

REPORT

Parks and Recreation, Engineering, and Community Services Departments

To: Mayor Johnstone and Members of Council
Date: July 7, 2025

From: Dean Gibson, Director of Parks and Recreation
Lisa Leblanc, Director of Engineering and Deputy CAO
Blair Fryer, Director of Community Services
File: 2723370
Item #: 2025-201

Subject: Westminster Pier Park – Activation and Community Re-Engagement

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the staff report titled “Westminster Pier Park – Activation and Community Re-Engagement ” dated July 7, 2025 be received for information.

PURPOSE

This report provides information on a one-year pilot project to support the activation and re-engagement of the community at Westminster Pier Park.

SUMMARY

This report outlines a one-year pilot project aimed at supporting the activation and re-engagement of the community at Westminster Pier Park in light of the re-opening the riverfront esplanade connection to the park. Supporting this initiative are also actions to address challenging behaviours and acts of vandalism that are impacting perceptions of public safety and enjoyment of the park.

An interdepartmental team developed a proactive strategy built on four pillars—Engaging, Observing, Reporting and Responding—to shift from reactive management to activation and prevention.

Key actions include:

- Increasing positive park activations and events.
- Increasing standards of maintenance for park grounds and washrooms.
- Phased launch of new Park Liaison Officers (PLOs).

The initiative aims to restore the park as a vibrant and welcoming community space, reduce risk, and protect City assets.

BACKGROUND

Westminster Pier Park has been disconnected from the continuous riverfront esplanade for over three years as a result of an adjacent private development project. In late June 2025, the riverfront esplanade connecting the River Market and Fraser River Discovery Centre to the west end of Westminster Pier Park will re-open for public use and the City is anticipating and preparing for a resurgence of interest in the park as a riverfront destination.

Unfortunately during the intervening years, the park has been repeatedly targeted by vandalism, particularly to public washrooms, elevators, and playground equipment. Damage costs from 2024–2025 total approximately:

- \$167,000 (washrooms and elevator)
- \$291,000 (playground equipment)

These acts, combined with challenging behaviours by some, have contributed to a diminished sense of public safety and park usability.

While the City's broader Crises Response Pilot Project (CRPP) addresses homelessness, substance use, and mental health, the most impactful issues at Westminster Pier Park are not directly linked to these crises and require a distinct, focused response to better support the public's attendance and ongoing enjoyment of the park.

EXISTING POLICY AND PRACTICE

Tools used to manage and regulate the operation of City parks include:

- [Parks Regulation Bylaw No. 3646, 1959](#);
- [Smoking Control Bylaw No. 6263, 1995](#).
- [New Westminster Consumption of Liquor in Public Places Bylaw No. 8264, 2021](#).

In addition, the Parks and Recreation Department has operated a seasonal Park Ambassador program for many years. This program supports park sites across the entire city and focusses on public relations, validating park use permits, and monitoring behaviors within parks for compliance with applicable bylaws.

DISCUSSION

PROPOSED PILOT PROJECT APPROACH

The proposed 12-month pilot uses a four-part strategy:

1. **Engaging** - Use City staff and events to interact with park users, promote appropriate behaviour, and invite positive community participation.
2. **Observing** - Enhance visibility and situational awareness through increased presence of trained personnel and the public.
3. **Reporting** - Establish mechanisms to report and escalate issues promptly and appropriately.
4. **Responding** - Deliver consistent, timely actions—from maintenance to enforcement—to build public trust and support safe use.

KEY INITIATIVES

A. Park Activations and Events

Scheduled summer and early fall 2025 events in Westminster Pier Park, or in immediate proximity to the park include:

- Afro World Expo
- Siwahli Festival
- Dia Campo
- Fridays on Front
- RiverFest

Additional smaller-scale activities (e.g. yoga, games, performances) will occur regularly to attract community use and foster a positive atmosphere. Where appropriate, messaging will be developed to encourage the community to come and enjoy the events and activities the space has to offer.

B. Park Concession Services

“Eats at the Pier” concession, operated by the City, provides daily food services during the summer and supports on-site monitoring and incident reporting.

C. Grounds and Washroom Maintenance

To match increased park activity, service levels will be adjusted:

- Consistent standard of site cleanliness through more frequent washroom cleaning
- Additional logistics and site staffing support during events and peak use periods

D. Enhanced On-Site Presence

A multi-layered team will help implement all four pillars of the pilot project approach:

- Park Liaison Officers (PLOs) – New staff function to support an ongoing positive presence in the park, supporting patrons, deterring vandalism, and addressing behaviours

- Park Ambassadors – Seasonal staff providing monitoring and public engagement to complement the role of PLOs and Contracted Security.
- Contracted Security – Dedicated late-night site personnel to monitor and escalate urgent issues.
- New Westminster Police (NWPD) – Continued emergency response with seasonal bicycle/foot patrols when resources permit.

Pilot Evaluation Metrics

The intent of the pilot project approach allows staff to test various forms of site activations and interventions at Westminster Pier Park to establish which initiatives are most effective in re-establishing the park as a welcoming and inclusive site and addressing the past issues of vandalism and challenging behaviours.

The project's impact will be assessed through a number of measures including:

- Park usage and concession sales data
- Event participation rates
- Emergency service call volumes
- Vandalism response costs
- Staff reports and incident logs
- Public feedback
- Return on Investment analysis

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Directing resources that might typically be used in responding to acts of vandalism towards pro-active and preventative measures, is a more sustainable approach and helps to mitigate risk factors for the park and more broadly for the City's downtown core.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Total estimated incremental resourcing impact for the one-year pilot:

<u>Action Area</u>	<u>Potential Staff and Resourcing Impact</u>
Park Activations & Events	\$71,500
Washroom & Grounds Maintenance	\$30,000
Park Concession Services	No additional cost
Park Liaison Officers & Security	\$318,000

Funding will come from existing departmental budgets, reallocations, and vacancy savings. Any final ongoing resource adjustments will be considered during future budget planning, based on pilot project outcomes.

INTERDEPARTMENTAL LIAISON

This initiative was developed in partnership with the following departments: Parks and Recreation; Engineering; Community Services; Planning and Development; Police; and Finance.

OPTIONS

Options for Council's consideration include:

1. Receive this report for information.
2. Provide staff with alternate direction.

Option #1 is recommended.

CONCLUSION

Reconnecting Westminster Pier Park to the broader riverfront creates opportunities to re-invigorate the park and address issues that have diminished the public's perception of the site as a welcoming and inclusive destination. The proposed pilot project is a comprehensive and proactive plan to re-establish public trust, and promote safe and enjoyable park use for all.

APPROVALS

This report was prepared by:

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This report was approved by:

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