



Report to: Development Services Committee

Date: September 9, 2014

SUBJECT:	Rouge National Urban Park Management Plan
PREPARED BY:	Lilli Duoba M.C.I.P., R.P.P., Manager, Natural Heritage

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1) That the staff report entitled 'Rouge National Urban Park Management Plan' dated September 9, 2014 be received;
- 2) And that Council congratulate Parks Canada and the Federal Government on the progress made to date in establishing the new Rouge National Urban Park within Markham and working with Markham Council to address park matters;
- 3) And that the staff report and recommendations be forwarded to Parks Canada as input into the Rouge National Urban Park Management Plan;
- 4) And that in addition to the general comments provided for in this report, Council request Parks Canada to provide greater detail and clarity in the Rouge National Urban Park Management Plan with respect to approval processes, implementation and consultation with municipalities regarding the major components of park infrastructure including the trails plan and development of the Markham Welcome Centres, and residential leasing arrangements for built heritage resources;
- 5) And further that Staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

In June 2014, Parks Canada released the draft Rouge National Urban Park Management Plan ('RNUPMP') for public input and prepared accompanying Bill C-40 'An Act respecting the Rouge National Urban Park' to implement the Rouge National Urban Park. Markham Council, on June 24, 2014 passed a resolution confirming its intent to be a party to a Memorandum of Agreement Respecting the Assembly of Lands for the Proposed Rouge National Urban with Parks Canada and other municipal landowners (the 'Land Assembly Agreement') to conditionally transfer approximately 115 ha of land as part of the process to establish the National Park, subject to the terms of the agreement. The new national park supports Canada's National Conservation Plan by protecting and showcasing the natural and cultural heritage aspects of the Rouge Park, and most importantly, the priority of connecting Canadians to nature. The RNUPMP identifies park objectives, actions and targets to facilitate the development of the park over the next ten years. A governance structure is proposed which includes the participation of municipalities on an Advisory Committee and topic specific working groups. This report provides recommendations to Parks Canada around the inclusion of more implementation details in the RNUPMP with respect to the processes required to deliver

the major components of the park and how municipal and stakeholder input would be sought and considered.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of the report is to provide Council with an overview and comments on the recently released Rouge National Urban Park Management Plan prepared by Parks Canada.

BACKGROUND:

In 1990, the Province of Ontario announced its intention to create a park to protect the Rouge River and adjacent lands and established an Advisory Committee to prepare a Management Plan. In 1994, the Province released the first Rouge Park Management Plan for the land south of Steeles Avenue and created the Rouge Park Alliance to manage the park affairs from the period between 1995 and 2012. The Rouge Park Alliance was created as a partnership body which included no legislation or authority, beyond the support and leadership of the public landowners and agencies. This model was exceptionally successful in advancing the preparation of numerous plans and studies including the Rouge North Management Plan, Visitor Experience Plan, Vegetation Management Plan and Trails Plans, as well as coordinating the dedication of the Little Rouge Creek corridor and additional Milne Park lands, Bob Hunter Memorial Park lands, and the Eastern Markham lands. The City of Markham has been a consistent and integral partner to the Rouge Park since its initial inception in 1990.

In 2009, the Rouge Park Alliance commissioned a study to recommend a more sustainable management structure to address the long term funding, development and operation of the Rouge Park. The study recommended Parks Canada be given authority to create a National Park. In April 2011, the Federal Government announced that it would create a Rouge National Urban Park.

In order to facilitate the creation of the Rouge National Urban Park, the Federal Government prepared Bill C-40 'An Act respecting the Rouge National Urban Park'. The proposed legislation establishes the Rouge National Urban Park as a new type of federal protected area intended to address the specific challenges and opportunities of a federal park in Canada's largest urban centre, specifically the higher expectation for visitor usage given the urban location and transit opportunities and the need to balance and address the protection of the ecological, cultural and agricultural resources. As the lands comprising the Park will be owned by the federal government, provincial and municipal laws will not apply. The proposed legislation creates broad regulatory powers for the management and administration of the Park by the Minister for the Parks Canada Agency. The legislation provides the basis for the protection of the Markham transfer lands and other public lands as a federally protected National Urban Park.

We note that the proposed legislation provides that up to 200 ha of land (approximately 4% of the lands within the Park) within the Rouge National Urban Park may be transferred to provincial or municipal levels of government and the TRCA, if such lands are required for public infrastructure. The infrastructure requirements in Markham identified to date, include road widenings and jog eliminations. Engineering staff have confirmed that these land needs fall well below the 200 ha available for transfers to public entities for public infrastructure. Notwithstanding this, because land transfers are capped at a total of 200 ha in the legislation and there is no way to anticipate infrastructure requirements from other levels of government and the TRCA, the Legal Services Department suggests asking Parks Canada to increase the proposed cap of 200 ha of land for future public infrastructure. Given that the Rouge National Urban Park is within an urban area, it is possible that Markham and other public landowners may require more land in the future to meet growing public infrastructure needs. It is impossible to predict today whether 200 ha shared between parties is sufficient to meet public infrastructure needs in the future and a higher cap would only benefit Markham, being a party who is expected to meet such needs.

The draft bill also provides that the Governor in Council may make regulations on various matters relating to the Park. It indicates that the regulations made pursuant to the proposed legislation may incorporate by reference documents that the Minister or the superintendent produces jointly with another level of government for the purpose of harmonizing the regulations with other laws. Accordingly, the proposed legislation provides the Minister with a mechanism for Markham's municipal by-laws to be incorporated in some fashion into the regulations that will govern the Park.

It is expected that the legislative process will be completed in the fall of 2014. At the time of the writing of this report, Bill C-40 had received first and second reading in the House of Commons and has been referred to the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development for consideration prior to third and final reading. . A summary of the key provisions of the legislation prepared by the Legal Services Department is attached to this report as Appendix 'A'.

Parks Canada released the draft Rouge National Urban Park Management Plan (RNUPMP) in June 2014. Park Management Plans under the control of Parks Canada are approved by Minister of the Environment and tabled in the House of Commons for information.

The Rouge National Urban Park is coined 'The People's Park'. The vision statement is:

Rouge National Urban Park celebrates and protects, for current and future generations, a diverse landscape in Canada's largest metropolitan area. Linking Lake Ontario with the Oak Ridges Moraine, the park offers engaging and varied experiences, inspires personal connections to its natural beauty and rich history, promotes a vibrant farming community and encourages us to discover Canada's national treasured places.

The RNUPMP sets out the vision, strategies, objectives, actions and targets for a 10 year period. The four cornerstone elements of the park are:

- Celebrates and protects
- Diverse landscape
- Linking Lake Ontario with the Oak Ridges Moraine
- Engaging varied experiences
- Inspires personal connections
- A vibrant farming community

The draft RNUPMP is attached as 'Appendix B'.

The Park study area was established in 2011 by Parks Canada based on the recommendations of the former Rouge Park Alliance. The final park boundary will be confirmed after Parks Canada has completed its due diligence and after each of the landowner parties have received authority to transfer their lands to Parks Canada. All parties to the Land Assembly Agreement have now received support from their Councils and Boards to execute the Land Assembly Agreement and Parks Canada has commenced coordination of the signing of this multi-party agreement. Markham Council, on June 24, 2014 passed a resolution authorizing the execution of the Land Assembly Agreement for the conditional transfer of approximately 115 ha of City owned land for the establishment of the Rouge National Urban Park, subject to the terms and conditions set out in the Land Assembly Agreement (see Appendix 'C').

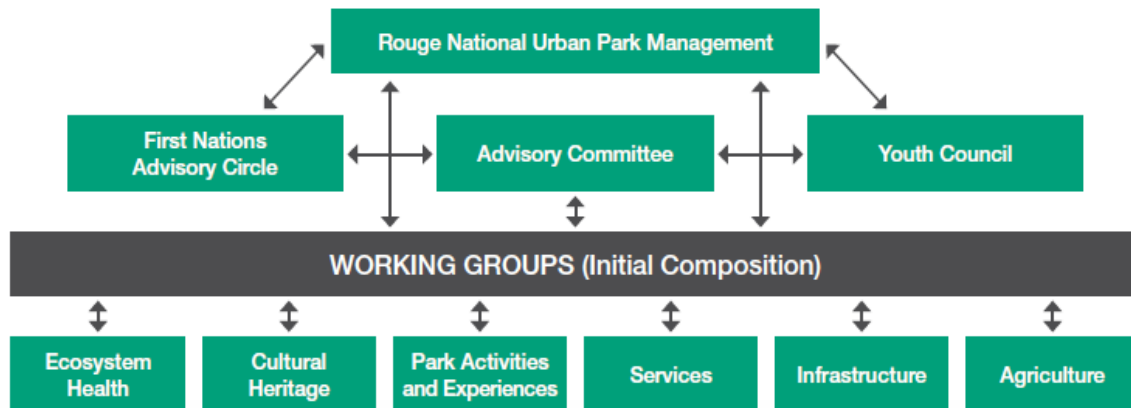
Markham's component of the transfer represents approximately 2.3% of the lands being transferred to the Rouge National Urban Park. The Rouge National Urban Park will not include private lands, lands within the Hamlets of Locust Hill and Cedar Grove or above ground infrastructure including roads and stormwater management ponds. Once the park is established, Parks Canada can expand the park on contiguous lands based on a willing-seller willing-buyer model. It is expected that Rouge National Urban Park will encompass approximately 5,027 ha of which approximately 3,428 ha (68%) are in Markham. The remaining transfer lands in Markham are from the Federal Government (internal transfer from Transport Canada), Province of Ontario and Toronto and Region Conservation Authority.

OPTIONS/ DISCUSSION:

Governance Structure

Parks Canada have proposed a collaborative governance framework to address the many interests in the management of the new Park. In addition to identifying the importance of coordinating the planning and management of the Park with its stakeholders, the RNUPMP also identified a governance structure comprised of committees and working groups. Figure 1 identifies the proposed governance framework. The advisory bodies are expected to all be created by 2015. The Advisory Committee and Working Groups include the participation of municipalities and will provide strategic advice and guidance on park management to Parks Canada. The RNUPMP specifically identifies the need to coordinate the planning and management of the park with other jurisdictions.

Figure 1 – Governance Structure



City staff support the Advisory Committee and Working Group structure but wish to identify that there may be the need to address local matters directly with Parks Canada staff and therefore the RNUPMP should also identify opportunities for municipal consultation on jurisdictional specific issues. Where issues are localized and impact only one stakeholder, the governance framework should identify a process and opportunity for issue resolution and decision making with the affected partners. It is particularly important throughout the transition period, that Markham have an opportunity and a clear process to consult with Parks Canada directly on matters of local interest.

Key Management Plan Strategies

The RNUPMP identifies a number of key strategies for the development of the Park over the first decade. Although the RNUPMP is a fairly high level document, there are many actions that inform how the park will develop in Markham. The highlights of the RNUPMP key strategies are bulleted below. Where comments are in *italics*, they also support the priorities identified by Markham's Rouge Park Implementation Task Force (2008 -2010).

Key Strategy 1: A Canadian First – Fostering a New Way of Thinking About Protected Heritage Areas in an Urban Setting

- The Plan identifies the integrated management components needed for the Park including ecological management, heritage protection, adaptive reuse of building and managing the agricultural, commercial and residential leases within the Park and coordination with other jurisdictions
- The Plan identifies the need for communicating the park values to the public
- *The Plan includes actions to recognize and affiliate natural areas and green spaces in municipalities adjacent to the Rouge National Urban Park to provide for stronger connections of local and TRCA green spaces to the National Park and commits to working with government agencies to implement this concept*

Key Strategy 2: A Dynamic Cohesive Rouge – Managing Change in Support of a Healthy and Resilient Park Landscape

- The Plan focuses on ecological restoration using Parks Canada's Principles and Guidelines for Ecological Restoration in Canada's Protected Natural Areas and including a target of a minimum of three restoration activities annually. The Plan also identifies the implementation of a dark sky policy and the implementation of recycling and composting programs in the Park
- The Plan identifies the continued involvement of community groups in species recovery, monitoring and habitat restoration
- *The Plan identifies agriculture as a significant component of the Park including long term leases to strengthen family businesses and support farming practices. The Plan also supports encouraging farmers to live in the Park by attaching farm leases and residential leases where appropriate*
- *The Plan identifies cultural heritage protection including encouraging various uses of cultural resources to support public enjoyment and long term conservation. The Plan recognizes national historic significant and other heritage values. The Plan identified working with Markham to advance the shared goal of preserving and celebrating important cultural heritage around Locust Hill and Cedar Grove by supporting limited residential infill in the Hamlets*

Key Strategy 3: A Connected and Relevant Rouge – Forging Emotional and Physical Connections with the Park

- The Plan identifies six welcome centres. Two primary Welcome Centres are proposed near the Toronto Zoo (Toronto) and *Bob Hunter Memorial Park/Cedar Grove (Markham)*. Secondary Welcome Centres are located in the *Locust Hill area and the north area (Markham)* and the beach area and campground area (Toronto)
- *The Plan supports a wide range of visitor experiences from outdoor recreation to special events. The Plan includes criteria by which new uses, activities, facilities, long term agreements and other interventions would be assessed*
- Park offices are targeted for a joint facility with Toronto Zoo
- *Group camping is identified as a potential use in Secondary Welcome Centre near Locust Hill in collaboration with Markham*

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- *The Plan identifies the potential for cross country mountain biking, geocaching and horseback riding in select areas of the Park*
 - The Plan supports community shared agriculture and community gardens programs as well as farmers markets
 - The Plan identifies a number of transportation options including way finding applications, trails, transit, shuttle networks and car pooling. The Plan also identifies a community bicycle sharing program
 - The Plan provides for continuous ecological and trail connections between Lake Ontario and the ORM
 - The Plan addresses the need to provide park facilities that meet physical and accessibility standards

Key Strategy 4: Success through Collaboration – Nurturing Strategic Relationships to Advance Shared Objectives

- *Third party agreements are recognized to deliver many park services and specifically mentioned is delivery of park operations, ecological restoration and monitoring, park farming, cultural heritage, green transportation and maintenance and other services like garbage collection*
- The Plan identifies priorities for commercial leases to provide services to park visitors and local residents
- *The Plan supports Markham Museum as one of the National Park's Museums of Record*

Transition Strategy: Enduring Spirit of the Rouge – Facilitating the Transition to Rouge National Urban Park

- The plan identifies the priority to collect base line information on natural heritage, cultural and agricultural resources
- The Plan outlines the governance structure including the presence of Parks Canada staff to the park
- The plan identifies the prioritization of long term leases and trail planning
- A number of specific management tools are identified for completion including restoration and ecological connectivity strategies, rural landscape plan and visitor experience related guidance

Staff Comments

i) Further detail regarding implementation is needed on major actions and park infrastructure

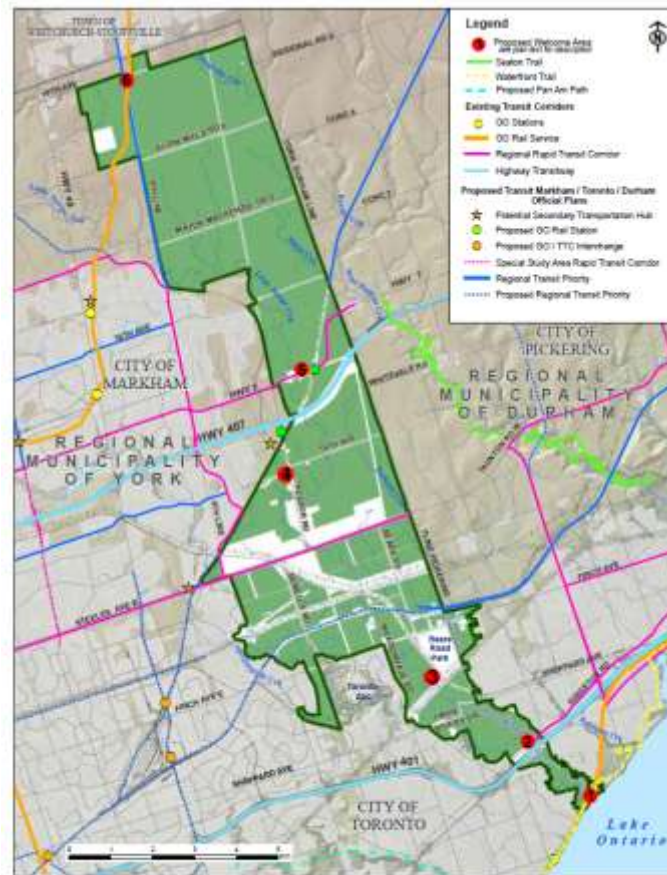
The RNUPMP is a high level strategic document designed to deliver actions and measurable targets over a ten year period, but it could provide clearer direction on the processes or tools to deliver on these major actions and the involvement of stakeholders. In some cases plans are specified. For example, one action is the preparation of the Rural Landscape Plan in consultation with affected stakeholders. It would be appropriate if the RNUPMP provided direction on how decisions would be made and the consultation process for the major elements of the park including the planning and development process for the Welcome Centres and the Trails/Mobility Plan. Markham would want to

ensure these facilities are located, connected, planned and operated in a manner that is consistent with Markham policies and standards. It is recommended that Parks Canada include more implementation details in the Management Plan around the processes required to deliver the major components of the national park and how municipal and stakeholder input would be sought and considered.

ii) Three welcome centres are proposed in Markham

The RNUPMP identifies six welcome centres for the entire park which comprises two primary welcome centres and four secondary welcome centres. The RNUP study area and welcome centre locations are identified on Figure 2.

Figure 2 – RNUP and Welcome Centre locations



MAP 4: Park Access and Welcome Areas

The primary welcome centre in Toronto is located at the Zoo (# 3 on map) and is identified as supporting a new joint building facility with theatre, exhibits, educational centre and offices in a new park building facility. The primary welcome centre in Markham (# 4 on map) is described as capitalizing on the existing new trails built in Bob Hunter Memorial Park, a potential gathering area and Markham gateway and programming and services linked to Cedar Grove. There is no new park facility building proposed for Markham. The Markham welcome centre is focused around existing hamlet

and trails facilities. The integration of these existing uses and facilities into a welcome centre will need to be considered with the input of Hamlet residents, many of which are private property owners. We note that this primary welcome centre appears to include lands and services outside of the park boundary (Markham Secondary Transit hub, Cedarena and Lapps Cider Mill). There appears to be nothing specific in this primary welcome centre that distinguishes itself from the secondary centres in Markham. We note that the previous Bob Hunter Memorial Park Management Plan identified the existing heritage building in Bob Hunter Park as providing for potential visitor services but this opportunity is not identified in the RNUP Management Plan. While it is understood that the Management Plan is fairly high level, as a 'primary' welcome centre, staff suggest further description be provided to articulate how this location as a primary welcome centre would be distinguished from the secondary centres located in Markham and Toronto, and even more importantly, the interrelationship of the welcome centre with private non park lands. We note that the previous Little Rouge Creek Management Plan also identified the unique opportunity that this location in Cedar Grove presented as an activity hub so it is recognized that this location does provide opportunities for a park activity area.

The Locust Hill Secondary Welcome Centre builds on options supported by Council in 2008 for a larger outdoor picnic and activity centre in eastern Markham. Also noted is an event area and group camping. This welcome centre is described as featuring adaptive reuse of existing buildings. Similar to Cedar Grove, this hamlet is primarily comprised of private properties and the integration of a welcome centre at this location needs to consider the input of the Hamlet residents.

The north area welcome centre is located at 19th Avenue and 9th Line and described as an agriculturally focused hub and Stouffville gateway featuring a farmers market, interpretation of park farming heritage and the preferred welcome area for horseback riding. Given the agricultural focus in the RNUPMP it makes sense to include an agricultural welcome centre in Markham.

It is recommended that the RNUPMP include more detailed information relating to the planning and approvals process for these welcome centres. Markham will want to ensure that Hamlet residents and other stakeholders are provided with the opportunity to input into the process and that municipal requirements are met.

iii) **Built Heritage Issues**

Specific comments provided by Heritage staff are identified in Appendix 'D'. The key concern is that the plan is silent or unclear as to how built heritage resources will be conserved and maintained over the long term if they are not associated with a farm operation, a commercial enterprise or in a public park adaptive use. The opportunity for long term, residential leases to ensure the ongoing (non-publicly funded) conservation and maintenance of built heritage resources appears to be absent.

iv) Community and Fire Services Comments

Specific comments from Community and Fire Services Commission are identified in Appendix 'E' and support the need for further detail on implementing this Plan, including establishing shared roles, responsibilities and obligations between partners for park infrastructure and service delivery.

Memorandum of Agreement Respecting the Assembly of Lands for the Proposed Rouge National Urban Park and Supplementary Agreement for Markham Specific Matters Underway

On June 24, 2014 Council authorized the Clerk and Mayor to execute the Land Assembly Agreement with Parks Canada and other landowners for the conditional transfer of approximately 115 hectares of City owned land to Parks Canada, subject to the terms and conditions set out in the agreement. Council also authorized staff to commence negotiating a supplementary agreement(s) to address certain matters as directed by Council. The Land Assembly Agreement has been finalized and will be fully executed in September 2014. Staff will commence negotiations with Parks Canada on the Supplementary Agreement(s) in the upcoming months.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS AND TEMPLATE: (external link)

There are no direct municipal financial implications as a result of this report. Over the long term, the City would benefit from the public infrastructure investment that would be provided for by Parks Canada in the delivery of the Rouge National Urban Park in Markham. This investment could be substantial and would provide Markham with an extraordinary public amenity. The RNUPMP identifies partnership opportunities with municipalities. The City intends to enter into Service Agreements with Parks Canada for the delivery of municipal services within the Rouge National Urban Park.

HUMAN RESOURCES CONSIDERATIONS:

Not Applicable

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

The recommendations support a number of the City's strategic priorities including environment, growth management, transportation/transit, municipal services and Parks and Recreation.


BUSINESS UNITS CONSULTED AND AFFECTED:

This report has been reviewed by the Community and Fire Services Commission, Sustainability Office and Legal Services Department.

RECOMMENDED BY:



Rino Mostacci M.C.I.P., R.P.P.
Director of Planning and Urban Design



Jim Baird M.C.I.P., R.P.P.
Commissioner of Development Services

ATTACHMENTS:

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| Appendix 'A': | Summary of Bill C-40 ' An Act respecting the Rouge National Park |
| Appendix 'B': | Rouge National Urban Park Management Plan, 2014 |
| Appendix 'C': | Council Resolution of June 24, 2014 |
| Appendix 'D' | Heritage Staff Comments |
| Appendix 'E' | Community and Fires Services staff comments |

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