



Report to: Development Services Committee

Meeting Date: September 9th 2019

SUBJECT: RECOMMENDATION REPORT
Wismer Percy Reesor Parkette Project
Response to Resident's request to Relocate the Percy
Reesor Parkette
20 Percy Reesor St.

PREPARED BY: Ashley Visneski, Parks Development Coordinator, ext. 2355

RECOMMENDATION:

1. That the report titled "Wismer Percy Reesor Parkette Project, Response to Resident's Request to Relocate the Percy Reesor Parkette" be received;
2. That the Percy Reesor Parkette be maintained at its current location and that buffering measures such as wood privacy fence, 6m high chain link fence, and buffer planting be installed, where feasible, in consultation with the affected residents and the Ward Councillor;
3. That the budget for the necessary work be drawn from the Capital Budget remaining in the Percy Reesor Parkette account;
4. And that staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution

PURPOSE:

To present Committee with options regarding a resident's petition to relocate the Percy Reesor Parkette, and to make a Staff recommendation regarding this matter.

BACKGROUND:

Percy Reesor Parkette is located at 20 Percy Reesor Street, adjacent to naturalized valley lands. This parkette is intended to serve the townhouse complex adjacent to the parkette, located south of Major Mackenzie Drive, west of McCowan Road and southwest of Percy Reesor Street (see Figures 1 and 2)

When the adjacent town house complex was developed, the developer did not convey physical parkland as part of the project through the subdivision process, as the developers group had provided the required parkland elsewhere in the Wismer community.

However, this townhouse complex did not have any park facility close by with the nearest park located over 900m away (walking distance). Once the need for some local recreational space became evident, staff considered available parcels in the immediate area. Options for usable open space/parkette location were limited due to the development being constrained by Major Mackenzie Drive to the north, McCowan Road to the East, Robinson Creek valley lands/ flood plain to the west and an existing

development to the south. The only land available was a small parcel of table land associated with a storm water management (SWM) pond located immediately to the west of the development. As this was City owned land, and 0.12ha (0.3 acres) of the storm water parcel was not needed for the SWM pond, it was decided to sever this portion of the pond lands to serve as open space/parkette. This decision was made prior to the adjacent homes being constructed and was noted on the engineering drawings in 2012.

The last phase of the townhouses within this project were occupied in 2014. Staff subsequently received multiple resident requests for a junior play area on the site, including swings. A budget request was submitted to Council in 2017 for the design and construction of a parkette with a play structure at the selected site.

Due to the size of the parcel and the limited programming, this park facility is classified as a parkette. Parkettes are meant to provide useable open space to nearby residents. Unlike the process carried out for Neighbourhood and Community Parks, public consultation or open houses are normally not held during the process of creating parkettes due to their size, and limited programming.

The budget for this parkette was approved in 2017. The approved budget for design, analysis, project coordination and construction was \$294,000. Design took place during the summer of 2017 with construction starting in October 2017, after notices of construction were distributed to residents directly adjacent of the future park space. The notices contained a construction time line, location map of the park parcel, pictures of the proposed features, and contact information for Staff and the Ward Councillor. Staff received no calls regarding the park construction as a result of the construction notice circulation, but received phone calls of concern from adjacent property owners in the spring of 2018 after the parkette was substantially completed, but prior to the opening.

Currently a 4 foot chain link fence is located along the rear of the residential properties (see Attachment C). This is the standard fence that is found along most property separations between private lots and City parks. The Percy Reesor Parkette, located a minimum of 7.5 m from the residential properties, includes a very modest junior play structure (meant for children 2-5 years old), two swings and two benches. These features were requested by area residents through the City's Contact Centre. There is also a pedestrian pathway leading from Percy Reesor Street to the parkette which is approximately 6m from the residential properties.

Located between the playground and the residential properties is a 5m wide vehicular access route that is needed to service the storm pond. This access route is not paved and is naturalized. This access route also limits buffer planting between the parkette and the residential properties that would typically be considered in these situations.

Residents who live directly behind the parkette brought concerns forward to the Ward Councillor in the spring of 2018 and asked that construction be halted as they had concerns over their privacy and safety. However, construction had to be completed, as there was a contract in place. Once the construction was completed, the construction fencing was left up for an additional 3 weeks as Staff worked with the Ward Councillor

to find a solution that would address the residents' concerns. At the same time Staff received multiple inquiries and requests from other residents in the area as to when the park would be opened as it was summer and the children were anxious to use the park. As a result, the construction fence was taken down and the parkette was opened for use. The parkette has been open for one season and has experienced light use as expected.

Staff agreed to continue to work with the Councillor and the community to find a solution. Staff offered to plant trees near the playground to provide a buffer but this was not considered to be sufficient. The residents have also noted that they had to pay a premium to the developer for their properties as it offered views into the valley lands. It was agreed that the shade toppers on the playground would be removed so that residents could have unobstructed views to the valley lands. The shade toppers were removed in spring 2019.

A community meeting was hosted by the Ward Councillor at the Civic Center on January 30th, 2019 and was attended by eight (8) households as well as Staff. After extensive discussion a vote was taken to decide whether the parkette should remain where it is. The vote was evenly split. Staff agreed to explore alternative locations for the parkette in the floodplain in consultation with the TRCA.

Staff worked with the TRCA and identified a potential location adjacent to Percy Reesor Street, within the floodplain, that the TRCA was able to support (see Attachment E). Staff had initially anticipated relatively minor costs to relocate the parkette. However, staff have now carried out a budget exercise and have determined that the cost to move the parkette would be significant, in the order of \$250,000 (see Attachment F).

OPTIONS/ DISCUSSION:

Staff have identified three options as follows:

Option 1: To maintain the parkette as it stands in its current condition. The construction of this parkette followed the City's standard procedure and notification was given to the residents prior to construction. The shade toppers which contributed to the obstruction of views into the valley lands from the residential properties were removed this spring. This option presents no additional costs to the municipality.

Option 2: To maintain the parkette in its current location and install buffering measures between the parkette and the adjacent residents' properties. This could include wooden privacy fences, increasing in the height of the existing chain link fence from 4m to 6m (to guard against unauthorized entry to private back yards by strangers), and planting a vegetative buffer, such as coniferous trees, or a combination thereof. The buffer planting would have to be planted primarily within the residents' private property as there is limited space between the parkette and the private properties due to the location of the maintenance access route. These measures could cost between \$10,000 and \$15,000 and there are sufficient funds remaining in the Percy Reesor Parkette budget to carry out this work.

Option 3: To relocate the parkette within the floodplain. This area is regulated by the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) who have agreed to allow the parkette to be located within an alternate location in the floodplain if necessary. Building here will ensure that no residential property is directly adjacent to the parkette and the draft location is identified in Attachment E. Construction at this new location will require filling in part of the floodplain and regrading it, relocating all park features to the new area, and then restoring the current location to a naturalized state. This option could cost approximately \$250,000 (see Attachment F)

Given the significant cost to relocate this parkette and given that there are mitigation measure that can be implemented to address some of the residents' concerns, as noted under option 2, staff recommend that the parkette not be relocated and that option 2 above be selected.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

There is no cost associated with option one. Option two could cost up to \$15,000 depending on the chosen material. There are ample funds available in the project's capital account for these measures. Option three could cost up to \$250,000.

HUMAN RESOURCES CONSIDERATIONS

Not applicable

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

Not applicable

BUSINESS UNITS CONSULTED AND AFFECTED:

Not applicable

RECOMMENDED BY:

Biju Karumanchery, M.C.I.P., R.P.P.
Director of Planning & Urban Design

Arvin Prasad, M.C.I.P., R.P.P.
Commissioner of Development Services

FIGURE 1 – LOCATION MAP

FIGURE 2 – AREA CONTEXT

ATTACHMENTS:

ATTACHMENT A: Existing Parkette Location

ATTACHMENT B – Lasseter Approved Landscape Plan

ATTACHMENT C – Site Photos

ATTACHMENT D – Current Floodplain

ATTACHMENT E - Proposed Relocation of Parkette

ATTACHMENT F – Cost Estimate for Relocation