

Report to Council



Date: May 11, 2020
To: Council
From: City Manager
Subject: Sarsons Beach Improvements
Department: Parks & Buildings Planning

Recommendation:

THAT, Council receives for information this report from the Parks & Buildings Planner Specialist, dated May 11, 2020, on the current park expansion project currently under construction at Sarsons Beach Park;

AND THAT Council directs staff to secure the park frontage along Hobson Road, until such time that a fence has been constructed along the neighbouring southern park property line adjacent to 387 Hobson Crescent.

Purpose:

This report addresses the proposed improvements to Sarsons Beach Park, and concerns raised by local residents regarding the removal of the existing park fence and gate.

Background:

In 2008, the City purchased 381 Hobson Crescent with the intention of adding the property to Sarsons Beach Park. Council approved as part of the 2020 Provisional Budget \$230,000 to undertake improvements to remove the house and integrate the property into park use. The design focused on maximizing usable park area, in order to open up the park for the many users of this popular park. The design included removing a centrally located hedge, opening up the turf space to the north, removing the house at 381 Hobson Crescent, and replacing that space with irrigated turf. The design focused on opening up sight lines, including removing obstructions that could hide potential party areas.

Specifically, the improvements to Sarsons Beach Park include:

- Demolition and removal of the house at 381 Hobson Cr.
- Install lawn area and irrigation throughout 381 Hobson Cr.
- Removing a central hedge to improve visibility and remove known blind spots
- Removing a chainlink fence to make the lawn in front of the Activity Centre more usable
- Remove the existing entrance gate and fence, and replace with a double swing vehicle gate and bollards with low landscaping
- Install 1.8m fence along the boundary with 387 Hobson Cr.
- Installing two concrete foosball tables near the playground

- Install three sets of new bike racks
- Increase lawn area immediately adjacent to the beach with the removal of four parking stalls net
- Increase parking by 17 stalls evenings and weekends by making the Activity Centre parking accessible for public use when there are no events booked.

Design Rationale:

Sarsons Beach Park is a popular beach park, particularly in the busy summer months. With the purchase of 381 Hobson Court, the intention was to expand the usable area of the park. Similarly, the plan included the removal of a hedge through the centre of the park in order to open the park up visually and physically, both expanding the area of use and improving sight lines. The design including the removal of a 1.8m high chain link fence and metal gate, replacing the gate with a low vehicle gate, similar to those in many parks across the City. This opens the park, both physically and visually. This solution is consistent with other waterfront parks, including Bluebird Beach Park and Hobson Beach Park, which is now open and available to the public.



Figure 1: Additional Available Turf Area through Improvements

The additional available turf area through the improvements, including making the northern area more accessible, is 4575 m², equivalent to 1.13 acres. The removal of hedges through the site enables views from the street, through to the water to the northwest and west directions.



Photo 1: Pre-construction View from Hobson Cr. / Sarsons Rd. Intersection



Photo 2: Current View from Hobson Cr. / Sarsons Rd. Intersection



Photo 3: Current View from Playground looking North

Fencing:

Our park designs try to avoid our parks appearing as fenced compounds. We are endeavouring to make them more welcoming, and a shared asset that can be enjoyed by the whole community. Opening up valuable views of the lake at different parks across the City without being obscured by fencing is part of that celebration of our parks. With the demolition of the house, the approach down Sarsons Rd will now have a direct open lawn view through the park out to the lake. We intentionally kept the existing parking configuration partly to achieve this view.

A chain-link fence across a park frontage unfortunately provides a false sense of security. While it prevents the majority of law-abiding residents from entering, it actually creates very little obstacle for someone intent on entering the park to either party or break and enter a property from the waterfront. Once in, it provides greater confidence as they know they will be left undisturbed.

However, we still need to maintain security. By increasing sightlines into the park, the eyes and ears of residents offers a greater year-round deterrent. With the property demolished, car headlights coming down Sarsons Rd. will shine directly into the park, and because this is unpredictable, create a greater deterrent. Increased visibility will also afford our nightly Parks security patrols and Bylaw much greater views into the park, making security easier, and again increase the deterrent factor.

We will still maintain a low vegetation barrier and low vehicle gate across the park frontage. This will clearly define the park boundary and give security or Bylaw the ability to challenge anyone who is in the park out of hours without excuses.

Parking:

The design includes the removal of six parking places closest to the lake, recovering two in front of a previous side access to 381 Hobson Court. The removal of parking spaces allowed reclaiming highly desirable turf area immediately adjacent to the beach. We acknowledge parking is a challenge at the park during the summer peak, but also recognize we do not dedicate a large area of valuable waterfront property to additional asphalt that will sit vacant for ten months of the year. We are therefore revising the signage to make the additional 17 parking spaces in front of the Okanagan Mission Activity Centre available after hours and at weekends when the Centre is not booked. We think this is better use of taxation dollars.

Alternative Fencing Option:

A hard barrier along the park frontage is not in line with our current park design best practice, however, should Council consider it necessary, staff would propose a 1.2m height metal rail fence, with stone clad pillars, and a matching gate along the road frontage. The estimated additional impact to the budget for this fence is \$63,000.

2019-2022 Council Priorities:

Parks also support several of Council's priorities such as:

- Vibrant neighbourhoods :
High quality, context sensitive site design;
Accessible and multi-purpose amenities;
Animated parks & public spaces;
- Environmental protection:
Resiliency & adaptability to climate change.

Conclusion:

The vision for waterfront parks is to be visually and physically open to the public. Fences can provide false sense of security, only assisting those with poor intentions and making surveillance more difficult. The plan is focused on opening up spaces and sightlines throughout the park, removing blind spots that would be difficult to patrol. The original plan follows this intent, which mirrors treatments of similar waterfront parks in Kelowna.

Internal Circulation:

Partnership & Investments;
Infrastructure;
Financial Services;
Infrastructure Operations Department;
Parks Services;
Community Communications

Considerations applicable to this report:

Existing Policy:

Council Priorities 2019-2022 identified measures to transform this vision into action. Specifically, relevant to this report:

- Vibrant neighbourhoods :
High quality, context sensitive site design;
Accessible and multi-purpose amenities;
Animated parks & public spaces;
- Economic resiliency:
Infrastructure deficit is reduced.

Considerations not applicable to this report:

Personnel Implications:

External Agency/Public Comments:

Communications Comments:

Submitted by: M. Steppuhn, Planner Specialist, Parks & Building Planning

Reviewed and approved by: R. Parlane, Parks & Building Planning Manager

Attachment 1 - Plan

Attachment 2 - PowerPoint