

Report to Council



Date: June 12, 2023
To: Council
From: City Manager
Subject: Phase 1 of the Parks Master Plan
Department: Parks and Buildings Planning

Recommendation:

THAT Council receives for information, the report from Parks & Buildings Planning dated February 6, 2023, with respect to the phase 1 summary of the Parks Master Plan.

Purpose:

To provide Council with a summary of phase 1 of the Parks Master Plan: Our Kelowna - As We Play, and its comprehensive parks planning framework.

Background:

The City of Kelowna is experiencing unprecedented growth in population and urban density. This fast-paced development is putting rising pressure on our parks system to deliver more, and better, place-making through new or upgraded parks, programming, and improved user experiences. Public demand for more dynamic and attractive public parks will continue to increase as the city grows.

Kelowna is comprised of a diverse mix of topography, ecosystems, cultures, and history. This diversity is also reflected in the richness of our outdoor parks and amenities which progressively play an important role in the lives of so many. This was especially true during the COVID-19 pandemic as our parks, trails and waterfronts became so heavily relied upon.

In conjunction with the stunning vistas and varied landscapes that surround us, our city parks system helps contribute to Kelowna's unique identity and special sense of place by serving as public spaces for social, leisure and political interactions to take place. 'Identity' and 'sense-of-place' are key concepts associated with quality city-building and place-making, where users and visitors become attached to public spaces in some special way and return often with family and friends. These same topics have previously been captured in *Imagine Kelowna*, our strategic vision for the city, where public input called for great civic gathering places such as parks, plazas, and urban centres to act as catalysts for municipal cohesion and vibrancy.

Finally, our city parks system offers the ability to experience outdoor activities or revitalize our relationship with nature, which in turn provides a multitude of corollary health benefits, as well as the capacity to bring communities together where all ages, cultures and abilities are welcome

Discussion:

The *Parks Master Plan: Our Kelowna - As We Play*, will consist of three separate phases that will form one comprehensive park planning document. The document will serve as the primary framework to help guide Council and city staff in making long-range park planning, capital development or rehabilitation project decisions to sustain Kelowna's portfolio of parks, trails, and natural areas over the next forty years.

The first phase of the *Parks Master Plan* is entitled the ***Plan of Direction*** which reviewed the city's existing park system at a city-wide scale. The first section opens with an introduction, purpose, and objectives for the master plan, as well as featuring relevant alignment with city policies and plans. The next section relates to context and trends within our city parks system and emphasizes the historic development of parks within Kelowna, plus current recreational best practices, and key park planning considerations. Appendix B offers a report encapsulation of the context and trends section. Appendix C features our public engagement process for phase 1 with key findings captured in: What We Heard.

The most extensive section for the first phase of the *Parks Master Plan* involved a detailed inventory and analysis of the current state of our parks, amenities and natural areas found within the city. The inventory included all classifications of parks and open spaces in the city's network and responding service levels. Park and amenity distribution maps were created to support the analysis, using city GIS files in combination with distribution analysis methods using foremost social information gathering technologies. Appendix A helps best summarize this section. The *Parks Master Plan* concludes with a framework for the future of our parks system where a vision statement was created, in addition to a wide-ranging set of objectives, goals, and establishment of core value frameworks with measures of success.

The second phase of the *Parks Master Plan* will be entitled ***Strategic Moves*** and include more in-depth analyses and public engagement focused at the urban centre scale that will explore Kelowna's five growth areas (Downtown, Pandosy, Capri-Landmark, Rutland and Midtown). This phase will identify, highlight, and map all opportunities, challenges, and priorities of the park system within all the urban centres. Future work in phase 2 will also explore community-specific growth, trends, and needs to determine more detailed park planning directions, service levels and guiding asset targets for these areas. Public engagement will offer real-world GIS mapping and commentary posting opportunities.

The final phase of the *Parks Master Plan* will be entitled ***Plan Adaption*** and contain park implementation strategies at the neighbourhood scale featuring high-definition park plans and enlargements depicting future amenities and improvements; related implementation costs; park policy recommendations; funding priorities and potential partnerships; as well as parks management and operational best practices.

To end, the *Parks Master Plan* will also be structured to be able to add supplemental appendices for relevant park trends or new topics as they emerge in future years (e.g., dog park strategy, inclusive play, universal design; climate resilience, senior-friendly strategies, etc.).

Phase 1: Public Engagement

An engagement plan was crafted for the first phase of work to develop a shared vision for the future of public parks in Kelowna by listening and expanding the number, and diversity, of voices providing input on the *Parks Master Plan*. Citizens of Kelowna were asked a variety of questions about our master planning process, broader municipal park topics and recreational trends, their current use of parks and any future aspirations for the park system they may have. As we were just emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic, multiple conversations and digital-first tool methods were utilized, involving:

- i) Kelowna's *Get Involved* engagement hub.
- ii) Virtual workshops: two with invited stakeholders and one with City staff.
- iii) Downloadable/ self-guided resident survey: PDF for individuals or families.
- iv) Downloadable/ self-guided discussion booklet: PDF for user groups or organizations.
- v) Consultant's project website.

Additionally, the public was provided on-site engagement options that included:

- vi) Park information and posting board displays: located at Stuart Park, City Park, Ben Lee Park, and Mission Recreation Park.
- vii) Mounted posters with QR code for downloadable PDF resident survey: 20 park sites.

Conclusion:

Active parks, open spaces and natural areas have played an important role in the development of Kelowna over the past century. At present, the city is facing new development challenges with respect to dynamic city growth balanced with a desire for increased active parks, outdoor recreational amenities, and stewardship. It is with this in mind that the Parks Master Plan was envisaged to help guide Council and city staff, reinforce significant City of Kelowna policies and initiatives, and ensure that every park be unique and singular in its own way.

Internal Circulation:

Parks Operations
Active Living & Culture
Community Communications
Infrastructure
Community Planning
Real Estate
Partnerships
Active Transportation
Financial Services

Considerations applicable to this report:

Existing Policy:

Imagine Kelowna - relevant to this report are its principles and goals working together as a singular system to help the city achieve its vision: Responsible, Smarter, Collaborative, and Connected.

2040 Official Community Plan (OCP) and Amendments – topics covered by the OCP are fundamental to understanding the complex trends and changes that affect long-term planning for Kelowna, as well as for its public parks system.

Kelowna Community Sport Plan – a comprehensive document that provides a framework for the local sport system to guide decision-making and provide direction for strategic leadership.

2021 Transportation Master Plan (TMP) – provides an overview of existing conditions along Kelowna's transportation network for walking, biking, transit, and driving, as well as future conditions for these modes out to 2040. The safe and efficient connectivity of the City's citizens to its many parks and its trail systems are paramount within the TMP.

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Approved for inclusion: D. Edstrom, Divisional Director, Partnership & Investments

cc:

Attachments: Phase 1 - Parks Master Plan: Our Kelowna - As We Play