Minutes – Executive Policy Committee – February 13, 2024

REPORTS

Item No. 6 Proposed Earth Mother Nature Park (Transcona Ward)

EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE DECISION:

The Executive Policy Committee concurred in the recommendation of the Winnipeg Public Service and received the report as information.

DECISION MAKING HISTORY:

Moved by Councillor Duncan,

That the recommendation of the Winnipeg Public Service be concurred.

Carried

EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On July 5, 2023, the Executive Policy Committee concurred in the recommendation of the East Kildonan-Transcona Community Committee.

COMMUNITY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On June 20, 2023, the East Kildonan-Transcona Community Committee passed the following motion:

WHEREAS on July 16, 2014, Council approved a Secondary Plan for the area bounded by Gunn Road, Perimeter Highway, Transcona Trail and Central MB Railway (to establish Transcona North Precinct Plan – Precinct "I") (File SP 6/2013);

AND WHEREAS SP 6/2013, adopted as By-law 1/2014, establishes a Nature Reserve Open Space of no less than 25 acres in the NW portion of the precinct area;

AND WHEREAS the Nature Reserve Open Space area shall be improved, at no expense to the City, to a manner that would constitute this area being considered 'Naturalized' to the satisfaction of the Director of Public Works, prior to the City assuming any responsibility for the land";

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Executive Policy Committee be requested to direct the Public Service to report back on:

1. Naming the public reserve noted on Appendix A 'Earth Mother Nature Park', with the sign to reflect the name in both English and the appropriate Indigenous language.

2. A site plan, to include, but not limited to, trails and large-scale planting of trees, ensuring a diversity of species, in consultation with the Ward Councillor.

3. Consultation with Trees Canada and their representative(s), Trees Winnipeg, High Schools and Junior High Schools located in northeast Winnipeg, for the purpose of planting trees within the nature park, beginning in Spring 2024.

DECISION MAKING HISTORY (continued):

COMMUNITY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION (continued):

4. Develop a contest for elementary students to design the logo for the Nature Park and that the following representatives/stakeholders be requested to participate on the panel of judges for the logo contest:

    A. Transcona BIZ
    B. Transcona Trails
    C. Buhler Recreation Park

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Title: Proposed Earth Mother Nature Park

Critical Path: Executive Policy Committee

AUTHORIZATION

Author	Department Head	CFO	CAO
D. Domke	J. Berezowsky	N/A	M. Jack

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On March 13, 2015, Council adopted DASZ 18/2014 – a development agreement that dealt with land located at the southeast corner of Gunn Road and Redonda Street. The agreement required the developer transfer 25 acres in the area south of Gunn Rd and west of Redonda Street buffering between the residential and industrial areas to the City for a nature reserve. The development agreement also notes the nature reserve as a potential location for a future dog park.

On July 5, 2023, the Executive Policy Committee concurred in the recommendation of the East Kildonan-Transcona Community Committee and directed the Public Service to report back on:

1. Naming the public reserve noted on Appendix A 'Earth Mother Nature Park', with the sign to reflect the name in both English and the appropriate Indigenous language.

2. A site plan to include, but not limited to, trails and large-scale planting of trees, ensuring a diversity of species, in consultation with the Ward Councillor.

3. Consultation with Trees Canada and their representative(s), Trees Winnipeg, High Schools and Junior High Schools located in northeast Winnipeg, for the purpose of planting trees within the nature park, beginning in Spring 2024.

4. Develop a contest for elementary students to design the logo for the Nature Park and that the following representatives/stakeholders be requested to participate on the panel of judges for the logo contest:

    a. Transcona BIZ
    b. Transcona Trails
    c. Buhler Recreation Park

This report outlines the challenges with moving forward on these four directions. The challenges are both logistical and policy-related.

The Public Service does not recommend taking further action until a fulsome plan for the nature reserve is developed. There is currently no budget allocated to this project.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That this report be received as information.

REASON FOR THE REPORT

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4. Develop a contest for elementary students to design the logo for the Nature Park and that the following representatives/stakeholders be requested to participate on the panel of judges for the logo contest:
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IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS

There are no formal implications arising from receiving this report as information.

HISTORY/DISCUSSION

On March 13, 2015, Council adopted DASZ 18/2014 – a development agreement that dealt with land located at the southeast corner of Gunn Road and Redonda Street in the Transcona Ward.

The agreement required the developer transfer 25 acres in the area south of Gunn Road and west of Redonda Street buffering between the residential and industrial areas to the City for a nature reserve. The land transferred for the nature reserve is south of Gunn Road and west of Redonda Street buffering between the residential and industrial areas. A map of this area is shown in Appendix A.

Since 2015, little work has been done to the area as the developer was not responsible for creating a design for the space and no capital budget was allocated for the City to do this work.

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4. Develop a contest for elementary students to design the logo for the Nature Park and that the following representatives/stakeholders be requested to participate on the panel of judges for the logo contest:
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A number of challenges exist with moving forward on these directions.

Background

At the time of the development agreement, the land had not been inventoried as natural habitat and was largely covered by weedy non-native species. It was likely under cultivation at one time as no remnant natural habitat exists. In order to function as a nature park, which would provide habitat for wildlife and a nature experience for park users, the area would have to be restored as natural habitat and planted with native species.

Prior to the land formally being transferred, topsoil was stripped from a portion of the site and windrowed. Removal of the soil was halted on consideration that the land was to be transferred to the City. Due to the resources required to spread this topsoil and a lack of overall plan for this site, the windrows have not been dealt with and remain on site.

Additionally, the development agreement mandates the developer to build a berm on a portion of the site.

At present, no berm has been constructed. Construction of a berm would likely have a significant effect on the overall condition of the site as well as any improvements undertaken prior to installation of a berm.

The development agreement also notes the nature reserve as a potential location for development of a dog park and states:

- “In the event that Manitoba Hydro does not approve the off-leash dog park on the Manitoba Hydro corridor, a similar size dog park be transferred to the 25-acre nature reserve lands outlined in Transcona North Precinct Plan By-law 1/2014, and conditions 30.a), b) and c), in terms of plan approval be applied.”

At present, Manitoba Hydro has not approved an off-leash dog park on the Hydro corridor.

Naming of the park

The naming of all City parks must be guided by the Council-approved Welcoming Winnipeg Policy. Therefore, it would be inappropriate to commit to naming the area “Earth Mother Nature Park” without proper process and consultation as indicated by the policy.

Site plan design and development

Under normal circumstances, developers transfer public reserve space to the City in a planned and improved condition. In this case, no planning process for the land was initiated and no resources were allocated for the plan nor improvement. As a result, the developer is not required to provide a design for the area, nor is the developer required to grade, level and sod in this location.

Outstanding issues, such as the berm, parking, trail access and, most significantly, the potential dog park, make this more than a simple landscape plan. Funding would be required to develop a plan with the required level of detail.

The Public Service advises a two-phased approach to developing the site. Phase 1 would include research and preliminary design; Phase 2 would involve implementation. A consultant assignment would be required for Phase 1 to develop a concept plan, meet with the developer regarding the dog park and berm, set grades/drainage, assessment of top soil depth to support tree planting and other vegetation, identify areas for volunteer tree planting, undertake public engagement, and develop a Class 3 cost estimate. The approximate cost for a consultant to complete this work is $50,000.

Tree planting, consultation with Tree Canada, and partnership with other stakeholders

Planting trees ahead of improving the site conditions is not recommended. Any planting undertaken prior to development would be at risk of damage or destruction upon further work at the site. It is also not advisable to plant trees on a site prior to developing full plans for its future state.

Phase 2 of the two-phased design and development process would include installation of trees and vegetation. It would also include exploring partnerships with groups on their potential involvement in this reserve. This may certainly include Tree Canada, Trees Winnipeg and schools located in northeast Winnipeg.

The Public Service regularly works with stewardship groups and organizations to conduct volunteer tree planting. All these planting initiatives are based on funding availability for tree watering for two years to ensure the success of planted trees.

The Public Service is currently engaged in planting in excess of 10,000 trees per year as part of the Home Grown - 2 Billion Trees initiative. The Public Service does not have a program or resources to undertake a separate or special initiative at this site. Engagement with multiple groups for planting at this site and running a competition would be most appropriately led by a non-profit or volunteer group under agreement with the Public Service if they choose to partner in this way. This would be consistent with the activities of other volunteer stewardship organizations spearheading tree planting initiatives in other areas across the City.

Although the motion suggests planting at the site in Spring 2024, completion of Phase 1 activities is necessary before Phase 2 activities could be contemplated.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Financial Impact Statement Date: January 4, 2024

Project Name:

Proposed Earth Mother Nature Park

COMMENTS:

As this report is for information purposes, there are no financial implications.

J. Ruby, 2024-01-05

J. Ruby, CPA, CA
Manager of Finance and Administration

CONSULTATION

This Report has been prepared in consultation with:

- Planning, Property and Development Department – Urban Design

OURWINNIPEG POLICY ALIGNMENT

Our Winnipeg Goal: Environmental Resilience
2.24 Low-Impact Ecosystem Management: Prioritize sustainable, integrated plant, pollinator and pest management, that achieves humane, safe, low-carbon, and low-chemical solutions to support the health of local ecosystems.

Our Winnipeg Goal: Social Equity
5.5 Indigenous Lens: Develop an Indigenous lens, which recognizes, respects and advances multiple and diverse First Nations, Inuit, and Métis rights, knowledge and perspectives. Apply the lens throughout municipal leadership and governance processes, policies, programs and practices to be inclusive and eliminate elements that knowingly or unknowingly enable the exclusion of Indigenous Peoples.

5.9 Heritage Conservation: Provide opportunities for heritage education, truth-telling, and reconciliation, through the commemoration, conservation, and stewardship of both tangible and intangible heritage resources, including Indigenous land-based practices and artifacts, public names, places, and art, museum artifacts, and archived information.

Complete Communities 2.0
G3. Parks and Recreation
Ecological function
4.3 Design and manage open space and park areas for their highest environmental and ecological performance:
4.3.1 Integrate interdisciplinary natural resource goals with planned park, recreation and infrastructure improvements to reduce costs and maximize public benefit.
4.3.2 Demonstrate a commitment to biodiversity and ecological integrity through planning, regulation, and collaboration.
4.3.3 Demonstrate the benefits of both natural and restored environments as contributors to quality of life

WINNIPEG CLIMATE ACTION PLAN ALIGNMENT

The report is in accordance with Strategic Opportunity #7:
7.1 Implement Opportunities to Improve Winnipeg's Resilience and Adaptability to the Effects of a Changing Climate.
7.3 Preserve and Manage Parks and Natural Areas to Support Climate Change Mitigation.

WINNIPEG POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY ALIGNMENT

The report is in accordance with:

- Goal 6: All City Services are Equitable, Inclusive and Accessible.

SUBMITTED BY

Department: Public Works
Division: Parks and Open Space
Prepared by: Rodney Penner / Dave Domke
Date: January 11, 2024

Attachment: Appendix A. Location of Nature Reserve

APPENDIX A: LOCATION OF NATURE RESERVE



Legend

25 Acre Nature Reserve