

Date: February 11, 2025
To: Anthony Haddad, City Manager
From: Ysabel Contreras, Parks Planner

File No: 6240-01

Subject: Lakawanna Park Upgrade – Final Concept Design

Staff Recommendation

THAT Council receive into the record the report dated February 11, 2025 titled "Lakawanna Park Upgrade – Final Concept Design";

AND THAT Council endorse the Lakawanna Final Concept Design to proceed to detail design and procurement;

AND THAT Council direct staff to prepare and submit an application to the Tire Stewardship BC (TSBC) program, to help offset the costs associated with the playground surfacing.

Strategic Priority Objective

Vision: Penticton is a connected, resilient and healthy waterfront city focused on safety, livability and vibrancy.

Livable & Accessible: The City of Penticton will proactively plan for deliberate growth, focusing on creating an inclusive, healthy, and vibrant community.

Executive Summary

The Lakawanna Park playground and spraypark had undergone a planning and engagement process aimed to create a final design concept that embodies the community's vision for this space. This initiative addresses the need for revitalizing the two aging assets identified in the Parks and Recreation Masterplan, which recommends replacement cycles of 20 years for playgrounds and 15 years for spray parks. The Official Community Plan (OCP) also indicates that Lakawanna Park is situated between two Strategic Growth Areas: Downtown to the east and Northern Gateway to the west. The future land uses planned around the park include Tourist Commercial and both Low and High Density developments, emphasizing the importance of supporting the future growth and overall viability in the area.

Two preliminary design concepts were developed for community feedback; one working within the existing playground footprint and the other proposing an expansion into the parking lot. The engagement process

revealed a strong preference for expanding the playground, which has been integrated into the final design concept. The finalized concept also highlights five key design principles: accessibility and universal design, safety, urban forest and sustainability, and interactive play. These principles were strongly supported by the community and are reflected in the various park features shown in the plan.

This report details the process undertaken by staff in developing the final concept design, as well as the various play features included. Additionally, it outlines three potential options for implementing the playground upgrades. With Council’s support, the project will move into detailed design, and construction is anticipated to begin in late 2025.

Background

On October 2024, City staff presented the proposed design priorities and engagement process for upgrading the playground and spray park at Lakawanna Park to the Accessibility Committee (AC) and the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee (PRAC). These facilities, originally constructed in 2000, require replacement in accordance with the recommendations of the 2018 Parks and Recreation Master Plan (PRMP). To initiate this project, the City engaged with BENCH Site Design Inc. to manage the planning, community engagement, and conceptual design of the existing play components. The redesign process started with a comprehensive site inventory and analysis, along with a review of relevant city policies and guidelines. This groundwork allowed the team to establish a series of design priorities as shown in Figure 1 which guided the development of two preliminary concepts. Concept 1 maintains the existing footprint of the park, while Concept 2 proposes an expansion to incorporate additional play areas, resulting in reduced parking, additional funding and consideration for a phased implementation approach.



Accessibility & Universal Design

Play equipment for diverse abilities and ages; accessible site furniture, pathways, and play surfaces.



Safety

Improvements to planting, fencing, and park entries to maintain clear sightlines and safe connections to surrounding streets and parking areas.



Urban Forest & Sustainability

Protecting root zones of existing trees, incorporating permeable surfaces, and adding new tree plantings where possible.



Creative Opportunities & Public Art

Interactive play areas and equipment plus visual, aural, and tactile stimulation.



Gathering Spaces

Site furniture and flexible gathering options for people of all ages, abilities, and sizes, and a range of sunny and shaded spaces for sitting and playing.

Figure 1 – Five Design Priorities

The preliminary concepts were shared with the community for feedback as part of a three-week public engagement process that ran from October 23rd to November 13th, 2024 including presentations made to the Accessibility and Parks & Recreation Advisory Committees. Following the completion of the engagement process, BENCH has refined the conceptual design based on input from the community, ensuring alignment with the community-supported design priorities. City staff will move into detailed design phase, with construction scheduled to begin in Fall 2025.

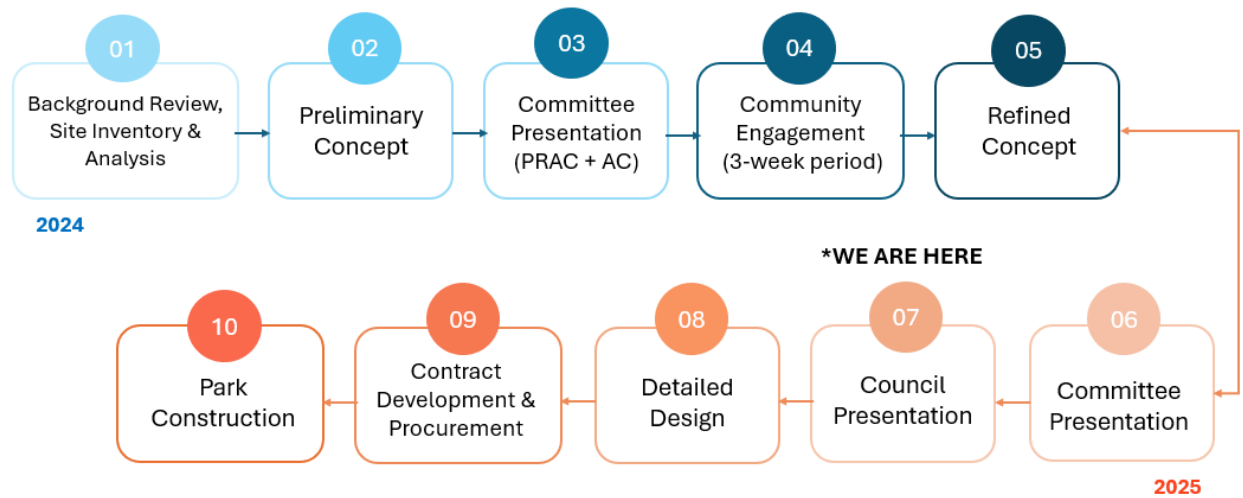


Figure 2 – Engagement Process + Project Timeline

Public Engagement Summary

City staff implemented an inclusive public engagement process using the framework outlined in Figure 2. This involved informing the community about the project background and gathering feedback from residents and stakeholders on the preliminary concepts. The public consultation utilized both online platforms (Shape Your City) and two in-person workshops to collect input. Approximately 172 residents participated in the public engagement process; 60 workshop attendees at 2 events, 112 survey submissions received and 1,100 individuals visited the Lakawanna Park project page on shapeyourcitypenticton.ca

The feedback received from all individuals and groups engaged was universally positive about focusing on accessibility and universal design, safety, and protection of the park’s mature trees. Just over half of the respondents were in favour of maintaining a water play area, and most respondents were in favour of improvements in seating options and gathering areas, as well as expanding play options for older children. While the majority of respondents indicated a preference for Concept 2, which included a phased expansion into the existing parking area, some people were nonetheless concerned at the loss of parking that this would entail.

Additionally, preliminary feedback from the Accessibility Committee and Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee highlighted several key topics:

1. Accessible Washroom - The importance of an accessible washroom was highlighted; while it is out of the scope of this project, the City notes that it is an important part of the playground and upgrades to the washroom have been approved as part of the facilities projects in the 2025-2029 Financial Plan.
2. Accessible Surfacing - Physical accessibility is a priority, with planned ramps, helical piles, and rubber surfacing to ensure safe pathways and connections to the parking lot and protection of existing trees. While a separate and upcoming master plan will consider the playground’s connections to the rest of the park on the west side of Power St., this plan will have flexibility for a safe future connection.
3. Neurodivergent Play - Options for neurodivergent children were discussed, emphasizing quiet spaces, tactile and auditory experiences, nature play, voice-activated equipment, and non-verbal infographics, along with non-equipment features like slopes.

4. Indigenization – The Committee recognized the importance of incorporating Indigenous elements into the art and overall characterization of the park.
5. Safety - Enhancements like improved lighting, low planting for better sightlines, and potential camera installation for security was noted.
6. Site Furniture - Adequate seating for caregivers was deemed essential, with a focus on durable materials. The feasibility of fixed versus movable furniture will be explored further with Park Operations.
7. Park Expansion - Support for expansion was expressed, considering the projected population growth in the area.
8. Parking - The importance of accommodating both cars and bicycles was highlighted, including space for large strollers.

A full summary of the activities and findings of the engagement program is provided in Attachment B.

Final Design Concept

In response to the feedback received, the final design concept reflects a refinement of the two previously presented design options into a single concept. Notable features of the final design include:

- **Phased expansion into the existing parking area** – Considering that 68% of engagement responses indicated a preference for expanding the play area into the existing parking lot, this design will require re-routing the laneway leading to Churchill Avenue and converting 12 parking stalls to accommodate additional play features for older children. Due to current budget limitations, the delivery of this expansion may be implemented as part of a future phase. Therefore, BENCH has provided an interim design for this area so that safety improvements, such as improving access between the playground and accessible parking, which includes additional handicap stalls can be made during phase 1. Staff will further assess this design, and an interim plan may not be required if the entire playground upgrade is constructed all at once.
- **Diversity in play opportunities** - Play areas are provided for all age groups but also for various play and learning types, with options for both active, quiet, creative, and physical play. Both braille and pictorial wayfinding will be provided, and sensory experiences will include interactive panels, colourful art, textural experiences, and noise-making elements. Nature play areas allow children to interact with natural elements such as boulders, logs, and bark mulch surfacing. The large tree structure in the central play area utilizes vertical play with multiple options for getting up and down, including a dedicated ramp, ladders, slides, ropes, and poles. The swings extending off the play tower will have toddler, group, and adaptable swinging opportunities.
- **Water play area** - While the results from the public engagement indicated a scant majority in favour of replacing the existing spray park with additional play elements, this item has been included in the final conceptual design because of its importance to the larger community. The redesigned water play plaza will offer play value in all seasons, whether the water is turned on or not. Colourful posts with weight-activated controls in the plaza paving will mist and squirt as children weave in and out; a focus on discovery is emphasized with movable and operable water play components. Decorative concrete paving will mimic waves and shoreline patterns.

- **Surfacing and circulation** - All circulation routes and the majority of play surfacing throughout the playground will be cast-in-place concrete and rubber safety surfacing to optimize accessibility throughout the space, while also prioritizing the protection of existing trees.
- **Gathering areas** - Many park users highlighted the importance of seating and gathering spaces in the engagement process. The final concept design provides benches and tables in a variety of locations around the playground to support caregivers who need a place to temporarily store belongings, as well as for those who want to sit and watch their children on the playground. Multiple respondents stressed the importance of seating and tables that can be used for groups, such as family picnics, daycare groups or children's birthday parties, resulting in both small and large seating plazas have been included in the design. The large gathering area to the east of the building offers both large harvest tables and potential individual chess tables. Furniture will be designed for a range of user needs, with options including bench backs and armrests, varied seat height and style, and tables with different lengths, seats, and accessible table overhangs.
- **Safety** - The entries to the playground have been reconfigured to prioritize visibility and safe community connections. The Lakeshore Drive entry is more direct and offers clear views into the main playground area, as well as new bike parking and a welcoming picnic plaza and lawn area. The south playground entry, set back from the road, has been reconfigured to provide a safer connection to the parking area, reducing children's exposure to street traffic.

The proposed welcoming improvements to the washroom plaza and east entrance aims to discourage non-playground users from using the washroom in the playground's interior. The removal of the existing cedar hedge along the east property line will reduce hiding places within the playground; new plantings will consist of low groundcovers, well-spaced ornamental grasses, and single-stemmed trees for clear sight lines and a reduction in inconspicuous spots for undesirable behaviours. Lastly, the entire playground will also be fenced with low and visually permeable fencing to provide security from the adjacent street activity.

2025 Committee Presentations

Upon presentation at the January 2025 meetings of the Accessibility Committee and the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee, both committees appreciated the changes and improvements shown in the final concept design, with the following additional feedback:

Accessibility Committee:

1. Request for upgraded garbage enclosure to be accessible for staff (e.g. provide a ramp if a raised deck is used to protect the tree's root zone). This will be explored further in the detailed design phase in consultation with Patio Burger to ensure that it does not impede with their operations.
2. Request that the design of the area on the east side of the building be compatible with the interior washroom upgrades.

Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee:

3. Appreciation for the additional seating types.

4. Appreciation for the inclusion of options for neurodivergent learning and play.

A full design report for the Final Concept Design is provided in Attachment C, and staff are recommending that the City continue to the detail design and procurement stage for the final concept as presented.

Financial implication

The project was introduced in the City's 2024-2028 Financial Plan and has a cumulative approved budget of \$1.551M in 2025 as additional funds were added through that budget process. This amount includes approximately \$936k for park and playground upgrades, \$415k for the spray park, \$150k for improvements to the washroom facility, and \$50K for upgrades to the existing parking lot.

The Final Concept design features the expanded version with an estimated project cost of \$1,575,000, excluding the washroom facility. This exceeds the current approved budget by \$175k, and incorporates an estimated 30% contingency. Actual project costs will not be known until the project is issued for construction. Given the uncertainty of the deviation from the approved budget, staff are recommending that we proceed with the detail design and procurement of the expanded project, and bring forward options (if required) to address any potential shortage once they are known.

With this in mind, there are three options to move forward with the project:

1. Single Phase Construction of the Final Concept design (recommended) – Complete the development presented in the final concept in one phase at the estimated cost of \$1,575,000, or
2. Multi-Phased Construction - Consider a phased approach to fit the recommended final design components within the available funding of \$1.35M until additional resources are secured to accommodate the expanded version, or
3. Reduce the scope to fit within the approved budget, opting not to proceed with the expansion, and remaining within the existing park footprint.

The second option would require staff to identify additional funding in a future year to complete the expanded area, at a higher overall cost (\$1,725,000) which will be discussed further below. The third option would involve committing to a revised detail design that remains within the approved budget and maintains the existing park footprint.

City staff will also be preparing to apply for a grant under the Tire Stewardship BC (TSBC) program, which could provide funding of up to \$30,000 to help offset the costs associated with the playground surfacing. This grant is specifically aimed at covering expenses related to rubber surfacing made from recycled tires, intended for fully public, wheelchair-accessible projects such as playgrounds, water parks, fitness areas, walkways, running tracks, and playing fields.

Climate Impact

The proposed upgrades to Lakawanna Park aligns with Penticton's Community Climate Action Plan (CCAP) and promotes sustainability through several key initiatives. A significant focus of this project is the protection of existing trees, which helps regulate local temperatures and increases climate resilience within urban areas. The project also prioritizes accessibility, inclusive park spaces, and walkability; with pedestrian experience at the forefront, we make it more inviting to those on-foot rather than vehicular use. Lastly, although not

directly referenced within the CCAP, the use of recycled rubber surfacing, supported by the Tire Stewardship BC grant, minimizes waste and promotes sustainable practices, while providing accessibility benefits to the community.

Analysis

The proposed upgrades for Lakawanna Park are carefully designed to align with Council's strategic goals of fostering an inclusive, healthy, safe, and attractive community. These enhancements also support the initiatives outlined in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan and other relevant master plans. The current playground and spray park require significant improvements due to aging equipment and accessibility issues. City staff have engaged with the public and stakeholders, presenting two preliminary options and incorporating feedback received into the final design concept shown in this report. Community engagement findings revealed strong support for expanding the playground into the existing parking lot and this change has been reflected in the Final Concept Design. The estimated cost of the Final Concept Design is \$1,575,000, including 30% contingency, which exceeds the available funding by roughly \$175,000.

As a result, Staff are recommending that the City proceed with the detailed design and procurement of the full concept design as outlined in option 1. Once the actual costs are determined, staff will evaluate the need to potentially reduce the scope, phase the work, or identify other funding opportunities, but it may not be required given the contingency built into the current estimate relative to the approved budget.

Staff also evaluated a multi-phase approach (option 2) to implement the final concept, however, if the proposed two phases are constructed separately, it is estimated that the phased project would cost \$1,725,000, which is \$150,000 more than the single phase option, to account for duplication in construction costs (such as mobilization/de-mobilization, fence relocation, etc.) as well as the loss of economies of scale for certain materials and processes (such as asphalt, concrete, and site grading) and construction inflation. This estimate assumes that the second phase would be constructed relatively quickly as it only includes a small allowance for cost escalation, which would be expected if the second phase is planned within the next year or two.

Alternatively, Council may wish to direct staff to develop a detail design that fits within the existing approved budget, which would result in the renewal of the park in its existing footprint, without expansion. An alternate recommendation has been provided to Council should this be desired.

Alternate recommendations

THAT Council direct staff to proceed with a reduced scope of work that fits within the approved funding of \$1.35 million and remain within the existing park footprint.

Attachments

Attachment A – Lakawanna Playground – Preliminary & Final Design Concept

Attachment B – Lakawanna Playground Engagement Summary

Attachment C – Lakawanna Park Playground Design Concept Report

Respectfully submitted,

Ysabel Contreras
Parks Planner

Concurrence

General Manager of Infrastructure <i>KD</i>	Director of Finance and Administration AMC	City Manager AH
---	---	------------------------