



**Committee of the Whole Report  
For the Meeting of November 24, 2022**

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**To:** Committee of the Whole **Date:** November 9, 2022  
**From:** Thomas Soulliere, Director of Parks, Recreation and Facilities  
**Subject:** Topaz Park Improvement Plan: Proposed Phase 2 Concept Design

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## **RECOMMENDATION**

That Council approve the concept design for the Topaz Park Improvement Plan: Phase 2 project, as shown in Attachment A.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The purpose of this report is to seek Council approval of the concept design for the next phase of improvements to Topaz Park. The scope of this phase includes sport courts, a fenced leash-optional dog area, a picnic area with a shade structure, an upgraded fitness area, a new plaza with play feature, new backstops and dugouts, spectator seating, new pathways, pedestrian lighting, and landscaping as shown in Attachment A.

This phase of improvements will complete the planned upgrades to the southern part of the park, as envisioned in the long-term park plan. In addition to new community amenities and upgraded sport facilities, the project will complete a key linkage in the pedestrian circulation through the park, connecting Topaz Avenue in the south to Finlayson Street in the north.

Should Council approve the concept designs in this report, staff will complete the detailed design and tender documents in 2023. Following the detailed design work staff will complete a funding proposal for the construction of the Phase 2 improvements, which will be included in the 2024 Financial Plan. Pending Council support for this in a future budget, construction will be planned to begin in the spring and be complete by the end of that year.

## **BACKGROUND**

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

In June 2018, Council adopted the Topaz Park Improvement Plan, with a vision for renewing and redeveloping the park. The City worked closely with the community to build the long-term plan, and the concept design for Phase 2 reflects the outcome of this extensive community engagement.

There are three major phases of renovations planned to achieve the park vision:

- Phase 1 (2020 - 2022): Skateboard and bike skills park (completed), and artificial turf sport field renovation and expansion (in progress)
- Phase 2 (2022 – 2024): Sport courts, central plaza (sport hub), fenced leash-optional area, picnic area, new backstops, spectators seating, fitness area upgrades, plaza, play feature
- Phase 3 (2024 – 2026): Sport box renewal, Finlayson Avenue parking lot upgrade, accessibility upgrades to the public washrooms

#### *Previous Council Direction*

- In June 2018, Council approved the Topaz Park Improvement Plan along with a phased implementation process.
- In January 2020, Council approved the first phase of investments for Topaz Park, which were included 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 Artificial Turf Field Reserve Fund, to complete the construction of the artificial turf field replacement project.
- In August 2021, Council approved the concept designs for the skateboard and bike parks and turf field expansion. Staff were directed to report back on the next phase of implementation of the Park Improvement Plan.
- In February 2022, Council approved \$350,000 of funding to complete the Phase 2 concept designs as part of the 2022 Financial Plan.

## **ISSUES & ANALYSIS**

This scope of this project relies on the extensive community engagement completed through the development of the Topaz Park Improvement Plan, which determined the elements that would be included in the park along with the approximate size and location.

The proposed concept design for Phase 2 is shown in Attachment A, and the major components of the design are outlined in the following sections.

### Leash-Optional Dog Area

The proposed design of the leash-optional area will provide improved accessibility and support year-round use of an existing area of the park already designated as leash-optional. The leash-optional area is fully fenced with three gated entries and an internal accessible looping path that connects to the park pathway and street sidewalk systems. A drinking fountain with pet bowl attachment is also provided within the fenced area.

A new entry feature at the corner of Topaz Avenue and Glasgow Avenue includes park signage, seating, bike parking, and a potable water station. Per previous Council direction, a memorial

plaque in this entry plaza will commemorate former police service dog, “Chase“. The grass field north of the playground will remain available as an alternate time-limited, unfenced leash-optional area.

A new path on the west side of the leash-optional area provides an accessible connection from the corner of Topaz Avenue and Glasgow Avenue to the picnic area and other amenities in centre of the park.

### Pickleball Courts

The City currently has seventeen dedicated tennis courts, four dedicated pickleball courts, and six mixed-use (tennis/pickleball) courts. The Topaz Park Improvement Plan envisioned a mix of dedicated tennis courts and pickleball courts within the park. However, new information from court users, sport organizations, residents living near courts, and facility owners has illustrated the need for dedicated pickleball courts at locations set well back from residential properties to mitigate noise and conflicts between user groups on mixed-use courts. A letter from Tennis BC and Pickleball BC with their joint recommendations for this type of facility is appended in Attachment B.

Based on this new information, staff recommend a dedicated pickleball hub for Topaz Park. This facility will provide much-needed infrastructure to help meet the growing demand for the sport and reduce the need for shared courts in other areas of the city.

The concept plan includes eleven dedicated pickleball courts. Shaded rest areas provide comfortable places to sit for spectators and those waiting to use the courts. Pathways installed as part of the skatepark project provide accessible connections to the parking lot and public washrooms. The existing sports lighting, scheduled to activate from dusk until 10:00pm, allows for evening use of the courts. Subject to Council’s approval of the concept design, staff will consult with stakeholders from the pickleball community on the detailed design of the new facility.

### Fitness and Picnic Areas

The outdoor fitness equipment will remain in its current location and be upgraded with rubber surfacing and additional components for improved functionality and accessibility. The picnic area will feature a new shade structure that will provide relief for park visitors on hot summer days. The picnic area is well situated for bike park access, offering an excellent viewpoint for parents and others to enjoy the action at the pump tracks.

### Central Plaza

This area is the social heart of the park, and a new plaza will provide a central gathering space for socializing and events. Terraced seating built into the slope around the plaza will serve as spectator seating for the adjacent sport fields. A sloped play feature with rubber surfacing, slides and climbing features is situated between the two spectator seating areas. This area's unique combination of features creates a vibrant node in the centre of the park that supports and enhances the use of amenities in surrounding areas.

Upgrades to the central sport fields include new backstops, dugouts, and scorer’s boxes. A new path with pedestrian lighting between the two grass sport fields completes a critical link in north-south pedestrian routes through the park. New paths to the east and west of the play slope will provide accessible connections from field level up to higher areas in the southern part of the park.

## Budget

Council approved a \$350,000 budget for the design work associated with the Phase 2 improvements as part of the 2022 Financial Plan. Pending Council approval of the proposed concept design, the project team will proceed with detailed design and the preparation of construction documents for procurement utilizing the previously approved funding.

It is important for Council to be aware of the anticipated investment to construct the amenities being proposed. Staff requested a cost estimate from an external consultant with expertise in such projects. The table below outlines the estimated order-of-magnitude cost for the Phase 2 improvements, assuming this work occurs in 2024. The anticipated construction cost is based on a Class D cost estimate completed by Van der Zalm + Associates. A 30% project contingency has been included to account for typical cost escalation due to inflation, cost of materials, and other cost impacts.

Item	Construction Cost Estimate
Construction	\$3,750,000
Contingency (30%)	\$1,125,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$4,875,000</b>

## Schedule

The graphic below details the project schedule. Pending Council approval of construction costs as part of the 2024 Financial Plan, construction of the improvements are expected to begin in spring 2024.

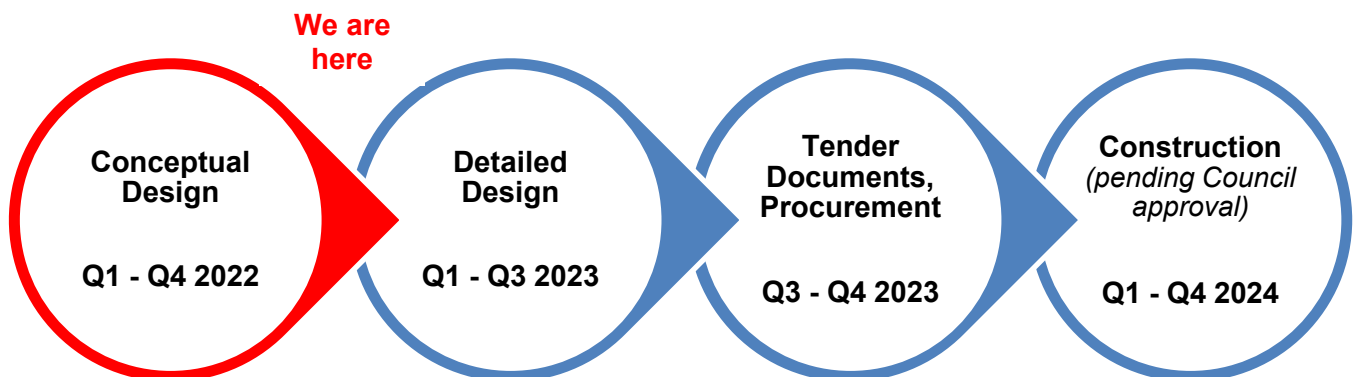


Figure 1: Project schedule

## OPTIONS & IMPACTS

### **OPTION 1 (Recommended) That Council approve the concept design for the Topaz Park Improvement Plan: Phase 2 project, as shown in Attachment A.**

Should Council support the proposed concept design, the project will proceed to detailed design utilizing previously approved funding. The investment for construction will be included in the draft 2024 Financial Plan for Council consideration, pending any further changes to City priorities.

### **OPTION 2 That Council refer the proposed concept design for the Topaz Park Improvement Plan: Phase 2 project back to staff for further refinement.**

Should Council decline the proposed concept design, direction to staff regarding specific changes or areas of focus will be required. Depending on the scale of the changes required, there may be schedule and cost implications.

#### *Accessibility Impact Statement*

One of the primary objectives of the long-term vision for Topaz Park is improved accessibility throughout the park. The Topaz Park Improvement Plan includes a *Baseline Accessibility Assessment Report*, which highlighted key areas in need of improvement. As with the first phase of investments, the second phase of work will significantly improve accessibility for park users, including:

- Provide accessible pathway connections;
- Provide a standardized, cohesive network of high-visibility signage throughout the park;
- Provide innovative accessible spectator areas that are inclusive; and,
- Provide inclusive access to the outdoor fitness area and ensure it has equipment that can be utilized by all.

The Accessibility Advisory Committee was consulted during the Topaz Park Improvement Plan process and was provided with the *Baseline Accessibility Assessment Report* for review and feedback.

In September 2021, Council directed staff to explore the feasibility and impacts associated with renovating one of the Topaz Park public washrooms as part of the Phase 2 improvements. This direction included consideration of an adult change table complete with a lift and sling with a 600lb capacity that would allow the ability to move around the room and engagement with the Accessibility Advisory Committee on other accessibility improvements for the washroom.

In January 2022, Council directed staff to conduct an accessibility audit of all park washrooms and develop options for upgrading these facilities. Staff are exploring the feasibility and implications of the suggested improvements for Topaz Park through the *Park Washrooms Accessibility Study*, which is currently underway. This report is expected to be presented to Council in Q1 of 2023.

#### *2019 – 2022 Strategic Plan*

The improvements planned in the long-term vision for Topaz Park support the City's strategic objectives relating to Health, Wellbeing, and a Welcoming City, Strong, Livable Neighbourhoods, and Climate Leadership and Stewardship.

### *Impacts to Financial Plan*

Council approved a \$350,000 budget for the design of Phase 2 improvements as part of the 2022 Financial Plan. Following the completion of detailed design, the final construction cost estimate will be prepared. This figure will inform the capital budget proposals for the draft 2024 Financial Plan.

### *Official Community Plan Consistency Statement*

The Official Community Plan contains the following objectives for 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*

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **That Council:**

That Council approve the concept design for Phase 2 improvements to Topaz Park, as shown in Attachment A.

Respectfully submitted,

Justin Dykstra  
Manager  
Park Design and Development

Derrick Newman  
Assistant Director  
Parks and Open Spaces

Thomas Soulliere  
Director  
Parks, Recreation and Facilities

**Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager.**

### **List of Attachments**

Attachment A: Topaz Park Improvement Plan: Phase 2 Concept Design Report

Attachment B: Joint Recommendation Pickleball BC and Tennis BC