



The Corporation of the City of Courtenay

# Briefing Note

**To:** Council

**File No.:** 7900-00

**From:** Director of Recreation, Culture, and Community Services

**Date:** January 15, 2025

**Subject:** Sports Field Allocation Policy Project Update

**PURPOSE:** To inform Council on the status of the Sports Field Allocation Policy project.

## BACKGROUND:

The Comox Valley Sports Field Strategy was presented to the CVRD Recreation Commission in February 2023 and received by Courtenay City Council in October 2023. The CVRD launched the Sport Field Strategy to complete a comprehensive field assessment in partnership with the local municipalities and School District 71. The purpose of the Sports Field Strategy was to:

- 1) assess the current state of sport fields within the Comox Valley,
- 2) identify focus areas and priorities for capital investment, and
- 3) identify opportunities to optimize how the sport field inventory is managed.

Based on the key findings and review of regional, provincial, and national trends and leading practices, the following strategy outcomes were recommended:

1. Enhance and standardize data collection methods.
2. Utilize the refreshed sport field classifications as a guideline for operational and capital investment in the sport field facility inventory.
3. Target capital investment in sport field infrastructure towards a focus in maximizing the quality of sport field infrastructure and adding functional capacity.
4. Develop a new approach for sport field bookings and allocations based around clear standards of play.
5. Advance efforts to actively promote spontaneous and unstructured sport field play.
6. Create a more streamlined and cohesive sport field system in the region through aligning planning and policy, shifting bookings responsibility to a single entity, and inviting the Village of Cumberland into the sport field service.

At the October 11, 2023 meeting, Council resolved:

*THAT Council receive for information the Comox Valley Regional District Sports Field Strategy and direct staff to initiate work on behalf of the region to develop a new sports field allocation policy and centralized booking function for the Comox Valley and to report back with recommendations.*

The inter-municipal recreation leadership group supported the City of Courtenay to take on the role of the centralized allocation and booking function for sports fields in the Comox Valley due to the already large inventory of sports field facilities, including SD71 facilities, administered by Courtenay (41), as well as our organizational structure within Recreation. Since Council's resolution in fall 2023, the Town of Comox, Village of Cumberland, and CVRD Recreation Commission have all passed similar resolutions in support of Courtenay taking the regional leadership role and initiating work on the development of a new sports field allocation policy, including fees and charges, and examining the work required for Courtenay to take on the centralized

booking and administrative function for Comox Valley sports fields. The CVRD Recreation Commission approved \$35,000 in funding to the City of Courtenay for the purposes of procuring a consultant to lead this project.

Over the past year, City staff in collaboration with local municipalities, the CVRD, and SD71 worked together to develop a scope of work to advance the development and implementation of a regional sports field allocation policy and consideration of a centralized booking function. The scope includes review of fees and charges, including consideration of implementation of youth minor sport fees, for consistent application throughout the Comox Valley.

#### **DISCUSSION:**

Staff have engaged a qualified consultant to lead the development of a Regional Field Allocation Policy, Fees, and Booking Process. The project was awarded to RC Strategies (RCS), a firm with significant experience in this area including but not limited to the completion of the City of Courtenay's Fees and Charges Framework, the CVRD Sports Field Strategy, and multiple other municipal sports fields strategies and allocation policies. RCS's familiarity with the Comox Valley sports field system and community will offer continuity and consistency as the implementation of the Sports Field Strategy recommendations progresses.

The development of a Regional Field Allocation Policy, Fees, and Booking process will advance two recommendations specifically related to allocation and administration:

Recommendation #4: Develop a new approach for sport field bookings and allocations based around clear standards of play; and

Recommendation #6: Create a more streamlined and cohesive sport field system in the region.

#### *Scope of Work*

The development of a regional allocation and fee policy, as well as centralized booking policy, will be based on standards of play that are aligned with Canada Sport for Life's Long-Term Development Model that each National Sport Organization in Canada is required to follow at provincial and local levels. This approach will enable allocation to occur based on need, not historical access, and will help to advance equity in sport development as well as make best use of sport infrastructure.

Additionally, the study will review fees and charges across the Comox Valley and seek to develop a consistent approach to the development and application of fees in an equitable and transparent way. The review of fees and charges will be based on Courtenay's recently adopted Recreation Fees and Charges Framework in the hopes of applying a consistent benefit-based approach to the setting of fees.

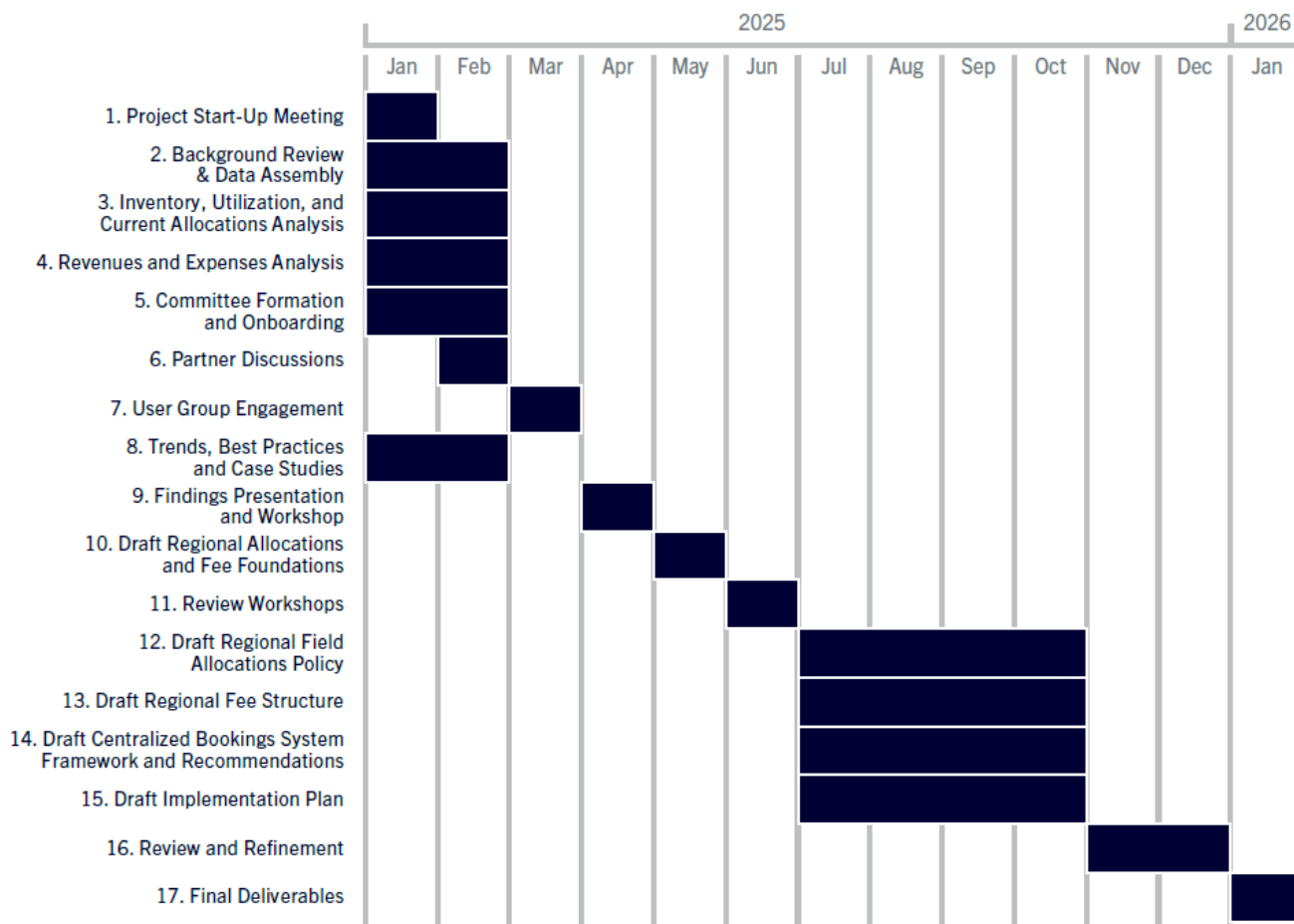
Finally, the project will include consideration of establishing a single entity responsible for all field bookings in the Comox Valley in order to improve cohesiveness of field booking in the region for sports field user groups and support alignment of allocation and fee policies.

The project will provide recommendations on regional sports field allocations, fees and charges, centralized bookings system, and an implementation plan.

### Project Timeline

Table 1 provides the proposed project schedule which starts in January 2025 and is anticipated to be completed in January 2026. This timeline would enable implementation could occur as early as fall 2026 in order to provide sports field user groups with enough time to respond to any allocation changes and communicate accordingly with their participants.

Table 1: Proposed Project Schedule



### Engagement

The CVRD Sports Field Strategy and City of Courtenay Recreation Fees and Charges Framework both included substantial public and user group engagement through workshops and surveys. The development of the Regional Field Allocation Policy, Fees, and Booking Process will focus engagement directly with sports field user groups and will do so in two ways:

1. Project Advisory Committee: The consultant and project working group (local government and SD71 staff) will support the creation of a Project Advisory Committee (PAC) made up of sports field user group representatives.
  - a. The PAC will meet at strategic points throughout the project to provide in depth feedback on the project.

- b. A Terms of Reference will be developed for this group and it will meet a minimum of four (4) times throughout the project.
- 2. User Group Engagement: All sports field user groups will be provided opportunities for feedback through:
  - a. Invitations to participate in discussion sessions (up to five facilitated sessions will be convened by the consulting team)
  - b. Online Sports Field Use Group Questionnaire

The consulting team will also engage with the partner local governments and SD71 throughout the process, both at the staff and Council / Board levels to provide updates, gather feedback, and seek consensus at key decision points. Draft materials regarding allocation, fees, and centralized booking will be presented to the respective Councils and Boards before proceeding to final recommendations.

#### **POLICY ANALYSIS:**

##### ***Official Community Plan, 2022***

Parks and Recreation Objective 5, “partnerships are in place to achieve parks and recreation objectives,” identifies the following policies:

- PR 27: Seek out partnerships to achieve the goals and objectives of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan including, but not limited to working with:
  - o SD71 to increase access to school facilities after hours for community uses and City programs
  - o Non-profit and private sector organizations to expand sport and physical activity options, and expand recreation opportunities for all residents
  - o Neighbouring jurisdictions and other government agencies and community groups, to coordinate recreation and park services and to consider alternative service delivery methods including maintenance agreements

##### ***Parks and Recreation Master Plan, 2019***

Courtenay’s Parks and Recreation Master Plan (PRMP) makes the following recommendations regarding sports fields in Courtenay:

- 3.3.2: Explore opportunities to collaborate with SD71 on school site improvement projects that can also serve the community, such as another field upgrade.
- 3.3.3: Work with others in the region to explore potential locations for new sports amenities including the following:
  - o A ball diamond complex
  - o Another synthetic turf with lights
- 3.3.4: Explore opportunities for sports field users to expand their hours of use
- 3.3.11: Add and upgrade the following amenities as part of park development:
  - o More or better sports fields as the population grows and in partnership with other jurisdictions in the Comox Valley
  - o Upgrade existing washrooms as needed

#### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

The total project budget is \$35,000 and is funded through the CVRD Recreation Commission recreation grants. In kind resources such as facility use and food / beverages to support in-person meetings will be provided by the City and partners.

### ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS:

The development of the Regional Field Allocation Policy, Fees, and Booking Process is part of 2024/2025 Recreation, Culture, and Community Services workplan. RCCS will be the strategic lead on the project and include Operational Services and Financial Services as internal interest holders.

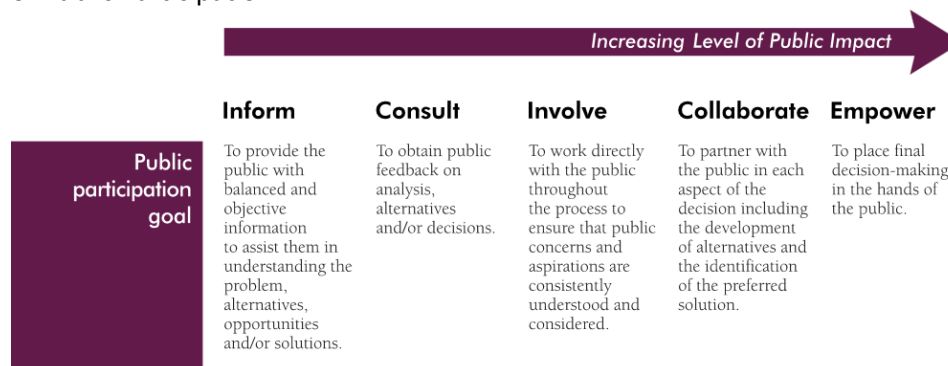
### STRATEGIC PRIORITIES REFERENCE:

This initiative addresses the following strategic priorities:

- Parks and Recreation - Optimize active public spaces to respond to density increases and increased park use
- Parks and Recreation - Review recreation programs and engage with community on current and future needs, changing demographics
- Good Governance - Explore and establish a partnership approach with SD71 on mutual interest topics: active travel and traffic planning, shared facilities, community use of schools, climate, reconciliation, child care and youth engagement
- Financial Sustainability - Review City Financial processes: Review fees, charges, and fines

### PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

Staff would inform the public and consult and involve sports field user groups based on the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation:



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**RECOMMENDATION:** THAT Council receive the “Sports Field Allocation Policy Project Update” briefing note.

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