

## **Update on the Status of Public Spaces around Nathan Phillips Square and Toronto City Hall**

**Date:** October 1, 2024

**To:** General Government Committee

**From:** Deputy City Manager, Corporate Services, and the Executive Director, Corporate Real Estate Management

**Wards:** 10 - Spadina-Fork York

### **SUMMARY**

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This report provides an update to members of the General Government Committee on the status of the overall state of amenities of Nathan Phillips Square ("NPS"), the on-going repair program and future planned capital works (both funded and unfunded), the combination of which forms the holistic State-of-Good-Repair ("SOGR") program.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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The Deputy City Manager, Corporate Services, and the Executive Director, Corporate Real Estate Management, recommend that:

1. The General Government Committee receive this report for information.

### **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

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There is no financial impact resulting from the adoption of the recommendation in this report.

In addition to existing planned and funded, short-term and ongoing initiatives, there is also an identified but unfunded need for the holistic preservation of NPS, which would include structural and other more extensive work. This holistic preservation currently has an estimated construction value of \$68.4 million, which is identified in the City's 10-year Capital Plan and forms part of the broader \$322 million identified for City Hall, NPS and the underground parking structure, but remains mostly unfunded. There is, however, \$1.1 million of approved funding for planning and design in 2024, 2025 and

2026 as it relates to this preservation work. The prioritization of the unfunded holistic preservation of NPS will be evaluated through future Capital Prioritization exercises to ensure alignment with the City's strategic direction regarding the allocation of available capital funds.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has been advised of the financial impacts associated with this work for consideration along with other priorities in the future budget processes.

## **DECISION HISTORY**

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At its meeting on September 17, 2024, the General Government Committee adopted Item GG16.15, requesting the Deputy City Manager, Corporate Services, and the Executive Director, Corporate Real Estate Management to report to the General Government Committee by October 16, 2024, on the overall state of amenities and the plan for refurbishing and improving the public spaces around Toronto City Hall and Nathan Phillips Square.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2024.GG16.15>

## **COMMENTS**

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### **Asset Stewardship and Programming**

The overall management of NPS is undertaken by 3 City divisions: Corporate Real Estate Management ("CREM"), Economic Development and Culture ("EDC"), and Parks, Forestry and Recreation ("PFR"). The divisions form a tri-party management team where CREM is responsible for the capital and operational stewardship of the real estate assets, EDC is responsible for oversight of the permitting of Nathan Phillips Square and engaging partners in the activation of cultural programming, and PFR is responsible for landscaping and for the delivery of high-quality, community-based recreation programs and services.

### **Current State of Good Repair, Ongoing and Planned Work**

Over the past two years, the planning of a large-scale preservation program, alongside a series of smaller scale rehabilitation initiatives, have been in progress at NPS and CH. These efforts, undertaken to preserve and enhance these iconic civic spaces, span a variety of capital projects aimed at improving infrastructure, public amenities, and accessibility.

The Indian Residential School Survivors ("IRSS") Restoration of Identity Project, recently completed in 2024, is also transforming NPS. The IRSS established a commemorative Spirit Garden in alignment with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action 82. Additionally, the multi-phase rehabilitation of the ceremonial ramp, staircases, and walkways will restore them to good working state, with

major work set to begin in late 2024. Finally, the Speakers Corner project, deferred from the original NPS revitalization project in 2015 due to budgetary constraints, remains part of the ongoing preservation efforts with plans for its relocation to Bay and Queen Streets.

The following sections outline key SOGR and preservation initiatives in further detail.

## **Enhancing Public Seating around City Hall**

### *Current Status and Recent Improvements*

Currently, there are 92 permanent benches offering non-seasonal seating options in and around NPS. Four new benches have also been added along Queen Street as permanent seating options. Seasonal seating options are provided during the summer months, including ten picnic tables on the west side of NPS adjacent to the Peace Garden.

### *Future Plans*

The IRSS Restoration of Identity Project on the west side of NPS, completed in September 2024, will add an additional 150 seats along the pool edge, amphitheatre, and Teaching Lodge.

## **Water Fountains on the Square**

### *Current Status and Recent Improvements*

All four water drinking fountains are fully functioning, however, the decorative display fountain located on NPS is currently non-functioning.

### *Future Plans*

Initial assessment of the decorative fountain identified that a more extensive capital work package is necessary for restoration. A comprehensive feasibility and condition assessment is currently underway, the results of which will determine whether to repair or to fully replace the fountain. The investigation is expected to be completed in the fourth quarter of 2024.

## **Electronic Display Board at the Southeast Corner**

### *Current Status and Recent Improvements*

The non-functioning electronic display board has been determined to be unrepairable and was subsequently decommissioned and removed.

### *Future Plans*

In consultation with EDC, there are currently no plans to replace the display board.

## **Electrical Infrastructure**

### *Current Status and Recent Improvements*

The electrical infrastructure in NPS is overseen by CREM while the events are coordinated by EDC. Currently, there are a limited number of 15-amp outlets available on NPS. To provide flexibility and to support the unique scope, size and layout of different events, direct connection to the outlets through movable temporary cabling is required. Any changes to the electrical infrastructure to limit the use of movable temporary cabling in favour of stationary electrical connection during events would restrict the size, scope, and layout of events, as well as necessitate a complete redesign of the electrical infrastructure on NPS. A redesign would require an electrical engineering study to assess the feasibility, complexity, and any costs associated with a potential upgrade. Generators are limited or not permitted on NPS, with the exception of food trucks, to minimize the use and storage of fuel.

### *Future Plans*

There are currently no plans to increase the electrical infrastructure on NPS.

## **Other Preservation and Rehabilitation Projects**

### *The Indian Residential School Survivors Restoration of Identity Project*

The Indian Residential School Survivors (“IRSS”) Restoration of Identity Project is a capital endeavour to design and develop the western bounds of NPS into a commemorative space for reconciliation to honour residential school survivors, and all the children lost to their families and communities. Led by the Toronto Council Fire Native Cultural Centre, the project aligns with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada’s Call to Action 82 and was completed in late September 2024.

Key features of this project include a turtle sculpture created by Anishinaabe artist, Solomon King, and the Spirit Garden. The Spirit Garden is a peaceful, contemplative space encompassing a Teaching Lodge and Amphitheatre for educational gatherings, a Three Sisters garden, a voyageur canoe, and an inuksuk, representing First Nations, Inuit, and Métis cultures. There is also the White Pine (Tree of Peace), a symbol connected to the Two Row Wampum, representing harmony and balanced relations, and the engraved names of the 17 residential schools that operated in Ontario to preserve historical memory.

### *Ceremonial Ramp, Staircases, and Walkways*

The ceremonial ramp, elevated walkways and its various staircases and bridge connections surrounding NPS were identified as requiring significant rehabilitation to rectify deterioration due to regular wear and tear. Repairs to address immediate safety concerns have been completed on the ceremonial ramp and public access to the ramp resumed on August 30, 2024. Extensive long-term capital repairs of the ceremonial ramp are scheduled to commence in the fourth quarter of 2024 and expected to be completed by the third quarter of 2025.

The elevated walkways connected to the ceremonial ramp and the staircases are currently safe and open to the public. Safety assessments and engineering reports are underway for the Hagerman stairs, the staircase on the east side of the building connecting to the podium level and the elevated walkway, the staircase on the west side of the building providing access to the Councillors Lounge, and the elevated walkways. These assessments are targeting completion in the fourth quarter of 2024.

Due to more complex access and multi-ownership obligations, the Sheraton bridge assessment and investigation will be completed by the first quarter of 2025. The assessments will determine the level of rehabilitation that will be required for the walkway and staircase structures to ensure they remain safe for use. The repair obligations and timelines will depend on the outcome of the safety assessments and engineering reports, however, all critical repairs will target completion by the second quarter of 2025. Repairs for remaining elevated walkways and steps, if not critical for safety, may be deferred to start after 2026 FIFA World Cup events.

### *Speakers Corner*

At the completion of the original NPS Revitalization project in 2015, the Speakers Corner was removed from its original location, just east of the Winston Churchill statue. Within the new design at the time, the Speakers Corner was to be located at the corner of Bay and Queen Streets. Due to budgetary reasons, the rehabilitation of NPS along Queen and Bay Streets was deferred within the 10-year Capital Plan and continues to be part of the ongoing future NPS preservation project.

### *Ongoing Maintenance and Upgrades*

Over the last year, efforts have been made to enhance the public spaces at NPS. This includes landscaping (i.e. re-painting planters, seasonal planting, mulching the garden beds along Queen Street), painting of benches and posts, repairing the chess table seats, updating directional signage along Queen Street, and live animation (i.e. cultural events and child-friendly floor painting). By the end of this year, public Wi-Fi and the replacement of the chess tables are expected to be complete. Staff continue to ensure the public spaces at NPS are clean through regular power washing, graffiti and poster removal, and waste pick up.

### **Future Capital Plans**

In addition to above mentioned initiatives, there are several other NPS rehabilitation projects that are currently underway on an expedited basis in preparation for the 2026 FIFA World Cup events. These include City Hall towers exterior lighting replacement and upgrading the pedestrian access ramps along Bay Street.

In addition to the planned, short-term and ongoing initiatives, there is also an identified but unfunded need for the holistic preservation of NPS, which would include structural and other more extensive work. This holistic preservation currently has an estimated construction value of \$68.4 million, which is identified in the City's 10-year Capital Plan and forms part of the \$322 million also identified for City Hall NPS and the underground

parking structure but remains mostly unfunded. There is, however, \$1.1 million of approved funding for planning and design in 2024, 2025 and 2026 as it relates to this preservation work. The prioritization of the unfunded holistic preservation of NPS will be evaluated through future Capital Prioritization exercises to ensure alignment with the City's strategic direction regarding the allocation of available capital funds.

In addition to the unfunded envelope of work for the preservation of NPS, there is a separate identified need for rehabilitation of the underground parking structure (operated by the Toronto Parking Authority). This work would also ideally be coordinated with the NPS work above to minimize disruption to regular operations of NPS or the parking garage.

## **CONTACT**

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## **SIGNATURE**

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