

Staff Report

Report To: Community Services Committee
Report From: Adam Parsons, Manager of Parks and Open Space
Meeting Date: October 18, 2023
Report Code: CS-23-108
Subject: Duncan McLellan Park Capital Renewal, 2024-2026

Recommendations:

THAT in consideration of Staff Report CS-23-108 respecting Duncan McLellan Park Capital Renewal 2024 - 2026, the Community Services Committee recommends that City Council receive the report for information.

Highlights:

- Duncan McLellan Park, constructed over 30 years ago, requires capital investment to remain viable. It is the City's marquee ball diamond facility with 3 class-A diamonds, a field house, and associated amenities.
- Sports Tourism generates a significant amount of revenue for the City's Business Community each year.
- A 3-year, 3-phase capital plan has been presented to Council, with year 1, 2024, approved as a part of the City's approved 5-year Capital Budget; years 2 (2025) and 3 (2026);
- 1 diamond will be closed each season for improvements for a full season each year for 3 years pending approval.
- A ball diamond allocation policy is required to support increased ball diamond use and ensure fair and equitable access to ball diamonds during the project seasons and into the future.

Strategic Plan Alignment:

[Strategic Plan](#) Priority: Clear Direction - KR2 - Align total municipal levy to Council's directed threshold each year while maintaining capital increase of 1 per cent annually

Climate and Environmental Implications:

There are no anticipated climate or environmental impacts.

Previous Report/Authority:

None

Background:

As a part of the July 2023 Capital Budget, Council requested additional information about the planned capital detailed in the approved 5-year capital plan at Duncan McLellan Park. The projects are part of the funded approved projects within the approved capital plan.

The purpose of this report is to:

1. Provide a summary of the Park's history, capital development, revenue and users; and
2. Outline the approach to designing and implementing the capital plan over the following 5 years.

Recreation Parks and Facilities Master Plan

The City's Recreation Parks and Facilities Master Plan, completed in 2018, recommends that the City consider options to transition some ball diamonds to new uses and invest in significant improvements at Duncan McLellan Park (lighting, outfield/infield, dugouts). As the City's premier Class A fields, the plan notes consultation with ball groups will be needed to ensure appropriate improvements are implemented where needed most.

The City has 14 ball diamonds. The existing fields are subject to a classification based on amenities and service level.

[Policy CS84 Ball Diamond Maintenance Standards](#) details how each field is classified and maintained:

"Class A" means a ball diamond, as defined herein, that also has a lighting system designed to extend playing hours past sunset or a pitcher's mound attached to it and is not limited in use by fence clearances or other limiting factor.

"Class B" means a ball diamond, as defined herein, that also has a lighting system designed to extend playing hours beyond sunset but has a limiting use factor such as outfield fence clearance or other limiting factor.

"Class C" Means a ball diamond, as defined herein, that has no lighting system or pitcher's mound.

Duncan McLellan Park is a 4.89ha park in the City's northeast quadrant, shown on the map below.



The park features 3 of the City's 4 Class A diamonds, a field house that includes change rooms, accessible washrooms, a media booth and canteen space, and access to an interior road that connects to 18th Street East.

A small playground north of the “Major” Diamond is located along 19th Street East. A covered pavilion is available at Duncan Major and its central location supports all three diamonds.

The diamonds are called Duncan Major, Duncan North and Duncan South. The field house at Major Diamond supports the other two diamonds as well.

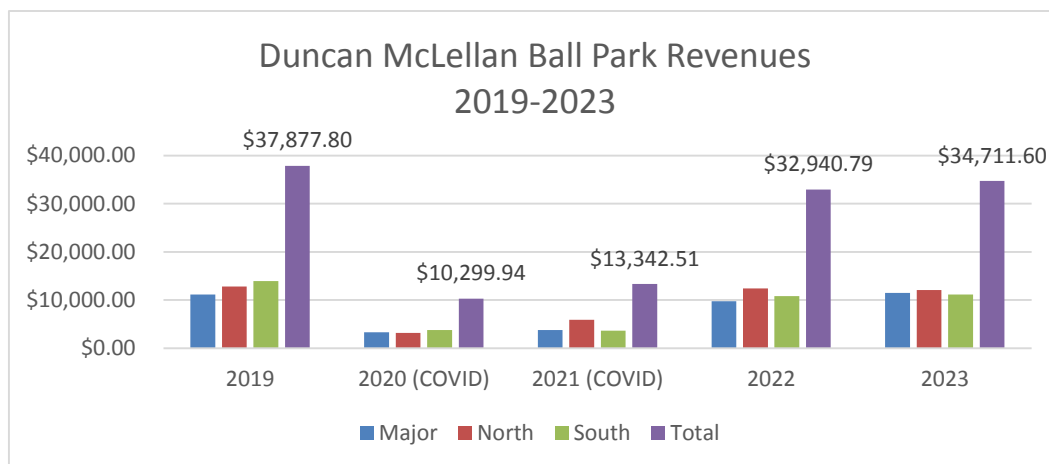
The City utilizes a compact tractor with loader and ball diamond groomer attachment, a portable irrigation unit, a side-by-side utility vehicle, a sod cutter, and a rental pickup truck to support maintenance at all 14 diamonds. Ball diamond maintenance operations use Duncan McLellan Park as the support hub for this work that requires a specialized toolset and skills.

Past Capital

Since 2016, the City has been investing in renewals at Duncan McLellan Park that support accessibility, community use and sport tourism. Major has new accessible bleachers that improve accessibility along with the park, including concrete sidewalks up to the door to the washrooms. The main field had new dugouts added in 2019.

A summary of improvements is outlined in Attachment 1. The planned capital for 2024, 2025 and 2026 focuses on field enhancements to support play on the three diamonds.

Revenue



The Chart shows revenues over the last five years.

COVID-19 significantly impacted the 5-year revenue totals from ball diamond rentals at Duncan McLellan Park in 2020 and 2021.

Revenues in 2022 and 2023 show a strong resurgence and desire by the fastball and slo-pitch communities to return to play at the City's premier ballpark.

Revenues over the last five years total \$129,172.64, representing over 4700 hours of use.

It is important to note that annual maintenance costs for Duncan McLellan Park continue to be reflected in the City's annual operating budget.

Labour and equipment used for ball diamond maintenance are captured under a general 'sports fields' line in the Parks and Open Space Operating budget. Duncan McLellan Park requires approximately \$20,000 in annual maintenance costs to operate, meeting the City's service levels detailed in [Policy CS-084- Ball Diamond Maintenance Standards](#).

Allocation and Use

A variety of user groups use Duncan McLellan Park for several variations of baseball and community-hosted tournaments.

In 2023, 29 facility booking contracts represented 1005.5 hours of use, including four tournaments.

Approved and Proposed Capital

The three-year total for planned capital renewal at Duncan McLellan Park carries a capital budget allocation of \$690,000. Using adjusted revenues of \$35,000 to compensate for lower revenues in the COVID-19-impacted seasons of 2020 and 2021 represents a 19.7-year return on investment (assuming current rental rates) for a facility that is expected to have a lifespan of 30 years or more following the renewal.

Each approved or recommended improvement is supported by Section 6 of the [Recreation, Parks and Facilities Master Plan](#).

The existing ball diamonds were constructed over 30 years ago on a former landfill site. Over time, grade changes and settling in the outfield have occurred, and turf-grass has difficulty establishing in portions of the North diamond outfield.

Capital detail sheets for approved and proposed capital for all 3 phases of the multi-year project are detailed in Attachment 2.

User Engagement

Staff have identified capital improvements from a sports infrastructure, asset management and operations lens.

The ball diamond user base in and around Owen Sound is vast, and each user group has unique needs for delivering the type of baseball they choose to play.

Slo-pitch, Softball, Fastball, and Baseball, including men's, women's and youth users have different rules and dimensions for preparing the facility for play. These dimensions further vary by age group in many cases.

Given the lifespan of the existing asset and the projected lifespan of the renewed assets, staff recommends engaging with user group organizing committees directly as outlined in the Master Plan. With in-person meetings to review the planned capital improvements, staff can ensure changes will meet the needs of each group. Engagement will also be done more generally with local ball diamond user participants and the broader community using [Our City](#) the City's online user engagement platform.

Planned Capital

2024- North Diamond - \$170,000

Diamond lights on the north diamond are currently 1000W incandescent bulbs.

Infield material is currently pond sand, a fine-grade fill material that is problematic for maintenance and can become mushy when wet and deep loose powder when dry.

The scope of the 2024 Duncan North phase of the project includes:

- Re-grade the outfield to a level playing surface.
- Import topsoil to create improved soil conditions for turf-grass establishment, including perennial Ryegrass and Kentucky Bluegrass
- Remove the existing infield "skin" layer of mixed material.
- Grade and assess the condition of the infield base layer material and drainage.
- Import appropriate infield material and grade.
- Replace existing incandescent light fixtures with LED replacements on the concrete poles.
- Dugouts for Duncan North are funded in 2026.

2025- South Diamond and Dugouts - \$310,000

Diamond lights on the south diamond are currently 1000W incandescent bulbs.

Infield material is currently pond sand, a fine-grade fill material that is problematic for maintenance and can become mushy when wet and deep loose powder when dry.

The scope of the 2025 Duncan South phase of the project includes:

- Re-grade the outfield to a level playing surface.
- Repair/replace sections of the outfield fence as required when grading is complete.
- Import topsoil to create improved soil conditions for turfgrass establishment clinging perennial Ryegrass and Kentucky Bluegrass
- Remove the existing infield "skin" layer of mixed material.
- Grade and assess the condition of the infield base layer material and drainage.
- Import appropriate infield material and grade.
- Replace existing incandescent light fixtures with LED replacements on the concrete poles.
- Dugouts

2026 Major Diamond and North Dugouts - \$210,000

The proposed scope of the 2026 Duncan Major phase of the project includes:

- Re-Grade the outfield to a level playing surface.
- Repair/replace sections of the outfield fence as required when grading is complete.
- Import topsoil to create improved soil conditions for turfgrass establishment clinging perennial Ryegrass and Kentucky Bluegrass
- Remove the existing infield "skin" layer of mixed material.
- Grade and assess the condition of the infield base layer material and drainage.
- Import appropriate infield material and grade.

Analysis:

Managing use during rehabilitation

To achieve the capital plan as it is designed, one diamond at Duncan McLellan Park must be taken out of service for an entire season, each season for three seasons in a row.

Use from the affected diamond will be moved to Tom Williams Ball Park and other city parks as appropriate. Tom Williams has the booking capacity to accept additional rentals.

It is important to note that Tom Williams is the City's only ball diamond with a pitching mound suitable for Baseball (Hardball). The City recognizes that using Tom Williams as a relief diamond is a compromise for the City's softball community. However, the long-term benefits of capital renewal at Duncan McLellan Park merit this temporary hardship.

Funding

Funding for approved and proposed capital improvements at Duncan McLellan Ball Park, totalling \$690,000 over the next three years, is fully supported by taxation. Staff continually review granting opportunities that would lessen the burden on the City's overall capital program.

Should a grant or alternate funding source be accessed for this project, the savings would be redistributed within the capital envelope. Grant or alternate funding would not have the effect of lowering the overall tax burden of the fulsome City-wide capital funding program.

Revenue Opportunities and comparable rental rates

In preparation for ball diamond user engagement, staff prepared a local market comparison of ball diamond user rates, included in this report as Attachment 3. It is important to note that service levels differ in many municipalities, and different strategies have been applied to fees based on what works in the subject community.

For example, a class A diamond rental in Owen Sound includes dragging, lining and base setting. Other municipalities may operate the same way or charge additional fees for specific services such as lighting, lining and dragging. Two municipalities charge a staff attendant fee on top of the regular tournament rates.

Some municipalities charge hourly, some charge per game, and many mirror Owen Sound's model that books 1.5-hour time blocks and is intended to cover warm-up and game periods.

Ball diamond user fees are reviewed annually and adjusted to meet the service levels determined by Policy CS85 Ball Diamond Maintenance Standards and material types used.

In considering current rental rates and comparing to other comparable diamonds , there is capacity to increase rental prices. Staff will update fees through the annual review of fees and charges. Phased increases timed with the capital improvement and responsive to actual costs will be the approach.

Next steps:

The next steps for 2023/2024 include:

- Developing the engagement with the user groups on the proposed improvements and plan during construction;
- Report back through Community Services Committee on the results of the engagement;
- Plan for and undertake necessary steps in accordance with the City's Purchasing bylaw to undertake the improvements;
- Update user fees as part of 2024 review.
- Work to develop a Ball Diamond Allocation Policy.

Financial Implications:

Capital Costs

The proposed multi-year capital program has a price tag of \$690,000, producing a return on investment in 19.7 years (assuming current rental rates and revenue) for the asset improvements expected to have a lifespan of 30 years.

Communication Strategy:

This report to Council Via the minutes of the Community Services Committee

Duncan McLellan Park User survey via Our City prior to project starting and in person meeting with organizations

Media release to advertise the user survey on Our City

Follow-up report on the outcome of the Duncan McLellan Park user survey.

Consultation:

Director of Community Services

Attachments:

1. Summary of Improvements 2016-2023
2. Multi-Year Project Capital Detail
3. October 2023 Local Ball Diamond Rates Comparison

Recommended by:

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Submission approved by:

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