

CITY OF VAUGHAN

EXTRACT FROM COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES OF DECEMBER 15, 2015

Item 13, Report No. 44, of the Committee of the Whole, which was adopted without amendment by the Council of the City of Vaughan on December 15, 2015.

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**KIPLING TRAIL FEASIBILITY STUDY
WARD 2**

The Committee of the Whole recommends approval of the recommendation contained in the following report of the Deputy City Manager, Planning & Growth Management and the Director of Parks Development, dated December 1, 2015:

Recommendation

The Deputy City Manager, Planning & Growth Management and the Director of Parks Development recommend:

1. That the Kipling Trail Feasibility Study Final Report dated October 28, 2015 be received for information.

Contribution to Sustainability

This report is consistent with the priorities previously set by Council in the Green Directions Vaughan, Community Sustainability Environmental Master Plan, Goal 2, Objective 2.2:

- To develop Vaughan as a City with maximum green space and an urban form that supports our expected population growth.

Economic Impact

There are no economic impacts associated with the recommendations of this report.

Communications Plan

Not applicable.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide the results of the Kipling Trail Feasibility Study that was completed to review the possibility of constructing future trails in the valley open space located south west of Kipling Avenue and Highway 7 (location map appended as Attachment 1).

Background - Analysis and Options

In 2009 Council directed staff to undertake a feasibility study to determine the cost of developing a pathway from the east side of the Rainbow Creek valley open space at Angelina Avenue/Sara Street to connect to the Vaughan Grove Sports Park and the Holy Cross Academy. This recommendation was made to determine the possibility of providing a pedestrian connection through the open space as an alternative to pedestrians using Highway 7 to walk or bike to the park and/or school.

At the time, the City's Engineering staff met with York Region on improving safety for pedestrians along Highway 7, however a suggestion was made during this review to consider the construction of a pedestrian walkway or trail as a potential long-term solution. Trail connections through valley open spaces are supported by OPA 240 and OPA 700 and identified in the City's Pedestrian and Bicycle Masterplan, including a proposed north/south trail along this portion of Rainbow Creek.

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The issue of a potential trail connection also arose as part of the consideration of a land use change for 77 Woodstream Avenue which was ultimately approved by the City and Region. At the time, the proponent and staff agreed to examine the trail connection through the valley open space as part of any future redevelopment of the area.

Although not specifically identified in the Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan, the proposed pedestrian trail across Rainbow Creek from the intersection of Angelina Avenue and Sara Street would make an important connection between the residential community on the east side of the creek with the park and school located on the west side. The proposed connection would also significantly reduce the walking distance of using the sidewalk system along Highway 7.

However, due to the significant topography of the open space valley (steep slopes, limited crossing areas), unknown geotechnical and hydrogeological conditions, TRCA restrictions and land ownership issues, construction of a trail crossing in this area may not be feasible, and accordingly a study was commissioned. In September 2012 Stantec Consulting Ltd. (Stantec) was retained to complete the feasibility study.

The purpose of the feasibility study was intended to help determine:

- a. If the proposed trail connection is physically and financially viable;
- b. Design options for a trail system that would have minimal environmental & cultural impact, while maintaining pedestrian safety and accessibility;
- c. The optimal position for a pedestrian bridge;
- d. The options and the most feasible routing of the trail connection;
- e. The approximate preliminary costs associated with implementation of the proposed trail connection; and
- f. To identify other development related requirements (access easements, environmental assessments, TRCA, MNR, Department of Fisheries and Oceans requirements, etc.).

Based on the above, the consultant's scope of work included review of the proposed trail alignment and design (including alignment options and cost estimates), geo-technical investigation, meander belt study, archaeology study and flora and fauna study. A public open house was also undertaken at the end of the review process to gauge community support and interest for the identified trail connection. The consulting team included a host of professionals including Landscape Architects, Ecologists, Archaeologists, Geotechnical Engineers, and Hydrologists.

Three options were identified as follows:

- 1) **Option 1. Trail connection on the west side of Rainbow Creek as per the conceptual Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan.** This option was not considered feasible due to the steepness of the valley wall. This option would require multiple bridge crossings to connect the community to the east and along the north/south trail alignment to traverse the steep slopes. Additionally this option would not significantly improve pedestrian access to the park compared to use of the existing sidewalk network.
- 2) **Option 2. Trail connection on the east side of Rainbow Creek.** This option was not considered feasible as there were too many complications with ecologically sensitive areas including flooding limits adjacent to the water channel. There were also concerns over the steep slopes. This option would require an extensive permitting and approvals process with the MNR and specifically included potential for disturbance of endangered species due to presence of Butternut trees and potential habitat of Red Side Dace.

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- 3) **Option 3. Trail connections along a portion of the east side of Rainbow Creek and use of the open space south of Angelina Court.** This option is the only potential option for trail development and creek crossing due to the valley slopes and other restrictions. This option allows for the most stable creek crossing according to the Meander Belt Study and allows connections to existing trails on both sides of the creek. This option still includes very significant challenges with the design and permits requirements from the TRCA and MNR and also requires an agreement with the Province to obtain access onto crown lands.

Significant design and construction considerations were identified through the course of this study and although not insurmountable, the existing steep slopes, issues related to the highly variable and poor shale ground conditions, a mid-channel bar in Rainbow Creek that is experiencing much change through dynamic channel erosion, environmentally sensitive areas that include vegetation types and/or species habitat and endangered species, etc. would require significant resources and time in order to move this project to move forward.

Upon completion of the study phase of this project, the most feasible option (Option 3.) was used as a basis for engaging local residents about the Feasibility Study and identified trail connections. On September 15, 2015 a community open house meeting was held at the Ontario Soccer Centre to provide residents an opportunity to review the plans and to discuss the project with staff and the consultant. Approximately 15 residents attended the open house meeting and each person was offered a hard copy comment sheet. The study presentation boards and comment sheets were also posted on the City Website for those who could not attend the meeting. Verbal comments were received by staff and the consultant at the meeting and a total of six (6) written comment sheets were provided following the meeting. Details of the open house meeting can be found on Page 35 and Appendix A –VII of the attached consultant's report (Attachment 2).

Two (2) residents indicated their support for the identified trail connection and provided support for additional future trail connections through the Rainbow Creek open space to the south.

The remaining comments, which represent the majority of comments received about this project, did not support the identified trail connection. The following concerns were raised:

- Safety concerns for pedestrians accessing a remote valley location
- Limited to seasonal use because gravel trails cannot be winter maintained
- Environmental damage and impacts to the existing natural areas and wildlife
- Significant cost of the project (estimated to cost in excess of \$1.25M)
- Increase in cars parking on local streets to access the valley and trails and traffic concerns
- Reduced sense of privacy and uniqueness to their community
- Increase in youth hanging out along the trails and in the valley
- Concerns over dangers of the river when it floods
- Maintenance concerns and potential for dumping and garbage

Based on the above analysis which identified significant physical and environmental challenges associated with this project as well as the lack of local community support for a trail connection at this location, staff recommend that the Kipling Trail Feasibility Study be received for information at this time. In addition, implementation of the preferred option (Option 3.) would require a land lease agreement with the Province since the area is located outside the limits of the current lease. Future consideration for trail development in this area can be reviewed at the time when future development applications are proposed on Woodstream Avenue or on lands in the Kipling Avenue area.

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Relationship to Term of Council Service Excellence Strategy Map (2014-2018)

This report is consistent with the priorities established in the updated Term of Council Service Excellence Strategy Map, specifically:

- Continue to develop transit, cycling and pedestrian options to get around the City;
- Continue to ensure the safety and well-being of citizens; and
- Continue to cultivate an environmentally sustainable City.

Regional Implications

There are no regional implications.

Conclusion

In 2012 a consultant study was initiated to review the feasibility of providing a trail connection between the residential community located on the east side of Rainbow Creek, south of Kipling Avenue/Highway 7 to the Vaughan Grove Sports Park and Holy Cross Academy. The study identified many physical and environmental challenges associated with a proposed trail through this valley system. The study concluded that a pedestrian trail connection is potentially feasible but would require significant capital and time investment as well as an agreement with the Province for access to crown lands. The study also included a public consultation component and based on the results of a community open house meeting held in September 2015 there currently is not sufficient community support community for this project at this time.

Attachments

1. Location Map
2. Kipling Trail Feasibility Study Final Report Dated October 28, 2015

Report prepared by

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(A copy of the attachments referred to in the foregoing have been forwarded to each Member of Council and a copy thereof is also on file in the office of the City Clerk.)