

October 5, 2022

An open letter

Dear Mayor Helps and Councillors

RE: DELIVERY OF STADACONA PARK PETITION TO CITY OF VICTORIA

We, the ¹1,260 electronically undersigned, petition Mayor and Council of the City of Victoria to **amend the City of Victoria Parks Regulation Bylaw to add Stadacona Park to the list of parks prohibited for sheltering.**

Your directive for shelter in place camping at Stadacona during the COVID-19 provincial state of emergency extended the sheltering bylaw to 24 hours, 7 days a week. On March 22, 2021, the City of Victoria and the Province of BC signed a Memorandum of Understanding, formalizing a commitment to work together to end current encampments and prevent future encampments. Minister Eby said, "Parks are for recreation," and Mayor Helps said, "There will be no more encampments." With the end of the state of emergency, the bylaw reverted to 7pm-7am sheltering.

But 24/7 sheltering in the park continues. For the past three summers, Stadacona Park has experienced large, shifting encampments of unhoused individuals. The park is no longer a safe greenspace for the residents who live in the houses, small rental apartments, condominiums, and other multi-unit homes in the neighbour and beyond.

In fact, Stadacona Park has been deemed so dangerous by the City as to require a two-person police escort for City Bylaw Officers to even enter the Park. Yet City Council has not introduced a single motion to resolve the issue or improve the situation so neighbourhood children, school groups, single women, seniors and community groups could feel safe re-entering and utilizing the Park's resources.

Some candidates in the upcoming municipal election wish a legal return to 24/7 camping in our City parks. Clearly, they do not know what it means to live on the shoulders of a park like Stadacona. Nor do they truly understand the complex harms they are imposing on the unhoused: violent crimes, including rapes, drug overdoses, exposure to extreme weather conditions, and lack of critical services continue to impact those who shelter in the park. We have witnessed many of these events first hand from our homes.

As residents who live near the park, we have also been intimidated and threatened, including with arson. We have had multiple incidents of thefts from our cars, garages, and storage lockers; disturbances at all hours: screaming, arguing, profanity and loud music. We have witnessed public urination and defecation; open use and sale of narcotics, sex trade, and weapons in the park.

Two weeks ago, a neighbor who has rented across from the park for 11 years was badly beaten when he was walking his dog in the park. A week ago, we witnessed two incidents of violence

¹ As of 12 noon, Oct. 5, 2022

between the unhoused. Then in the same week, a camper from the park brandished a knife at a BC transit driver. Turns out this individual was wanted in Ontario on a charge of attempted murder and weapons charges, among other crimes. Just yesterday, a violent brawl brought out between 10 individuals who are sheltering in the park. How can children or adults be safe in this environment? How are the unhoused safe in this environment?

As a last straw, after raising these concerns now for 2.5 years with Council, Police, and Bylaw, we were moved to create this petition in late August 2022 by your plans to open a modern, accessible playground in Stadacona. Construction of this playground is set to begin in Spring 2023 – how exciting. But how can this facility possibly co-exist with the current encampment? The answer is, it cannot.

We call upon the City to prohibit all sheltering in the park now. We call upon the City to remediate and restore this valuable greenspace for the more than 10,000 Fernwood residents, most of whom represent young families and the elderly. This is not a heartless call for displacement of the unhoused, but a plea for the City to return to its vision of a park:

“Victoria’s parks and open spaces system is dynamic, vibrant, playful, sustainable, inclusive, and diverse. It engages residents and visitors with the unique ecosystems, culture, and character of the city, supports health and wellness for all, and protects natural areas as a vital resource.”

Now, with an immediate housing commitment for the homeless population from David Eby, NDP candidate for Premier of British Columbia, we are hopeful that solutions, especially for the unhoused, are on the horizon for our city. We urge the City of Victoria, BC Housing and the federal Ministry of Housing to work together to create and implement better solutions to house those sheltering in Stadacona Park, including creating transitional solutions while those individuals await housing.

The inability of the City to enforce even a 7pm-7am bylaw has been borne out and clearly demonstrates that sheltering in parks is not sustainable, safe, or humane for the unhoused or surrounding residents. We emphatically state: tents in parks are not acceptable substitutes for homes – for anyone. We hope in the future, with the right stewardship, that homelessness will become a rare event in Victoria. We are a creative and caring society here in Victoria. Surely we can do better.

We submit our petition to you and ask that you recognize the extended period of time that this neighbourhood has endured extreme stress, fear, and frustration.

We ask that you submit a motion now to place the park on the no shelter list.

Michael Barr for
Friends of Stadacona Park

[Link to petition and comments](#)

Who we are?

- Friends of Stadacona Park
- Michael Barr, spokesperson, community letter and petition

Why we formed?

- Stadacona Park has reached an unacceptable state for all
- Overflow campground to Pandora St
- Healthy/diverse/vibrant greenspace is now an unwelcoming/unsafe place avoided by the community

What we believe?

- Sheltering in parks LACKS SAFETY & DIGNITY for the homeless and LACKS SAFETY & RESPECT for community
- “Parks are for recreation, not camping (sheltering)”
- Support efforts to address housing and complex care

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What we want?

Request the City of Victoria amend the Parks Bylaw to add Stadacona Park to parks prohibited for sheltering

End sheltering/camping in Fernwood's Stadacona Park, Victoria

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Dear Mayor Hel

RE: DELIVERY

We, the 1,221 e
amend the City
prohibited for s

Summary We, a group of concerned neighbours and residents, urge Victoria City Council and BC Housing to provide better solutions for those experiencing homelessness in our neighbourhood park. We ask that all sheltering be prohibited in Stadacona Park, Fernwood's largest greenspace. We would like to see this occur well ahead of the spring 2023 opening of a new children's playground in the park, to allow time for remediation of the park.

1,223 have signed. Let's get to 1,500!

At 1,500 signatures, this petition is more likely to get picked up by local news!

Roger Bukac signed this petition
Julianne Cameron signed this petition

Sign this petition

First name

Last name

Email

Victoria, V8T Canada

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re list of parks

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What we want?

Request the City of Victoria amend the Parks Bylaw to add Stadacona Park to parks prohibited for sheltering

- Park policy issue, not a housing issue
- Assumes upholding City of Victoria Parks Vision: *'dynamic, vibrant, playful, sustainable, inclusive and diverse (places that) engage residents and visitors with the unique ecosystems, culture, and character of the city, supports health and wellness for all, and protects natural areas as a vital resource'*
- Exception warranted due to proximate influence of Pandora St

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Stadacona Park: Vision/Master Plan

EngageVictoria.ca Stadacona Park is the Largest park in the Fernwood neighborhood

'Stadacona Park is a popular greenspace with large mature trees, garden beds, open lawn areas and meandering paths. The park offers amenities including recently refurbished sport courts, public washrooms and a playground. Much of Stadacona Park consists of a provincially designated Sensitive Ecosystem Inventory (SEI) area'



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Stadacona Park: Current State?



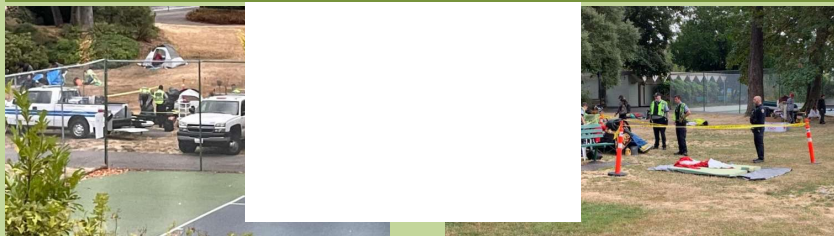
The City of Victoria is failing to deliver on its Parks Vision Statement ... to support health and wellness for all



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Stadacona Park: Current state?

Stadacona Park is now avoided by the community as an unwelcome and unsafe place

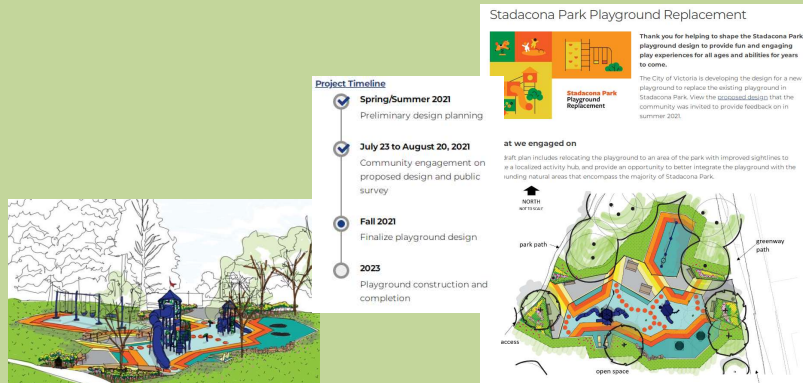


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Stadacona Park: Future state?

EngageVictoria.ca

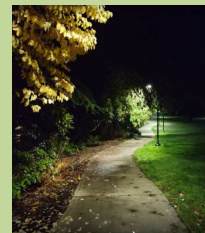
Stadacona Park Playground Replacement



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What we want?

Request the City of Victoria amend the Parks Bylaw to add Stadacona Park to parks prohibited for sheltering ...



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