

## **City Residents to Inform Next Steps for Multiplex Project**

In fall 2020, WSP Canada Inc completed an initial environmental assessment of the proposed Despard site and submitted a report to Council in February that recommended further study, highlighting areas where more in-depth environmental assessment should be done.

At the July 5 meeting, Council was advised by WSP that preliminary assessments completed in June identified potential valuable ecological communities at the proposed site which may present constraints to the proposed development. The following motion was approved by Council:

1. THAT WSP finalize their current ecological assessment of the Despard site.
2. THAT no further studies in relation to the development of the Despard site be initiated and that WSP be retained as the technical consultant and the balance of the budget reallocated to land analysis and site condition assessments for alternative potential sites.
3. THAT staff be directed to move forward with the planned public engagement to commence later this month and into the fall.

On several occasions, Council stated decisions would be based on the studies and before asking residents to consider the additional costs of acquiring land, wished to investigate site conditions on land already owned by the City. The Despard site was chosen by Council as the preferred site for several reasons: the size of the area and buffering from nearby residences; no additional cost to purchase the land; proximity to existing services; walkability from a large portion of the population and compatible land use regulations. Council agreed they would not pursue any action that would cause irreparable damage to the area. It is important to note this location is not the same as the identified wetland in the park property to the northeast of the proposed location but represents a different valuable feature on fee simple lands not currently designated as park.

Along with the services of a public engagement consultant, the cost of the WSP site condition assessments were allocated from a provincial COVID grant. The assessment of the Despard site is extremely valuable as the City looks to manage and protect this site in the future. WSP will complete the assessment and following peer review, present the final report to Council as soon as possible.

With the new information provided by WSP today, Council appointed six members to the Advisory Technical Working Group for the project and extended the application process for a further few weeks. Please refer to the City's website for more information on the working group.

With COVID restrictions easing, a robust public engagement effort will begin to discuss the community's input on the size, location and features for a pool and multiplex. We look forward to hearing from residents throughout the summer and fall. Public engagement consultant, HDR will be asking residents questions such as:

- Do you want a pool in Parksville? If so, what features/amenities should be included in the facility?
- What siting conditions are important - e.g. walkability, access to transit, proximity to other amenities, servicing, etc?
- Would you be willing to see taxes increase to support this project and how much would be acceptable? Would you support borrowing funds to build the facility?

We encourage residents to be part of the conversation on next steps; please email [HDR@parksville.ca](mailto:HDR@parksville.ca) to be added to the mailing list.

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**For more information:**

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