



Committee of the Whole Report

For the Meeting of August 5, 2021

To: Committee of the Whole **Date:** July 22, 2021
From: Thomas Soulliere, Director of Parks, Recreation and Facilities
Subject: Topaz Park Improvement Plan: Phase 1 Concept Design Proposals

RECOMMENDATION

That Council approve the following two concept designs for Phase 1 improvements to Topaz Park;

- A. Skate and Bike Parks Project, as shown in Attachment A, and
- B. Artificial Turf Sport Field Replacement Project, as shown in Attachment B.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to seek Council approval of the concept designs for two major improvements to Topaz Park, the new skate and bike parks, and the artificial turf sport field replacement.

In January 2020, Council approved these projects identified in the Topaz Park Improvement Plan, as an initial phase of investments. The skate and bike parks will provide a new set of amenities, with fun and challenging riding experiences for all ages and skill levels. Meanwhile, the new and expanded artificial turf sport field will offer an enhanced playing surface, while improving accessibility and supporting broader community use.

Staff recently completed community engagement for both projects with support from community engagement specialists from Newline Skateparks. The engagement strategy ensured participation from eventual end-users and included collaboration with representatives from local sport groups, First Nations, and technical experts. In addition, a survey gathered public feedback on the skate and bike park concept design. The results showed a high level of support from the community, with nearly 80% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that the designs succeed in achieving the principles established in the Topaz Park Improvement Plan.

The concept design phase for both projects has now concluded. Pending Council support for the proposed designs, both projects will proceed to detailed design and construction. Construction of the skate and bike park is planned to start in Q4 2021 and be complete by the summer 2022. Construction of the new sport field will begin in Q1 2022 and will also finish in the summer of 2022.

BACKGROUND

Located in the Hillside-Quadra neighbourhood, Topaz Park is one of Victoria's largest parks (10ha/24.85ac). The park is home to the City's only artificial turf sport field and numerous other amenities, including grass sport fields, a lacrosse box, leash-optional dog area, fitness equipment and a playground. It is also a popular outdoor special event venue, hosting festivals, sports tournaments, and other gatherings annually.

In June 2018, Council adopted the Topaz Park Improvement Plan, which established a 10-year vision for renewing and redeveloping the greenspace, based on extensive public input.

Previous Council Direction

- In June 2018, Council approved the Topaz Park Improvement Plan, including a phased implementation plan.
- In January 2020, Council approved the first phase of investments for Topaz Park, in the 2020 Financial Plan:
 - a. Allocate \$3.25 million from the Building Infrastructure Reserve Fund to complete the construction of a skateboard park, bike park, and related supporting infrastructure; and,
 - b. Allocate \$3.02 million from the Building Infrastructure Reserve Fund, and \$1.2 million from the Turf Sport Field Reserve Fund, to complete the construction of the Turf Sport Field Replacement project.

Skate and Bike Parks

The consulting team led by Newline Skateparks began design work on the skate and bike parks in March 2021. The consultant team includes landscape architects, engineers, arborists, community outreach specialists, construction professionals and high-level skateboarders and biking enthusiasts. The team also comprises gender equity, accessibility, and youth programming experts to ensure the new skate and bike parks meet the community's wide-ranging needs.

Since March 2021, the consulting team has completed site investigations, research and analysis, engagement and concept design. Engagement included a series of workshops with an advisory committee composed of leaders from the local skate and bike community, the Songhees Nation, and technical experts. The City recently completed a public survey to solicit technical and community feedback relating to the concept design.

Sport Field Replacement

The Topaz artificial turf field is Victoria's most popular playing field, providing year-round access. The field is at the end of its functional life and replacement is necessary to meet high community demand for quality sport fields.

In August 2020, the City procured a team of consultants led by Core Group to design the sport field replacement. This project will expand the field capacity by including a full-size soccer pitch, youth-sized multi-purpose field and a softball diamond. The project will also deliver improved support amenities such as dugouts, player shelters, a backstop and spectator seating. The softball diamond will replace the one displaced by the skate and bike park in the southern portion of the park.

Over the past year, the consulting team completed site investigations, research and analysis, engagement, and developed the concept design.

Public Art

In April 2021, the City awarded a commission for an integrated public art installation for the skate park to Germaine Koh, a Vancouver-based visual artist and curator. A selection panel comprised of members from local skate groups, artists, curators, as well as a representative from the Art in Public Places Committee (APPC) reviewed the applications and unanimously selected Germaine Koh.

Germaine has been working closely with the Newline team since April 2021 to create an integrated public art installation for the park. Her concept proposal includes a series of interactive, playful sculptures inspired by local native plants and celebrates energy flowing around the site from human movement, natural forces, and urban systems. Detailed design for the artwork is now underway and will be integrated into the approved skate and bike park designs.

ISSUES & ANALYSIS

Skate and Bike Parks

The City formed an advisory committee consisting of local leaders in skate and bike communities to provide input on critical design decisions throughout the concept design development phase. The advisory committee also participated in three virtual workshops and will continue to be involved through the next phase of the project.

An online survey was used to engage end users and the broader public on the key features of the designs. The survey included questions on specific skate and bike features and options, a series of questions to gauge the perceived alignment with the principles outlined in the Topaz Park Improvement Plan, and open-ended questions allowing respondents to provide general feedback on the design.

The survey received 471 responses and demonstrated a high level of support for the proposed concept design, with nearly 80% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that the designs succeed in meeting the principles established in the Topaz Park Improvement Plan.

The proposed concept design and public engagement summary are enclosed with this report, Attachment A: Skate and Bike Parks Design Report.

Key features of the design include:

- Wide variety of skate terrain and features
- Asphalt bike pump track designed to accommodate a range of skill levels
- Lighting in all areas
- Integrated infrastructure and services for special events
- Network of barrier-free pedestrian pathways and social areas
- Garden areas with native plantings celebrating local ecology
- Retention of existing trees and addition of new trees
- Natural asset approach to stormwater management

Sport Field Replacement

The concept design for the sport field replacement is rooted in input received during engagement with sport stakeholders and the broader public through the Topaz Park Improvement Plan development. In addition, an advisory group consisting of representatives from soccer, slo-pitch, special event organizers, Songhees Nation, and the local community were invited to provide input on the overall design, and detailed considerations such as line markings, storage requirements, field dimensions, fencing, access, support amenities, and spectator seating. The advisory group participated in two virtual workshop sessions to ensure the design will meet the diverse needs of field users.

The proposed concept design is enclosed with this report, Attachment B: Artificial Turf Sport Field Replacement Design Report.

Key features of the concept design include:

- Expanded multi-sport field capacity
- Improved player amenities
- New spectator zone with built-in seating
- High-efficiency, high-quality field lighting
- Universal design elements including:
 - Accessible paths (all grades under 5%)
 - Well-distributed seating/resting opportunities
 - Integrated wheelchair seating in spectator areas
- Expanded covered bicycle parking
- Retention of existing trees and new trees
- Natural asset approach to stormwater management

Sustainability is a critical consideration in this project, both in the overall design and selection of new materials and the approach for recycling or disposing of old materials. The consulting team completed research and analysis of turf recycling, new material options and infill considerations.

Staff will use this information and the consulting team's recommendations to evaluate and select an environmentally conscious infill material. The field design will incorporate engineered and administrative controls to manage environmental impacts effectively. Examples of these controls include specialized filtering infrastructure to capture material before it enters the storm sewer system, operating and maintenance procedures, user education, and boot scrape stations to keep infill material on the field.

The City has identified a recycling facility in Seattle, WA, capable of processing old turf carpet and infill material. They separate and distribute recycled components to manufacturers for reuse in new products. A European company with a proprietary turf recycling process that recycles old turf carpets into new turf carpets has plans to open a US facility sometime in 2022 or 2023. This closed-loop method would be a more sustainable option for recycling turf carpets. Staff will explore this option should it become available before the commencement of the new field construction.

OPTIONS & IMPACTS

OPTION 1 (Recommended) That Council approve the concept designs for the Skate and Bike Parks project and the Artificial Turf Sport Field project, as shown in Attachments A and B.

The concept designs for both projects have been developed through a process involving extensive technical analysis, community input, and cost considerations. Should Council support the proposed

designs, each project will proceed to detailed design and construction to open for public use in the summer of 2022.

OPTION 2

That Council refer the proposed concept designs for the Skate and Bike parks project and/or the Artificial Turf Sport Field project back to staff for further refinement.

Should Council decline the proposed design concepts, direction to staff regarding specific changes will be required. Staff will then work with the consultants to make the necessary changes and report back to Council. This option is likely to result in schedule and potential cost implications.

Accessibility Impact Statement

The proposed designs seek to address the objectives outlined in the City's Accessibility Framework, *"to systematically remove and prevent barriers in public parks, open spaces and plazas, mobility systems and City-owned buildings and facilities."*

The Topaz Park Improvement Plan contains a Baseline Accessibility Assessment Report, which identified key areas for improvement. Both projects address the accessibility recommendations within this report, including:

- Providing universally accessible pathway connections, including mitigating steep slopes adjacent to the east side of the turf sport field;
- Adapting the layout, location, and number of accessible parking stalls in Topaz Avenue parking lot and Finlayson Street parking lot;
- Providing a standardized, cohesive network of high-visibility signage throughout the park;
- Removing obstructions around the perimeter pathway of turf sport field, and providing a clear and consistent perimeter walking surface with frequent seating opportunities;
- Providing wheelchair access to player seating boxes; and,
- Providing accessible spectator areas that are inclusive.

A universal design agency, Level Playing Field, is part of the skate and bike park project team. This team has provided innovative universal design solutions and best practices into the designs to ensure that they will meet the needs of a wide range of skills and abilities.

The Finlayson Street parking lot improvements include 3 accessible stalls (2 standard, 1 van accessible) in improved locations, as well as 3 drop-off areas. The Topaz Avenue parking lot includes 2 accessible stalls (1 standard, 1 van accessible) in improved locations.

Staff have recently shared the concept plans with the City's Accessibility Advisory Committee to solicit feedback on further accessibility considerations.

2019 – 2022 Strategic Plan

The Strategic Plan contains ongoing actions with respect to parks and open spaces, access to services and facilities, and facilities planning:

5.24: Identify and remove barriers to make Victoria accessible and apply a barrier-free lens to all decisions we make to ensure we're not creating new barriers (ongoing)

6.20: Promote rain gardens and improve water quality entering waterways (ongoing)

6.21: Strengthen tree protection and enhance tree canopy and urban forest (ongoing)

Impacts to Financial Plan

Funding for both of these projects has been approved by Council, as part of the 2020 Financial Plan. No additional costs are anticipated at this time.

The City is awaiting the outcome of the grant application submitted through the *Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program* for the sport field project. A decision is anticipated by September 2021.

Official Community Plan Consistency Statement

The Official Community Plan contains the following objectives with respect to parks and open spaces, access to services and facilities, and facilities planning:

(9.1.2) Recognize and balance the multiple purposes and uses of parks, such as cultural events, recreation, sports, ecosystem services, commemoration and aesthetic enjoyment;

(9.14) Enhance child- and youth-friendly parks and recreational facilities, services, and programs in the City, to promote a healthy community and to help attract and retain households with children.

(9.18) Seek opportunities to integrate green infrastructure in park and recreational facilities during new construction and major upgrades.

CONCLUSIONS

Approval of the concept designs is an important milestone to advance these significant community initiatives, representing the first phase of investments towards the long-term vision for Topaz Park. Once complete, these new sport and recreation amenities will serve the needs of citizens of all ages and abilities for many years to come.

Respectfully submitted,

Justin Dykstra
Manager
Park Design and
Construction

Derrick Newman
Assistant Director
Construction and Facilities
Management

Thomas Soulliere
Director
Parks, Recreation and Facilities

Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager.

List of Attachments:

- Attachment A: Skate and Bike Parks Design Report
- Attachment B: Artificial Turf Sport Field Replacement Design Report