



July 31, 2020

MEMO TO : Park Board Commissioners

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

SUBJECT : **Oppenheimer Park Restoration – 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. The costs related to the removal and clean-up of the encampment, as well as estimated costs for managing encampments in parks in general, are still being determined and will be provided once available.

Background

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 encompasses grading and restoration of the grass areas of the park, arboricultural work, restoration of the fieldhouse, repairs to the playground, and the restoration of historical and cultural elements within the park. The work is anticipated to allow for a re-opening in early fall of 2020, with an estimated cost of \$840,000. Due to the extent of some of the required repairs, the park will likely require a phased opening.

Concurrently, Park Board staff are working with Carnegie Community Centre staff to ensure that a respectful and inclusive process of community engagement is conducted in acknowledgement of the significant role the park plays in the Downtown Eastside. Carnegie Community Centre has operated arts, cultural, educational and recreational programming year-round at Oppenheimer Park for over 20 years. The park offers one of the lowest-barrier spaces in the Downtown Eastside, and serves some of the most isolated and marginalized community members who often cannot access programs and services in other spaces. Programming in Oppenheimer Park serves as 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.



Program delivery at Oppenheimer Park is governed by a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Park Board and Carnegie Community Centre, whereby Carnegie 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 the Board with regards to Oppenheimer Park. Currently, and in alignment with the Park Board, Carnegie staff are preparing to restart programming at and near Oppenheimer Park with approval through the City-wide Business Planning Oversight Committee as part of the City's COVID-19 Re-start process. 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 in collaboration 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, with a large initial "S" and a long, sweeping underline.

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

/amb/dh/clc

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