

Topham Park Playground, Wading Pool, and Clubhouse Improvements

Feasibility Report

Prepared for:
City of Toronto Parks, Forestry and Recreation – Capital Projects
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Executive Summary

The City's PFR Capital Projects division is planning to implement improvements to the clubhouse, playground, and wading pool at Topham Park once funding for all three assets is secured. Due to the integrated nature of the three amenities located at the north east end of Topham Park, Cosburn Nauboris Ltd. and Cherie Ng Architect Inc. have been retained by PFR – PDCP to prepare a feasibility study and schematic master plan that addresses the improvements in a comprehensive way, and to provide costing.

The preparation of the preferred concept plans included consultation with internal and external stakeholders and the public who reviewed draft concept plans and provided feedback. A summary of the consultation is provided in Project Scope, Section 2 below. The design team incorporated consultation feedback and cost analysis to arrive at the preferred conceptual master plan for the integrated landscape and architectural improvements.

The purpose of the master plan and feasibility study is to arrive at a supported plan, and to inform the future detailed design of the park improvements with a viable plan that will maximize the budget available for construction and ensure that the resulting park upgrades function as an integrated whole.

Project Scope

Topham Park is a 2 hectare park located at 181 Westview Boulevard, near St. Clair Avenue East and O'Connor Drive. The park features three baseball diamonds, two tennis courts, a wading pool, playground, and clubhouse. The objective of this study is to provide a schematic master plan with costing for integrated clubhouse, wading, and playground improvements at the east end of the park. The rest of the park, including sports field improvements, are not included in this report.

Some of the key issues that were addressed in the preparation of the recommended master plan include:

- Identifying the primary users of the existing clubhouse, playground, and splash pad
- Determining if the wading pool budget should be used to retrofit the existing wading pool, or to convert the water feature to a splash pad
- Exploring various design options to meet the needs of PFR community recreation programming, Topham Park Softball League, and other primary users of the park and clubhouse
- Determining the most beneficial use of Section 27 funding allocated to Topham Park for improvements of the clubhouse
- Exploring the possibility of acquiring right-of-way property (post-intersection realignment) to increase the footprint of the playground

There are a few key factors that influenced the design options and master plan presented in this document. They include:

- The City's allocated budget for the renovation of each park amenity
- Feedback and Input received at stakeholder and community consultations
- The possibility of acquiring additional park property due to the planned Tiago Ave and Westview Blvd intersection re-alignment
- The existing condition of the playground, wading pool, and clubhouse

1 Budget

The City's estimated project budgets for the implementation of Topham Park Improvements are as follows:

- \$450,000.00 for clubhouse improvements per 2017 State of Good Repair Audit
- \$150,000.00 for playground improvements
- \$350,000.00 for wading pool improvements
- \$300,000.00 Section 37 funding for interior and exterior facility improvements associated with a development application in Ward 19

Refer to Appendix A for cost estimates for proposed landscape and architectural improvements.

2 Community Consultation

Invited stakeholder meetings were held in July and September 2018 to gather input from various community groups and internal stakeholders (City staff). The findings from these initial meetings were used in the analysis of existing park conditions and for the further refinement of the preliminary landscape and architectural plans.

The stakeholders invited to the meetings include:

- Ward Councillor and support staff
- City Parks, Community Recreation, and Aquatic Staff
- Topham Park Community Association
- Topham Park Minor Softball League

An information meeting was held in July 2019 to present the concept plans to the public. The feedback received was used to develop the master plan presented in this report.

There was strong support for the conceptual master plan at the public meeting, and from the internal and external stakeholders.

Refer to Appendix B for stakeholder and public information meeting consultation summaries.

3 Intersection Re-alignment

There is an intersection realignment planned by Transportation Services for Tiago Ave and Westview Blvd. The new road alignment will result in a parcel of new softscape boulevard within the right-of-way, adjacent to the park boundary. The City has explored the possibility of acquiring this parcel of land as parks property for inclusion in the planned park improvements. The transfer of property would require the process of environmental testing and Record of Site Condition (RSC). City staff has determined that there is not enough value in the additional property to justify the property acquisition for park use. For the purpose of the feasibility study, the park boundary will remain unchanged.

4 Existing Conditions

The playground, wading pool, and clubhouse are all located at the north east end of Topham Park, near the intersection of Tiago Ave and Westview Blvd. Due to the close proximity of the park amenities to the road, the park is enclosed by a combination of chain link and decorative metal fencing with pedestrian and maintenance access gates throughout.

The following conclusions were made based on site review and community consultation:

Exterior Walkways and Gathering Areas

- Existing timber planters are in disrepair, are labour-intensive to maintain, and should be replaced with a low- maintenance alternative
- The amount of available seating will need to be increased to accommodate community events and functions hosted by the Topham Park Minor Softball League
- Existing arbor at the park entrance does not provide shade for park users, item can be considered for removal in the design
- Existing flagstone paving at the main entrance to the clubhouse is a tripping hazard and should be replaced with an accessible paved surface
- Existing opening in the fence adjacent to the tennis courts should remain; it is the primary access for the courts and is used to access the clubhouse as well
- The existing asphalt service access road off Westview Blvd should be extended further toward the baseball diamond to improve maintenance access and provide a formalized accessible path to the snack bar from the wading pool area

Playground

- Funding designated for playground improvements are typically allocated every 25 years; the replacement of existing play equipment is strongly recommended
- Separate junior and senior play structures should be proposed to add more play value for children of all ages; this approach is in support of the current direction of City playgrounds
- Existing poured concrete ramp does not meet AODA requirements and should be replaced
- Existing safety surfacing is engineered wood fiber, meets AODA requirements and should remain due to budget constraints
- Fencing around the playground will be proposed, adjustments to the layout of the existing fencing will be required to address pedestrian circulation patterns; existing gate entries are to be reviewed for accessibility
- The existing concrete playground curb is in good condition and should remain due to budget constraints
- The existing walkways around the playground are not an accessible width; the unit pavers and wood edging will be removed and replaced with poured concrete paving

Wading Pool

- Upgrading the wading pool to meet current City of Toronto standards will use the entire wading pool budget and the resulting play value would remain the same
- Leaving the existing wading pool as-is and adding splash pad elements would not be feasible, as the two elements currently share the same basin and drain which poses safety issues when the drain is blocked and the basin fills without wading pool staff present. This condition has been reported to City staff numerous times at Topham. For this reason, the current City standard is to separate the two uses.
- The conversion of the wading pool to a splash pad is preferred by city staff and community members; splash pads allow for longer operating seasons, longer daily hours, and can operate without staff supervision; with increasing summer temperatures, cooling amenities with extended hours for community use are recommended
- Removing the existing wading pool and implementing a splash pad would be the most efficient use of the budget and provide enhanced play value

Clubhouse

- Based on the State of Good Repair Audit (November 2017) and site investigations, State of Good Repair improvements will include:
 - Roof and upper window replacement
 - Accessibility improvements including wider doors with automatic operators
 - Renovation and/or reconfiguration of the existing washrooms and a new universal washroom
 - Furnace, exhaust fan, and hot water heater replacement
 - Plumbing fixture repairs
 - Exit signs, battery packs, incandescent lighting fixtures, and receptacle replacement
- With the potential to combine the SOGR funding with funding from Section 37, a more comprehensive building renovation could occur which would include a number of improvements shown in the conceptual design, including:
 - Amenities required to diversify the use of the clubhouse for additional community recreation programs
 - More natural light by adding windows that also provide visual connection at eye level to park exterior
 - Better visual connectivity between rooms to allow City staff to supervise program activities from a central location
 - A floor plan to allow for multiple, concurrent programming
 - To provide lockable storage for City-run and community recreational programming, including the softball club's use of the kitchen for its snack bar and BBQ events (note that storage of the baseball club's sports equipment will move primarily to an exterior shed location to be provided by the City)

Design Options

Two landscape and architectural conceptual options were presented and discussed at the invited stakeholder meetings. Based on feedback from internal and external stakeholders, one preferred architectural concept and two landscape concepts were presented at the public meeting.

Landscape Master Plan

Appendix C – Landscape Master Plan

A preferred landscape plan was developed following the public information meeting based on strong support for Landscape Option 1, described below.

Landscape Plan - Option 1

Woodland Meadow

Appendix C – Landscape Plan – Option 1

Design Highlights and Analysis

1. Park master plan is developed with organic lines and proposed features are nature inspired
2. The two wood planters in front of the Clubhouse entrance will be removed and replaced with one large planter with seatwalls and low maintenance planting
3. The removal of the existing planters will allow for clear sightlines to the clubhouse entrance and create a larger gathering space for community events
4. Trees will be planted in the planters to provide shade for splash pad users
5. The decorative metal fence and gate into the playground will be reconfigured to simplify the entry and allow for a larger gathering space
6. The existing concrete seatwalls at the splash pad will be removed
7. The splash pad will be meadow-themed with river play elements that will separate junior and senior play “zones”
8. The proposed river play element is a pre-fabricated ground-level play element that includes a pump, bridges, gates, etc. along channels that encourages splash pad users to experiment with features to control the water flow
9. Community Representative and Councillor were in support of the river play element and noted that it would be a popular element for the community
10. Community representative asked for clarification on the splash pad surface and suggested the use of rubber surfacing
11. Cosburn Nauboris confirmed that the splash pad surfacing would be poured concrete, with a textured finish to provide slip resistance
12. City Project Manager noted that poured concrete paving is the city standard and that rubber surfacing is typically only a thin layer on top of concrete at splash pads and does not provide additional protection for falls and scrapes
13. City Staff noted that the longevity of concrete was preferred over the maintenance of rubber surfacing at the splash pad which can become slippery over time, especially if it is in shade

Landscape Plan - Option 2

Solar System and Space Travel

Appendix C – Landscape Plan – Option 2

Design Highlights and Analysis

1. Theme was inspired by the community's early nickname of "Sunshine Valley"
2. The incorporation of the solar system in the splash pad and playground would add an educational element to the play spaces
3. The splash pad would be solar system themed with the sun and planets positioned to scale and relative in size
4. The spray elements would be stainless steel with bright coloured spheres
5. The existing concrete seat walls at the wading pool would be preserved to reduce demolition costs and allow for more robust splash pad elements
6. The preserved concrete seat walls will be extended/integrated to raised planters to allow for additional seating and a raised planting bed with trees for shade
7. The area south of the planters in front of the snack bar will be paved to formalize the picnic bench seating area
8. Councillor and community stakeholder expressed concern for the loss of "green space"
9. After review of the proposed paved area, it was agreed that paving around the existing planters to allow a firm, dry, and accessible surface for picnic tables would be desirable to eliminate the existing muddy zone
10. City Staff expressed support for paving and formalizing this area to allow for the possibility of using the space for outdoor programming
11. It was noted that width of the path could be reduced to accommodate the picnic benches and to meet minimum AODA walkway width requirements, i.e. paving should be reduced where feasible

Preferred Architectural Plan

Appendix D – Preferred Architectural Plan

Two architectural plans for the clubhouse renovations were presented at the stakeholder meetings. Both architectural plans feature the following improvements:

Design Highlights and Analysis

1. The exterior door adjacent to the playground and the exterior door facing the softball diamond have been shifted to allow for a primary north-south corridor with open views
2. A mop closet with a mop sink and emergency eye wash station has been provided off of the main corridor
3. The existing snack bar and pantry has been consolidated into one large community servery, with a roll-up overhead door to Community Room 'A' to allow for recreation program use
4. A new exterior door is provided for Community Room 'A' adjacent to the servery for delivery access
5. A reception area with lockable storage is proposed for visual connections and building supervision
6. All main entry doors will have automatic door operators for improved accessibility
7. Washrooms will be reconfigured to allow for a universal washroom with an automatic door operator; men's and women's washrooms will not have automatic door operators
8. Community Room 'A', Community Room 'B', reception area, and the main corridor will have larger windows to allow for improved sightlines
9. Existing upper windows will be replaced to improve energy efficiency; some will be operable for natural ventilation
10. Sinks and millwork storage are provided in both Community Rooms for recreation programming use

Additional improvements specific to each architectural option are described in the sections below.

Detailed discussion of the clubhouse renovations resulted in a clear preference for Option 1. This option was further developed into a Preferred Architectural Plan that was presented at the public information meeting. Refer to the architectural improvements listed above, and items specific to Option 1 below for a description of the Preferred Architectural Plan that was presented to the public.

Architectural Plan – Option 1

Appendix D – Architectural Plan – Option 1

Design Highlights

1. A large storage room next to the mechanical room directly accessible from Community Room 'A'
2. Large Community Room 'B'
3. Main reception area includes two storage closets

Architectural Plan – Option 2

Appendix D – Architectural Plan – Option 2

Design Highlights

1. Community Room 'A' includes a flexible folding partition that can separate the room for two separate uses
2. Community Room 'B' is smaller to accommodate a storage room behind the reception area
3. Main reception area includes one storage closet

Conclusion

Schematic plans for integrated clubhouse, wading, and playground improvements at Topham Park have been prepared and discussed in detail with interest groups at multiple invited stakeholder meetings. With feedback and suggestions gathered from the meetings, the landscape and architectural concepts were further refined for presentation to the public in July 2019.

The goal of the public information meeting was to receive direction on a preferred concept and theme to provide direction for the preparation of a final master plan. Overall, there was strong support for the proposed splash pad, playground, and clubhouse improvements. Based on the community's preference for Landscape Plan - Option 1 and woodland meadow theme, a Landscape Master Plan was developed following the meeting to address additional community input received.

The Preferred Architectural Plan presented at the public information meeting also received strong support from the community. Residents expressed excitement about the potential programming opportunities that could take place in the renovated building.

The Landscape Master Plan and Preferred Architectural Plan included in this report arrived from extensive, ongoing consultation with stakeholders and members of the community. The final plans and associated construction cost estimates included in this report should be referenced in the next phase of the project to streamline the detailed design process.