



November 15, 2023

**TO:** Park Board Chair and Commissioners  
**FROM:** General Manager – Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation  
**SUBJECT:** Killarney Park Track & Field Upgrades – Concept Plan

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## RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Vancouver Park Board approve the proposed concept plan for the Killarney Park Track and Field Upgrades, as outlined in this report and shown in Appendix A, and direct staff to proceed with (insert wording of OPTION A or B) in the approved design.

**OPTION A:** Infield Material - Natural grass

**OPTION B:** Infield Material - Synthetic turf

## REPORT SUMMARY

The proposed concept, as described in this report, is for a significant upgrade and expansion to the track and field at Killarney Park located within the Killarney Neighbourhood. If approved, this project will be Vancouver's first purpose-built track and field venue to include a regulation 8-lane running track. The concept is informed by the [Vancouver Park Board Track and Field Strategy](#), endorsed by the Park Board in 2019 as well as additional project specific public and stakeholder engagement conducted in 2023.

The purpose of this report is to share details of the design and to seek Board decision on the proposed concept plan (See Appendix A) as well as direction from the board on the two options for infield material to allow staff to proceed with detailed design followed by site construction.

Included in this report is an overview of the upgraded and new track and field amenities as well as considerations related to the infield options including public and stakeholder feedback, key advantages and disadvantages, and associated costs with each option.

There are different benefits to the two infield material options, and as such a specific recommendation has not been provided. However, based on plans for additional synthetic turf field projects in the near term at alternative locations, there is merit to pursuing natural grass for this project in order to prioritize track and field use at this purpose built location, and to ensure the facility meets the requirements to host local and provincial tournaments.

## BOARD AUTHORITY, POLICY, PREVIOUS DECISIONS/UPDATES

As per the [Vancouver Charter](#), the Park Board has exclusive jurisdiction and control over all areas designated as permanent and temporary parks in the City of Vancouver, including any structures, programs and activities, fees, and improvements or major changes that occur within those parks.

The proposed concept for the Killarney Park Track and Field Upgrades and Expansion is supported by principles outlined in the following plans and strategies:

- [Vancouver Park Board Track and Field Strategy](#) (2019): Developed in partnership with the Vancouver School Board, the Strategy guides short-term and long-term investment, management and programming at Vancouver's track and field facilities.
- [VanPlay](#) (2019/2020): VanPlay, the Board's Parks and Recreation Services Master Plan set priorities and provides tools and policies to support the pursuit of equity, connectivity, and access to parks and recreation for all.
- [Rain City Strategy](#) (2019): Reimagines and transforms how the City manages rainwater with the goal of improving water quality, resilience, and livability by creating healthy, urban ecosystems across the City of Vancouver.
- [Vancouver Sport Strategy](#) (2008): A new approach and roadmap for the future of sport in all Vancouver communities. This strategy identifies six strategic goals and recommendations for success in developing sport in Vancouver.

## **BACKGROUND**

### **Track and Field Strategy**

On September 30, 2019, the Park Board approved the Vancouver Park Board Track and Field Strategy, developed in partnership with the Vancouver School Board. The Strategy guides short-term and long-term investment, management and programming at Vancouver's track and field facilities. The Strategy indicates that Vancouver's existing track and field facilities are well used by a diverse cross section of the population including; 26 Track Groups currently registered with BC Athletics and based throughout the lower mainland, 23 organized running groups, approximately 19 public secondary schools with over 2000 student athletes who participate in track League and Championships and approximately 68 public elementary schools participating in elementary school Zone Track Meets. There are at least 10 Track and Field and Running Clubs actively using existing facilities in Vancouver.

The Strategy process included three rounds of city-wide engagement that helped to inform its implementation plan priorities which were highlighted by a Category 'A' facility to be located at the Vancouver Technical Secondary School (VanTech). A Category 'A' facility, as outlined in the strategy, is to be a venue for athletic and para-athletic training and that is capable of hosting high-level competitions (Refer to Table 1 in Appendix C). These facilities include, at minimum, an 8-lane rubberized, lit track, space for spectator seating and full jumping and throwing event space supported by change rooms, washrooms and ancillary building space and are easily accessible by various modes of transit. The infield material can either be natural grass or synthetic turf so long as the minimum requirements can be met.

The proposed facility at VanTech held particular significance when considering that Vancouver does not currently have a single 8-lane track, nor any dedicated amenities for the throw sports of discus, hammer toss and javelin.

### **Location Shift**

In 2021, initial timelines for the VanTech project were extended while the Vancouver School Board investigates more comprehensive development opportunities for the larger VanTech site. The Sir Winston Churchill Secondary School site, also identified as a future Category 'A' facility, was

initially considered as the alternative location to VanTech, but had similar timeline challenges due to dependencies with the adjacent Langara Gardens Redevelopment. Focus then shifted to Killarney Park, which, at that time was identified as the most appropriate location to deliver new track and field amenities in the short-term due to the site's existing support facilities, geographic location, jurisdictional clarity and project readiness. Staff also considered feedback from the Strategy's public engagement processes, where the highest number of participants identified Killarney as the track they frequent most in Vancouver.

Killarney is listed in the Strategy's implementation plan as a Category 'B' facility intended for recreational and training purposes with the capability to host small events and local competitions (Refer to Table 1 in Appendix C). With uncertainty at the VanTech and Sir Winston Churchill Secondary School sites, it was determined that the Killarney project would be reprioritized and strive to meet as many of the Category 'A' requirements as possible, subject to site constraints and funding.

### **Existing Track and Field**

The existing running track and field at Killarney Park is located in the southeast portion of the park and occupies an area roughly 3 hectares in size (Refer to Figure 1 Appendix A). The area sits to the east of the Killarney Community and Seniors Centre and Killarney Secondary School near the corner of Kerr Street and East 49<sup>th</sup> Avenue. The Park also includes a concrete wading pool, playground, two baseball diamonds, a regulation grass field, an all-weather gravel field, an off-leash dog area and an asphalt parking lot. The Community Centre includes both a regulation sized single pad arena and an indoor aquatic centre.

The existing running track is one of Vancouver's most utilized tracks servicing the Community and Seniors Centre, the School's 2000+ students, local running and track and field clubs, and both the local and broader citywide community. The site currently includes a 6-lane asphalt track, an irrigated, natural grass infield and 8 high-mast sport quality light poles. These existing amenities are coming to the end of their lifespan and are in need of upgrades to adequately support growth and density and better service increased use by the local and citywide community.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Proposed Concept**

The proposed concept plan for the Killarney Track and Field – Upgrades and Expansion (Refer to Figures 2, 4 and 6 in Appendix A) features:

- A new 8-lane 400m running track with rubberized surfacing;
- All required jumping and throwing amenities;
- New LED track and sport field lighting;
- Spectator seating for over 350 spectators as well as additional space that can accommodate portable bleachers;
- On-site storage for pole vault, high jump and hurdles;
- A rain garden with a focus on habitat creation and storm water management; and
- New pedestrian pathways with bench seating, tree plantings, grass berms and site fencing that improve overall site accessibility, circulation and landscape integration.

The proposed concept will include either an irrigated Class 'A' natural grass infield or a synthetic turf infield, both of which are discussed in further detail below.

Regardless of infield material, if approved, this project will be Vancouver's first purpose-built track and field venue to include a regulation 8-lane running track. The new facility will improve training and recreational opportunities for track and field and running clubs, school groups and facility users, better serve the city's population growth and increased participation in track and field sports, help provide equitable access to these facilities and promote participation in physical activity.

### **Stakeholder and Public Engagement**

In addition to the three rounds of public and stakeholder engagement that were completed during the Track and Field Strategy, staff engaged key stakeholder groups through the preliminary design phase of the project in May and June of 2023. During this process staff gained valuable feedback on the initial design direction that was informed by recommendations in the Strategy, targets identified in other Park Board and City-wide strategies and policies and input from Park Board operational staff.

The revised concept plan was shared with these groups in September of 2023 and presented publicly at an information session held at the Killarney Community Centre. Key stakeholders included the Killarney Community Centre Society, Killarney Youth Soccer Association, Vancouver School Board planning staff, Killarney Secondary School staff and the Track and Field Advisory Group that was assembled during the Strategy process to provide periodic input and expertise from a broad range of perspectives within the track and field community. The Vancouver Field Sport Federation has been receiving regular update summaries on the project since September 2022.

In general, feedback on the proposed design, as shown in Appendix A, was very positive from both the stakeholder groups as well as the general public. The majority of the feedback that was received focused on preferences for the infield material. The track and field community advocated strongly for natural grass due to the advantages it provides for facility use particularly related to the hammer, discus and javelin throw sports, whereas there was general support for synthetic turf from various other stakeholders.

### **Infield Material Options**

Track and Field facilities can include natural grass or synthetic turf infields depending on the focus and intention of the facility and its surrounding site context. Synthetic turf generally provides benefits to a broader cohort of users and allows for year-round and extended evening use, whereas natural grass better supports three track and field specific throw events (hammer, discus and javelin) and provides the capability to host track and field competitions. Due to the complexity of competing priorities, two options are being considered and are described in further detail below.

#### **OPTION A: Infield Material - Natural Grass**

The key advantage of a natural grass infield is that it can be used for both training and competitions for the throwing events of discus, hammer toss and javelin, providing the capability of hosting high-level events. A natural grass infield also consolidates all of the track and field sports in one location providing efficiencies for coaching and development training, better

utilization of the proposed spectator seating and creates a more equitable space for all track and field users.

By including a natural grass infield at Killarney, the City of Vancouver would have the potential for its first Category 'A' track and field site in the short-term, delivering the highest priority indicated in the Track and Field Strategy. This has relevance when considering the uncertain timelines for delivering a Category 'A' facility at another location in the city and is why staff have preference for this approach

The key disadvantage to natural grass fields is that due to maintenance considerations permitted field bookings are limited to 14 hours per week. Increased demand to permit the field for throw sports will likely result in reduced hours for other field sports (I.e. soccer, ultimate frisbee etc.), however impacts could be mitigated by considering additional permit hours based on the variation of use between sports. It should also be noted that grass fields are not available for permit due to rest and major maintenance periods for up to 8 weeks a year and that they are frequently closed during heavy rain and snow periods in the fall and winter months.

**OPTION B: Infield Material - Synthetic Turf**

The key advantage of a synthetic turf infield is that it significantly increases permitting capacity, providing approximately 105 hours of permitted time weekly. Synthetic turf fields are rarely closed due to inclement weather. As a result, a synthetic turf field yields a minimum of 4 times the amount of bookable field hours when compared to a natural grass field as there is no need to limit bookable hours in order to preserve field quality. This presents an opportunity to provide more sport field capacity to the community year-round over a smaller footprint, providing more space for other park uses.

The key disadvantage to synthetic turf is that the infield cannot be used for throws training and competitions and therefore cannot be considered as a Category 'A' facility unless a separate throws area is provided. While it may be possible to use ball tipped javelins for training on synthetic turf, discus and hammer athletes would be required to throw into a net which impacts the ability for these sports to train and compete at the same venue as the other athletes as these competition events would need to be held off-site. Increased infield use may also create a greater amount of conflict between track and field users. Allocation policies will guide permitted use to manage conflict, however unsanctioned use may occur and may require additional on-site staffing.

**Summary of Considerations for Infield Material Selection**

Considerations	Natural Grass	Synthetic Turf
Facility Use Suitability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multi-sport suitability, including throw sports (discus, hammer toss and javelin) training and competitions</li> <li>• Facility has potential to be Category 'A' (as per Track and Field Strategy) with ability to host local and provincial level events and can achieve *World Athletics (international governing body for</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multi-sport suitability, <u>excluding</u> throw sports (training or competition)</li> <li>• Facility cannot achieve Category 'A' designation (as per Track and Field Strategy) or any level of *World Athletics certification unless it has throws area</li> </ul>

	<p>the sport of athletics, including track and field ) certification</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allows for consolidation of track and field amenities at a single location improving training and coaching, spectator viewing and creates a more equitable space for all track and field users</li> </ul>	
Permitted Field Hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Level of field use is limited by weather and maintenance (ongoing and resting/grass recovery).</li> <li>• ~600 hours per year</li> <li>• Note - Vancouver has no demand/use data for throw sports as there is no dedicated infrastructure for them in the city. A regional review indicates throw amenities get utilized by track and field groups for training purposes 2-6 days per week for 2-4 hour sessions during the spring, summer and fall seasons. Additional use is typical during the track and field season (April – June) for event use</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Level of field use is relatively unrestricted and suitable for year round use.</li> <li>• ~3,000 hours of prime-time hours per year. (Note - best practice is to restrict use of infield to non-track use during track bookings).</li> </ul>
Construction Cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Used as Benchmark</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approximately \$500,000 higher than natural grass</li> </ul>
Annual Maintenance Cost & Recoverability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Estimated as roughly equivalent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Estimated as roughly equivalent</li> <li>• Higher recoverability of maintenance costs through permit fees due to the increased ability to program.</li> </ul>
Lifecycle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Field Infrastructure: ~30 years</li> <li>• Grass surface (root zone): ~30 years</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Field Infrastructure: ~30 years</li> <li>• Turf, infill: ~10 - 12 years</li> <li>• Shock Pad: ~25 years</li> </ul>

**Alternative Onsite Locations for Throwing Amenities**

In a scenario in which synthetic turf is selected for the infield, alternative siting for the throw sports has been reviewed. There are many competitive track and field facilities that include synthetic turf infields and locate throw amenities outside of the track oval elsewhere onsite. Alternative locations

for a discus/hammer cage and javelin runway have been reviewed on the north and western sides of Killarney Park (Refer to Figure 7 Appendix B). Due to the dimensional requirements of the landing sectors and necessity for them to be fully fenced for public safety, their inclusion would require either the removal of one baseball diamond (north side) or significant reduction in the off-leash dog area (west side). Locating the throws events in the baseball diamond area would also have future impacts on the potential development of Killarney Park as a 'Hub Site' as recommended in the Sport Field Strategy draft findings described further below. Further to this, locating the throws events away from the track oval reduces training and viewing capabilities and would increase project costs in the range of \$500,000 - \$750,000 as many of the cost efficiencies in co-locating these amenities within the track oval would be lost. The project budget does not presently include funds for a separate throw amenity area.

### **Vancouver Sport Field Strategy**

The Vancouver Sport Field Strategy is a comprehensive 15-year strategy to guide the maintenance, management and development of Vancouver's sports fields. The Strategy is currently under development and is targeted for completion in Q1 of 2024. As part of the Strategy's ['Big Moves'](#) Killarney Park has been identified as both a candidate to convert its all-weather (gravel) field to synthetic turf and a potential hub site, providing three or more quality fields in close proximity to one another in a single community park setting. The field material for hub sites can be either Class 'A' natural grass or synthetic turf or a mix and therefore either option presented in this report is viable.

### **FINANCIAL / OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

The development of the new Killarney Park Track and Field – Upgrades and Expansion is to be funded by the 2019-2022 and 2023-2026 Capital Plans. The total anticipated project costs based on a 'Class C' construction cost estimate and including soft costs, project management fees, permitting, escalation and contingencies is:

- Option A – Natural Grass Infield - \$14.1M, or
- Option B – Synthetic Turf Infield - \$14.6M; additional costs to accommodate the throw amenities at an alternative location are estimated to be between \$500,000 to \$750,000, and are not included in this figure.

There is currently \$11.6M dedicated to the project from the 2019-2022 and 2023-2026 capital plans. The remaining funding of \$2.5M and \$3M for Option A (Natural Grass) and B (Synthetic Turf) respectively, require funding reallocations from within existing capital budgets.

While Option A costs less overall, it requires a larger reallocation of renewal dollars (i.e Debt funding) due to the limited "growth" that results from the reduced programming hours that natural grass can accommodate when compared to synthetic turf. Option B is able to leverage a larger reallocation of development cost levies that fund new assets and amenities (i.e. a new synthetic turf field). Due to this, Option A will have a greater impact in causing a reduction of spending capacity for future diamond and playfields as well as future park renewals, while Option B requires a larger reallocation from diamond and playfields but does not impact park renewals. All the sport field priority projects, as presented at the October 16, 2023 Park Board committee meeting will be proceeding, and will not be impacted by these required reallocations.

Based on the standard maintenance and operations practices for parks of comparable size and program, the annual operating budget for this park is estimated to be \$250,000 regardless of infield material and would be requested from the operating impacts of capital budget process.

## **NEXT STEPS**

Subject to the Board's decision on the recommendation outlined in this report, detailed design for the Killarney Park Track and Field – Upgrades and Expansion will commence. Construction is targeted to begin in Q4 2024 and to be completed by Q2 2026.

## **CONCLUSION**

The concept design for the track and field upgrades and expansion has high overall community support and aligns with Park Board policies. Staff recommend the Vancouver Park Board approve the proposed concept for the Killarney Park Track and Field – Upgrades and Expansion and provide direction on the infield material so that the project can proceed to detail design followed by construction.

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**Killarney Park Track and Field – Proposed Concept Plan**



**Figure 1: Existing Killarney Park Track and Field and Context**



**Figure 2: Concept Plan of the proposed Killarney Park Track and Field – Upgrades and Expansion**

**Killarney Park Track and Field – Proposed Concept Plan**

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**Figure 3:** Existing Killarney Park Track and Field – Looking Northwest



**Figure 4:** Rendering of the proposed Upgrades and Expansion to Killarney Park Track and Field – Looking Northwest

**Killarney Park Track and Field – Proposed Concept Plan**

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**Figure 5:** Existing Killarney Park Track and Field – Looking Southwest

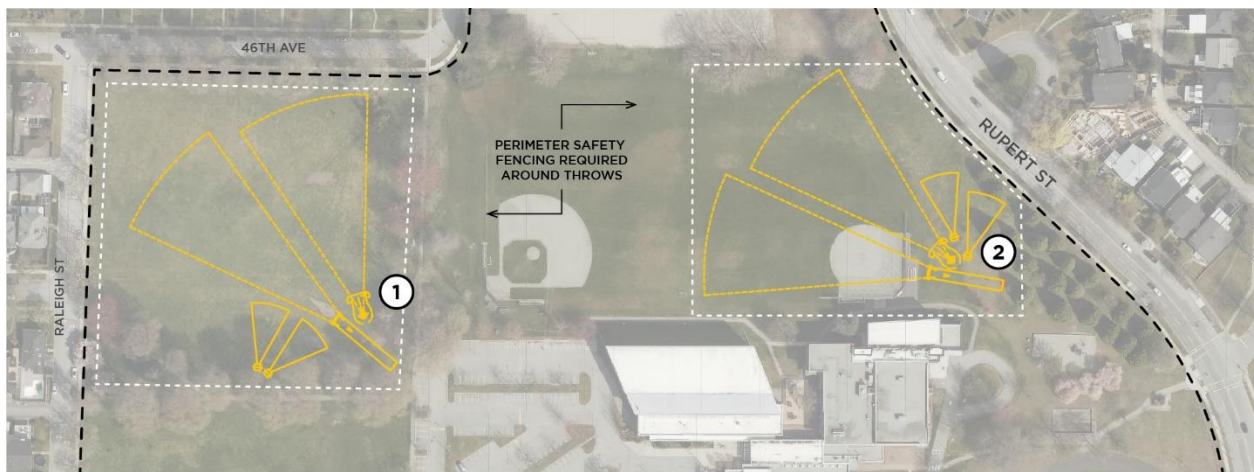


**Figure 6:** Rendering of the proposed Upgrades and Expansion to Killarney Park Track and Field – Looking Southwest

**Killarney Park Track and Field – Alternative Throws Locations**



**Figure 7:** Exploration of Alternative throw locations within Killarney Park - Context



THROWS SPORTS LAYOUT LOCATION OPTIONS 1 AND 2

**Figure 8:** Exploration of Alternative throw locations within Killarney Park - Detailed

Track and Field Strategy – Facility Category Descriptions




Category	C	B	A
Use	Recreation 	Recreation and Training 	Recreation, Training and Competition 
Facility	Facilities supporting leisure activity for running, walking, fitness, cross-training, school fitness classes and informal athletic/para-athletic training. Facilities are generally non-reservable.	In addition to category C facilities, category B facilities provide for formal athletic and para-athletic training and small event hosting and facilities are reservable.	In addition to category B and C facilities, category A facilities are larger, can accommodate more users and support competitions and host larger events.
Amenities	Includes a track of 6-lanes or less with a low impact surface where possible. Other amenities may include fitness equipment, benches, and a water fountain.	Includes a minimum six-lane rubberized, lit track and as many core amenities (long jump and high jump areas) and desired amenities (e.g. change rooms, communications systems) as possible. The 'B' facilities will align with the IAAF (International Association of Athletics Federations) Category V facility.	Includes an 8-lane rubberized, lit track, space for spectator seating, and all core amenities (e.g. equipment storage space, timing, announcement and communication systems) and as many desired amenities (e.g. serviced for broadcast capabilities) as possible. The 'A' facilities will align with the IAAF Category III facility.
Locations	Proposed category 'C' sites are: Templeton Park, Memorial South Park, Balaclava Park, Britannia Secondary, Empire Fields Park, Charles Tupper Secondary, Camosun Park and Brockton Oval in Stanley Park.	Proposed category 'B' sites are: Kerrisdale Park/Point Grey Secondary, Killarney Secondary, Strathcona Park and Eric Hamber Secondary.	Proposed Category 'A' sites are: Vancouver Technical Secondary, Sir Winston Churchill Secondary.

Table 1: Track and Field Strategy – Facility Category Descriptions