

Recreational Lake in Blatchford

Recommendation:

That the November 26, 2015, Sustainable Development report CR_1803, be received for information.

Report Summary

This report describes the potential costs and benefits of adding a recreation lake in the Blatchford Redevelopment. Two locations for a possible recreation lake are described, along with their associated timing and impacts on the Blatchford Redevelopment. It is recommended that a recreational lake not be added to the current scope of the Blatchford development.

Previous Council/Committee Action

At the November 2, 2015, Agenda Review Committee meeting, the Sustainable Development report CR_1803 was postponed to the November 26, 2015, Special Executive Committee meeting.

At the October 28, 2014, Executive Committee meeting, the following motion was passed:

That Administration provide a report to Executive Committee with an analysis of the costs and benefits of a possible recreational lake in Blatchford.

Report

Background

This report addresses the potential for the Blatchford project to include a recreation lake as an additional liveability feature in the community. The project team has based this report on the premise that a recreation lake would be an amenity open to the general public, and not a private facility only open to the residents and employees of Blatchford.

Two locations were identified within Blatchford for a possible recreation lake. The first location where (the original location) was discussed at the June 10, 2014, City Council meeting. The suggestion for the second location where (the alternate location) arose when the project team discussed the option of including the recreation lake in the central park location with the Blatchford Redevelopment Advisory Group at its meeting on May 4, 2015.

Attachment 1 shows the original location of a possible recreation lake and a general indication of the alternate location.

Discussion

Adding a recreational lake in Blatchford would have a number of consequences for the redevelopment project, and would impact the costs of the project as well as the overall vision for Blatchford as a sustainable, pedestrian and transit oriented community. Administration conducted an analysis of the costs and benefits of a possible recreation lake and found that there is inconsistency between the sustainability objectives of the Blatchford Redevelopment project and the insertion of a recreation feature that creates a city-wide draw of people and traffic into the interior of the neighbourhood. A public venue such as a recreation lake has the potential to create a conflict between the stated goal of creating a community that is more pedestrian and transit oriented, and then locating what would be perceived as an auto-oriented amenity inside the same community. In this case, there is a significant risk of negating branding qualities related to the original sustainability vision for the community.

The analysis also considered the impact of adding a recreation lake on the housing market in Blatchford. While some developments add value to surrounding real estate by providing private amenity space for community members only, there may not be the same effect with offering a public amenity. The analysis concluded that the negative perception of non-Blatchford traffic moving through the community to use the lake would out-weigh any potential marketing benefit of having a lake in the community.

One possible benefit to the City of providing a recreation lake in Blatchford is the potential to support The Outdoor Aquatic Strategy (Policy C534). This policy guides the City's involvement in providing, developing and managing outdoor aquatic amenities and facilities in Edmonton. The Strategy recommends developing two signature outdoor water venues in south and north Edmonton to address service gaps in new areas of the city and capital investment in Mill Creek Outdoor Pool. Signature outdoor water venues could include swimming lakes, outdoor pools, water parks or whitewater paddling facilities.

Although Blatchford represents an opportunity to support this policy, given Blatchford's central location, it may not be an ideal place to locate a facility to address service gaps in new areas of the city. The evaluation process for the venue would include a review of potential sites, capital and operating costs, and a community needs assessment. In the 10-Year Capital Investment Agenda, there are currently three profiles related to the Outdoor Aquatic Strategy: South Outdoor Aquatic Venue 19-21-5813, North Outdoor Aquatic Venue 19-21-4700, Mill Creek Outdoor Pool 19-21-4220. It should be noted that Borden Park Outdoor Pool is scheduled for significant retrofit to a more natural swimming area, beginning in 2017.

If a recreation lake were built at the original location, the current staging plan for the redevelopment suggests it would be serviced during the final phases of the overall project.

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The potential site is located at the foot of the hill which will be constructed in stages. Much of the material that will form the hill will be excavated from the northern storm water management facility, the basements in the lower density residential sub-areas, and the underground parkades associated with the medium to high density residential, institutional and commercial/office development in the easterly and town centre portions of the site. Based on the current staging sequence for development of the project it is expected that this site at the foot of the hill in the central park would become available for construction of the recreation lake in the 2030-2040 timeframe.

In 2013, Stantec estimated that the cost to construct a recreation lake with a surface area of 1.9 hectares was approximately \$7.6 million. This figure includes grading and landscaping, it does not include any support and service buildings and dedicated parking. It also does not include a land cost, as it is located within the dedicated park area.

The second option is to select an alternate location that would be available much earlier in the redevelopment schedule, outside of the central parkland area.

Given the approved Area Redevelopment Plan and the Concept Plan that accompanied the Business Case report, proforma and cash-flow analysis, there are no public open space areas that could be used as the site for a recreation lake in the early stages of the project. To create this opportunity would require that land currently shown as development sites would need to be re-designated for the lake. As such, the Area Redevelopment Plan would need to be amended, once a suitable site is defined. A public consultation program would also need to be developed and completed as part of the Area Redevelopment Plan amendment process. In addition, all of the technical reports that support the Area Redevelopment Plan (Area Master Plan/Neighbourhood Designs Report, Hydraulic Network Analysis, and Traffic Impact Assessment) would also need to be revised, submitted and approved. It is estimated that the total Area Redevelopment Plan amendment process and technical report revisions would take between 9 - 15 months and would cost between \$100,000 and \$200,000.

If this work proceeds, it would be based on the assumption that the same size facility would be constructed along with the same accessory buildings and parking. In this general area of the redevelopment, the land required for the lake would have a 2015 market value of approximately \$10 million.

Conclusion/Recommendation

Given the conflicts between the Blatchford vision and a public amenity recreation lake, as well as the costs and timing concerns associated with a possible recreation lake, Administration does not recommend adding a recreation lake to the Blatchford Redevelopment project.

Policy

Outdoor Aquatics Policy C534

Corporate Outcomes

The report supports the corporate outcome "Edmonton is attractive and compact" by integrating transportation and land use in Blatchford.

Attachments

1. Recreation Lake Location Map

Others Reviewing this Report

- R. Smyth, Acting General Manager, Community Services