



## **Governance and Priorities Committee Report**

### **For the Meeting of June 4, 2015**

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**To:** Governance and Priorities Committee **Date:** May 22, 2015  
**From:** Julie MacDougall, Assistant Director, Parks and Recreation  
**Subject:** Quadra Heights Playground Improvements

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#### **Executive Summary**

The purpose of this report is to present the results of recent public engagement and to outline the next steps for the renewal of the Quadra Heights playground and park.

Quadra Heights Park is a small neighbourhood park, one acre in size, located in the Hillside/Quadra neighbourhood. It is north of Finlayson Avenue and south of Tolmie Avenue. The park currently features a playground, benches, a picnic table and several mature trees as well as a pathway connection to Reed Street.

The 2015 Financial Plan includes \$100,000 for Quadra Heights Park to replace aging play equipment to better meet the needs of the community.

In the spring of 2015, nearby residents and the general public were invited to participate in two open houses and an online survey. Idea boards were also placed onsite to collect feedback from residents and visitors. Participants, including children, were asked to specifically share what kind of playground equipment they would prefer, along with other park improvements. Open houses were held on-site (May 2 and May 6) and a total of 35 residents attended. Additionally, 50 responses were received through the online survey.

Several themes were heard during engagement:

- A combination of natural play areas and manufactured play equipment was preferred.
- Swings were the most popular type of playground equipment.
- There was an interest in reducing the amount of sand, with support for keeping a small sanded area as sand wasps were identified as a concern.
- Better lighting was requested, as were more picnic tables and benches.
- A few issues surrounding dogs in the park were raised through the engagement. In total eight comments were received, including requests for clearer bylaw signage, requests for a fenced area, and requests for a bag dispenser.
- There was interest in ziplines and water features, although these elements are unlikely due to park size and project budget.

A conceptual plan for the park and play area upgrade that responds to the results of the public engagement is attached. The future improvements will include:

- A combination of manufactured and natural play areas.
- Play equipment that accommodates a range of ages, with focus on ages 18 months to five years.
- Swings and climbing elements.
- A new pathway and seating area including bicycle parking.
- An expanded open grass area.

Manufactured play equipment will be selected through the City of Victoria purchasing process. A tender process will be initiated in early June and the results of the public engagement process will be considered in selecting the successful bid.

A budget of \$100,000 for the play area and park upgrade has been approved in the 2015 Financial Plan. Construction of this play area upgrade will commence in October 2015, and is expected to take eight weeks.

**Recommendation:**

That Council receive this report for information.

Respectfully submitted


for   
Leigh Sifton  
Manager, Parks Planning & Design

  
Julie MacDougall  
Assistant Director, Parks & Recreation

for   
Katie Hamilton  
Director, Citizen Engagement & Strategic Planning

Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager:

Date:

  
May 29, 2015



## **Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to present the results of recent public engagement and to outline the next steps for the renewal of the Quadra Heights playground and park.

## **Background**

Quadra Heights Park is a small neighbourhood park, one acre in size, located in the Hillside/Quadra neighbourhood. It is north of Finlayson Avenue and south of Tolmie Avenue. The park currently features a playground, benches, a picnic table and several mature trees as well as a pathway connection to Reed Street. The playground includes swings, a merry-go-round and a play structure. See Appendix A for a site map and photos.

Quadra Heights Park is one of five playgrounds located within a one kilometer radius. Two large community playgrounds and park amenities such as sports fields, hockey/basketball courts, tennis courts, outdoor fitness equipment and a lacrosse box are located within 500m of Quadra Heights Park.

The 2015 Financial Plan includes \$100,000 for Quadra Heights Park to replace aging play equipment and to better meet the needs of the community. The current play equipment is approximately 15 years old. Play equipment manufacturers recommend a 10 to 15 year replacement cycle. At the same time as play equipment is replaced, the City considers all park users and upgrades to other site amenities when possible. Items outside of the budget may be considered within future year capital planning.

To facilitate engagement, staff developed options for play equipment that took into consideration the size of the park and the budget available for these improvements.

## **Issues and Analysis**

In the spring of 2015, nearby residents and the general public were invited to participate in two open houses and an online survey. Idea boards were also placed onsite for three weeks to collect feedback from residents and visitors. Participants were asked to specifically share what kind of playground equipment they would prefer, along with other park improvements. Feedback from children was encouraged through an interactive craft station where they could build their future playground.

The engagement program focused on residents living closest to the park. Broader community participation was sought through advertising and social media. The Quadra Days community event was also used to inform the community about the upgrades and to encourage their participation in the survey.

Open houses were held on-site (May 2 and May 6) and a total of 35 residents attended. Additionally, 50 responses were received through the online survey. No letters or emails were received.

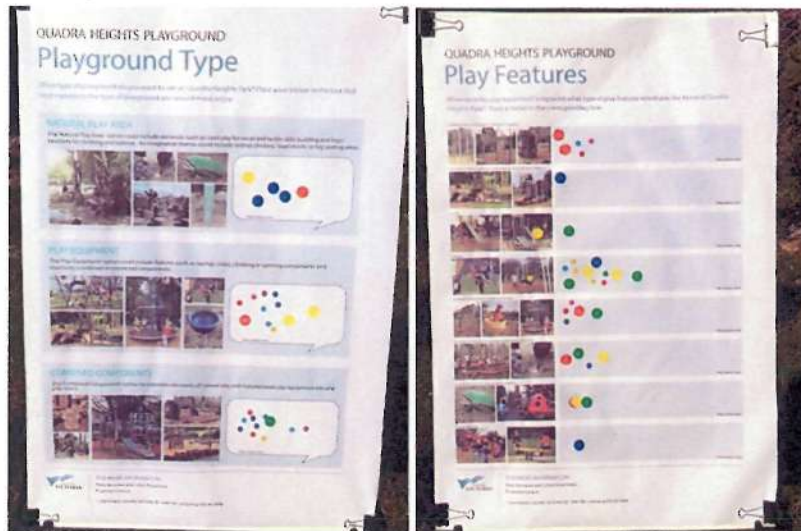
Several themes were heard during engagement:

- A combination of natural play areas and manufactured play equipment was preferred.
- Swings were the most popular type of playground equipment.
- The existing merry-go-round was seen as a unique feature of the park.
- There was an interest in reducing the amount of sand, with support for keeping a small sanded area as sand wasps were identified as a concern.

- Better lighting was requested, as were more picnic tables and benches.
- A few issues surrounding dogs in the park were raised through the engagement. In total eight comments were received, including requests for clearer bylaw signage, requests for a fenced area, and requests for a bag dispenser.
- There was interest in ziplines and water features, although these elements are unlikely due to park size and project budget.

## What We Heard

### Open House



- When asked about the preferred playground type, manufactured play equipment ranked the highest, followed closely by a combination of natural play areas and manufactured equipment. Natural play areas were ranked third.
- In terms of play features, swings were the most popular, followed by: playhouse/social/imaginative elements, climbing features, spinning features and natural play elements.
- Art pieces by children included ideas about swings, slides, waterparks and ziplines.



## Ideas Boards



The Ideas Board was used for the first time in a parks project and met with high participation. It enabled the City to reach park users when they were in the park, outside of formal events. It asked about what new play equipment visitors would like to see at the park and what other park improvements would be enjoyed:

- Keeping the merry-go-round was a popular comment.
- Swings were the most popular piece of play equipment.
- There was an interest in keeping some sand, but a concern about dealing with the wasps and cats related to the sand.
- Better lighting was requested.
- There was some interest in catering to a wider range of ages.
- More picnic tables and benches was a request from some.
- Ziplines and waterparks were common requests.

### Online Survey

64% of survey respondents were from Hillside Quadra and another 14% were from Saanich, as this park is very close to the Saanich border. 54% lived within a five minute walk of the park.

- The most popular features of the current playground included swings (32 responses) and the merry-go-round (27 responses), followed by the play structure (16 responses).
- The least liked features included the sand surfacing (20 responses), the play structure (16 responses) and the merry-go-round (11 responses).
- When asked about the choice of a natural play area or manufactured equipment, 90% of participants requested a combination of both.
- In terms of new play equipment, swings were the most popular (29 responses), followed by natural play elements (26 responses) and a climbing structure (23 responses).
- Comments about unique play equipment for this park included: keeping the merry-go-round or replacing it (10 responses).
- General ideas about how the park could be improved included: accessible surfacing, removing sand and related wasps, more picnic tables and eating areas.

### Social Media

- One comment was received requesting a rubber surface on the playground.

### Next Steps

A conceptual plan for the park and play area upgrade is attached (Appendix C) that responds to the results of the public engagement. The future improvements will include:

- A combination of manufactured and natural play areas.

- Play equipment that accommodates a range of ages, with focus on ages 18 months to five years.
- Swings and climbing elements.
- A new pathway and seating area including bicycle parking.
- An expanded open grass area.

Given the proximity to other nearby neighbourhood parks and the types of play equipment located in those parks; comments from the public regarding the ages of children visiting the park; and, the amount of area available for the playground, the new play equipment will accommodate a range of ages, but will be targeted to younger children (18 months to five years).

The feasibility of a zipline or waterpark in a small neighbourhood park is limited due to the size of the park and the budget available. Hard surfaces for basketball have also not been considered, due to sound impacts from this small park and the proximity of two existing basketball courts in this neighbourhood.

Manufactured play equipment will be selected through the City of Victoria purchasing process. A tender process will be initiated in early June and the results of the public engagement process will be considered in selecting the successful bid.

A budget of \$100,000 for the play area and park upgrade has been approved in the 2015 Financial Plan. Construction of this play area upgrade will commence in October 2015, and is expected to take eight weeks.

## **Recommendations**

That Council receive this report for information.

## **Appendices**

Appendix A: Site Map and Photos

Appendix B: Conceptual Plan



# Appendix A: Site Map and Photos

