



September 4, 2020

MEMO TO : Park Board Commissioners

FROM : Shauna Wilton
Acting General Manager, Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation

SUBJECT : **Oppenheimer Park Restoration & Reopening – Board Briefing Memo**

Dear Commissioners,

The purpose of this memo is to provide an update on the work underway and estimated costs to restore Oppenheimer Park for public use following the removal of the homeless encampment. Costs incurred by the City of Vancouver and Park Board during the period of time the park was occupied by the encampment are still being reviewed and will be provided once available.

Park & Fieldhouse Restoration

In early May of 2020, in recognition of the significant threat the COVID-19 pandemic poses to public health, safety and welfare, particularly to vulnerable segments of society, the Province of BC issued Ministerial Orders [M150](#) and [M152](#) under the Emergency Program Act, for the immediate evacuation of the encampment in Oppenheimer Park. A variety of housing and shelter options were provided to camp residents.

Following the decampment, Park Board staff assessments of the park identified that significant restoration work would be required before the park could be re-opened to the public. The scope of this work encompasses temporary fencing, grading and restoration of the grass areas of the park, arboricultural work, repairs to the playground, and the restoration of historical and cultural elements within the park, with a total estimated cost of \$450,000.

The fieldhouse washrooms also experienced damage during the encampment and will require repair prior to being reopened. As staff had previously identified other facility improvements needed to bring the fieldhouse up to an acceptable standard for the safe and efficient delivery of programming activities, the washroom restoration work will be included in the overall facility upgrade project. Preliminary assessments by the City's Real Estate and Facilities Management department indicate a cost of approximately \$420,000 to undertake this work, which will be initiated in early fall.

The park restoration work is well underway, however due to the extent of some of the required repairs, the park will require a phased opening. Beginning early this fall, staff expect the eastern edge of the park will be the first section to return to service, followed by the playground, and then the fieldhouse. Temporary amenities, including access to toilets and hand washing stations, will be in place until the fieldhouse is back in service.

Park Programming & Community Engagement

Through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Park Board, Carnegie Community Centre is responsible for the delivery of social, recreational, and cultural programming at the park and out of the fieldhouse. The MOU articulates that the Carnegie Community Centre



Association, through its Oppenheimer Park Committee, has an advisory role to Park Board with regards to the park.

For over 20 years Carnegie has operated year-round programming in Oppenheimer Park, which offers one of the lowest-barrier spaces in the Downtown Eastside, serving some of the most isolated and marginalized community members who often cannot access programs and services in other spaces. This programming also provides a gateway to assist community members in accessing other essential services including health, income, housing and employment supports. Programs are delivered directly by staff, community volunteers, or in collaboration with over 70 community partners, and include: drop-in recreation programs; programs that support language and technological literacy; Indigenous programming; cultural programming; children's programming; sports and physical wellness programs; peer employment and volunteer opportunities; meal and food security programs; veterinary services; peer-led overdose prevention; and much more.

In acknowledgement of the significant role Oppenheimer Park plays in the Downtown Eastside, Park Board staff are working closely with Carnegie Community Centre staff to ensure that respectful and inclusive community conversations are conducted regarding the park's restoration and program delivery. Engagement will include conversations to welcome community members back to Oppenheimer Park, along with the reactivation of sacred spaces in partnership with the community. Programming will include mobile and to-go recreation programming and information and referrals to other community programs and resources.

The restoration, community engagement work, and phased program implementation are being planned collaboratively to ensure that at re-opening, the park will be well positioned to successfully meet the needs of the local community. Staff will provide further updates as the restoration proceeds.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shauna Wilton". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Shauna Wilton
Acting General Manager - Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation
604-257-8448

is/amb/dh/clc

Copy to: PB Senior Leadership Team
PB Communications
Park Development
Arts, Culture & Community Services
City Manager's Office