

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Strathcona Gardens recreation complex is a well-loved and well-used recreational hub that contributes to the health and well-being of residents within the City of Campbell River, Electoral Area D and surrounding areas. To ensure that the facility continues to meet the needs of our communities, the Strathcona Regional District (SRD) embarked on a project called REC-REATE Strathcona Gardens, with the goal of renewing the facility to address aging components and deliver recreation services that the community desires in an exciting, modern, safe and inclusive environment.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

REC-REATE grew out of recommendations from a 2015 needs assessment study. As part of this study, the SRD asked for public feedback on how the facility could better meet people's recreational needs. A number of potential actions for the facility were identified, including operational enhancements, business planning, and redevelopment of the building.

Over the past three years, the SRD project team has been working with consulting architects, engineers, recreation specialists and the community to develop a new concept design that would address gaps in service provision and aging infrastructure in need of upgrading.

A revised option was developed and recommended to the SRD board of directors in April 2018. The board adopted that option, which would cover a partial new build of the facility, including:

- a new aquatic centre
- improved fitness centre adjacent to the new wellness centre on the first floor
- improvements and upgrades to the ice facilities
- new storage and public spaces
- energy efficiency measures

In November 2018, a schematic design, which provides greater technical detail, was approved by the SRD board. This design work also included a more detailed cost estimate of approximately \$62.1-million. Given increasing costs of construction on Vancouver Island and new tariffs, the SRD anticipates that these costs will increase between now and project completion.

PROJECT PHASES

Considerable work has been undertaken over the last three years to develop a feasible redevelopment concept that has support from the community. This includes a needs assessment (2015), a condition assessment (2016), a feasibility study (2017), a revised concept plan (April 2018) and schematic design (Nov. 2018). In February 2018, traffic specialists Bunt and Associates also provided a traffic impact assessment for the revised concept which found that the plan's proposed traffic lay-out and parking supply would accommodate regular peak period conditions at the renovated recreation complex. However, for larger events such as regional swim meets or hockey games, a special event parking and traffic management plan will need to be developed in consultation with adjacent property owners, the City of Campbell River and user groups.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

In order to develop a plan that reflected the community's key priorities, public input was gathered through 2015 to 2017. Public feedback was collected at facility workshops for users and stakeholder groups, as well as through an established community advisory group. In addition, public outreach happened via interactive public events, update meetings and an online survey.

COSTS

COST ESTIMATE

The schematic design came with an updated cost estimate of \$62.1 million. This increase is the result of a higher degree of certainty, and the escalation of some key cost factors, such as increasing construction costs and the forecast of new steel tariffs. It is possible that the cost could rise to \$77.5 million by the time this project is under construction if these external market pressures continue. The SRD is already contributing to a reserve fund to help pay for this project and does not plan to increase the amount that is collected by taxpayers to cover increases in costs. The plan is to extend the length of the borrowing term rather than increase the annual tax amounts.

FUNDING

The SRD is planning to apply for funding in early 2019, through the newly-created \$134M Canada-British Columbia Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program. If the application is successful, the remaining costs would be supplemented by reserve funds that are already being collected from taxpayers and set aside for this project. If the application is not successful, the Board will need to reconsider how to proceed with the required upgrades.

NEXT STEPS

With the schematic design now approved, the SRD will apply for provincial and federal grant funding. Funding is expected to be announced in late 2019, with the goal of starting construction at the end of 2020 and completion in 2023.

STAYING INFORMED

Visit the project pages online at www.recreatesg.ca, and sign up for the newsletter (mail or email) by contacting the project team at recreate@srd.ca or calling 250-830-6711.

