

Multi-use pathway through Beacon Hill Park

Community engagement

February, 2018

Provided by the James Bay Neighbourhood Association and the Fairfield Gonzales Community Association

Introduction

Throughout the month of February, the James Bay Neighbourhood Association (JBNA) and the Fairfield Gonzales Community Association (FGCA) engaged their communities around the desire to enhance an existing east-west multi-use pathway through a portion of Beacon Hill Park.

The project was brought forward as a joint proposal from both associations as to how to best invest the \$100,000 in public realm improvements, being provided by the Core Area Liquid Waste Management Committee to the City of Victoria.

What We Did

The associations promoted the project in several ways:

- Community association meetings
 - JBNA February 14 meeting (212 present)
- Email sent through the FGCA to their distribution list (approximately 1,500 emails)
- JBNA e-mail to residents (approximately 600 residents on the distribution list)
- Presentation to the South Park PAC AGM on Feb 7 - about 40-50 present (mostly Fairfield and JB residents)
- Interview by Marg Gardiner on CFAX Family Day Monday Feb 12
- An article in the February James Bay Beacon Community Newspaper (distribution to several thousand homes/residents approximately 5,000-8,000)

In addition, the associations held a joint open house at South Park Elementary on February 20. Residents were invited to learn more about the proposed project, ask questions and to provide feedback. In total, 10 people attended. Representatives from the Friends of Beacon Hill Park, Sir James Douglas and South Park Elementary were in attendance.

No email feedback was received.

What We Heard at the Open House

In general there was strong support for the pathway from the participants who attended the open house (eight in favour and two against).

Below are the themes heard from open house participants:

Preservation of natural areas: Many stated they support the path as long as the route alignment will continue to preserve surrounding natural areas in particular the trees and camas fields.

Preference for alternative route: Some participants stated their desire to see the path connect to Pendergast Street, but understood the ecological constraints and mentioned the proposed route will also work.

Speed used on the pathway: Concern that some may use/consider the path as a cycle lane versus a multi-use pathway. Mention that Heywood intersection needs to be well thought out so cyclists do not go full-speed onto Heywood.

Camping in the park: Concern around homelessness in the area and more children traveling along the path.

Crosswalk: One attendee mentioned the need for a crosswalk from the park to south side Oliphant Avenue.

Lighting: Desire to add lighting along the path for early morning and evening travel to enhance safety.

Letters of Support

Letters for support for the enhanced multi-use pathway were provided to the neighbourhood associations by:

- Sir James Douglas Elementary School Parent Advisory Council
- Sir James Douglas Active Travel Committee
- South Park Family School Parent Advisory Council

Support for cycling improvements through Beacon Hill Park were also identified in the recent FGCA Task Force on Cycling Report. This report was informed by community input.

The FGCA board, the JBNA Board and Active Transportation Committee support an enhanced multi-modal all-ages-and-ability pathway which would provide a more welcoming link between the communities. Residents from the two communities use facilities/amenities in each other's commercial centers.

Next Steps:

Staff and the two associations will present the proposed project and the feedback received from the community to Council in the second quarter of 2018 for their consideration.