



BRIEFING NOTE

To: Council

File No.: 6120-20

From: Director of Recreation, Culture and Community Services

Date: November 8, 2023

Subject: Park Playground Design Standards Project Update

PURPOSE: To inform Council on the status of the Park Playground Design Standards project.

BACKGROUND:

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan (PRMP), 2019 identified the need to establish defined service levels related to park amenities through park design and development. As per the PRMP, the City has parks in outstanding locations however they have not all been designed to maximize opportunities or accessibility.

Recommendation 3.2.1 of the PRMP identifies the need to apply design guidelines to the development of new and upgraded parks, including amenities. These design guidelines are detailed in the PRMP and include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Use universal design principles to welcome all park visitors
- Encourage parks to include gathering places, including with seating
- Plant trees in parks to the degree possible for shade and as a contribution to the urban forest
- Use Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles
- Design parks with the goal of increasing creativity and interest, e.g., more interactive play environments and equipment, allow children to experience more nature in parks, and provide options for all ages of children, youth and adults
- Explore opportunities to integrate outdoor exercise equipment in or near playgrounds in community parks
- When planning and designing new parks, consider life cycle cost analysis and water and energy consumption
- Design parks with consideration for protection and enhancement of environmental resources
- Celebrate local artists in parks, with more public art such as murals, mosaics, and sculptures

The Official Community Plan (OCP), 2022 reinforced the design guidelines contained in the Parks and Recreation chapters including (but not limited to) a focus on:

- a. Providing adequate, quality, useable and universally accessible open space opportunities for year-round activities related to play, social gatherings, leisure activities, food growing, rest and relaxation.
- b. Considering local infrastructure needs and amenities as well as safety, accessibility, aesthetics, and recreation.
- c. Environmentally sensitive design of siting, materials, surfaces and maintenance.

In February 2023, the City received a grant through the Province's Growing Communities Fund to address the cost of local government infrastructure required to support growing communities. A portion of this funding was applied to Courtenay's playground replacement program, which was previously funded to

replace one playground approximately every two years. The playground replacement program is based on condition assessments conducted by the City annually to prioritize the renewal and replacement of playgrounds across the City. Previous capital funding however has only been able to support the replacement of like for like playground infrastructure and on a bi-annual basis. As a result of receiving the Growing Communities Fund, staff initiated the development of a playground design standards guidelines to address the recommendations in the PRMP and OCP, and provide guidance on leading practices for playground design which will be applied in upcoming replacement and renewal playground projects.

DISCUSSION:

Staff have engaged a qualified consultant to apply the PRMP and OCP guidelines and develop park playground design standards for Courtenay’s community and neighbourhood parks. The project was awarded to Lanarc Consultants, a firm with decades of experience in park and playground planning and design. The development of playground design standards will be informed by established industry guidelines for playground design and accessibility, research in the field of playground design, interviews with City staff and a targeted community engagement process that will include the general public and key interest holders. Lanarc Consultants also brings experience with playground designs that demonstrate partnerships and reconciliation between a municipality and local First Nation artists and artwork.

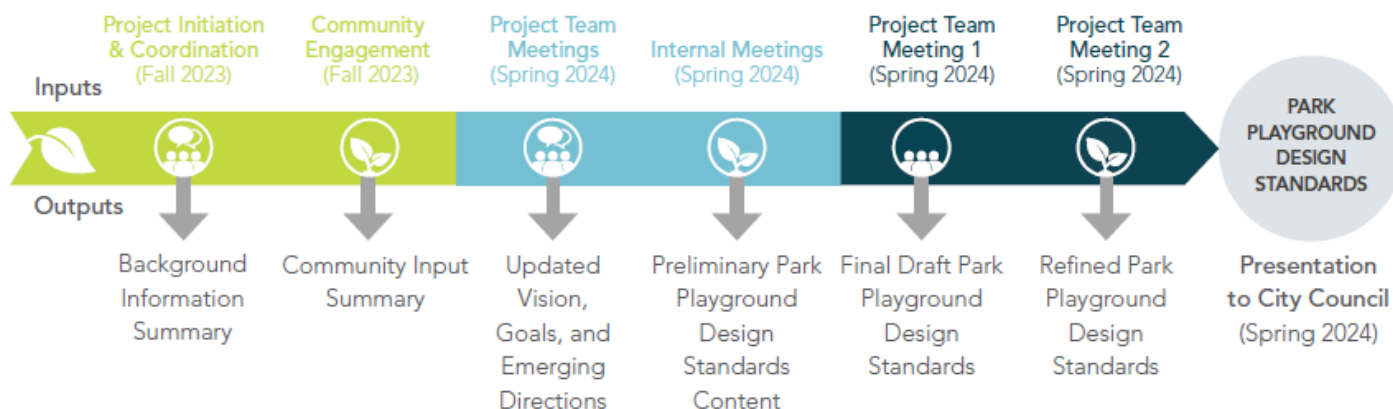
The scope of the Park Playground Design Standards (PPDS) project includes:

- classification system review / updates;
- playground development standards and targets;
- future needs assessment;
- parks and open space recommendations;
- playground design standards recommendations; and
- preliminary order-of-magnitude cost estimating and financial recommendations.

The PPDS will provide recommendations on leading playground design practices including but not limited to: universal accessibility, nature-based play structures, amenity provision at playgrounds, gathering spaces and amenities for youth, and climate adaptation (i.e. shade). The PPDS will also help inform the provision of public amenities through development by establishing the service level standards as informed by the community and key interest holders.

The following is the proposed project schedule which started at the end of October and is anticipated to be completed by the end of April 2024:

Project Milestones



Staff will report back to Council twice during this project: 1) after the community engagement which will occur in Fall 2023 with a *What We Heard Report* and 2) at the final phase of the project for Council to review and consider approval of the final draft of the Park Playground Design Standards.

Concurrently with the development of Park Playground Design Standards, staff will collate recommendations from the PRMP and OCP regarding other park amenities (i.e. benches), to present to Council at a future date. These processes will establish service levels for the provision of public amenities in City parks that can then be applied in the subdivision and development processes where applicable.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The project costs and engagement activities required to develop the Park Playground Design Standards are funded in the 2023 capital budget.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS:

The development of the Parks Playground and Design Standards is part of the 2023/2024 Recreation, Culture and Community Services Department work plan. RCCS will be the strategic lead on the project and include the Public Works Services, Parks Division, Engineering Services, and Development Services as internal interest holders in the project.

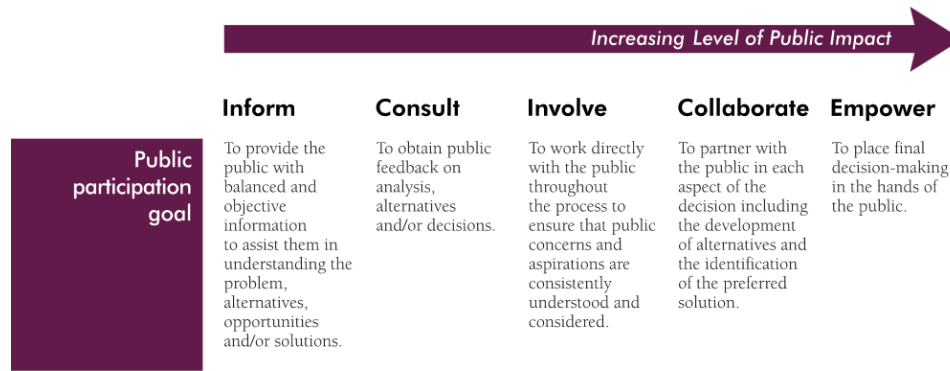
STRATEGIC PRIORITIES REFERENCE:

This initiative will help address the following strategic priorities:

- Parks and Recreation - Provision of public amenities through development (requirements for parks, trees, accessible benches, and public art)

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

Staff will consult with the public based on the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation:



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NEXT STEPS:

Following an initial meeting with staff, Lanarc will be reviewing background documents and key City strategic documents to inform the engagement strategy and plan for this project. Lanarc will then meet with interest holders and based on the feedback received develop the engagement materials and an online public survey to be released in the coming months.

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