

Staff Report

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Report To: Special General Government Committee

Date of Meeting: September 16, 2024 **Report Number:** PDS-036-24

Authored by: Andrei Micu, Manager, Parks Design and Development

Submitted By: Carlos Salazar, Deputy CAO, Planning and Infrastructure Services

Reviewed By: Mary-Anne Dempster, CAO

By-law Number: **Resolution Number:**

File Number:

Report Subject: Bowmanville Zoo Lands Park Master Plan

Recommendation:

1. That Report PDS-036-24, and any related delegations or communication items, be received for information;
2. That Council endorse the proposed Bowmanville Zoo Lands Park Master Plan guiding principles, vision, and concept;
3. That Council refer recommendations 4 and 5 to the meeting of October 28, 2024 alongside the Parks, Recreation, and Culture Master Plan;
4. That Council authorize Staff to implement the recommendations of the Bowmanville Zoo Lands Master Plan by issuing a Request for Proposal to select a qualified consultant to advance the Master Plan concept into detailed design for Phase I – Trails;
5. That Council allocate \$1,112,500.00 for Phase I – Trails to start construction in 2025 with a trail opening to the public in 2026 and,
6. That all interested parties listed in Report PDS-036-24 and any delegations be advised of Council's decisions.

Report Overview

The purpose of this Staff Report is to inform Council of the completion of the Bowmanville Zoo Lands Master Plan, its integration with the Parks, Recreation, and Culture Master Plan, and to report the key recommendations to support the multi-year development of the Bowmanville Zoo Lands Park.

1. Background

- 1.1 In 2018, Council approved the acquisition of 13.7 hectares (34 acres) of land from the previous Bowmanville Zoo lands from Farsight Investments Ltd. and Savannah Land Corporation. The transfer of the property to the Municipality would be through a gratuitous dedication as part of the subdivision approval process.
- 1.2 For more information on the transfer of the Bowmanville Zoo Lands, please refer to Staff Reports PSD-065-18, PSD-071-18, and Confidential Report #LGL-005-18.
- 1.3 In August 2021, the land was officially transferred to Municipal Ownership.
- 1.4 In December 2021, Council passed Resolution #C-408-21 to direct Staff to undertake the preparation of a comprehensive Parks Master Plan for the Bowmanville Zoo lands.
- 1.5 In May 2022, Council passed Resolution #GG-202-22 that directed Staff to form a partnership with the Valleys 2000 organization with the intent to jointly develop the Park Master Plan for the Bowmanville Zoo lands.
- 1.6 For more information on the Master Plan background, please refer to Staff Report PDS-030-23.
- 1.7 In April 2023, Council passed Resolution #PD-039-23 that reads as follows:
 1. *That the Bowmanville Zoo Lands Park Concept Plan be included as part of the proposed Parks Recreation and Culture Master Plan;*
 2. *That staff be authorized to further the design and assess the feasibility, scope, associated costs and p having of the implementation by extending the scope of work of the consultants and that the cost be covered by the Planning and Infrastructure Services 2023 Consulting Budget; and,*
 3. *That all interested parties listed in Report PSD-030-23 be advised of Council's decision.*

2. Discussion

- 2.1 The objective of the Bowmanville Zoo Lands Master Plan is to create a comprehensive Park Master Plan that will establish a park identity and purpose. Currently the parkland has limited functionality with no public access.

- 2.2 The Bowmanville Zoo Lands is planned to be a destination municipal wide park for residents, and it is likely to attract visitors from outside the community.

Guiding Principles for the Bowmanville Zoo Lands Park Master Plan

- 2.3 The Master Plan presents a vision for a new public park that will revitalize one of Bowmanville's most iconic destinations and landscapes. The former zoo lands will be transformed into a public space that celebrates the natural heritage of the site and creates a cultural hub for the community. The park will assume a new and important role as a natural environment park and become a place for learning and for appreciating the Soper Creek Valley.
- 2.4 The Master Plan was developed with a vision that focuses on a bold, inspiring signature park for the community that is tied to the natural and cultural history of the property and honors the legacy of Soper Creek and the former zoo lands while integrating the lands into a broader trail system. The Master Plan was guided and formulated based on the following principles:
- Adhere to the Municipalities Strategic Priorities, noted in Section 5 below.
 - Develop the park as a Municipal wide destination park.
 - Integrate opportunities for public art.
 - Preserve and enhance the parks key ecological link within the Soper Creek Valley.
 - Investigate sustainable uses that protect the natural environment and cultural heritage assets.
 - Provide recreational opportunities for all ages and abilities of a growing community.

Proposed Park Uses

- 2.5 The natural environment park will be an educational and cultural destination, a place of respite and recreation for residents and visitors. The park will incorporate meadows that attract pollinators, woodlands that attract birds and other wildlife, wet meadows for amphibians and reptiles and the creek itself that winds through the park will continue to provide habitat for a wide range of flora and fauna. There will be space within the natural environment for cultural gatherings and installations and walking and cycling trails will be integrated throughout the park. The park will connect to the broader trail network and be part of the Bowmanville's Circle of Green vision.

- 2.6 The new and restored landscapes of the park will provide special features and destinations that are designed to enhance the experience of park visitors. Demonstration gardens will serve as an introduction and orientation to the ecological zones of the park. Restored and new wet and dry meadows will enrich both the ecology of the park and visitor experience. The goal is to develop immersive landscapes that are diverse and rich in both flora and fauna.
- 2.7 Woodlands throughout the park will be representative of the Soper Creek Valley system and will create a strong armature that provides habitat for a variety of wildlife. In addition, the woodlands will provide park visitors with shaded walking routes through a variety of richly vegetated areas.
- 2.8 Parking and trails are important infrastructure that will enhance the function of the park. The Master Plan proposes access into the park from all compass directions. Key access points include one from King Street East, two from Mearns Avenue, one from Mearns Park, one from Concession Street E., and lastly one from the new Timber Trails Subdivision. Over time, trails within the park will provide direct access to the various proposed park amenities.

Proposed Initial Phase and Timeline ‘Phase I – Trails’

- 2.9 The initial phase of implementation focuses on providing public access to the park through the design and construction of strategic connection trails within the park that generally align with the layouts identified in the Master Plan.
- Develop a Terms of Reference and Issue RFP for consultant selection to develop detailed design. (Q1 2025)
 - Develop a Terms of Reference and Issue RFP for consultant selection to comprehensively assess the structural integrity and heritage status of the existing bridge and provide recommendations on rehabilitation or replacement. (Q1 2025)
 - Construction of strategic connection trails within the park. (Q3 2025)

King Street East Node & Orientation Centre

- 2.10 The Master Plan proposes a main entry and arrival node on King Street that will welcome and introduce visitors to the park. The area will include a pavilion, signage, demonstration gardens, public art, parking, and trail connections, which will be accommodated within lands currently owned by the Municipality.

3. Communication and Public Participation

- 3.1 Public engagement and consultation were integrated in the development of the Master Plan. A communications and engagement strategy was developed by the Consultant, The Planning Partnership, with significant input from Staff and leveraged the Municipality's current communication channels. The strategy included in-person and virtual sessions where the public was asked for input.
- 3.2 Two, two-hour in-person public sessions were held on April 16, 2024, where The Planning Partnership presented the vision and park concept. There was a total of 20 participants in each session who made notes and comments on the concept plan.
- 3.3 The engagement and consultation strategy also included an online survey component that ran for 3 weeks, concluding on April 26, 2024. There were 7,130 total views on the Clarington Connected page with 159 total contributions (interactions).
- 3.4 A summary of the public participation is included as an Appendix within the Bowmanville Zoo Lands Master Plan.

4. Financial Considerations

- 4.1 Valleys 2000 funded 100% of the costs to prepare the original concept plan intended to provide a point of departure for continued conversation, engagement and consultation with the community for the development of the Bowmanville Zoo Lands. The cost of consulting services incurred by Valleys 2000 to date is \$20,650.08.
- 4.2 The Municipality funded 100% of the costs to advance the Bowmanville Zoo Lands Master Plan from the initial concept to the current Master Plan. The total cost of consulting services approved and expected to be incurred by the Municipality is \$62,000.00 with \$40,328.75 of that incurred to end of June 2024.
- 4.3 The Master Plan includes a Costing and Phasing component. The Planning Partnership prepared a high-level order of magnitude costing exercise for the implementation of the recommendations set forth in the Master Plan, at a total value of \$21,465,000. The order of magnitude costing is comprised of 7 'Focus Areas' within the park and intended to allow the Municipality to phase in the Master Plan strategies.
- 4.4 Certain amenities within the Master Plan Park Concept are eligible costs to be recovered through development charges. The Municipality is currently working with a consultant to include these costs in the Development Charge Background Study. Staff will explore alternative funding options for ineligible costs such as Community Benefits Charges and partnerships with Valleys 2000 for fundraising.

5. Strategic Plan

C.4.1: Promote and support local arts, culture, and heritage sectors.

- The Master Plan recommends that public art be integrated through the park with a focus on recalling the legacy of the Bowmanville Zoo as well as the natural and cultural heritage of the area.
- It is recommended that a public art master plan for the park be developed as part of the next detailed design phases of the Park.

G.2.3: Develop and begin implementation of the Parks, Recreation, and Culture Master Plan.

- The Bowmanville Zoo Lands Master Plan is being integrated with the larger Parks, Recreation, and Culture Master Plan, allowing the Municipality to strategically begin implementing the recommendations set forth in both Plans.

G.3.2: Consider the creation of a community park on the former Bowmanville Zoo Lands.

- The development and adoption of the Bowmanville Zoo Lands Master Plan in conjunction with the Parks, Recreation, and Culture Master Plan is the first step in the creation of a municipal wide park on the former Bowmanville Zoo Lands.

G.4.3: Protect and enhance Clarington's natural heritage.

- The Master Plan has a strong focus on protecting the natural heritage of the area. To implement the Master Plan, the Municipality will work with other levels of government, including local Conservation Authorities to ensure the natural heritage is protected and enhanced.

6. Climate Change

6.1 The adoption of the Bowmanville Zoo Lands Master Plan and the implementation of the recommendations will strengthen the resilience of Municipal infrastructure as well as protect ecosystems and biodiversity, in accordance with Clarington's Corporate Climate Action Plan.

7. Concurrence

7.1 Not Applicable.

8. Conclusion

8.1 It is respectfully recommended that Council endorse the proposed Bowmanville Zoo Lands Park Master Plan guiding principles, vision, concept.

8.2 That Council authorize Staff to implement the recommendations of the Bowmanville Zoo Lands Master Plan by issuing a Request for Proposal (RFP) to select a qualified consultant to advance the Master Plan concept into detailed design, with the implementation to be phased over several strategic stages. This work will include expediting components of Phase 1 – Trails.

Staff Contact: Andrei Micu, Manager, Parks Design and Development, 905-623-3379 ext.2439 or amicu@clarington.net

Attachments:

Attachment 1 - Bowmanville Park Master Plan, August 2024. Prepared by The Planning Partnership.

Interested Parties:

The following interested parties will be notified of Council's decision:

Ron Strike, Valleys 2000
Kim Maxwell, Valleys 2000
Doug James, Valleys 2000