



## **Committee of the Whole Report**

### **For the Meeting of June 21<sup>st</sup>, 2018**

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**To:** Committee of the Whole **Date:** June 5, 2018  
**From:** Thomas Soulliere, Director of Parks, Recreation, and Facilities  
**Subject:** Topaz Park Improvement Plan

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

That Council approve the Park Improvement Plan for Topaz Park, as described in Attachment A.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The purpose of this report is to seek Council approval of the Topaz Park Improvement Plan. The plan is intended to guide improvements to Topaz Park over the next decade.

In September 2016, Council directed staff to work with the community to develop a Park Improvement Plan for Topaz Park. One of the City's largest parks, Topaz Park is a destination location for sport and recreation activities, and contains a number of amenities, which are nearing end of life. In response to interest in the community for a coordinated approach to the renewal of amenities, a comprehensive process consisting of extensive community engagement, technical analysis, and design exercises, was implemented over the past year. The result is a vision for long-term investment in this high profile public space.

The improvements proposed for Topaz Park will offer a wider range of activities and facilities, and update the park to support broad community use. The plan is expected to deliver benefits including an enhanced visitor experience, improved accessibility and safety, and a more effective use of the park footprint.

Key features of the plan:

- Increased capacity for field sports through the renewal/expansion of the existing artificial turf field;
- Renewal of existing assets to improve quality – upgrading the grass sports fields, increasing multi-functionality of the lacrosse box, improving the playground and formalizing the leash-optional area;
- Diversified park experiences through the addition of new facilities, including a skateboard park, bike skills park, tennis courts, and pickleball courts;
- Improved connectivity by introducing a network of marked pathways and trails;
- Enhanced natural areas and increasing tree canopy;
- Improved support for special events and festivals, by integrating support infrastructure into park upgrades.

Public engagement was an essential component guiding the development of this plan. Over 3,600 people actively participated in public consultation for this project over the past year. The participation level for the engagement sessions was the highest for any recent park initiative. While an objective of the plan was to meet the broadest range of community needs possible, there were instances where requests could not be accommodated. In these cases, future park planning exercises may provide a venue for consideration of such opportunities. The project team was encouraged by the results of the final public survey, in which citizens expressed a high level of support (87%) for the proposed improvements.

The Topaz Park Improvement Plan is an ambitious guide, which has been developed for implementation in multiple phases. A proposed implementation strategy is included in Chapter 5 of the Park Improvement Plan (Attachment A).

Phase 1 of the implementation plan focuses on the replacement and expansion of the City's lone artificial turf sport field. This asset is nearing end of life and expanding the capacity of this facility is a critical action in advance of Phase 2: repurposing the Topaz Avenue grass sport field for other amenities. At present, \$1,000,000 is held in a City reserve fund to be applied towards the replacement of this facility.

A second set of short-term actions, outlined in Phase 2 of the implementation plan, relates to the southern area of the park, which will be home to a suite of new amenities, including a skateboard park, bike skills park, tennis courts, pickleball courts, outdoor fitness area, sport hub, picnic area, and associated pathways and amenities. In order to generate an accurate construction cost estimate, detailed design work is required.

In accordance with City practice, major detailed design and construction projects associated with the full implementation of the plan will be presented as part of the annual Financial Plan process.

## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this report is to seek Council approval of the Topaz Park Improvement Plan, as well as implementation priorities for the immediate future.

## **BACKGROUND**

### *Previous Council Direction*

In September 2016, Council directed staff to work with the community to develop a Park Improvement Plan for Topaz Park. This direction arose from the awareness that a number of park assets were nearing end of life, and recognition that a coordinated approach to planning future investments offered the most efficient method of addressing these needs.

### *Policy Framework*

The Topaz Park Improvement Plan is informed by other City plans and policies, including the Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan, and aligns with the City's strategic directions and goals. A full list of relevant policy directions is included in Section 1.4 of the Topaz Park Improvement Plan (Attachment A).

## ISSUES & ANALYSIS

### *Existing Park Conditions*

Topaz Park is Victoria's third largest park (10ha/24.85ac). Located in the Hillside-Quadra neighbourhood, it is the main active recreation park in the city. The park is home to the City's only artificial turf sport field and numerous other amenities, such as a lacrosse box, several grass sport fields, leash-optional dog areas, fitness equipment and a playground. It is also a popular tournament and event venue, hosting a variety of community events each year.

Topaz Park is bordered by Blanshard Street to the west, Topaz Avenue to the south, Finlayson Street to the north, and Glasgow Street to the east. This park is located approximately 350m from the municipal border, and users of Topaz Park may also frequent nearby facilities in Saanich, such as Rutledge Park, Cedar Hill Recreation Centre, and Cedar Hill Park.

Topaz Park has developed incrementally over time, without the guidance of an overarching plan to influence changes. As a result, the park space is used inefficiently and portions of the park lack connections. Much of the infrastructure is aging and requires replacement in the next 2-10 years. Additional detail on the condition of existing assets can be found in Chapter 2 of the Topaz Park Improvement Plan (Attachment A).

### *Design Process*

The Topaz Park Improvement Plan was developed through a three-phase process, carried out between May 2017 and May 2018.

1. **Inventory and Analysis:** The initial phase of this project included an analysis of current park conditions, a comprehensive policy review, a review of recreational needs across the City and the region, and a review of best practices from other multi-sport recreation parks. Public consultation focused on collecting feedback on existing park conditions, and generating new ideas for future changes.
2. **Preliminary Concept Plans:** This phase consisted of developing an overall vision for the park and two high-level concept plans, based on the data gathered in the previous phase. This formed the basis for a 6-week public engagement effort between December 2017 and January 2018.
3. **Proposed Concept Plan:** The final phase of this project included a detailed review of stakeholder feedback and a comprehensive needs analysis based on City-wide and regional recreational inventories. External consultants were retained to conduct a feasibility assessment and schematic design of the proposed turf field expansion, to conduct a parking impact assessment, and to prepare a baseline accessibility analysis. A final phase of public engagement collected feedback on the overall proposed plan.

Public engagement was an essential component in the development of this plan. Over 3,600 people actively participated in public consultation activities for this project over the past year. Overall, citizens have expressed a very high level of support (87%) for the proposed park improvements. An overview of public consultation activities is included in Chapter 3 of the Topaz Park Improvement Plan (Attachment A). A detailed summary of the public engagement is also included as an appendix to the Improvement Plan.

## *Proposed Park Improvements*

The planned improvements for Topaz Park will deliver operational efficiencies, offer a wider range of sports and athletic facilities, and develop the park to better support broad community use.

Highlights of the plan include the following:

- Increased capacity for field sports through the renewal/expansion of the existing artificial turf field;
- Renewal of existing assets to improve quality – upgrading the grass sports fields, increasing multi-functionality of the lacrosse box, improving the playground and formalizing the leash-optional area;
- Diversified park experiences through the addition of new facilities, including a skateboard park, bike skills park, tennis courts, and pickleball courts;
- Improved connectivity by introducing a network of marked pathways and trails;
- Enhanced natural areas and increasing tree canopy; and
- Improved support for special events and festivals, by integrating support infrastructure into park upgrades.

Further detail on all planned improvements is included in Chapter 4 of the Topaz Park Improvement Plan (Attachment A).

## *Recommended Implementation Approach*

The proposed implementation strategy is outlined in Chapter 5 of the Topaz Park Improvement Plan (Attachment A). In developing the project phasing, staff considered the replacement timelines for existing amenities, impacts on park users including user groups, construction efficiencies, priorities from public consultation, and financial impacts.

### *Phase 1: Artificial Turf Replacement and Expansion*

The first priority project for Topaz Park is the renewal and expansion of the artificial turf sport field. Construction of the field facility must be done in advance of repurposing the Topaz Avenue grass sport field, to retain field capacity and minimize service disruption. Staff will maximize the use of existing grass field inventory and partner with neighbouring municipalities, school districts and private facilities in order to accommodate impacted user groups during the construction period.

The City has saved approximately \$1,000,000 in a reserve fund for replacement of the artificial turf field. A budget proposal for the detailed design of this facility will be presented to Council for consideration in the draft 2019 Financial Plan. Based on the outputs from the design exercise, a budget proposal for construction of the facility would be presented to Council for consideration in the draft 2020 Financial Plan.

### *Phase 2: Southern Park Enhancement Project*

The second priority project is detailed design of enhancements in the southern portion of the park, which includes the skateboard park, bike skills park, tennis courts, pickleball courts, outdoor fitness area, sport hub, picnic area, and associated pathways and amenities. Completing the design of these amenities simultaneously will result in a more efficient and cohesive outcome. Staff will develop a scope and cost estimate for the necessary design work in the coming months for consideration as part of the draft 2019 Financial Plan.

## OPTIONS AND IMPACTS

### ***Staff recommend Council approve the Park Improvement Plan for Topaz Park.***

This plan has strong support from the community and will provide clear guidance for investment planning over the coming decade. The plan is designed to be implemented in multiple phases. Prior to implementation, each phase (project) will require detailed design work to finalize requirements and determine accurate cost estimates.

#### *Accessibility Impact Statement*

Accessibility has been a primary consideration of this design exercise. The proposed park improvements are intended to improve inclusion, including equitable access to amenities, and to reduce barriers throughout the site. An accessibility report has been prepared by a Rick Hansen Foundation Certified Assessor for the purposes of providing a baseline assessment and informing design considerations.

#### *2015 – 2018 Strategic Plan*

The recommended option is consistent with:

- Objective 2: Engage and Empower the Community
- Objective 7: Facilitate Social Inclusion and Community Wellness
- Objective 8: Enhance and Steward Public Spaces, Green Spaces, and Food Systems.

#### *Impacts to Financial Plan*

Budget requests for the design and construction of the artificial turf field facility, as well as future capital projects and any adjustments to operational budgets, will be considered in future Financial Plan proposals.

<b>Proposed Implementation (Short-Term Actions: Phases 1 and 2)</b>	<b>Projected Timeline</b>
Artificial Turf Field (Detailed design) South Park Enhancements (Detailed design) <i>*pending approval in 2019 Financial Plan</i>	2019*
Artificial Turf Field (Construction) <i>*pending approval in 2020 Financial Plan</i>	2020*
South Park Enhancements (Construction) <i>*pending approval in 2021 Financial Plan</i>	2021-2022*

Council has already approved \$200,000 towards the implementation of the Improvement Plan. The balance of funds required to carry out the short-term actions will be considered within the draft 2019 Financial Plan.

## Official Community Plan Consistency Statement

The proposed park improvements support actions in the Official Community Plan under Goal 9 – Parks and Recreation.

### CONCLUSIONS

Topaz Park Improvement Plan is based on the results of a fulsome public engagement effort, direction from guiding City documents, technical analysis, financial considerations, and operational needs. The plan responds to these inputs and aims to create park experiences that will meet the needs of our growing community, expand park use and functionality, and meet key strategic priorities.

Respectfully submitted,

*for Campbell*

Alia Johnson  
Senior Parks Planner  
Parks Planning, Design and Development



Thomas Soulliere  
Director  
Parks, Recreation and Facilities

Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager:

*Joelyn Enkaps*  
Date: *June 15, 2018*

### List of Attachments

Attachment A: Topaz Park Improvement Plan

Attachment B: Topaz Park Improvement Plan Appendices