



Council Report

For the Meeting of May 5, 2022

To: Committee of the Whole **Date:** April 25, 2022
From: Thomas Soulliere – Director, Parks, Recreation and Facilities
Subject: Proposed Functional Program for New Community Space at 926 Pandora Avenue

RECOMMENDATION

That Council approve the functional program for the new community space in the development planned for 926 Pandora Avenue, as shown in Attachment A.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the functional program of the community space in the proposed new development at 926 Pandora Avenue.

In June 2021, the City of Victoria announced a partnership with the Province of BC, BC Housing and the Capital Region Housing Corporation (CRHC) to build 220 non-market rental homes and a new neighbourhood community space on the City-owned land. The partnership, roles and project concept were approved by Council and reflected in a Letter of Intent agreed to by the parties in the fall of 2020.

In December 2021, Council directed staff to develop plans that consider space for some or all of the following: gymnasium, community kitchen, childcare, and space to achieve some of the aims in the Create Victoria Arts and Culture Master Plan.

Over the past several months, staff have completed the necessary technical analysis and design work to develop a proposed functional program based on the direction from Council.

The proposed program maximizes opportunities to achieve the various objectives for community use and aligns with the design parameters established for the overall development. The main floor space, consisting of approximately 1,626 square meters (17,500 square feet) includes capacity for a 36 person childcare operation, along with six small to medium size multipurpose rooms, a large multi-purpose room, a kitchen facility, administration space, and an outdoor program area. The facility design is intended to ensure the spaces are flexible and adaptable to meet community needs over the long term.

Pending Council approval of this proposal, the development partners will be on-track to submit a rezoning application this summer, with a projected construction start in 2024. Confirmation of the community space composition is critical to ensure the project remains on the project partner's schedule.

BACKGROUND

The City purchased the property located at 926 Pandora Avenue in 2020, as a strategic investment aimed primarily at increasing affordable housing, but it also provided opportunity to achieve multiple community benefits. Redevelopment of the site is a priority action intended to address local needs for affordable housing and high-quality community programs for residents, particularly those living in the Downtown and North Park neighbourhoods.

The proposed mixed-use development will include 220 new homes and approximately 1,626 square meters (17,500 square feet) of community-use space on the ground floor. BC Housing is the property development lead, responsible for the design and construction, as well as engaging with the community throughout the redevelopment process.

ISSUES & ANALYSIS

In December 2021, Council directed staff to report back on plans for the ground floor, with instructions to accommodate some or all of: a gymnasium, community kitchen, childcare, and space to achieve the aims of the Create Victoria Arts and Culture Master Plan.

Since this time, staff have completed the necessary research and technical analysis, identified project requirements and constraints, and created the functional program.

The following road map outlines the key project activities and anticipated timeline for each.

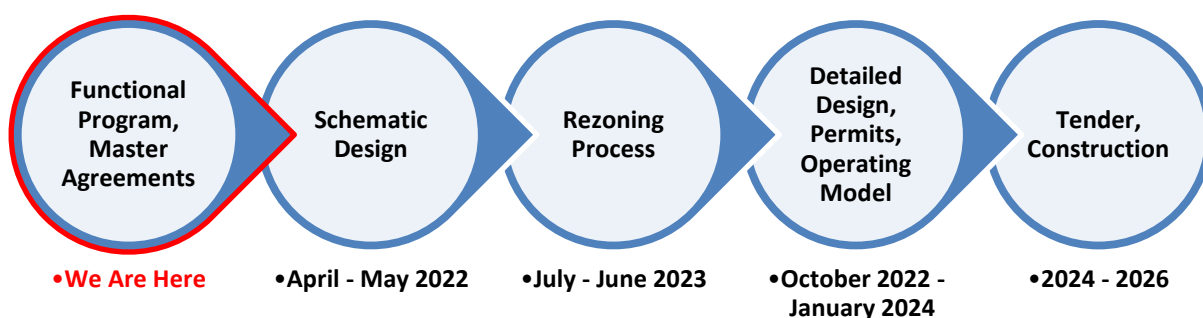


Figure 1: Project Timeline

Research and Analysis

In March of this year, staff completed research involving consultation with facility operators in other jurisdictions, as well as local organizations, which began in 2021. This exercise was valuable as staff heard about lessons-learned from similar projects, design and program considerations, and risks to be managed. The facility assessments included:

- Our Place Society, Victoria
- Roundhouse Community Centre, Vancouver
- Mount Pleasant Community Centre, Vancouver
- Anvil Centre, New Westminster
- McTavish Academy of Arts, North Saanich
- C5 Northeast Community Hub, Edmonton (virtual)

Important design considerations, such as an accessible and welcoming user experience, clear and inclusive wayfinding, and programmable outdoor spaces, were identified in successful projects. Fundamental to all the facilities is a focus on flexible multi-purpose spaces, which can accommodate a range of activities and adapt to changing needs over time.

In addition, staff met with local community arts and culture stakeholders. This included representatives from the Victoria Inter-Cultural Association who provided input on the types of activities and recreational programming that may benefit newcomers, as well as members from Theatre SKAM, who offered insight into the demand for performance art programs. These discussions highlighted the need for space where a wide range of arts and culture programs can be accommodated. Of note, staff also heard of the community's interest in a larger size multi-purpose event and performance space, that could accommodate an audience of 100 - 150 people.

Functional Program

Community centres are critical infrastructure that provide safe places for citizens to engage in activities that offer physical, creative, social, and intellectual stimulation. The City has identified specific design aspects which are desired in the new facility and are intended to meet various strategic goals identified through public consultation and analysis in recent years. The focus of this report is the functional program, which will provide the design team with clear instructions on the types of activities to be accommodated in the design. Specific outputs from this technical exercise include, the type of infrastructure, equipment, and other requirements that impact the space, the number of occupants the spaces can support, the number of staff, and amount of administration and ancillary space required, and relationships between spaces or groups of spaces. The graphic in Attachment A illustrates the proposed program spaces, relative sizes, functional relationships, and direct access points of the facility. Outlined below is a brief description of the program areas.

Childcare Space

The functional program includes capacity for a licensed childcare operation that will accommodate up to 36 children. The indoor, outdoor and administrative spaces will be located on the west side of the facility, with dedicated, secure access for families and staff. The childcare space will also be accessible from within the community space.

Multi-Purpose Rooms

The proposed design offers a significant amount of physical space to accommodate activities that support individual and community health and wellness. This includes a range of room sizes, including small and medium size spaces, and a large, gymnasium-like, room with high ceiling to allow for special events, performances, and recreational programs.

Each of the multi-purpose rooms can be used to provide opportunities for activities that align with the aims of the City's Arts and Culture Master Plan, including those noted below.

Goal: Everyone feels welcome and able to access affordable spaces for creative participation, production and enjoyment

Objective 1.3: Serve a range of ongoing creative space needs for artistic and creative expression, display and enjoyment and participation.

Objective 1.4: Facilitate social inclusion, and promote diversity, community wellness and accessibility.

The opportunity to increase rehearsal and recording spaces, a deliverable of the Victoria Music Strategy, may also be realized through this project.

Kitchen

The functional program includes a kitchen area, that can be used to support activities hosted in the various multi-purpose spaces. The kitchen is located on the east side of the building immediate adjacent to the largest multi-purpose room.

Administrative Space

The operation of the new community facility will require a team of staff and space for services, as well as administrative tasks. This area is centrally located within the floor plan.

OPTIONS & IMPACTS

Staff recommend that Council approve the community space's functional program at 926 Pandora, as shown in Attachment A. This plan has been informed by the research and analysis and measured against the objectives established by Council for the community space.

Approval of the functional program for this component of the overall development is a key milestone on the project schedule, which has been developed to allow BC Housing to submit a rezoning application this summer and, subject to approvals, be able to begin construction in 2024. Minimizing timelines to get to construction tender is an important factor in minimizing construction inflation costs.

Accessibility Framework

The functional program aligns with the following goals of the City's Accessibility Framework, including:

Focus Area 1: Built Environment: To systematically remove and prevent barriers in public parks, open spaces and plazas, mobility systems and City-owned buildings and facilities.

Focus Area 2: Governance and Services: To provide all residents and visitors with equitable access to municipal programs, services, information, engagement opportunities, and the ability to exercise their statutory rights.

2019 – 2022 Strategic Plan

The delivery of a new community space to serve the needs of the arts and cultural community and the residents of the surrounding neighborhoods. This proposal supports the following the Strategic Plan objective:

4.10: Support arts, culture and innovation venues and spaces

*8.12: Establish a community centre for North Park**

*The North Park Neighborhood Association have indicated in an open letter to the City that their board does not feel this location is suitable for a neighborhood community centre.

Impacts to Financial Plan

The current phase of work for this project has been approved in the Financial Plan. Future budgetary requirements to complete the detailed design and operation of the community space will be determined during the next phase of the design process. No additional resources are required at this time.

Official Community Plan

The Official Community Plan contains the following objectives relating to this proposal:

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

(15.9) Seek opportunities to promote social interactions between different generations through the design and programming of public spaces, parks and public facilities.

(6.15) Consider opportunities for new arts and culture facilities as part of a capital plan for visitor destination development in partnership with senior governments, organizations and private developers.

CONCLUSIONS

The 926 Pandora Avenue development will provide much needed new affordable housing as well as community amenities in a rapidly growing area of the city. The proposed plan for the main floor of the new facility is intended to address both immediate needs identified by residents, as well as adapt to future requirements that may arise within the community.

Respectfully submitted,

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Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager

List of Attachments

Appendix A - Functional Program