

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with a proposed update to Clover Point Park and seek authorization for funding.

BACKGROUND

Clover Point Park is a 42,087 square metre (10.4 acre) open space located on the southern border of the municipality, between Ross Bay (adjacent to Eberts Street) and Beacon Hill Park (at Cook St), in the Fairfield neighbourhood. For thousands of years prior to the arrival of James Douglas in 1842, the waterfront and adjoining lands were cultivated and managed by Indigenous peoples, known today as the Songhees and Esquimalt First Nations.

Until 1988, when the property was transferred to the City, the federal government owned the land along Dallas Road at Clover Point. The loop roadway was constructed in 1956 to provide a “viewpoint parking area” at the water’s edge¹.

The park is comprised of a gently sloping greenspace intersected by pathways, roadway, and parking. Portions of the open areas are used for various activities, such as kite flying, dog-walking, and fitness training. The point is a landmark for watercraft and home to the Clover Point Angler’s Association. The park also serves as the western terminus of the Trans Canada Trail (The Great Trail) and the park’s shoreline and surrounding waters are part of the Victoria Harbour Migratory Bird Sanctuary.

Over the past two years the Clover Point Pump Station has been upgraded and expanded as part of the CRD Wastewater Treatment Project. The project will result in a new plaza and several new public amenities to enhance the visitor experience, such as new washrooms, multi-use pathways, on-site bicycle parking and repair station, public seating, and Indigenous art.

To facilitate construction, the access road to Clover Point Park was closed to vehicles at Dallas Road in November 2019, although pedestrian access to the park was retained. In April 2020, as part of the City’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic to increase opportunities for physical distancing, the City requested that the CRD continue the closure of the access road and maintain pedestrian access only for the duration of construction.

Over the past year, staff have observed the high numbers of people using the new oceanside pathway system and the park itself, absent of vehicle traffic and contemplated the value of retaining this condition on a permanent basis.

ISSUES & ANALYSIS

The *Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan (2017)* provides a roadmap for priority investments to achieve the vision of a parks and open spaces system that is “dynamic, vibrant, playful, sustainable, inclusive, and diverse”. The Plan also outlines four goal areas, along with recommended actions for each.

One of the Plan goals is *Foster Engaging Experiences for Everyone*. The focus of this section is the provision of parks that meet current and future health and wellness needs, through the efficient use of space, and have the flexibility to meet changing demands.

¹ <https://beaconhillparkhistory.org/index.htm>

The present design of Clover Point Park reflects an historic priority, offering one of the most valuable public spaces to be used primarily for vehicle circulation and parking, rather than for outdoor recreation.

The temporary restriction of vehicle access to Clover Point Park has allowed pedestrians unobstructed use of approximately 3,600 square metres (38,750 square feet) of additional open space along the waterfront for the first time since the 1950s. Furthermore, the value of the previously underutilized greenspace inside the loop roadway has been greatly enhanced as it became a more accessible and safer space for recreation. By removing vehicle traffic, the entire south end of the park has become less congested and more welcoming to pedestrians and other active transportation users.

Access to the southern portion of the park and integration with the other walking and cycling investments undertaken through 2020 is a key consideration for the adjustments planned in the immediate term. Staff have collaborated with representatives of the CRD project team to improve connections into the park from the new multi-use pathway along Dallas Road, as well as to the lower park area. Over the last year the walking and cycling facilities starting at Ogden Point by the new Dallas Road balustrade and continuing east through Clover Point have been constructed and later in the year, the pathway will be extended west to the new connection at Memorial Crescent.

The modification recommended is intended to reduce the amount of park space dedicated to vehicles so that it may fulfil its outstanding potential as a space dedicated to pedestrians. As illustrated in the attached drawing (Attachment A), the roadway is proposed to be closed at the north end of the “loop”, thereby providing citizens on foot, on bike or using mobility aids exclusive access to the waterfront. In the immediate future, the existing paved area would receive new furnishings, such as benches and picnic tables, and provide opportunities for walking and other recreational activities. The removal of vehicles from the point will also make it an excellent venue for short-term activations and special events.

The proposed design accommodates a total of 17 parking stalls within the park. This includes the 13 parking stalls adjacent to the new multi-use pathway. To serve those with mobility needs, four designated accessible parking spaces are located at the southernmost end of the road. An additional oversized passenger loading zone will allow park users to drop-off any gear and supplies before relocating their vehicle to one of the time-limited parking spaces. Access for emergency vehicles will be maintained and members of the Clover Point Angler’s Association will be able to access the boathouse when needed.

Prior to the start of construction on the wastewater treatment facility, there were approximately 90 parking spaces within Clover Point Park. On the south side of Dallas Road, between Cook Street and Moss Street, there are approximately 60 parking stalls available within parking bays as well as an additional 55 on-street parking stalls directly adjacent the park. This parking is currently well utilized particularly on weekends and with the permanent closure of the loop, on-street parking on Dallas Road is likely to remain in demand. New time limited parking restrictions have been installed on Dallas Road in recent weeks to better manage parking availability.

The proposed closure of the loop roadway represents an interim step, which takes advantage of the temporary restriction resulting from the construction period planned to complete this spring. The long-term opportunities for the southern area of the park are recommended to be scheduled in a future year and would include the high level of public participation that is the standard for the City’s process for such park development plans.

During the 2021-22 period the City plans to complete major park projects at Songhees Park, Topaz Park, Stadacona Park, Banfield Park, and Peter Pollen Waterfront Park. At this time, staff would anticipate commencing the process of developing the long-term scheme for Clover Point Park in 2023-24.

OPTIONS & IMPACTS

Option 1 (Recommended) – Direct staff to complete modifications to increase the pedestrian priority space in Clover Point Park, including closure of the loop roadway, as illustrated in Attachment A.

The proposed plan will enhance the recreational value of Clover Point Park and increase the total area within the park available for walking, cycling and play. The civil works necessary to complete the closure and install park furnishings can be coordinated with the construction work currently underway and are estimated to cost \$250,000. The work will be completed primarily by contractors and therefore not impact staff capacity.

Public engagement would consist of informing community stakeholders about the immediate-term adjustments, but design feedback will not be sought. A long-term plan for the park, informed by public input, would be undertaken in a future year.

Option 2 – Direct staff to retain vehicle access to the loop roadway upon completion of the CRD project.

Council may wish to retain the access for vehicles to the southern end of the park until the long-term park plan is developed. This approach would provide future opportunities for public engagement on all potential changes, including those relating to vehicle access and parking.

Accessibility Impact Statement

The proposed design places a priority on direct access to the southern portion of Clover Point Park for people with disabilities. Accessible parking stalls are a part of the proposed concept and the designated passenger loading area can also be used for drop-off and pick-up. Residents using mobility aids will benefit from the use of the loop roadway (wide multi-use pathway) to safely explore the peninsula without risk of conflicts from vehicles. Future park planning will also consider installations / features that support objectives on accessible recreation to provide an inclusive and welcoming space for people with a range of abilities.

2019 – 2022 Strategic Plan

The proposed amendments align with Strategic priorities relating to *Health, Well-Being, and a Welcoming City*, including increasing access to nature, and creating access to shoreline areas.

Impacts to Financial Plan

Should Council direct staff to complete the modifications outlined in this report, the \$250,000 cost could be funded through remaining funding from the 2020 Dallas Road balustrade capital project. Should Council not approve this project, the funding would remain in the Buildings and Infrastructure Reserve. To authorize the project to take place in 2021, an amendment to the Financial Plan would be required.

CONCLUSIONS

The proposal outlined in this report offers an opportunity to provide incremental benefits to citizens to enjoy this notable waterfront area. Access for residents to public open space is critical to community health and well being, as the current COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated. Staff recommend that Council approve this proposal as an important step towards the enhancement and overall value of this unique park.

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas Soulliere
Director
Parks, Recreation and Facilities

Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager

Attachment A – Proposed Interim Design for Clover Point Park (2021)