



November 9, 2017

**TO:** Park Board Chair and Commissioners  
**FROM:** General Manager - Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation  
**SUBJECT:** Age Friendly Fitness Equipment in Memorial South Park

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## RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT the Vancouver Park Board approve the proposed location for an age friendly outdoor fitness equipment area within Memorial South Park, as described in this report; and
- B. THAT the Board direct staff to proceed with detailed design and construction of the facility.

## BOARD AUTHORITY/ PREVIOUS DECISIONS

As per the [Vancouver Charter](#), the Park Board has exclusive jurisdiction and control over park land use in the City of Vancouver, including any structures, programs and activities, fees, and improvements that occur within designated parks.

Through the [Seniors Fitness in Parks Motion](#) approved on October 3, 2016, the Board directed staff to:

- Review potential opportunities for the installation of senior friendly fitness equipment in Vancouver parks;
- Give consideration to engaging stakeholders such as seniors' associations, community centre associations, the Seniors' Advisory Committee, and the Persons with Disabilities Advisory Committee, as may be beneficial; and
- Report back to the Board with options for installation of the equipment, including giving due consideration to an initial pilot installation at Memorial South Park.

## BACKGROUND

Memorial South Park, originally known as Wilson Park, was designed by Municipal Engineer E. Dundas Todd to serve as a memorial to soldiers who perished in World War I. The park officially opened on May 22, 1926 and was part of the municipality of South Vancouver before it was amalgamated and became part of Vancouver in 1929. Vancouver's first Cenotaph, which originally stood outside the South Vancouver Municipal Hall, was relocated to the park on November 11, 1939.

This large park is both a sports hub and a popular community destination. A formal tree-lined entry drive leads to the war memorial that gives the park its name. The track beyond is a popular place to exercise and socialize. The pond at the northwest corner of the park provides a quiet place to watch dragonflies and ducks.

A lit synthetic turf field was installed in 2011 and is heavily booked for soccer, field hockey, lacrosse and ultimate games. The nearby track was also upgraded at this time. Improvements included replacing the cinder surface with rubberized surfacing and widening the track to six lanes. It is open to the public and is very popular with local residents. It is also regularly used by nearby elementary and secondary schools for recreation of their students. The area of turf inside the oval track is used for both cricket and ultimate practice and the adjacent seating area near the fieldhouse is home to a vibrant social scene.

There are currently nine (9) parks in Vancouver outfitted with some form of outdoor exercise equipment. They are:

1. China Creek Park
2. Douglas Park
3. Fraserview Park
4. Kitsilano Beach
5. Memorial South Park
6. Prince Edward Park
7. Second Beach at Stanley Park
8. Slidey Slides Park
9. Tisdall Park

Two of these parks, Tisdall Park and Slidey Slides Park, contain fitness equipment that could be considered age friendly.

Memorial South Park was determined to be the best location to respond to the Board motion as it is a community scale park with an established active seniors' group and compatible existing amenities. Staff therefore proceeded with public engagement regarding a new age friendly fitness area in this park.

While the focus of this report is Memorial South Park, there are many other Vancouver parks where the installation of age friendly outdoor fitness equipment is possible and may be appropriate. Additional public engagement is needed to understand the city wide needs for this type of equipment. The Park Board Playbook, a plan for the future of Vancouver's parks and recreation facilities that is currently under development as part of the VanPlay Parks and Recreation Strategy, will provide some direction for the development of these amenities in parks over the next 25 years.

## **DISCUSSION**

Staff reviewed the park landscape and existing features, and identified a number of potential locations in the park where a fitness area could be installed. Staff also conducted research into the different types of equipment that could be included in the fitness area. This information was used to develop the materials used to facilitate discussion and elicit input from the public through a series of two open houses and surveys.

Public consultation for age friendly fitness equipment in Memorial South Park assessed the level of support for an age friendly fitness area in Memorial South Park and sought feedback on the location and type of fitness equipment to be included. The process consisted of two

open houses and two surveys, which were available to the public online and as hard copies at each of the open houses.

### **Open House #1 - August 2, 2017:**

The first open house was held on site at Memorial South Park from 3:00pm - 6:00pm on August 2, 2017. Attendees were given the opportunity to weigh in on the location of the proposed fitness equipment and the types of equipment they would like to see in the park (see Appendix A). Boards were prepared showing potential locations and equipment options and attendees indicated their preference(s) by placing stickers at their preferred locations and next to their preferred type(s) of equipment. Surveys were distributed at the event and were also available online via a link on the Memorial South webpage from August 2 to August 21, 2017. The survey asked respondents to provide feedback not only for the location and type of equipment but also whether they were generally in support of the proposed fitness area. Respondents were also asked to indicate their level of support for a proposed sidewalk connecting the center of the park to East 41<sup>st</sup> Ave. along the entry drive, which was included in response to a number of recent requests for this improvement.

### **Survey Results**

- 169 total survey responses (63 hard copy and 106 online)
- 97% of respondents indicated support for the proposed age friendly fitness area
- 76% of respondents indicated support for the proposed sidewalk
- 60% of respondents were over the age of 50
- Respondents indicated preference for a mix of equipment types that would promote muscle strength, balance, flexibility, and aerobic fitness
- Respondents indicated a preference for two of the proposed locations, Option A, which is located at the northwest corner of the track adjacent to the play area and existing exercise equipment, and Option B, which is located at the west end of an open area to the north of the fieldhouse (see Appendix A).

Other optional amenities that were identified through the initial round of public consultation and will be considered during the detailed design phase include:

- A shelter over the workout area for shade and rain protection.
- A reflexology walking path
- Benches adjacent to the fitness equipment and seating spaces to promote increased social interaction between park users.

### **Open House #2 October 18, 2017:**

The second open house was also held on site at Memorial South Park, this one from 3:00pm - 6:00pm on October 18, 2017. Staff prepared boards showing conceptual designs for the fitness area at the two preferred locations identified through the first open house and survey and attendees were asked to indicate their preferred option. Their feedback was collected through surveys distributed as hard copies at the open house and online from October 18 to November 9, 2017 via a link on the Memorial South webpage. Hard copies were also provided to representatives from the Tai Chi Society so that they could be given to members who were not able to attend the open house. These additional paper surveys were received by the Park

board on November 1, 2017. In addition to their preference regarding the location, respondents were asked to indicate if there were other types of equipment desired beyond those included in the design concepts as well as their level of support for the proposed sidewalk along the entry drive.

### **Survey Results**

- 60 total survey responses (36 hard copy and 24 online)
- 86% of respondents preferred Option #1 (see Appendix B), located at the west end of an open area to the north of the fieldhouse
- 93% of respondents indicated support for the proposed sidewalk
- 84% of respondents were over 50 years old
- Respondents did not indicate a desire for other types of equipment beyond those included in the design concepts.

### **Consultation with Operations and Recreation Staff**

Operations and Recreation staff were consulted on the location of the equipment to identify any potential conflicts with existing uses and maintenance practices. No major conflicts were identified.

Operations staff expressed some concerns about equipment with moving parts based on their experiences with fitness equipment installed at other Vancouver parks. As a result, it is recommended that the majority of proposed fitness equipment should be stationary with few moving or mechanical parts to ensure safety for all users.

It was revealed that the cricket club had been considering an area near option #1 for a proposed cricket cage. It was determined that the batting cage could easily be located in another area of the park if and when the club is prepared to move forward with this idea.

### **Advisory Committee Reviews**

The final concept is scheduled to be brought before the Seniors' Advisory Committee on November 17, 2017, and the Persons with Disabilities Advisory Committee on November 23, 2017. Findings from these advisory committees will be incorporated into the final design.

### **Strategic Plan Alignment**

The installation of accessible outdoor fitness equipment in Memorial South Park takes steps to follow all of the directions set forth in the Park Board Strategic Framework. These include:

#### ***Parks and Recreation for all***

The outdoor fitness equipment will provide seniors with a variety of activities that they can enjoy regardless of any physical limitations. There is also a proactive planning element to the installation of the fitness equipment. Adults over the age of 65 made up 13.1% of the population in 2006 and are projected to grow to 16% by 2021. It is predicted that seniors will make up 21% of the population by 2036 (Source: Social Indicators Report 2009, Social Development, City of Vancouver. pg. 42. Population Estimates and Forecasts. BC Stats. P.E.O.P.L.E. 33.) The pilot installation of fitness equipment will help to meet a growing demand for age friendly recreation opportunities in Vancouver parks.

### ***Leader in Greening***

The concepts shown to the public were all developed with the intention to preserve the existing tree canopy within the park. Engagement and supervision with the urban forestry staff during detail development and construction will help to avoid any potential impacts to the existing trees in the park. A permeable safety surface for the equipment will also help to maintain the current levels of rain water infiltration occurring within the park.

### ***Engaging People***

Engagement objectives were achieved by consulting with community members and Park Board staff. Staff members from Operations and Recreation were asked to share their knowledge of maintenance issues and user group activities so that that information could be integrated into the concepts prior to public consultation. We sought to provide an open and transparent dialog with residents where they live by holding open houses in the park. Staff felt this would maximize the number of local residents who could attend the event and also help them to visualise how the proposed fitness equipment would impact their experience within the park.

### ***Excellence in Resource Management***

We intend to provide durable equipment that will hold up to the rigours of daily use and will require limited additional maintenance during their projected lifespan. Operations staff provided insight into the types of outdoor fitness equipment that tend to be more resilient than others.

### **Schedule**

With Board approval, and after receiving input from the two advisory committees noted above, staff will immediately move into detailed design for the age friendly fitness area with the intent of beginning construction in the summer of 2018 and completing construction by the fall.

### **Finance**

The age friendly fitness equipment will be funded through the Park Board's capital budget. The preliminary estimated cost of the park upgrades is \$200,000, which may be adjusted if necessary following completion of more detailed design, subject to Board approval of the location. Dedicated funding for the project is available in the 2015-2018 capital plan. The design of the sidewalk will require additional consultation with COV Engineering and urban forestry.

### **SUMMARY**

The proposed age friendly fitness equipment pilot project in Memorial South Park continues to receive strong support from local residents. As the percentage of older adults in our city continues to grow, it is essential that we continue to provide our senior citizens with safe, accessible, and enjoyable options for recreation within Vancouver parks.

The introduction of this equipment is in line with all the directions set forth by the Park Board in order to achieve a vision to become "leaders in parks and recreation by connecting people to green space, active living and community." In order to become leaders in connecting people to their parks, it is important that the Park Board take steps to provide recreation activities to seniors in the community. The fitness equipment provides unique health and

social benefits that will become more and more essential as the number of older adults in our community continues to grow. The introduction of the fitness equipment will ensure that older adults, with a variety of interests and physical abilities, feel as though they are valued participants within the parks and recreation community. The installation of the age friendly fitness equipment is an important step towards fulfilling the Park Boards commitment to provide accessible recreation opportunities to seniors in Vancouver parks.

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Open House #1

Park concept map identifying possible locations for fitness equipment



Open House #1

Proposed Fitness Equipment Types

**FITNESS CATEGORIES**  
Place dots on your favorite pieces of equipment

**BALANCE**

**FLEXIBILITY**

**MUSCLE STRENGTH**

**AEROBIC ACTIVITIES**

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Open House #2

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Context plan indicating the locations of Option 1 and Option 2 within Memorial South Park



Open House #2

Option #1 conceptual design for Fitness Equipment

Option 1



Open House #2

Option #2 conceptual design for Fitness Equipment

Option 2

