



Governance and Priorities Committee Report

For the Meeting of December 3, 2015

To: Governance and Priorities Committee **Date:** November 20, 2015
From: Thomas Soulliere, Director, Parks, Recreation and Facilities
Subject: Victoria West Park Improvements

RECOMMENDATION

That Council endorse the Park Improvement for Victoria West Park including the priority improvements of the skate park, playground and off-leash dog area.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to seek Council approval of the Park Improvement Plan for Victoria West Park.

The Park Improvement Plan was initiated to address priority needs for Victoria West Park and to guide future capital funding requests for desired park improvements and amenities. The priority improvements for 2016 are based on the condition of existing park infrastructure and/or the need to address park use conflicts. The list of priority improvements consists of; 1) replacement of the "beginner bowl" of the skate park; 2) replacement and expansion of the playground; and, 3) relocation and fencing of the leash-optional dog area.

Victoria West Park is the second largest park in the Victoria West neighbourhood, and the eighth largest in the City. It serves the needs of the local neighbourhood, and also serves as a draw for residents across the city. In addition to the skate park, playground and dog use area, the park contains a multi-use sports field, a lawn bowling facility, a basketball court, two parking areas and a public washroom.

The creation of the Park Improvement Plan aligns with the 2015 – 2019 Strategic Plan Council approved the engagement plan for this project in June 2015.

Over the past six months, residents have provided their input and suggestions for the future of this park through four in-person events and online surveys. This feedback has informed the priority upgrades that are being proposed.

A capital budget to construct the proposed improvements to the skate park, playground, and off-leash dog area have been included in the proposed 2016 Financial Plan.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to seek Council endorsement for the Park Improvement Plan for Victoria West Park.

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 facility, a basketball court, a leash-optional dog area, a playground, two parking areas, and a public washroom. A diagram of existing park facilities is attached as Appendix A.

Some details of interest relating to the existing park facilities are noted below.

- The leash-optional dog area is one of 12 in Victoria. Victoria West has the highest household ratio of licensed dogs in Victoria; Dog licensing data indicates that one in two homes has a dog. This area is across the park from the playground, leaving distance between these two park uses. It is not currently fenced. Triangle Park is nearby on Wilson Road and is also used by dog owners, but is not a leash-optional area. The rezoning submission for the Dockside Green development also proposes a nearby dedicated dog park.
- The skate park is the only skate park operated by the City in Victoria. The original facility was installed in 1992, and is currently used as a beginner bowl. A large expansion was added in 2002 and a memorial feature was added in 2012. The skate park is heavily used by both skateboarders and BMX riders.
- The playground was installed in 1996. It includes a swing set, and a play structure.
- The ball diamonds are used daily from April to August 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.
- The basketball court was installed in 2002. The court is not used to capacity, and use varies based on weather.
- The lawn bowling area is leased to the Vic West Lawn Bowling Club which has approximately 75 members.

The key factors driving the need to look at improvements to this park space include:

- The age and condition of the playground equipment and the ability to keep it up to current CSA (Canadian Standards Association) standards.
- The condition of the "beginner bowl" portion of the skate park (the oldest portion) is in need of replacement as patching is no longer effective.
- Users of the leash-optional dog area have indicated support for improvements to the fencing and have indicated that they would be interested in fundraising for this project.
- Increased density in the neighbourhood as a result of multi-storey condominium development.

ISSUES & ANALYSIS

Phase One Public Engagement

During June and July 2015, three in-person events were used to collect general feedback about future improvements to Victoria West Park: Vic West Street Fest, Vee DubSk8 Competition, and the City-hosted "Ideas Picnic". At these events, staff talked to approximately 200 residents. On-site ideas boards and an online survey were also used to collect feedback. A total of just over 240 surveys were received.

A full engagement summary report is attached as Appendix C. Common feedback received included:

- Need for a fenced in dog area, with increased seating
- Upgrades to the playground, including natural play, climbing structures, and water feature(s)
- Increased park lighting – walking paths, dog area, park areas
- More seating – picnic tables and benches, community picnic area
- Community gardens
- Water fountains, for people and dogs
- Water play / water feature
- Improvements to sports fields – grading, better maintenance, more seating
- More trees
- Zipline

A separate survey was included in the first phase of public engagement to collect feedback specific to upgrades at the skate park facility. We received 126 completed surveys. The skate park is generally viewed as a positive community amenity. Users of the skate park noted frequently that this facility was one of the best skate parks on Vancouver Island. Common requests for improvements included:

- Improved lighting
- Additional washroom facility
- Additional shaded seating areas
- Improved water fountain
- Paved walkway connecting to the skate park to existing park pathway between Wilson St. and Esquimalt Rd.

A separate engagement summary report has been prepared for the skate park, and is attached as Appendix D.

Phase Two Public Engagement

Based on the feedback received, Staff prepared a proposed improvement plan for the park. Proposed improvements included:

- Fenced leash-optional dog area and additional leash-optional area for off-peak hours
- Improvements to the "beginner bowl" in the skate park (additional public engagement and design to be completed by consultant)
- Larger, improved playground
- Space for a community garden
- Reconfiguration of the recreational fields to provide space for new tree planting and recreational open space;

- Field improvements to the primary ball diamond with new bleacher seating
- New community 'Play Box' for recreation
- New picnic area
- Conversion of the existing aging basketball court to a half-court with new concrete surfacing
- New washroom by skate park, with a bottle fill station
- New shaded seating area by the skate park
- Storage and locker facilities by the skate park
- Paved and widened multi-use pathway on the east side of the park
- New gravel pathway on the north end of the park
- Redesigned parking lot off Wilson Street with bike parking area

A second open house to view the proposed park improvements was hosted on October 27, 2015 at the Vic West Lawn Bowling Club. An online survey and on-site 'ideas boards' were also available. The majority of feedback received on the proposed improvements was positive. A complete phase two engagement summary report is attached as Appendix D. The most popular proposed improvements to this park based on survey feedback were:

- Relocation and fencing of leash-optional dog area
- New washroom facility by skate park
- Larger playground
- Space for community garden
- Improvements to the sports field

The least popular proposed improvements were:

- Shared use of the recreation fields as an additional leash-optional area during off-peak hours
- Conversion of the basketball court to a half court facility

Other common feedback included requests for additional park lighting, especially along the pathway adjacent to the lawn bowling club and at the dog leash-optional area.

Park Improvement Plan

A final Park Improvement Plan for Victoria West Park, with the exception of improvements to the "beginner bowl" of the skate park, is attached as Appendix B.

Improvements to the skate park facility will be designed by an outside consultant who specializes in skate facility design. A design/build RFP is anticipated to be issued in January 2016. There will be an additional opportunity for public feedback on the skate park design in March 2016.

OPTIONS & IMPACTS

Option 1: Endorse the Park Improvement Plan for Victoria West Park (recommended)

- Proposed 2016 priority improvements have been included in the draft 2016 Financial Plan
- Construction of the priority improvements would commence in August and would be complete no later than December 31st. Construction of the skate park would be completed by an external contractor who specializes in skate park construction. The remainder of projects would be completed by internal staff.

- Future improvements based on the Park Improvement Plan will be proposed and incorporated into future Financial Plans for Council's consideration, in the context of other priority investments for parks and open spaces. These will also be guided by the future Parks Master Plan.

Option 2: Do not endorse the Park Improvement Plan for Victoria West Park

1. Direct staff to conduct additional public engagement on this park, or aspects of the park, as part of the 2016 Park Master Plan process.

2015 – 2018 Strategic Plan

The recommended option is consistent with Objective 8 in the 2015 – 2019 Strategic Plan: "Enhance and Steward Public Spaces, Green Space and Food Systems".

Impacts to 2015 – 2018 Financial Plan

Total capital costs for park improvements are estimated at \$1,520,000. The park improvement plan is intended to guide phased improvements to this park as funding allows. The following improvements have been included in the 2016 Financial Plan request:

<i>Improvement Area</i>	<i>Requested 2016 Capital Budget</i>
Playground improvements	\$260,000
Skate park improvements	\$500,000
Dog off-leash area	\$40,000

Impacts to annual operating budgets will be determined through detailed design. It is not anticipated that these improvements will require additional operating budget.

Anticipated costs for remaining park improvements to be completed in future years include:

<i>Future Improvements</i>	<i>Anticipated Capital Budget (*based on 2015 values)</i>
Ball diamond improvements	\$280,000
Pathway improvements	\$200,000
Additional washroom*	\$85,000
Furnishing / amenities	\$75,000
Parking lot improvements	\$80,000

* Note: Upgrades to the existing washroom facility are estimated at \$190,000 over ten years, as included in the 2015 facilities condition assessment.

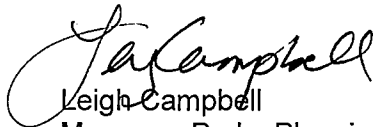
Official Community Plan Consistency Statement

The recommended option is consistent with Goal 9(A) of the Official Community Plan: "Victoria is an active community where everyone enjoys convenient access to community parks, open spaces, facilities, amenities and programs close to where they live".

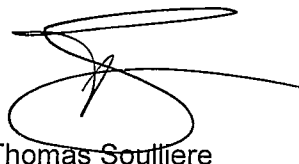
CONCLUSIONS

The creation of this Park Improvement Plan, and upgrades to this park space, will allow Victoria West Park to better meet the needs of the Victoria West neighbourhood. Improvements to Victoria West Park support the 2015-2018 Strategic Plan and the Official Community Plan.

Respectfully submitted,



Leigh Campbell
Manager, Parks Planning and Design




Thomas Soulliere
Director, Parks, Recreation and Facilities



Katie Hamilton
Director, Citizen Engagement and Strategic Planning

Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager: _____

Date: _____



Nov. 27, 2015

List of Attachments

- Appendix A: Existing Park Facilities
- Appendix B: Park Improvement Plan
- Appendix C: Engagement Summary Report: Phase One Public Engagement
- Appendix D: Engagement Summary Report: Vic West Skate Park
- Appendix E: Engagement Summary Report: Phase Two Public Engagement