



THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF COURTENAY

STAFF REPORT

To: Council

File No.: 07710-20

From: Director of Recreation, Culture and Community Services

Date: October 25, 2023

Subject: Parks and Recreation Master Plan – Implementation Strategy

PURPOSE: For Council to approve the Parks and Recreation Master Plan Implementation Strategy (the Implementation Strategy). The Implementation Strategy (Attachments 1, 2 and 3) prioritizes and guides the City's work plan, capital and operational expenditures, and strategic initiatives related to park and recreation matters over the next ten years.

BACKGROUND:

In 2016, staff engaged Urban Systems to develop the Parks and Recreation Master Plan (PRMP). The scope of work included an inventory and condition assessment of park and recreation assets. Thousands of data points were collected: condition of trails, parks, buildings, sports fields, and playgrounds. The information was then used as a benchmark for the next phase of analysis. The analysis phase included the identification of trail gaps, the quantity of parks in various classifications, as well as recreation programs and services. The compiled information was presented to the public through focus groups, an online survey and a public open house session. The results of the analysis and community feedback were tabulated over the winter of 2017/2018, analysed, and used to inform the draft Parks and Recreation Master Plan. A draft plan was released in December of 2018 for public feedback.

At the April 29, 2019 council meeting, Council reviewed the public feedback received and directed staff to include the requested changes into the master plan. Staff incorporated the changes into the draft master plan and presented a final draft for adoption by Council at the September 30, 2019 council meeting where Council resolved the following:

That based on the September 30th, 2019 staff report "Parks and Recreation Master Plan Adoption", Council adopt OPTION 1 and approve the final draft of the master plan as presented.

The next phase to the master plan would have been to develop an implementation strategy to prioritize the recommendations identified in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan however this work was put on hold during the COVID-19 pandemic. The development of an implementation strategy was reinitiated in early 2022. To ensure continuity and alignment with the 2019 PRMP, staff again engaged Urban Systems to assist with the strategy's development. Over the course of 2022 and the first half of 2023, staff worked with Urban Systems, internal City departments, and Council to bring the implementation strategy to fruition.

DISCUSSION:

The City's Parks and Recreation Master Plan (PRMP) identifies the parks and recreation land, facilities, amenities, programs, and resources that the City of Courtenay will need over the next 10 years and beyond to meet the needs of the community. It consists of a vision for parks and recreation in Courtenay, eight goals based on community input, and 56 recommendations.

The PRMP covers a wide range of topics: outdoor recreation – parks and trails land, design, and amenities; indoor recreation – facilities, programs, and services; and touches on special events and culture. The recommendations are grouped into categories that differ in implementation: planning and design, land acquisition, capital development, and service delivery. The recommendations are based on an analysis of existing conditions, projected growth, trends and future needs, and community input.

An implementation strategy is necessary to ensure that a path forward is clearly articulated and understood through prioritized implementation of the PRMP recommendations. The PRMP Implementation Strategy (Attachment 1) ensures that recommendations are acted upon in accordance with City policy, strategic direction, and Council priorities. The implementation strategy considers the City’s various strategic guiding documents and links recommendations with the Official Community Plan that was updated in 2022. This process results in an implementation strategy with 98 actions and planning activities which are phased to be completed over the next ten years. The implementation strategy is a living document that will be reviewed annually and adjusted as needed based on Council direction, strategic priorities, funding availability, internal capacity, and evolving community needs.

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan articulates consistent, community engaged planning approaches for the implementation and development of park plans and strategic initiatives. These processes, along with design standards and guidelines, will be followed in the implementation processes for each applicable recommendation, and are further guided by the cardinal directions of the OCP: Reconciliation, Climate Action, Community Well-Being, and Equity.

Prioritization Criteria

In order to facilitate the prioritization of the PRMP recommendations, a set of criteria was developed using the OCP cardinal directions, vision, and goals, (which were in draft form at the time) and the PRMP vision, goals, and objectives. These criteria were selected in order to strategically advance the PRMP recommendations in support of achieving the City’s articulated goals and priorities. Criteria, definitions, and respective weightings were shared with Council in early 2022 following which staff finalized the prioritization criteria and began the process of scoring each recommendation according to how strongly it aligned with the criteria. The higher the total score a project received, the higher it ranked for implementation. The prioritization criteria and associated weights are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Prioritization Criteria

PRIORITIZATION CRITERIA		
Criteria	Definition	Weight
Community Priorities and Strategic Alignment	Community has high support for the improvement, aligns with Council priorities, reflects trends, consistent with OCP direction and input	X2
Safety and Reliability	Will mitigate risks of concern, relates to condition assessments and asset management plans	X2
Community Well-being and Equity	Supports healthy lifestyles; addresses accessibility, inclusion and diversity; connection and belonging; serves equity-seeking groups; serves large number of people; addresses gaps in service; takes action on reconciliation	X1.5

Lifecycle Costs	Limited capital costs, maximizes public resources, considers resources required for ongoing operations and maintenance	X1
Climate Resilience	Increases mitigation of or adaptation to climate change, including consideration of GHG emissions, flood mitigation, food security, urban forest, conservation, and ecosystem sustainability	X1
Opportunity for Funding and Partnerships	Potential for partnership funding and/or creating new or maintaining community partnerships; working together with community partners	X0.5

Other Prioritization Considerations

Following the process of ranking recommendations, staff reviewed the implementation priorities in further detail to ensure alignment with City policy, strategic direction, and Council priorities. The following variables and considerations were applied in the prioritization of PRMP recommendations to develop the final implementation strategy:

- The OCP was in draft form at the time the prioritization criteria were developed.
 - After the OCP was completed in 2022, staff considered the OCP policies and prioritized recommendations accordingly. For example, prioritizing improving parks in primary or secondary growth locations where Develop Cost Charges (DCCs) funds could be utilized to fund implementation of new or upgraded amenities in existing parks.
 - The PRMP was written under the old OCP and as such some recommendations have to be updated to reflect the priorities and policies of the 2022 OCP
- Internal capacity and financial implications
 - Implementation of the PRMP at the pace and scale recommended in the Master Plan will require additional park planning resources. Staff will include a resource request in the 2024 operating budget for Council’s consideration.
 - Operating and capital budget impacts associated with the implementation strategy will be included in the financial planning process annually for Council’s consideration.
- Other City strategic documents, Council’s Strategic Priorities (2023-2026) and parks and recreation leading practices that must be considered in the planned implementation of a recommendation. For example:
 - The completion of Playground Design Standards and Guidelines in advance of further playground replacement.
 - Strategic Cultural Plan in advance of a special events and hosting policy.
 - Recreation Needs Assessment prior to Lewis Centre facility needs assessment and feasibility study
 - Other key strategies include: Floodplain Management Plan, Cycling Network Plan, Local Area Plans, CVRD Sports Fields Strategy.
 - Other key strategies that will address multiple recommendations in the PRMP include: Parkland Acquisition Strategy (2024/25), Community Garden Policy (TBD), Trail Planning and Design Strategy (TBD).

These variables affect the timing and feasibility of the delivery of the PRMP recommendations. In addition, the implementation strategy identifies where the current state and task now departs from the original PRMP recommendations due to changing conditions, direction, and or priorities. For example:

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- Recommendation 3.2.3: Consider the open, grassy space for a disc golf course at Hurford Hill Park. This recommendation is unlikely due to conservation covenant on title that may conflict with use; the intent is to preserve the land in a natural state.
 - Recommendation 3.2.3: Develop Park Management Plan for Condorsy Park and Recommendation 3.2.5: Improve community parks as opportunities arise, including Riverside Park. These recommendations will be dependent upon guidelines established under the Flood Management Plan.
 - Recommendation 3.2.7: Improve natural areas and green spaces as opportunities arise. Several of the parks listed are not active parks and may need to be considered for other complimentary park uses or considered as natural assets that have low or no active parkland use but may have environmental value. Trail opportunities to be informed by a Trail Planning and Design Strategy (TBD).
 - Recommendation 3.4.7: Continue improving and expanding trails as per Figure 3.6, including extension of Courtenay Riverway South to regional district trail. While previously a priority, this is now a long term planning item as the OCP has redefined the focus of park planning into primary and secondary growth areas.

Implementation Strategy

Following application of the prioritization criteria, weighting, and scoring methodology, the PRMP recommendations were put into implementation tables according to their priority ranking. Appendix A (Attachment 2) of the Implementation Strategy provides a high level overview of the phased implementation of the PRMP recommendations describing what projects will be completed on what timeline. Appendix B (Attachment 3) of the Implementation Strategy provides a more detailed description of the implementation approach for each recommendation including high level descriptions of proposed phased, estimated costs, budget type, departmental responsibilities, and other relevant City documents.

The phased implementation of the recommendations is as follows:

- Completed (since 2019)
- In Progress: the project is currently underway
- Ongoing: the project happens consistently over time
- Short Term: 1 - 3 years
- Medium Term: 4 - 6 years
- Long Term: 7 - 10 + years

The format of the implementation strategy will enable staff to incorporate PRMP recommendations into annual workplans and strategic planning cycles, as well as assist in identifying both operating and capital resource requirements.

While multiple City departments are involved in the implementation strategy, Recreation, Culture and Community Services has overall responsibility for ensuring the Parks and Recreation Master Plan recommendations are implemented according to the Implementation Strategy. As noted in the PRMP, implementation will also occur through City and regional partnerships, parkland acquisition through the development process, Development Cost Charges, capital development through projects led by other departments and developers, and grant opportunities. It is recommended that the Implementation Strategy be reviewed and updated annually as part of the City's strategic and financial planning processes. The timing

of projects may change based on Council's strategic priorities, internal capacity, funding availability, and the completion of associated strategic planning documents.

POLICY ANALYSIS:

While the Parks and Recreation Master Plan was adopted in 2019, implementation of its recommendations must align with the objectives and policies of the 2022 OCP. As such, several recommendations within the PRMP will be updated to reflect OCP policies, including growth areas and service level standards.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The budget to support the creation of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan Implementation Strategy is in the 2023 Operating Budget. The estimated cost to carry out the implementation strategy recommendations will be included in the annual and five year operating and capital financial plan and updated annually to reflect actual anticipated costs as projects are finalized for implementation. Operating impacts from capital will also be included within the financial planning process.

The Recreation, Culture, and Community Services division does not currently have sufficient staff capacity to carry out the frequency, depth, and level of park planning as outlined in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan recommendations. The division will require an additional resource dedicated to parks planning in order to achieve the deliverables set out by the Implementation Strategy and budget to accommodate the implementation program will be presented to Council for consideration through the 2024 financial planning process. Adjustments to the implementation strategy will be made based on available resources and funding.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS:

Implementation of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan is a core function of the Recreation, Culture, and Community Services division, in addition to the roles Development Services, Engineering Services, and Public Works Services play in the development, delivery, and maintenance of parks and recreation assets, projects, and services within the city of Courtenay.

An overview of current departmental responsibility is provided below:

- Recreation, Culture and Community Services is responsible for carrying out the strategic park and recreation planning for each project, including guiding service level standard development.
- Development Services will lead the development of the local area plans, related development services and zoning bylaw amendments, and ensure developers meet the established guidelines for park and greenway contributions.
- Public Works Services is responsible for the operational repair and maintenance of park and recreation assets, and meeting asset management service levels established by the PRMP recommendations.
- Engineering Services is responsible for major capital upgrades and new capital project management for parks and recreation infrastructure including detail design and construction.

The Implementation Strategy is a living document and RCCS will lead an annual review in order to update prioritization, departmental responsibility, and phasing based on Council priorities, strategic direction, OCP policies, funding availability, and community needs.

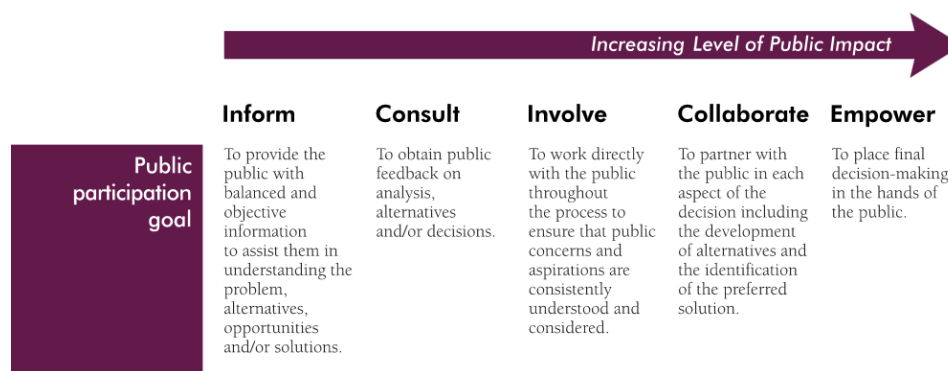
STRATEGIC PRIORITIES REFERENCE:

This initiative addresses the following strategic priorities:

- Parks and Recreation - Provision of public amenities through development (requirements for parks, trees, accessible benches, and public art)
- 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
- Parks and Recreation - Complete recreation facilities need assessments and capital improvements: Florence Filberg Centre, Courtenay & District Memorial Outdoor Pool, Lewis Centre
- Natural Environment - Develop and implement a strategy for parkland acquisition
- Arts, Culture, and Heritage - Complete Strategic Cultural Plan

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

Staff would inform the public based on the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation:



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Significant public engagement was completed as a part of the development of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan and community input into that process was included in the Implementation Strategy prioritization exercise.

The PRMP identifies the need for key community input on park design and planning and recommends the preparation of park plans through a full community engagement process. Recommendation 3.2.2 outlines the engagement process as follows:

- Inform the relevant City residents of the process and consult with and involve those interested in each park; for Community Parks, inform the entire City; for Neighbourhood Parks, inform those within the catchment; for all parks, inform interested parties;
- Conduct thorough site inventory and analysis, including potential environmental, archaeological, geotechnical, and transportation analyses depending on the location;
- Obtain input from park users and interested parties on their patterns of use, interests, needs, etc;
- Conduct focus group sessions to discuss park strengths, challenges, vision, objectives, and potential recommendations;

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- Prepare a park vision, objectives and program of amenities and activities (could include options); and,
 - Prepare optional park concept plans.

The OCP, 2022 furthers these recommendations through its four cardinal directions: reconciliation, climate change, equity, and community well-being. These cardinal lenses will be applied by staff when developing engagement plans for developing park plans, considering community partnerships, and when developing other park and recreation planning strategic documents.

NEXT STEPS

If approved by Council, staff will include the financial impacts of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan Implementation Strategy in the 2024 operating and capital plans and five year financial plan for Council's consideration in the budget process.

OPTIONS:

1. THAT based on the October 25, 2023, report "Parks and Recreation Master Plan – Implementation Strategy", Council approve the final draft of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan Implementation Strategy (Attachment 1, 2, and 3).
2. THAT Council refer the matter back to staff for further consideration.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Attachment 1 - Parks and Recreation Master Plan Implementation Strategy
2. Attachment 2 – Appendix A: Project Phasing
3. Attachment 3 – Appendix B: Project Type

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