



Governance and Priorities Committee Report

For the Meeting of June 4, 2015

To: Governance and Priorities Committee **Date:** May 22, 2015
From: Julie MacDougall, Assistant Director, Parks and Recreation
Subject: Victoria West Park Improvements Engagement Plan

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to seek Council approval of the proposed engagement strategy for Victoria West Park to provide the public with the opportunity to shape potential park improvements in 2016.

This park is the second largest park in the Victoria West neighbourhood and the eighth largest in the City. It meets the needs of the Victoria West neighbourhood, and also serves as a draw for residents of Greater Victoria. It currently contains a multi-use sports field, a lawn bowling club, a skate park, a basketball court, a leash-optional area, a playground, two parking areas and a public washroom.

The creation of a park improvement plan for Victoria West Park supports Objective 8 in the 2015-2019 Strategic Plan: "Enhance and Steward Public Spaces, Green Spaces and Food Systems". A park improvement plan will address several park infrastructure needs in a single year including the integrity of the beginner bowl at the skate park; renewal of the playground and sports field structures; soft landscape re-development; renewal of sports field irrigation; and, leash-optional needs.

The public will be engaged between June 2015 – September 2015. Engagement objectives include:

- Engage community members about park improvements for Victoria West Park; and,
- Work collaboratively with people who currently use the skate park on the design of engagement events and design of future improvements.

The City will report back to Council in October 2015 with an engagement summary and proposed park improvements.

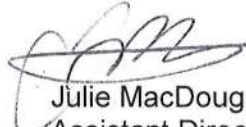
Consultation and design costs of \$50,000 for Victoria West Park improvements were approved in the 2015 Financial Plan. Park construction costs were not included in the Financial Plan as they will be determined through the design process and informed by the results of public engagement. The 2016 Financial Plan will include a capital budget request for the proposed improvements, including any long-term investment recommendations.

Recommendation:

That Council endorse the proposed engagement strategy for Victoria West Park.

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 21, 2015

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to seek Council approval of the proposed engagement strategy for Victoria West Park to inform the creation of a park improvement plan.

Background

Victoria West Park is the second largest park in the Victoria West neighbourhood and the eighth largest in the City. It meets the needs of the Victoria West neighbourhood, and also serves as a draw for residents of Greater Victoria. The park was first established in 1921 and has seen many improvements since then to address the changing needs of local residents.

Victoria West Park currently offers a range of park facilities, including a multi-use sports field for baseball and soccer, a skate park, a lawn bowling club, a basketball court, a leash-optional area, a playground, two parking areas and a public washroom (see appendix A for a site plan).

Details surrounding existing park facilities include:

- The ball diamonds are used daily on weekdays and sporadically on weekends, and serve slo-pitch teams from across Greater Victoria. The soccer pitch is not currently used due to the field condition and the grade of the land.
- The lawn bowling area is leased to the Vic West Lawn Bowling Club which has approximately 75 members.
- The skate park is the only City operated skate park in Victoria. The original facility was installed in 1992, and is currently used as a learner's bowl. A large expansion was added in 2002 and a memorial feature added in 2012. The skate park is heavily used by both skateboarders and BMX riders.
- The basketball court was installed in 2002. Depending on the season the level of use is sporadic. During nicer weather it is used almost daily.
- The playground was installed in 1996. It includes a swing set, and a play structure.
- The leash-optional dog area is one of 12 in Victoria. Victoria West has the highest per household ratio of licensed dogs in Victoria. One in two homes has a licensed dog. This area is across the park from the playground, leaving distance between these two park uses. It is not fenced. Triangle Park is nearby on Wilson Road and is also used by dog owners, but is not a leash-optional area. The community has indicated that there are conflicts between the off-leash area and other park users. There is an opportunity to explore improvements to the off-leash area to minimize conflicts, including the consideration of a fenced dog park, as outlined in the City's Strategic Plan.

The key factors driving the need to look at how best to update the park include:

- The age and condition of the playground equipment and the ability to keep it up to current CSA standards.
- The condition of the beginner portion of skate park (the oldest portion) is aging and is in need of redesign and re-pouring as patching is no longer effective for any length of time.
- Users of the leash-optional area have indicated support for improvements to the fencing and have indicated that they would be interested in fundraising for this project.
- Use of the sports field for some activities is limited due to the condition and grading of the turfed area.
- Increased density in the neighbourhood as a result of multi-storey condominium development.

The creation of a park improvement plan for Victoria West Park supports Objective 8 in the 2015-2019 Strategic Plan: "Enhance and Steward Public Spaces, Green Spaces and Food Systems". A park improvement plan will address several park infrastructure needs in a single year including the integrity of the beginner bowl at the skate park; renewal of the playground and sports field structures; soft landscape re-development; renewal of sports field irrigation; and, leash-optional needs.

Issues and Analysis

Staff are proposing to begin community engagement around the future of the park starting June. A variety of tools and approaches will be used to engage all current and prospective parks users in a discussion on future improvements and uses. The objectives of the engagement strategy are to:

- Engage community members about park improvements for Victoria West Park
- Work collaboratively with people who currently use the skate park on the design of engagement events and design of future improvements

Engagement Approach

A two phased engagement strategy is proposed. The first phase will begin in June.

Phase One- Preliminary Engagement (June – July 2015)

The first phase will focus on collecting the community's thoughts around possible parks improvements. This will focus on what elements are used and enjoyed now, what's missing, what needs improvement and what other activities would be of interest.

Preliminary engagement will include:

- Update the Vic West Community Association on the engagement activities planned. We will also ask for their assistance in raising awareness of the engagement opportunities.
- Online Survey: An online survey will be launched in early June to solicit ideas for future park improvements. The survey will remain open for one month.
- Ideas board: an ideas board will be placed in the park to collect input from park visitors.
- Community Design Picnic: In early July, the City will host a community design picnic in Victoria West Park to engage community members in a conversation about park improvements. This event aims to build community as well, as neighbours will be encouraged to bring a blanket and basket and discuss how the park could be improved.

In addition, users of the skate park will be engaged by City of Victoria youth programmers and the Skate Park Host. Together they will design an event through which they can provide input on improvements to the skate park, and park improvements in general, in a way that best works for them. Following this initial engagement, the consultant retained to develop designs for the skate park will work closely with this group in the design of these improvements.

The following tools will be used to create awareness about preliminary engagement opportunities:

- A neighbourhood mail drop;
- Print advertising;
- Information on website and social media;
- Informational signs posted near the main access points for the park; and,
- Participation in community events, including Vic West Street Fest (June 7th) and skate park competition (June 13th).

During the engagement process, staff will check to ensure feedback collected is reflective of all key stakeholder groups. If, through the survey and workshop, there is a gap, more focused

engagement will be done in early July to ensure all those impacted in the decisions have an opportunity to provide input and that their input is reflected in the park improvement plan.

Once all feedback is collected, concepts of what the park could include and look like will be created.

Phase Two - Closing the Loop (September – October 2015)

The concepts will be shared and refined with the public in September to ensure they reflect the needs and interests of the community. The proposed second phase of engagement includes:

- Public Open House: A public open house will be hosted in September to present the concept options for the park, skate park and to collect a second round of feedback.
- Online Survey: An online survey will be available to solicit feedback on concept options.

The following tools will be used to promote this phase of engagement:

- Information posted on website and social media;
- Print advertising; and,
- Stakeholder emails.

All feedback and final design recommendations for Victoria West Park will then be taken back to Council in October for consideration.

Options & Impacts

Consultation and design costs of \$50,000 for Victoria West Park improvements were approved in the 2015 Financial Plan. Park construction costs were not included in the Financial Plan as they will be determined through the design process and informed by the results of public engagement. The 2016 Financial Plan will include a capital budget request for the proposed improvements, including any long-term investment recommendations.

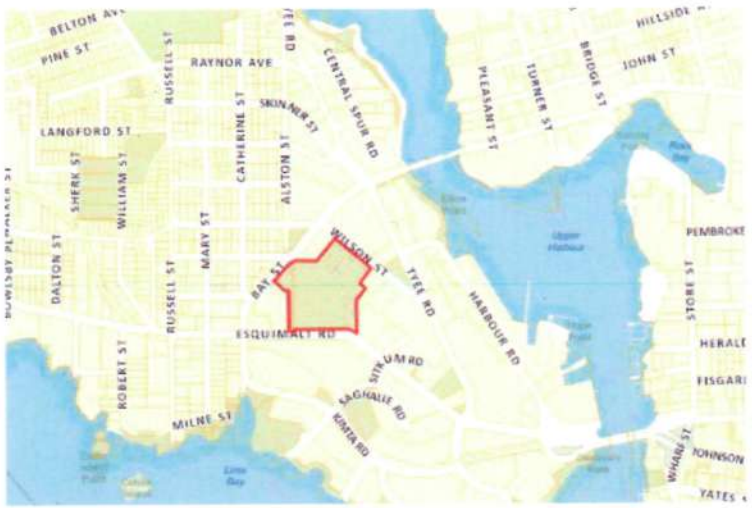
Recommendations

That Council endorse the proposed engagement strategy for Victoria West Park.

Appendices

Appendix A: Site Map

Appendix B: Site Photos



Appendix B: Site Photos

