

Fiddle Park revitalization to cost \$9.4 million, take five to 20 years

Written By Paula Brown

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Shelburne Town Council took a closer look at concept plans for the revitalization of Fiddle Park at a recent meeting. During their meeting on June 26, council was presented with the draft master plan for Fiddle Park from town planner Steve Wever.

"The thrust of this master plan is to take Fiddle Park to more of a community-oriented park, where it is a destination park, where everyone in the community [has] year-round opportunities for a whole course of different activities while also being able to draw people from outside the community and hosting events as well," said Wever.

Fiddle Park is the largest park property in Shelburne, with a total area of 114.5 acres, of which 83.5 acres is protected natural heritage.

The project is part of the 2019 Community Improvement Plan (CIP), which was created to provide strategies and direction for enhancements of key areas in Shelburne.

The Fiddle Park Master Plan looks to take the remaining 30 acres of land at the park and redesign it as a "community hub."

In 2021, the Town of Shelburne launched an online community survey to gather input from residents on specific activities and programs they would like to see as part of the revitalization project. Three concept options were developed for the project based on community input.

Components of the draft plan presented to council on June 26 included a multi-functional trail; with all-season usage such as walking and biking as well as skating; an amphitheatre and pavilion; a playground; a multi-use court; community plaza; memorial forest; and enhanced parking lot.

"This Master Plan is intended to see Fiddle Park come to life as a community hub, with opportunities for programming all year and to create a destination that will attract community members and tourism," read the report.

According to the report to the council, the total cost for the Fiddle Park improvements is estimated to be over \$9.3 million, with \$5,351,389.20 in initial park enhancements and \$4,006,188.72 in phased park enhancements.

The estimated cost of the Fiddle Park project is based on the 2023 figure. Implementation of the master plan for Fiddle Park will take place in phases, with the first phase spanning five years and the next phase of future improvements spanning around 5-20 years.

Denyse Morrissey, chief administrative officer, noted that the suggested 20-year timeline is the "ultimate project length" and is based on the total cost of the project.

"There certainly is capacity for quick wins. It doesn't mean that we expect the project to take 20 years, but there may be things for example that would be put off because they don't need to be as front-ended to ensure community access," said Morrissey.

The next steps for the Fiddle Park Master Plan include public engagement and feedback on the drafted projects and improvements.

A final report on the concept plan will come back to the council on Sept. 25, which will be the guiding principles for the design of the park.