and programming of Dentonia Park as a 9-hole entry level golf centre than by its current offering.

With regard to the proposed non-golf aspects of a renewed Dentonia Park, further review and engagement with the community would be required as part of the development of an overall Master Plan. The Master Plan would recognize the sensitivity of the Taylor-Massey Creek ravine system and seek to limit significant physical intervention in the redesign to preserve and restore the site's ecological integrity. The Master Plan would also be an opportunity to explore how ongoing food-growing initiatives could be advanced as well as opportunities for active recreation including facilities and/or multi-use trails. As with other park redesign projects that PFR staff have led, the master plan exercise would include extensive consultation, preparation of preliminary and refined concepts, development of funding and implementation strategies, tender documents and permit approvals. The cost and funding sources for the renewal will be identified through the first phase of the master plan process.

During the master planning process, Dentonia Park would continue to operate in its current capacity as a standard eighteen-hole par-3 course. At completion, a renewed Dentonia Park would represent a fulfillment of multiple strategic City objectives aligned with the goals of this review.

## **Conclusion**

The City offers a range of recreational programming in parks that are essential to maintaining a high quality of life and supporting the social, mental, and physical health of Torontonians. The recommendations of this report strike that balance by maintaining golf operations at all five City-owned courses – Tam O'Shanter, Don Valley, Humber Valley, Scarlett Woods, and Dentonia Park – while acknowledging that the golf courses can do more than one thing.

The nRFP process proposed to select a new operator recognizes the multiple roles the golf courses play, addresses the deficiencies of the current operating model, preserves City stewardship of the sensitive ravine lands within which the golf courses are located, and advances a range of strategic objectives.

## **CONTACT**

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## **SIGNATURE**

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## **ATTACHMENTS**

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Appendix 1 – Operational Review – Executive Summary  
Appendix 2 – Alternative and Complimentary Use Analysis  
Appendix 3 – Engagement Summary Report