

Buena Vista Park Upgrade

Feedback Report - Engagement Summary



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1 Engagement Summary

Buena Vista Park, located in the Buena Vista neighbourhood, will be receiving upgrades in 2024 as part of the City's Park Upgrade Program, an ongoing capital project that provides funding for improvements to existing neighbourhood parks to address deficiencies and bring them up to current park standards. The upgrade work in Buena Vista Park is also being funded in part by the Government of Canada's Natural Infrastructure Fund.

Starting in Fall 2023, the City began work on the Buena Vista Park Upgrade project to address deficiencies and bring the park up to current standards.

Upgrades planned for Buena Vista Park include:

- Upgraded pathways.
- Upgraded irrigation, including the lawn bowling area.
- Updated site furniture, including lights.
- Enhanced plantings throughout the park, including trees.

To address any impending concerns regarding the upgrade, the City engaged with the community to present the park upgrade plans and address any concerns they might have. As a part of the engagement, initial discussions were held with the Buena Vista Community Association members.

The community and identified stakeholders who may be affected by the proposed park upgrade were invited to provide feedback during the in-person open house meeting on 29th November 2023.

1.1 City Project Team

- Hrolfur Kristinsson, Special Projects Manager (NIF), Parks
- Barb Giocoli, Landscape Development Coordinator, Parks
- Michael Beresnak, Landscape Architect
- Lindsay Cockrum, Community Consultant
- Aisha Rafique, Public Engagement Consultant
- Jennifer Pesenti, Senior Communications Business Partner

2 Summary of Engagement Activities

The objective of this engagement was to **inform** local impacted residents about the proposed park upgrade at Buena Vista. Specific engagement goals included:

- Provide the community with an opportunity to view the upgrade proposals and interact with the project team.
- Indicate project timelines, how the process may impact stakeholders and partners.
- Develop and maintain positive relationships with the community and stakeholder groups.
- Follow the City of Saskatoon's Public Engagement Principles.

Engagement activities for Buena Vista Park Upgrade project included an Engage webpage that hosted project information and updates, and an in-person public open house event. Flyers were delivered to residents living near Buena Vista neighbourhood with information about the open house event held on November 29, 2023, informing about the project.

2.1 Public Drop-in Session

An in-person public open house session was held on November 29, 2023 from 6:30 to 8:00 pm, at Queen Elizabeth School, Small Gym. The intended audience for the open house was residents who would likely be most impacted by proposed park upgrade project. The open house details and flyer were posted on the project's Engage webpage, so interested members of the public outside of the local neighbourhood could access the invitation.

This come-and-go session enabled residents to talk with City staff to ask questions and provide feedback on the proposed measures.

During the session, 38 community members attended. Feedback during the open house ranged from requesting further understanding of the proposed park upgrade, need for the upgrade, funds, providing recommendations for consideration, questions regarding the next steps for the project, accessing alternative methods to provide feedback and the overall project in general.

2.2 Email and Phone Correspondence

The project's Engage webpage includes contact information for site visitors to send comments or ask questions directly with the project team. There were 5 emails received from the community. Feedback received via email highlighted multiple aspects of the proposed upgrades, ranging from design parameters, recommendations for improvements and more proactive communication with the community.

2.3 Marketing Techniques

The survey was promoted through neighbourhood flyers, the City's social media, as well as the project's Engage webpage.

3 Summary of Feedback

The Buena Vista Park upgrade public info session was held at Queen Elizabeth School, Small Gym on November 29, 2023, from 6:30pm till 8pm. The session saw a turnout of 38 members from the neighborhood, interested to know and learn more about the park upgrade.

The feedback from the public information session indicated residents value the trees at the park and were seeking to have more programs and amenities provided at the upgraded park. In addition, they were concerned about the extent of park closure during the construction phase.

3.1 Feedback Themes from Engagement:

Below are the comments shared by the attendees during the info session, categorized by themes of interest:

Green Space

The key highlight during the information session was the trees and the community members were keen about preserving the trees in the park. They expressed the need for safeguarding the trees, protecting as many mature trees as possible, and recommend planting more trees at the park. The members were keen about safety during the construction phase while working with the tree roots and added that the tree stumps be removed.

Amenities

There was a wide interest shown towards maintaining the basketball court, the pump track, improving the playground and seating area as well as providing options to improving winter sports amenities at the park. Most community members recommended that the basketball court be resurfaced, the basketball court be made more child friendly. Some were keen on improvements to the pump track, with widening of the track, and increasing it to full size for people of all ages to use. There were suggestions to improve the ski paths, replace the damaged sprinkler system, enhance the playgrounds, add benches and garbage bins closer to the pathways, and reinstall the barbeque stands.

Access Routes and Visibility - (Pathways and Lighting)

Some expressed concerns about the new pathway location, width of pathway, need for a larger pathway and preferred that it remains the same in its current form, as they are in good condition. Safety while navigating the slope and curves on the pathway was highlighted, considering young children who use the park.

A few community members requested better lighting at the park with an emphasis on LED warm lighting, rather than cold blue lighting.

Communication

While the community understood that the Buena Vista Park Upgrade Project falls under the umbrella of the Natural Infrastructure Fund Project, which is a federally funded initiative, they had questions about the budget allocated for the project and if the budget could have been used for expanding the use of the park. Other feedback was to involve the community associations before planning future changes so community has a chance to provide input that could be considered in the upgrade. Another feedback received was that the closure dates should be informed to the Nutana Community Association as well as the Queen Elizabeth Exhibition Community Association (QEXCA).

4 Limitations

This engagement was focused on the residents in and surrounding Buena Vista Park neighbourhood. Surrounding neighbourhoods and other stakeholders may have an interest in the park upgrade and this was highlighted during the public info session.

Only in-person option was offered as part of this engagement process to try and accommodate participation. Due to this some residents may not have been comfortable or available to attend the in-person engagement session.

5 Next Steps

A summary of engagement results was shared with the Project Team for the way forward and proceed with tendering for the park upgrade. Construction is scheduled for summer of 2024.