

## Committee of the Whole (Working Session) Report

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**DATE:** Wednesday, September 13, 2023

**WARD(S):** ALL

**TITLE:** NORTH MAPLE REGIONAL PARK PROGRAM UPDATE -  
SEPTEMBER 2023

**FROM:**

Vince Musacchio, Deputy City Manager, Infrastructure Development

**ACTION:** DECISION

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### **Purpose**

To provide an update on active projects and initiatives for advancing the 900-acre park vision for North Maple Regional Park (NMRP) and to seek Council approval for continuation of consulting services to support the planning, design and delivery of priority projects, community engagement, park programs and activations.

### **Report Highlights**

- A NMRP Program Committee and staff Collaboration Team were established to provide alignment with priorities of this Term of Council.
- Priorities emerging from committee discussions are focused on design and development of the Family Recreation Area and botanical garden elements.
- Construction of the Enabling Works site grading, servicing and environmental works on 130 acres of parkland continues and is approx. 50% complete.
- The feasibility review for a National Soccer Training Centre (NSTC) at NMRP continues to be in progress and is currently in the concept design stage.
- An RFP for consulting services to lead community engagement and development of a 900-acre Master Plan for NMRP was released in July 2023.
- People and Place Consulting were engaged to support park planning, design, community engagement, park programs and activations.
- A Single Source procurement to People and Place Consulting will permit the City to continue its work in the design and delivery of priority projects; a 2-year term plus two 1-year optional renewals is proposed for Council approval.

## **Recommendations**

1. THAT People and Place Consulting be approved as a single sourced supplier for a period of 2-years (plus 2 years optional – one year term each) to support staff in the planning, design and delivery of North Maple Regional Park priority projects, community engagement, park programs and activations; and
2. THAT staff be authorized to negotiate a contract with People and Place Consulting for their services, including design assignments for the Family Recreation Area and botanical garden elements, to the satisfaction of the Deputy City Manager, Infrastructure Development and Director of Legal Services.

## **Background**

The 900-acre North Maple Regional Park (NMRP) is the City's most ambitious park development to date with a vision to create a nationally significant signature park and legacy project for future generations. Key objectives for implementing the NMRP vision are focused on activities related to restoring nature, sharing culture, promoting active living and building community. Three key pillars are emerging to guide work on this amazing park: RESTORE, ENGAGE, PLAY.

The next phases of park development are currently in motion. While construction is advancing, NMRP continues to host a variety of programs and events including Ride for Sick Kids, Run 4 Vaughan, Strides for Seniors and the Canada Soccer National Championships, which is the largest amateur team sport competition in Canada.

### **An NMRP Program Committee and staff Collaboration Team were recently established to help guide the NMRP Program throughout this Term of Council**

In December 2022 Council affirmed NMRP as a Term of Council priority and approved establishing an Ad-Hoc Committee of Council to help guide the NMRP Program. In response to direction from Council, it was determined that an Advisory Committee for North Maple Regional Park is not warranted at this time, considering the comprehensive park master plan and community engagement process to be undertaken commencing in Q4 2023.

As an alternative to a formal Advisory Committee, an informal NMRP Program Committee was established with Regional Councillor Ferri and Councillor Iafrate as Council Liaison Members to support the work of the NMRP Program team. The NMRP Program Committee includes key Department Heads to provide alignment with priorities of this Term of Council. Meetings occur monthly and regular staff reports for the NMRP Program will continue to be provided semi-annually to Council.

Priority projects identified through the NMRP Program Committee to be completed by 2026 are focused on the design and development of the Family Recreation Area with picnic areas, playgrounds, water play, youth zone, shelter, skating rink, washrooms and advancing botanical garden and horticultural elements within key areas of the park.

To support the NMRP Program Committee, a staff Collaboration Team was also established that includes key department representatives that have direct responsibility or association with NMRP design, operations, programs, and activities. Additionally, the City retained People and Place Consulting, led by Cam Collyer (formerly from Evergreen) in 2022 under single source agreement SSA22-016 to support the NMRP staff team in advancing key design, development, and activation projects.

## **Previous Reports/Authority**

[NORTH MAPLE REGIONAL PARK PROGRAM UPDATE FEBRUARY 2023](#)

## **Analysis and Options**

**Construction of the Enabling Works are progressing with substantial completion of the cricket field, event areas, pond and wetland restoration expansion works expected later this year**

Enabling Works design and construction activities are approximately 50% complete overall with certain elements nearing completion in 2023. Scope of work includes site preparation, bulk grading, servicing, and environmental restoration of approximately 130 acres of the site to prepare this area for future park development. As part of this contract, the existing vehicular park driveway (Vaughan CARES Way) will be reconstructed and a second access (right-in / right-out) to Keele Street will be constructed. Installation of traffic signals at the main Keele Street park entrance was approved by Council in December 2022 and York Region Council in May 2023, with installation to start in Q4 2023.

As part of the Enabling Works, additional park pathways will be installed including an accessible multi-use trail and nature trails. Grading and servicing of the City's first cricket field and event area are expected to be substantially complete later this year. The pond and wetland expansion works are currently in-progress by the TRCA with final planting and other finishing works nearing completion. The Enabling Works will continue to advance throughout 2023 and are expected to be fully completed in 2024.

The original expected completion date of Q4 2023 needed to be extended due to additional work associated with environmental restoration areas, invasive species, habitat permits, adjustments to servicing requirements, and added scope related to

design and installation of the Keele Street traffic signals and roadway improvements. Staff are working diligently with the City's Technical Advisor, Stantec Consulting and the General Contractor to complete sections of the park as efficiently as possible so they can be opened for public use.

**A Federal Grant application submitted to the Natural Infrastructure Fund for wetland area improvements and development of an Eco-Classroom in the park is still pending a decision**

The ecological significance and natural environment of NMRP play a key role in the park vision. As part of the Enabling Works environmental restoration, ecological enhancement and connection of the existing pond, wetland and habitat areas are being advanced. Environmental restoration is a priority as it includes removing existing invasive species of trees, grasses and shrubs which will be replanted with native plants in a way that improves the ecological health of the site.

In October 2022, staff submitted a grant application to the Natural Infrastructure Fund for NMRP wetland expansion and to create an Eco-Classroom in the park. The objective of this project is to enhance and expand the ecologic function of the existing wetland areas and to develop site features that promote and provide access to the public, school groups and events to function as an outdoor Eco-Classroom for community engagement. Federal announcements were expected in Q1 2023 but have been delayed. Upon a successful outcome with this grant, staff will advance design concepts for the Eco-Classroom and provide a more detailed update to Council at that time.

**Feasibility review for a National Soccer Training Centre at NMRP is currently in the concept design stage**

In January 2023 Stantec Consulting was retained through an RFP process to assist the City in the feasibility review for the potential to develop a National Soccer Training Centre at NMRP. The project is envisioned to include development of an indoor training centre, administrative facilities, outdoor soccer fields, stadium field, parking and amenities. The feasibility of developing an indoor fieldhouse with full size soccer field, gym space, viewing areas, and changerooms is also being explored. The consulting team facilitated working meetings with City staff in collaboration with representatives from Canada Soccer to help guide and inform the conceptual design. The final concept design and cost estimate is underway, and staff will report back to Council when this work is completed, anticipated in Q4 2023.

## **An RFP for consulting services to lead a robust Community Engagement and Park Master Plan process for the entire 900-acre vision for NMRP is currently underway**

Advancing the 900-acre vision for NMRP is a Term of Council priority initiative as the park continues to be a popular destination for residents and visitors. The community engagement and park master plan process is intended to help the City properly plan for future phases of park development. An RFP for multi-disciplinary consulting services to lead the Park Master Plan was issued in July 2023.

The purpose of the Master Plan is to validate and expand on the current Park vision and to develop an exciting park development plan and set of structured guidelines to guide the on-going and long-term development, programming and management of all 900 acres of NMRP to make it a regional destination. At a high level, the Master Plan will foster opportunities to restore nature, engage the community and provide a place for active living. The Master Plan process includes a multi-faceted community engagement plan to help ensure that the public is aware and is offered a variety of opportunities to provide feedback on future programming and development in the Park.

## **Installations of artistic wayfinding and signage has commenced in the park**

As work continues to evolve and park development progresses, one of the immediate priorities is to develop interim site signage that helps enhance park visitor experience, address any information gaps on site, keep users informed and to strengthen sense-of-place at NMRP.

During the summer and fall of 2023, a series of installations at the park is being completed to provide more information on current park design, construction, development plans, and vision, as well as a collection of images and words to express a warm welcome to park visitors. These installations provide an opportunity to explore an initial visual language and identity and will help to inform longer-term goals for future signage, interpretation, branding and wayfinding at the park. The hope is to develop an identity unique to NMRP and reflective of its grand size and bold vision.

The first set of installations featuring ground-level graphics at pedestrian and vehicle entrances to the park are being completed in collaboration with a multi-disciplinary consultant team, led by People and Place Consulting and artist Ferruccio Sardella. The works include representations of plants, animals, insects and birds that resonate with the park. The first set of driveway installations were completed in June and August

2023. In addition, a large-scale image is currently being designed to be installed on the wall of the pavilion facing the parking lot.

The second set of installations, to be completed in the fall of 2023, will feature a series of interpretive signage that will highlight information on the park's vision and guiding principles, its history, and information on current construction projects.

Development of a park of this magnitude is a significant undertaking. A staff team in the Parks Infrastructure Planning and Development Department within the Infrastructure Development Portfolio has been established to lead the planning, design and development of the Council-approved 900-acre vision for NMRP, with support from departments across the entire corporation. A comprehensive work program continues to be established to provide a clear plan, communications and timing that will guide park development over the next 10-years and beyond. The program priorities that will be focused over this Term of Council and emerging from committee discussions are identified in Attachment 1.

**Development of the Family Recreation Area and botanical garden elements is an emerging priority for this Term of Council with the initial phases of concept design in-progress by People and Place Consulting**

The Family Recreation Area is envisioned to include a variety of programming for all ages and all seasons such as playgrounds, picnic areas, pavilions, water play, ice skating, and botanical garden elements.

Through discussions at the NMRP Program Committee, advancing the design and construction of Family Recreation Area by 2026 has become an emerging priority. In collaboration with People and Place Consulting, preliminary design concepts have been developed to build on the vision for the Family Recreation Area. People and Place Consulting have demonstrated experience with the development of unique children's playgrounds as part of the Climate Ready School project in Milton, Ontario and many of the playground design and programming elements used at that location are being explored for the Family Recreation Area at NMRP. People and Place Consulting presented a preliminary concept design of the Family Recreation Area to the Program Committee on June 21, 2023 which was well received.

**To ensure timely design and delivery of the Family Recreation Area for 2026, staff recommend engaging People and Place Consulting to continue supporting the NMRP staff team**

In 2022, People and Place Consulting led by Cam Collyer (formerly with Evergreen) were engaged to support park planning, design, community engagement and park programs and activations. People and Place Consulting provides specialized and creative services that successfully bring multi-disciplinary resources to the NMRP project team including artists, communication specialists, and landscape architects which will be key to the project's success.

People and Place Consulting bring a broad and unique skillset and has been integral in the delivery and advancement of the City's vision and goals for the NMRP program, most recently in support of the following:

- Development of program priorities, vision and associated key messages
- Advancement in communications projects, including website enhancements and interim wayfinding and site signage
- Identification of opportunities and strategies to develop social enterprise activity
- Development of procurements for master planning, engagement consulting, and other creative services
- Initial concept planning and design for the Family Recreation Area

Based on the successful collaboration with People and Place Consulting to date, staff are recommending approval of this firm to continue supporting park planning and design, community engagement and park programs and activations over a period of 2-years (plus 2 years optional – one year term each) and that staff be authorized to negotiate a single source contract with People and Place Consulting as a single sourced supplier during this period.

**A Single Source Procurement is justified in accordance with the City's new Procurement Policy**

The City's new Council-adopted Corporate Procurement Policy came into effect on July 1, 2023. A Single Source Procurement is one where other suppliers are available, however, there are valid and sufficient reasons for selecting one Supplier in particular. The City's Procurement Policy provides criteria which must be met in order to procure via Single Source Procurement. Given the need for standardization and compatibility with previously-acquired services, and the special knowledge, skills and expertise required, it is the Director of Procurement Services' determination that this justifies the use of Single Source Procurement in this case. The Procurement Policy further provides

the City protection in that a Single Source Procurement must be undertaken to obtain Best Value for the City.

Given the anticipated amount of the award, Council must first approve proceeding via Single Source Procurement.

### **Financial Impact**

The NMRP Program continues to be funded from approved Capital Project PK-6636-19 which supports implementation of capital projects, consulting services, administration, and project management. Staff continue to seek potential partnerships and funding opportunities including Federal and Provincial grants, advertising and program sponsorships to help advance the 900-acre vision for NMRP.

A single sourced supplier contract with People and Place Consulting is anticipated to have annual costs of approximately \$75,000 to \$100,000 to continue supporting the NMRP project team. Costs for completion of design assignments for the Family Recreation Area and botanical garden elements over the next several years are estimated to be in the order of magnitude of \$950,000 to \$1.4M (based on 10-15% of an estimated \$9.5M construction budget) to be funded through the capital project account and included in the capital budget submission and forecast to 2026.

### **Operational Impact**

Completion of the NMRP project requires continued discussion and coordination with various departments supporting the vision of the park, namely Parks Operations and Recreational Services who are ultimately the project clients.

### **Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations**

Completion of the NMRP project requires continued discussion and coordination with a variety of external agencies and stakeholders, including communication plans and potential funding announcements as applicable.

Design and construction plans related to Keele Street traffic signals and roadway improvements require approval and associated permits from York Region.

### **Conclusion**

Advancing the 900-acre vision for NMRP continues to be a Term of Council priority and transformation of the park continues. A dedicated staff team is in place to lead implementation of the NMRP Program, and a comprehensive work program is established to provide a clear plan, communications and timing that will guide park



development over the next 10-years and beyond. Staff are seeking Council approval to engage People and Place Consulting as a single sourced supplier for a 2-year initial term with optional 2 additional years for approximately \$1.8M over a 4-year period to continue supporting the project team and to deliver design development for the Family Recreation Area and botanical garden elements of the project.

**For more information**, please contact: Jamie Bronsema, Director, Parks Infrastructure Planning and Development, extension 8858.

**Attachment**

1. North Maple Regional Park Program Priorities.

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**Approved by**



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**Reviewed by**



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