



For the Committee of the Whole Meeting June 7 2018

Date: Wednesday May 31 2018

From: Mayor Helps, Councillors Alto and Lucas

Subject: Housing, Community Space and Underground Parking Adjacent to Crystal Pool

Background

In the early spring of 2017 Council gave staff direction to advance a project to replace the aging Crystal Pool facility. Since that time a great deal of progress has been made on the project including gathering community input to help shape the facility and building provincial and federal support for the project. The City has been awarded \$6 million in gas tax funding for the project and continues to pursue all other available sources of funding. Currently HCMA is working with staff and the community on the detailed design phase of the project in order to have a shovel ready project for when provincial funding intake is announced.

Alongside the official city process with regard to the pool and wellness centre redevelopment, a number of community groups have been organizing. These groups are made up primarily of residents of the North Park and nearby neighbourhoods. One group is focussed on planning for Central Park, wants to ensure as little disruption to the park during the construction and to ensure that the park space is enhanced after the pool project is completed. Another group, loosely in touch with the first, has been advocating for a better and higher use of park space than a surface parking lot for the pool. See attached letters in Appendix B.

The latter group proposes that Council consider issuing a request for expressions of interest or proposal to have the required parking for the pool (approximately 100 spaces) be built underground and above ground to have up to a six storey building with affordable housing, childcare and some community space in addition to that already proposed in the new Crystal Pool facility that may also serve as a welcome centre for newcomers to Canada. See Appendix A which indicates the high number of newcomers to Canada living in this area; this represents a large proportion of people who could probably benefit from affordable housing, childcare and a facility in the neighbourhood that provides services specific to being a newcomers, as well as a home base/one stop shop and place to feel welcome.

As part of the initial project scoping, Council asked staff to report on the possibility of having affordable housing as part of the pool building. Staff reported back to Council that incorporating housing into the footprint of the pool would add both significant time and cost to the project. This proposed housing/community centre/childcare project would not be built, owned or operated by the City – an operator will be determined through the request for expressions of interest or proposals; the City's contribution would be the land, potentially in the form of a long term lease.

Should Council wish to move in the direction suggested by the community with the regard to a better and higher use than the proposed surface parking lot, it would be prudent to begin down this road at this time or very soon. This should be being with community consultation on this proposed new direction to replace surface parking with affordable housing, childcare and more community space. There is funding through Partners for Places

(<https://www.fundersnetwork.org/partners-for-places/>) to fund this consultation process with the potential of matching funding from the United Way. This will help ensure that any new parking, housing and community facility is built at the same time as the pool and will allow the entire site to be planned in a cohesive way. This includes the planning of improvements to Central Park.

Given the work the community has already done gathering support for this option and given the income and population distribution of this area which could clearly use an increase in affordable housing, childcare and potentially a community space for immigrants and newcomers, I recommend that we move in this direction.

Doing some preliminary community consultation and issuing an RFEOI or RFP will be a significant body of work not contemplated in this year's work plan. If Council wishes staff to proceed in this direction at this point there will need to be some other work plan items put on hold. It may be possible to give staff direction to go in this direction and to implement the recommendations below later in the fall. Either way, with the acute housing crisis in the city and the provincial commitment to fund and finance this housing project (see attached letter from BC Housing in Appendix B) this is an opportunity that Council should not let go unexplored.

Recommendation

That Council direct staff to report back at the next quarterly update on the implications and timeline for implementing the following recommendations.

Direct staff to:

1. Work with residents of North Park and other interested stakeholders community to develop and issue an RFEOI or RFP for:
 - a. Provision of affordable housing (on the site currently set aside for a surface parking lot) to include underground parking and a community space on the ground floor that would be able to accommodate at a minimum, a welcome centre for newcomers to Canada (should this be identified by stakeholders as a need, child care facility, community kitchen, and additional that may not be able to be accommodated in the Crystal Pool project for for sport and non-sport programming for youth, seniors and other underserved groups.
 - b. Operation one or more of the community centre, child care, and welcome centre.
2. Design and report back to Council on the process for engaging the community (North Park, Harris Green, Downtown residents and immigrant and indigenous communities from across the city/region) about the community centre/welcome centre space.
3. Apply for funding through Partners for Places (<https://www.fundersnetwork.org/partners-for-places/>) to undertake the process outlined in #2, with potential for matching funding from the United Way of Greater Victoria.
4. Design and report back to Council as part of the 2019 financial planning process on the process for engaging the neighbouring community and citywide residents about the Park Master Plan for Central park, including budget and timing. And direct staff to develop and communicate a plan through consultation with current park users, to ensure their continuing enjoyment and access to the park during construction of Crystal Pool.

5. Report back on the public approval process for having either surface parking or affordable housing in Central Park adjacent to the new Crystal Pool.

Respectfully Submitted,


Mayor Helps


Councillor Alto


Councillor Lucas