



Engagement Plan for

Sandy Beach, River Park, Britannia Slopes –
Combined Park Management Plan

Project Background

In recent years residents and park advocates have expressed concern over the overuse and deterioration of the park (River Park/Sandy Beach/Britannia Slopes area). Park use conflicts are increasing, especially between those visitors exercising dogs off-leash and those using the park for other activities—walking, jogging, cycling and picnicking. The summer rafting season brings additional challenges as Sandy Beach is a major launching area for float trips on the Elbow River.

In June 2007, the River Park Steering Committee, a group of various park stakeholders, presented a memo to Parks including recommendations for short-term maintenance and long-term planning to address the physical issues and users conflicts at River Park. One recommendation was to develop and adopt a management plan for River Park, similar to the Bowmont Natural Environment Park Management Plan.

In 2008 Parks hired O2 Planning + Design Inc. to develop a Combined Park Management and Design Development Plan (The Plan) for River Park – Sandy Beach - Britannia Slopes.

This Plan is to address all the parklands, both natural and formally designed. The purpose of The Plan is to assess the existing situation and make recommendations for physical improvements and ongoing management strategies to reduce user conflicts, restore natural areas and upgrade other landscapes and amenities within manicured areas of the park. The Plan will integrate the goals and objectives identified in the Natural Area Management Plan, Urban Park Master Plan and the Open Space Plan, as well as other policies and bylaws related to parks, pathways, trails and animal control. The Plan will reinforce the overall vision of River Park – Sandy Beach – Britannia Slopes as a multi-use regional park within the river valley system.

The plan was scheduled to be presented to committee on May 5th, 2010. As news of the committee presentation of the proposed plan spread to the broader community, The City of Calgary received several requests to extend the public consultation process on the draft plan. Although the year-long public engagement process included representatives from 18 stakeholder groups consisting of community associations, environmental and recreation organizations, The City of Calgary acknowledges there are many individual residents who still wish to review and provide input on the draft plan.

Background on Engagement to Date

A combination of Internal and External stakeholders were invited to participate in two workshops and a Public Open House on the plan.

Stakeholder Workshop #1 – January 29, 2009

At the first workshop stakeholders were asked to contribute toward Issue Identification, Opportunity Identification and Evaluation Criteria as follows:

- For the Issue Identification portion of the workshop, participants were asked to identify key issues with the park, which were most important and why, and where in the park these issues most apply.
- For the Opportunity Identification portion, participants were asked to write down opportunities they felt existed for the park and indicate why they are important.
- Lastly, participants were asked to review a list of evaluation criteria for judging the success of the project. They were asked to write down any additional criteria that may have been missed or that needed to be included. Participants were then asked to identify their top three criteria and why.

At the closing of the workshop, the design team presented a review of next steps in the process and provided take-home comment sheets for additional input.

Stakeholder Workshop # 2 July 16, 2009

The second workshop provided the first opportunity for participants to view the Draft Plan Principles and Concepts.

Presentations were made by the design team and included a review of the Parking and Traffic study and the Draft Plan Principles and Concepts.

Breakout and plenary sessions were provided to review and discuss the Draft Plan Concepts. Stakeholders were then divided into groups and asked to provide feedback on the Draft Plan Principles and Concepts; groups were then asked to Report-back.

At the closing of the workshop, the design team presented a review of next steps in the process and provided take-home comment sheets for additional input.

Public Open House – September 29, 2009

All stakeholders were invited to attend the public open house. The open house provided an opportunity for the general public and stakeholders to view the Draft concepts.

Information presented at the open house included display board stations that identified Background Information, User Survey, Restoration, Dog Use, Parking and Traffic and the Design Development Plan. All stations, with the exception of the Background Information, were staffed by O2 Planning and Design personnel to answer questions on the plans.

A formal presentation was made by O2 Planning and Design and was followed by a Q&A period that included discussion on how to provide additional comment on the plan after the open house. A Frequently Asked Questions handout was provided to all participants that provided some additional background information on the decision making process.

On October 9, 2009 the final Draft Plans were posted to the City of Calgary Parks website with an explanation and summary of changes made to the Design Development Plan following the Open House.

Project Definition

A Notice of Motion, NM2010-17, was put forward by Alderman Pincott on May 10, 2010 that directed Administration to “undertake a public engagement process in order to more fully incorporate public and stakeholder feedback for the redevelopment plan...”

There are three deliverables from the Notice of Motion:

1. Report to SPC on Community and Protective Services 2010 June 02 meeting with a public engagement plan
2. Commence Public Engagement with community stakeholders in November 2010
3. Report to SPC on Community and Protective Services with a completed River Park / Sandy Beach / Britannia Slopes Park Management and Design Development Plan no later than 2011 July.

Goals/Objectives for engagement

- Provide opportunities for all stakeholders (that wish to) to provide feedback on the creation of a management and design development plan for The Park
- Establish / maintain good relations with the affected communities
- Use a process that clearly identifies what feedback was heard and how that feedback affected the development of the plan
- Demonstrate how the cornerstones identified in The City's engage Policy (accountability, inclusiveness, transparency, commitment and responsiveness) are being met
- Inform stakeholders about plans and decisions that will affect their lives
- Mitigate project impacts (impacts to internal and external stakeholders)
- Assist stakeholders in understanding the complexities, details of the issue
- Build stakeholder support for the plan

Stakeholders

INTERNAL Stakeholder Table

Water Resources
Water Services
Recreation
Parks Operations Central
Transportation Planning
Animal By-Law Services
Pathways
Natural Areas – Planning and Development
Community & Neighborhood Services

EXTERNAL Stakeholder Table

Stakeholder Groups from previous engagement process
Britannia Community Association (BCA)
Elbow Park Residents' Association (EPRA)
South Calgary Community Association (SCCA)
Between Friends Club
YMCA Calgary
River Valleys Committee
River Park Working Committee
River Park Preservation Society
Calgary Pathway Advisory Committee
Cows & Fish
Dogercise
Nature Calgary
Friends of River Park
Off-leash Calgary
Stanley Park to Glenmore Dam Preservation Society
Elbow Valley Cycle Club
Calgary Golf and Country Club
Ward 11 Office
Council

While the previous engagement process made use of a defined stakeholder group, the proposed process going forward will not. All the stakeholders who have been involved in the process are invited to continue their participation along with any other citizens and/or stakeholders who would like to participate in the process.

Sensitivity/Risk

- An engagement process has already been undertaken for this project – the input that has been gathered from that process must be still considered as this project moves forward
- A lot of work was done to develop a plan and where possible, that work needs to be conserved.
- There may be a need to rebuild trust with the stakeholders who did not feel their voices were heard during the first process
- Due to both the time of year and the fact that it is an election year, the public engagement process will not be able to move forward until November 2010
- There are many opposing opinions on the plan for the park and the process going forward needs to be sensitive to that and ensure that it helps build understanding of those different views.
- There are other City projects that impact the same communities that need to be taken into consideration during this process.

Engagement Strategy & Promise

The strategy chosen for this project is consult:

Stakeholder feedback is obtained through consultation to analyze issues and build alternatives, and thereby make contributions to the decision-making process. Consulting with stakeholders ensures issues and concerns are understood and considered.

The corresponding promise that goes with the strategy of consult:

We will consult with stakeholders to obtain feedback and ensure their input is incorporated to the maximum extent possible. We undertake to advise how consultation affected the decisions and outcomes.

Communications / Inform:

Communications is a key part of any engagement process and as such will be used throughout the process to ensure that we are providing information that is timely, accurate, balanced, objective, easily understood, and highly accessible. We will respond to questions for clarification.

Proposed Engagement Process

Step 1 – Education/Background Session (including acknowledgement of previous stakeholder feedback)

Purpose – Inform – to ensure that everyone is working off of the same information and to give opportunities for those that have not been involved to understand all the background

- Bring original stakeholder group and all others who wish to participate in the process together
- This presentation would give an overview of the history of the park, including all of its previous uses / configurations and the current state of the park.
- The process that has been done to date would be presented – including the case for this project.
- This presentation will be made available online for all those unable to attend the session.

Step 2 - Public Meeting: Open Space Conversation Session

Purpose – Consult - to allow all stakeholders to have a voice in determining the key issues for this project

- This event would be open to any and all stakeholders / citizens of Calgary that wish to participate
- A facilitator will work with the group of people at the session to help them create their own agenda and determine their topics of conversation
- People will then be able to select the conversations that they are most interested in participating in. Each conversation will have a note taker to ensure that the comments are all captured
- The session will end with the whole group coming back together for closing comments
- Reporting back – all notes from this session will be sent out via email or mail (depending on the preferred communication methods selected by participants) and posted on the website

Step 3 – Online Consultation

Purpose – Consult – to allow further comment and discussion on the issue areas and to begin looking at parts of the plan

- Having moderated discussions on the different key areas that were identified through the open space conversation
- Introduce the draft plan
- Allow all participants to generate discussion via online blog

Step 4 – Public Meeting: Draft Plan Working Session World Café

Purpose – Consult – to ensure that the comments heard are being reflected in the plan and to allow further discussion and refinement

- Present all information back to the public and show them “Here’s what we heard” and “Here’s how we’ve interpreted what you’ve told us on the Plan”
- Have groups work through the different pieces of the plan for any further refinement
- Each person would get an opportunity to go and discuss each key area of the plan and move to a new group each time so they continue to hear different points of view
- Each group would be facilitated and notes recorded on discussion

Step 5 – Release Proposed Plan Online

Purpose – Listen and Learn – to see if there are any remaining issues that need to be dealt with prior to taking the plan out

- Report back on all that was heard during the World Café and how those comments refined the plan
- Allow all participants to view the plan prior to Proposed Plan Session
- Allow public to generate discussion via online blog to see if there are any remaining issues that need resolving

Step 6 – Proposed Plan Session 2 (Present Final Concept Plan)

Purpose – Inform – let stakeholders know the details of the plan and how all their input contributed to the formation of the plan

- This event would be to do a presentation on the proposed plan that is being brought to committee with an opportunity for Q & A.
- It would clearly walk stakeholders through the process of how comments that were provided were incorporated into the plan or in some case why those comment were not able to be incorporated into the plan.
- It would outline their opportunity to participate in committee hearing

Step 7 – Committee Hearing

Alignment

Communications and engagement will work closely together to ensure alignment from that perspective.

Budget/Required Resources

Budget will be required for the proposed engagement activities for venue bookings, promotional tactics, facilitator and other associated costs. *More details when tactics are agree upon...*

An experienced facilitator and online moderator will be required. *More details when tactics are agreed upon...*

Evaluation

It would be useful to do an evaluation of the engage process at key points along the way to ensure that the objectives are being met. After all engagement activities, an opportunity to comment on the process will be provided. Those comments would be used to make any alterations that would improve the rest of the process.

Reporting

The engage representative will report directly to the project manager and keep communications informed.