

Staff Report to Council

Title: Birchwood Parks Playgrounds

Report Number: [Report Number]

Director: Community Services

Manager: Parks & Facilities

Meeting Date:

Wednesday, March 26, 2025

Date to be considered by Council:

Wednesday, March 26, 2025

Recommendation:

That Council approve the consolidation of North Cedar Lane (Kin Huron Park) and Parkwood Road (Lake Huron Highlands) parks; and

That Council direct Staff to conduct community engagement for the purposes of selecting the preferred features within the park.

Executive Summary:

The playgrounds on North Cedar Lane (Kin Huron Park) and Parkwood Road (Lake Huron Highlands) are located in close proximity to one another as a result of the subdivision developments that took place at different times. Each park has playground equipment which is overdue for replacement as the equipment has surpassed their lifespan and do not meet several safety standards as per CSA Z614-20. To address these safety concerns and provide enhanced facilities for children, staff recommend a replacement project to be implemented as part of the 2025 Capital Budget, allocating \$70,000 for this purpose. Council requested additional opportunities for discussion related to this project. The recommendation takes into account findings from the Parks and Recreation Plan, including space efficiencies and based on strategic design practices, consolidating the two playgrounds into a single, improved play structure at the North Cedar Lane site is proposed. These parks have a travel distance of approximately .5 km between them.

Strategic Priorities:

C.8-Create vibrant parks, green space, recreation facilities and programs for residents or visitors of all ages and abilities

Financial Considerations:

The approved 2025 Capital Budget allocates \$70,000 for the replacement of playground equipment at the North Cedar Lane site. This allocation will allow for the installation of a CSA compliant playground and fall protection zone which will reflect an enhancement to the neighbourhood. The allocated funds are sufficient for one playground replacement but will not be sufficient to replace both playgrounds (Parkwood Rd. and North Cedar Lane).

Should Council wish to proceed with retaining a playground at both sites, an additional \$30,000 should be allocated to the project. This additional \$30,000 will cover the cost of excavation, tree removal, and installation of an Engineered Wood Fibre surface (EWF) at Parkwood Rd. site, as well as the refurbishment of the swings currently located at the park.

Policy:

Parks and Recreation Plan

Context and Background Information:

The combining of two subdivisions resulted in one larger subdivision with two parks located .47 km of each other. Both parks; one on Parkwood Road (Lake Huron Highlands) and one on North Cedar Lane (Kin-Huron Park), have existing playgrounds that are beyond their 10-15 year life expectancy and present several violations to the CSA Z614-20 standards. These violations reflect safety hazards at both sites that should be remedied prior to reopening the sites in the 2025 season. (NOTE: Park names in brackets are as per the Municipal GIS – the road names are being used instead to avoid confusion)

As a result, staff proposed a replacement project as part of the 2025 Capital Budget in the amount of \$70,000. Staff also recommended that as part of this project, Council consider consolidating these two play structures into one, at the North Cedar Lane site.

Both playgrounds currently offer limited play value and no accessible components as each site has sand protective surfacing, with a couple stand alone play structures such as swings and a slide. These play structures do not accommodate multiple age groups or provide accessibility. These playgrounds are also walking distance to each other, with each park being approximately 0.47 km from each other.

As part of the budget proposal, staff suggested the consolidated site at North Cedar Lane as the park offers an open grass area which is ideal for expanding the play structure area and has excellent site line from the road and nearby houses which conform to Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) practices.

The Parkwood Road site is surrounded by trees and lacks the wide-open grass area present at the other site. To facilitate playground installation at the Parkwood Rd. site, several trees would need to be removed to ensure compliance with CSA Standards. While many of these trees are Ash trees slated for removal anyway, there are several healthy native trees that would need to be removed as well. The removal of these trees and the associated ground prep (stump and root removal) that would be required at the Parkwood Rd. site would heavily cut into the \$70,000 budgeted for the playground, garnering a smaller, less desirable play structure.

It is important to note that the proposed replacement project will not be “like for like” replacement of equipment. This project will see the installation of a composite play structure that includes swings, slides and ground panels, as well as features for children with disabilities such as a quiet area and transfer platform. This new play structure will comply with the CSA Z614-20’s Annex H for accessible playgrounds, which will be a marked improvement over both current parks.

Consultation Overview:

Engagement will be held with residents and through social media, to understand a variety of concept designs. Concept designs will emphasize the importance of accessibility and the need for features engaging children with diverse abilities and ages. Those participating in the community engagement will have an opportunity to review multiple concept designs and select their preferred features to be included in a hybrid model.

Origin:

2025 Capital Budget

Implementation Considerations:

Council may wish to determine if the removal of the playground equipment of the Parkwood Rd. site provides a surplus, waterfront property for the purpose of resale or if the preferred option is for it to be left as a passive parkland with continued maintenance.

Risk Analysis:

Non-compliance with current CSA safety standards presents a significant risk of accidents and liabilities, necessitating prompt action to prevent further exposure.

Existing equipment located in the Parkwood Rd. site should be removed either way, due to the depreciated state of the equipment and proximity to existing trees.

The project may be sensitive to the possible concerns from the community regarding removal of an existing park as well as removal of hazardous trees.

Attachments: Map

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