

For Information Only

Playgrounds

Presented To: Finance and
Administration
Committee

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Resolution

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Background

Overview and Current State

The City of Greater Sudbury has a current inventory of 189 playgrounds and tot lots. The Parks department has completed an inventory of the 189 sites and ranked the current inventory based on a poor, satisfactory, or good rating, which is defined as follows:

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Poor - Old wooden structure – needing replacement in less than 5 years

Satisfactory – Older structures that need replacement within 10 years

Good – newly installed within the last 5 to 8 years with a 20 to 25 year lifecycle

A breakdown of the inventory by Ward is displayed in Table 1.

Table 1 – Number of Sites by Ward

Ward	Number of Parks/ Playgrounds/Tot Lots	Condition of Parks/ Playgrounds/Tot Lots		
		Good	Satisfactory	Poor
1	17	8	5	4
2	20	5	6	9
3	24	9	8	7
4	16	8	5	3
5	15	8	1	6
6	14	10	1	3
7	20	4	6	10
8	15	7	2	6
9	11	5	1	5
10	11	10	0	1
11	16	7	8	1
12	10	5	2	3
Totals	189	86	45	58

Playground Costs

Based on these rankings there is a projected need for renewal of 58 sites within the next 5 years, and this would bring the playgrounds back to a “good” ranking without any other enhancements. Based on current year numbers, the revitalization of a playground site has an average cost of \$40,000, noting that it is dependent on size. Based on these figures the total cost to revitalize the playground equipment infrastructure would be \$2,320,000, thus bringing them to current standards.

Field House Costs

Along with playground equipment infrastructure, the City also owns 63 sites that have a physical field house building on the property. These field houses were generally built in the 1970’s and as such require capital repairs to bring them back to a good state of repair. Building condition assessments of the field house buildings were completed and they show that \$2,757,000 is needed to return the 63 sites to an “as new” state with no apparent defects. It is important to note that one playground building in particular was closed this year due to the prevalence of structural issues with the roof of the building. If adequate capital maintenance is not applied to these building in the near future, further building envelope failures could occur which would mean more costly upgrades in future years.

Accessibility and Equity

The Parks department also incorporates accessibility features into parks when complete revitalizations are needed or when new parks are built by developers. It is important to note that approximately only one third of playground sites have accessible features. When reviewing the table above, playgrounds in the “satisfactory” column do not necessarily have accessibility features. To add accessibility features to existing sites would add approximately another \$20,000 per site and further work would be required to determine what features would fit best into individual playground sites.

Finally, equity is another consideration when the Parks department assesses repairs to playground infrastructure. Some areas of the City have neighbourhood associations that are much more active in terms of applying for grants or having access to donations to help leverage grants for new play structures. Therefore, it may take longer for certain neighbourhoods to see new equipment based on the demands from the Leisure Capital budget in any particular year. As mentioned, the standards for new playgrounds in the City are much different than the existing stock of older playgrounds that make up the majority of the sites.

Sun Shade and Seating

Ward based HCI funds have been used in the past to address additional needs beyond play equipment and field house repairs. The two additional areas of investment in the past few years has been the purchase of picnic tables or bench seating along with sun shade areas. Currently, 24 sites have picnic table seating, and less than 10 sites have shade structures. It is important to note however that in many of the older park areas, there is treed shade over parts of the park and the parks department has tried to place benches under treed areas for sun shading.

To outfit the remainder of the sites with the composite hexagon picnic tables (with anti theft install) would require an additional investment of \$1,200 per site.

Healthy Communities Initiative (HCI) and Capital Support

The two primary sources of funding for playgrounds in the City come from the Leisure Capital budget and more recently through HCI funding from individual wards. The Leisure Capital budget generally allocates approximately \$125,000 per year to playground capital which includes field house capital repairs. HCI funding has been another source of revenue for playground revitalization with approximately one third of HCI funds being spent on playgrounds over the past three years. This amounts to approximately \$600,000 worth of capital funding including the purchase of items such as picnic tables for parks over the three year period.

One of the other sources for revenue that is available to Council would be to give staff direction to implement one of the recommendations from the Parks and Open Space Master Plan, which recommended a review of surplus parkland. Action items 51 and 52 in the 2014 report reference reviewing the Parkland Disposal Policy noting that “OMBI indicates that the City of Greater Sudbury has the most maintained parkland compared to the other benchmarked municipalities.” (Master Plan).

Currently, the Disposal by-law 2010-158 outlines the criteria for declaring a park space surplus and further directs that any sale of surplus space be re-invested between the Ward and the rest of the community. Staff could bring back a report reviewing which properties would fit the criteria with an aim to divest of some parkland, and re-investing the proceeds into the existing stock of playgrounds.

In conclusion, staff would continue to use the Leisure Capital budget as the primary funding source for capital repairs, although it should be noted that there are many competing priorities in the Leisure Capital budget such as arenas and other Leisure facilities such as pools.