

# **REPORT**

## ***Parks and Recreation Department***

**To:** Mayor Cote and Members of Council      **Date:** April 11, 2022

**From:** Dean Gibson  
Director of Parks and Recreation      **File:** 2062389

**Item #:** 2022-246

**Subject:** Update on Mayor's 50 Ideas Parks & Recreation Initiatives #3 & #18

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

THAT Council receive this report for information.

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### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on Parks and Recreation activities completed in 2020 and 2021 as related to from the Mayor's '50 Ideas in 50 Days' initiative.

### **BACKGROUND**

Over the last 50 days leading up to the 2018 municipal election, ideas were presented outlining opportunities to enhance existing, or provide new, amenities or services for the benefit of the community.

In the September 30, 2019 open report to Council, staff identified ideas that were implemented or initiated in 2019, and ideas that were to be completed in 2020-2021. The proposed approach for 2020/2021 and associated resources for the remaining ideas related to Parks and Recreation were outlined as:

Reference	Idea Description	Financial Implication
<b>A.</b>	<b>Expanded Loonie program</b> Additional low cost options to the swim and skate schedule have been approved in the 2020 Fees and Charges Bylaw. These are being implemented as a pilot to evaluate impact that will inform potential additional low cost options for other program areas (i.e. drop-in sports, fitness, and wellness) for consideration in the proposed 2021 Fees and Charges Bylaw.	To be evaluated during 2020 pilot program
<b>B.</b>	<b>More Public Seating</b> (engagement and implementation) Engage a group of stakeholders from each neighbourhood to workshop locations for new public seating opportunities. Location and seating typology to be implemented upon Council approval.	\$20,000 (annual capital budget request for 2020-2024 period)

As the Parks & Recreation Department is continually working to improve park amenities and recreational services, the following ideas have been implemented, or initiated, in 2020-2021 within existing and budgeted resources:

- #3 More Public Seating -Work with the community to provide more comfortable public seating opportunities in city parks and streetscapes.
- #18 Loonie Program – Expand the City’s Loonie Recreation Program to offer a \$1 drop-in recreational program every day of the week.

The ideas presented in the ‘50 ideas in 50 days’ are intended to enhance public spaces, park amenities, and recreational services to help meet the needs of the City’s growing and diverse community. This report outlines the approaches taken and outcomes of the completed initiatives: More Public Seating, and Expanded Loonie Program.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Public Seating**

The Parks and Recreation department, through the ‘50 ideas in 50 days’ initiative #3 – More Public Seating, were asked to work with the community to provide more comfortable public seating opportunities in the city parks and streetscapes. In the current climate of COVID-19, parks and outdoor amenities were highly utilized by the community. Accordingly, enhancements were made to outdoor spaces to accommodate needs for more public seating and small group gathering/social spaces.

Through the COVID response survey, the Parks and Open Space division added outdoor seating and opportunities for temporary sheltered spaces within parks and open spaces as funded through the 2021 Capital program.

Additional seating was integrated in parks, open spaces, and along streetscapes; refer to Attachment “A” for images of public realm seating added in 2021. Recent projects with public seating are listed in the table below:

Location	# of additional seats
Ryall Therapeutic Garden 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6 Adirondack Chairs</li> </ul>
Connaught Heights Pollinator Meadow (2021)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 bench seat</li> </ul>
Alcohol in Parks Program (2021)	<p>Various parks throughout the city which included additional picnic tables in parks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sapperton: 1</li> <li>• Hume: 2</li> <li>• Queen's Park: 6 + 1 kids'</li> <li>• Port Royal: 2 + 1 kids'</li> <li>• Grimston: 1</li> <li>• Moody Park: 4</li> <li>• Westminster Pier Park: 4</li> </ul> <p>20 picnic tables and 2 kids tables = 22 altogether.</p>
Moody Park (2021)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 Accessible Picnic Table (ADA compliant)</li> </ul>
Rivermarket (2021)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 picnic tables</li> </ul> <p>Installed along the Riverfront Esplanade adjacent to the River Market.</p>
Quayside Tugger Gathering Space (2021)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perimeter bench seat</li> </ul>
Westminster Pier Park Play Area at 6 <sup>th</sup> Street Overpass/ Ramp (2021)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 hammocks</li> <li>• 8 Adirondack chairs</li> <li>• 2 picnic tables</li> <li>• 2 benches</li> </ul>

Parks continues to look for opportunities and works towards the advancement of this initiative of expanding and adding more comfortable seating within the public realm either as integrated into existing capital projects or as smaller stand-alone initiatives. Although many of the locations are to be determined for 2022, the following projects that include seating are currently underway by Parks staff or in collaboration with the Engineering Department:

- Riverside Adventure Park
- Victory Park
- Agnes Street Greenway

### Loonie Program Expansion

The Department has a long history of offering low-cost drop-in services with fees that promote affordable participation. As per the '50 ideas in 50 days' campaign initiative #18 – Loonie Expansion Program, the department was asked to expand the city's Loonie Recreation Program to offer a \$1 dollar drop-in recreational program every day of the week to promote affordable participation.

In the July 8, 2019 Fees and Charges Bylaw Amendment, which set the 2020 Parks and Recreation user fees, Council endorsed a significant increase to the number of low cost drop-in opportunities for public skating and public swimming. Concurrent with the adoption of this Bylaw, Mayor and Council directed staff to develop options to expand the low cost drop-in service offerings beyond swimming and skating. With this direction, the “Loonie” program evolved over 2020 and 2021 into the much more broadly based \$2 “Try-It” program. The program offers any participant an affordable \$2.00 admission fee to approximately 30 drop-in services per week that expand across services including group fitness, swimming, skating, drop-in sports, gymnastics, and drop-in children’s services. In order to incentivize the public to try new and different services, it is intended that the discounted pricing is applied on a quarterly rotational basis across a variety of services, days and times in order to be as accessible as possible to the broadest cross section of the local population.

In 2020 Council also adopted new Access and Inclusion Policies and Procedures aimed at streamlining and reducing barriers to the application and administration processes associated with persons accessing the Parks and Recreation Department’s Financial Assistance Program. The Access and Inclusion Services brochure is included as Attachment “B” to this report. As the Access and Inclusion Financial Assistance Program does not apply to single admission visits, the \$2.00 “Try-It” fee also helps to bridge this service gap.

The full scope of department access and inclusion services are outlined on the city’s website at <https://www.newwestcity.ca/parks-and-recreation/access-and-inclusion>.

The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 has disrupted the normal offering of many parks and recreation services. As a result, the implementation of the Access and Inclusion policy and introduction of the “Try-It” services has been slower than originally anticipated. As public health orders continue to relax and the public feels comfortable returning to parks and recreation services, the full impact of the new policy and service offering will become more evident.

## **FINANCIAL IMPACTS**

### **Loonie Program Expansion**

#### Public Seating Initiative

Allowances for projects planned for 2022 are included in the approved 2022 Capital budget.

#### Loonie Program Expansion

As public health orders continue to relax and the public feels comfortable returning to parks and recreation services, the full impact and benefits of the new policy and service offering will become more evident and addressed in subsequent departmental operating budgets if required.

## **OPTIONS**

Options for Council's consideration include:

1. That Council receive this report for information; or
2. Provide staff with alternate direction.

Option #1 is recommended.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A – Images of types of seating added in 2021.

Attachment B – Access & Inclusion Services brochure

## **APPROVALS**

This report was prepared by:

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