



Report to: General Committee

Meeting Date: October 7, 2019

SUBJECT: Approval of the 2019 Integrated Leisure Master Plan Update

PREPARED BY: Brenda Librecz, Commissioner, Community & Fire Services
Deborah Walker, Director, Library Strategy
Sara Tam, Manager, Business Planning & Innovation

RECOMMENDATION:

1. That the report entitled “Approval of the 2019 Integrated Leisure Master Plan Update” be received; and,
2. That Council approve the 2019 Integrated Leisure Master Plan (ILMP) Update as set out in Attachment 1; and,
3. That Council direct the Commissioner of Community and Fire Services to incorporate the ILMP into annual Business Planning, Capital and Operating Budget processes and to report progress annually to Council; and further,
4. That Staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to seek approval of the 2019 Integrated Leisure Master Plan Update, a document that sets the parameters for investment in the social infrastructure required to keep the City of Markham strong, livable, vibrant and a great place to live, work, learn, play and invest. It guides the City’s provision of parks, recreation, culture and library services, facilities and policies to 2031 when the population is forecasted to grow by 119,700 people to 460,200.

The ILMP Update is a living document that is long range in nature and subject to ongoing review as changes in growth, trends, user patterns, and regulations influence the recommendations within each major community service area. It is subject to the annual budgeting process including business case evaluations of major expenditure items. As the 2010 Master Plan was the point of departure for this update, an overview of the outcomes achieved pursuant to that plan is also provided in the Update report.

BACKGROUND:

In 2010, Council approved the City’s first Integrated Leisure Master Plan (ILMP). The 2010 ILMP provided a framework for planning future parks, recreation, cultural and library services and facilities. The timeframe of the 2010 ILMP recommendations covered the period of 2010 to 2019. However, this horizon was extended in some cases where longer term planning was needed.

Highlights of our progress and accomplishments pursuant to the 2010 ILMP include:

- *Strong follow-through on the recommendations of the 2010 ILMP: 77% of the recommended short-term actions have been completed or are in progress.*
- *Completion of three major community facilities – two joint Community Centre and Library facilities (Cornell and Aaniin), and a regional sport facility (Markham Pan Am Centre), all within six years.*
- *Completion of over 90 new parks with much needed community amenities, including 17 new sport fields of which 4 are artificial turf – and all of them done in partnership with others; and*
- *Development of key strategies to address community needs, including the Older Adult Strategy, the Public Art Master Plan (in progress) the Parks Renaissance Program, the Public Realm Strategy, the Corporate Volunteer Program and the Sport Development Plan.*

This success has been achieved through close monitoring of population growth, application of the principle of equitable geographical distribution of parks, recreation, cultural and library (PRCL) facilities across all areas of the City, annual review of the ILMP by staff, and important feedback from our residents, stakeholders and Members of Council.

Generally, the Council-approved 2010 ILMP provided staff with focus and direction, and supported our efforts in accessing funding from the provincial and federal governments. The positive results achieved pursuant to the 2010 ILMP have confirmed the value and importance of master planning and keeping the ILMP updated.

DISCUSSION:

The purpose of the 2019 ILMP Update is to identify current needs and future facility provision strategies, consistent with the City of Markham's commitment to providing safe, accessible, and community-responsive PRCL services and facilities that appeal to a wide range of interests and abilities. Given that Markham is one of the fastest growing communities in Canada, **timely and bold short-term and long-range planning is critical to ensuring that facility and service provision properly coincides with development, demographic changes and shifts in community needs.** This ILMP Update will guide planning for parks, recreation, culture and library services and facilities to the year 2031, with a particular focus on the next five years.

The original mission statement of the ILMP remains relevant:

Markham's Parks, Recreation, Cultural and Library services provide *inclusive, accessible, safe, enjoyable and sustainable* leisure, learning, sport and cultural opportunities essential to vibrant places.

Leisure services and facilities contribute to a superior quality of life that attracts and retains diverse and talented residents, supports a community-wide commitment to

lifelong active living and learning, and advances Markham's future prosperity in the rapidly growing creative and knowledge-based economy,

The 2019 Integrated Leisure Master Plan Update (2019-2031) updates the recommendations of the 2010 ILMP with current data and research to inform a roadmap for decision-making regarding PRCL facilities and services in Markham to 2031. Once approved, this plan will supersede the 2010 ILMP.

The starting point of the Update project was a thorough review of the 2010 ILMP recommendations. Their status (Completed, In Progress, and Further Review Required) is included in the attached Report.

Using a fact-based methodology, the Update has been informed by several processes of assessment, evidence-review and consultation, including:

- A detailed assessment of the City's existing PRCL facilities, with consideration of their location, geographic distribution, AODA compliance, and facility capacity and utilization based on standard user patterns;
- Socio-demographic factors (current and forecasted), including age;
- Trends in leisure services locally and across Canada;
- Review of the City's past strategic studies and findings;
- Usage data and trends;
- Stakeholder input sessions regarding areas of pressure (ice sports, racquet sports, sports fields);
- Further community input through an online survey;
- One-on-one interviews with Councillors;
- Engagement with the Library Board, City officials and staff;
- Current and anticipated development based on the City's Official Plan;
- Benchmarking against comparable municipalities; and
- Assessment and verification of the provision targets established in the 2010 ILMP. The provision targets outlined in the 2019 ILMP Update are consistent with those of neighbouring municipalities, and have been customized to Markham's context where appropriate.

The Planning Context – A Changing City of Markham

Effective planning requires an understanding of existing and emerging changes and trends that may affect PRCL services and facility needs. Between 2010 and 2019, Markham has grown and evolved. The planning context for 2019 and beyond is very different to that of 2010.

The most fundamental change lies in the story of a growing and changing population since 2010, which has driven the ongoing strong and growing demand over the same period for parks, recreation, culture and library programs and services. **It is expected that over the next 12 years Markham's population will grow by 119,700 people to 460,200 in 2031.** In terms of meeting the needs of this growth, the biggest challenges will be land availability and cost.

Beyond the numbers of population growth, the 2019 ILMP Update process has been informed by the emergence of following changes and trends:

- The City of Markham continues to experience significant growth and development, resulting in substantive changes to built form and pressures for communities that are “complete”;
- Besides new greenfield development, there is also increased development of high-density neighbourhoods (vertical cities) within intensified areas such as Markham Centre;
- Significant anticipated changes to provincial legislation that affects municipalities;
- Continued changes in demographics, in particular an aging population – the region forecasts that by 2031 every 1 in 5 people will be 65 years or older – 21% of total population in 2031, up from just 12% of total population in 2011. This and other demographic shifts and changes have impacts on user needs and expectations, service planning and facility delivery;
- Need to adapt and revitalize existing services and facilities and develop a combination of tools and creative approaches to meet evolving user expectations in a timely manner;
- Informed residents with rising expectations demand changes in the use of parks, open spaces, arts and cultural facilities, libraries and recreational activities, e.g. growing demand for passive leisure activities, drop-in programs, dog parks and related facilities; and
- A desire for walking and biking infrastructure that connects communities, e.g. sidewalks, connected trails, bike paths.

Report Structure

The 2019 ILMP Update Report is structured as outlined below:

1. About the ILMP Update: Introduction, About Markham, Alignment, Our Planning Process, Benefits of Leisure.
2. Our Accomplishments: Key Initiatives and Projects, Status of the 2010 ILMP.
3. Community Context and Trends: Population and Growth, Trends & Best Practices, Community Input (Online Survey), Stakeholder Engagement (Workshops), Internal Engagement (Staff and Library/Municipal Officials).
4. Key Challenges and Opportunities
5. Strategic Framework: 2010 ILMP Strategic Framework, Building Markham’s Future Together, Other Notable Guiding Documents.

Sections 6 to 9 focus on the four dimensions of PRCL. Each Section reviews the current inventory of facilities (by ILMP Study Area) and current service provision levels, and provides recommended provision targets. Each Section also provides recommendations regarding service delivery and programming.

-
6. Parks Services and Facilities
 7. Recreation Services and Facilities
 8. Cultural Services and Facilities
 9. Public Library Services and Facilities

Section 10 addresses the challenges of providing PRCL services and facilities in Intensification Areas. At the time of the 2010 ILMP, Markham's Intensification Areas were just beginning to develop. Between 2010 and today, development of these Areas has progressed significantly and the implications of "vertical lifestyles" are better understood. This Update proposes innovative options for providing PRCL services and facilities in Markham's IAs.

10. Intensification Areas: Background, Planning Leisure Services for Intensification Areas, Keeping Pace with Growth in Intensification Areas – Timing, Community Design for "Complete Communities" in Intensification Areas, Partnership and Co-Location, Partnerships and Co-Locations.

The Report concludes with consideration of the challenges and complexities of implementing the Plan.

11. Implementing the Plan: Implementation Tools, Financial Considerations, Monitoring and Updating the ILMP.

Overview of the Recommendations:

The 2019 Update has focused on the following areas to guide the approaches to service delivery and provision strategies:

- **Intensified areas** need a different provision model with a focus on integration within development plans early in the process to capitalize on cost sharing opportunities;
- **Shared Uses, Flexible Spaces** among service providers (schools/faith groups/agencies/ private sector) will be needed;
- **Neighbourhood level planning** and engagement strategies should be considered in partnership with community leaders and other service providers;
- **Equitable distribution** of amenities among communities is critical to building Complete Communities that are accessible for all;
- Recognition of the **challenges of providing parkland** in the future, especially within intensified areas;
- Greater focus on creating **meaningful volunteer opportunities**;
- Increasing demands for services for **aging population** will continue to grow significantly, creating challenges and opportunities;
- Partnerships and creative approaches are critical to achieving provision strategies; and
- Role of the City in advancing provision strategies will be to continue to leverage partners, rethink delivery options from standalone to integrated models with focus on equity, inclusion and community access to leisure amenities.

Markham's Integrated Leisure Master Plan will continue to focus on neighbourhood and community engagement supported by integration among Markham services and solid community partnership development. Our partnership with both school boards has been extensive especially with the shared use of sport fields. Many master plans of this type focus on 'bricks and mortar' – our plan focuses on people and places to drive creativity, inclusion and place making in a shared manner.

The ILMP contains 136 recommendations ranging from adopting industry best practices of little or no cost to major community infrastructure investments. This update makes one major recommendation for a community centre and library within the Future Urban Area. For intensified areas, the recommended approach focuses on partnerships and shared uses in the creation of Neighbourhood Centres to meet the needs of growth in those vertical neighbourhoods. The recommended park provisions and park amenities are based on provision targets by type of amenity, and are intended to be used in the creation of new parks by Planning & Urban Design, and in the management of parks by Parks, Horticultural and Forestry staff in Operations. Culture programs will focus on opportunities to integrate within community spaces and in partnership with others, the advancement of their efforts with Public Art, and the development of the Flato Markham Theatre Foundation. The Sport Development Plan will continue to look for opportunities to support tourism within Markham, while continuing to provide sport development opportunities. The Older Adult Strategy and related 'ability to pay' model will accelerate over the next few years, as Markham's population grows older.

Approval of the 2019 ILMP enables staff to move forward with development of implementation plans and to seek out opportunities for shared use, federal grants and partnerships with other providers. Regarding any recommendations that involve major business transformations or significant investments for community infrastructure, staff will follow current practice and provide staff reports to Council for decision-making. Recognizing that recent provincial decisions related to development charges will affect priority setting for not just this plan, but also all Master Plans, and require a process for Council decision making regarding the Community Benefits Charge, having a Master Plan with provision targets will help with priority setting. In fact, the Province referred to the need for such a plan within its recommendations.

In conclusion, the 2019 ILMP prioritizes the needs of the community by developing recommended actions that will support and continuously improve the quality of life in Markham for all neighbourhoods.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The development of a detailed-level financial strategy for implementation of the 2019 ILMP Update was not within the scope of this project. However, as a roadmap for decision-making, the Update recognizes that implementation will be dependent on a number of factors, including the pace of population growth, funding, land availability and partnerships. In many cases, proposed timeframes are linked to the population forecasts

approved by the Region of York; should these forecasts change, the Plan should be reviewed and adjustments made to the implementation and funding strategy.

The recent launch of sweeping changes to Ontario's land use planning system, with the stated objective of stimulating the supply of housing, further complicates financial planning in relation to the recommendations of the 2019 ILMP Update. The full implications of Bill 108 and Community Benefits Charges will not be fully understood until regulations are released. Once regulations regarding Community Benefits Charges have been finalized and full details understood, Council may need to prioritize decisions regarding the recommendations in the 2019 ILMP Update.

As a result, the 2019 ILMP Update proposes that financial costing of its recommendations will be undertaken through the City's annual budget process as priorities are brought forward for Council's review and consideration. The full implementation of this Plan may require the pursuit of alternative funding, the establishment of various partnerships and cost-sharing agreements with community organizations, schools, agencies, developers and other partners, and alternative service delivery models, particularly in Intensification Areas.

By approving this Plan, the City is not bound to implementing every recommendation or providing facilities in the order, amount or timing indicated. Rather, this Plan provides guidance on community priorities and sets a general course for meeting the needs as they are presently defined. If growth is slowed or accelerated, the timing of implementation may require adjustment. It is expected that the City will make decisions on individual projects and funding sources annually through the budget process.

HUMAN RESOURCES CONSIDERATIONS

Not applicable.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

By completing 2019 ILMP Update, this report aligns with the strategic direction contained in the 2015-2019 Building Markham's Future Together (BMFT) Goal 2 - Engaged, Diverse and Thriving City (Strategic Objectives 2.1 Increasing Community Engagement and 2.2 Ensuring Markham is Welcoming and Inclusive).

BUSINESS UNITS CONSULTED AND AFFECTED:

Urban Planning and Design, Financial Services, Operations (Parks, Forestry & Horticulture Division), Recreation Services, Economic Growth, Culture and Entrepreneurship, and Markham Public Library.

RECOMMENDED BY:

Brenda Librecz
Commissioner, Community & Fire Services

Arvin Prasad
Commissioner, Development Services

ATTACHMENTS:

1. 2019 Integrated Leisure Master Plan Update (2019-2031) – Presented to General Committee October 7, 2019