

DATE OF MEETING MAY 19, 2021

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PARKS, RECREATION AND CULTURE

SUBJECT **DRAFT AMENITY IMPROVEMENT CONCEPTS FOR WESTWOOD
LAKE PARK**

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report

To provide information to Council regarding proposed amenity improvements at the Westwood Road entrance and beaches of Westwood Lake Park.]

Recommendation

That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend that Council receive the draft ideas and improvement options at Westwood Lake Park for public review and direct Staff to return with feedback and refined improvement concepts for Council's consideration.

BACKGROUND

Westwood Lake Park is a jewel in the City of Nanaimo's park system. Highly used by the community and a favourite with visitors, this park sees heavy use all year round. Over 800 people enjoy the main trail loop every day. The beaches are a popular destination in summer and there are many options to fish and paddle on the lake. In the last few years, there has been a steady increase in mountain biking and use of the park to access a greater trail network. The area is also a popular venue for events such as triathlons and fundraising runs.

Westwood Lake is a fabricated lake created when Darough Creek was dammed for hydroelectric production in 1907 by the regional power network. The hydroelectric plant was abandoned in the 1950s and the City of Nanaimo purchased the land and dedicated it park in 1957.

As outlined in Attachment A, the majority of the park is zoned PRC-1 with a focus on natural spaces. The Westwood Road entrance and both beach areas are zoned PRC-2 zoning which allows for a variety of recreational and cultural amenities. As outlined in Attachment B, the park currently has three main access points and all three are heavily used.

Improving and increasing access to waterfront areas has been a community priority identified in Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plans since 1994. Acquisition of land adjacent to Westwood Lake Park has also been a focus and several additional park parcels have been acquired over the years by purchase and through the development process.

REIMAGINE NANAIMO

Community feedback was collected through Phase 1 of REIMAGINE Nanaimo regarding a variety of community issues. Westwood Lake Park was specifically brought up through engagement with several community organizations including the Westwood Neighbourhood Association (Friends of Westwood), immediate park neighbours, and various user groups with interest in the park and surrounding areas. A short summary of the input includes:

- Maintaining the park as natural area as much as possible;
- Addressing overuse concerns including issues with trail maintenance, trail widths, parking areas, and parking overflow;
- Continuing to acquire additional land parcels to increase the park size;
- Improving traffic flow, conflicts between multiple park users, and emergency access;
- Considering structures for events and group park use such as a picnic shelter;
- Adding park amenities including a new playground, picnic facilities, activities like sand volleyball, and areas with shade etc.;
- Adding site furnishings including seating, picnic tables, ping pong tables, etc.;
- Addressing universal accessibility concerns – washrooms, parking, access to water; adaptive single track trails, boat launch, fishing pier, signage and trail condition information;
- Expanding single track trail networks for mountain biking and wilderness recreation; and,
- Improving amenities and access to the lake for recreational fishing.

Additional input and data collection will be conducted through Phase 2 of REIMAGINE Nanaimo process and through a proposed review process as outlined in this report.]

DISCUSSION

[INTEGRATED PLANNING AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Through the REIMAGINE NANAIMO process, the importance of integrated planning to meet multiple values is coming to the forefront. This site lends itself well to piloting an integrated planning process that achieves the goals of REIMAGINE Nanaimo (Healthy, Connected, Enabled, Empowered and Ecological), meets community needs, and is practical.

Attachment C outlines a proposed planning process for the development of an integrated land use plan for the site. The public review process will be tied to Phase 2 of REIMAGINE Nanaimo and will be conducted through the summer while the park busiest in the park. Themes identified in the REIMAGINE process will be integrated with finalized concepts. Additionally, the Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness (ACAI) and the Environment Committee, will be consulted for review and input.

DRAFT AMENITY IMPROVEMENT CONCEPTS

If the proposed planning process is approved, the feedback heard to date as well as initial draft improvement options (Attachment D) could be shared with the public and stakeholders for input.

The initial draft improvement options focus on the area formerly occupied by the Caretaker House, as well as the main entrance off Westwood Road, first parking lot, and First Beach. Elements in both options are interchangeable and are just ideas to test through future public engagement.

The initial draft improvement concepts include the following improvement ideas:

- Expansion and new recreational improvements at First Beach;
- Improved universal access features including washroom (new or renovated), trails, and beach and water access;
- Increased parking capacity, including additional accessible parking stalls;
- Improved traffic navigation, including improved entranceways and exits;
- Improved pedestrian circulation and safety improvements;
- Site furnishings that can be enjoyed by all users;
- Additional picnic and special event areas;
- New playground;
- Improved flow for boat launching;
- Improvements to trail navigation at entrance area, including 3m accessible trail network;
- Storm water management considerations to capture and filter storm water including sustainable paving options to improve site ecology;
- Additional shade trees;
- Enhancement of natural areas through new plantings in excess of any removals and vegetation retention. A buffer between the park and the houses on Leighton Place will also be included;
- Bike wash facility;
- Consideration for lifeguarding facilities and emergency access.

OPTIONS

1. That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend that Council receive the draft ideas and improvement options at Westwood Lake Park for public review and direct Staff to return with feedback and refined improvement concepts for Council's consideration.

- The advantages of this option: Public engagement can be dovetailed with ongoing engagement work through Phase 2 of Reimagine Nanaimo and at the park while it is busiest in the summer. This also would allow the development of improvement concepts to be fast-tracked. REIMAGINE Nanaimo is focused on achieving integrated community goals and this project, when implemented, can help to display the integrated community goals (Healthy, Connected, Enabled, Empowered and Ecological).
- The disadvantages of this option: Staff are already busy with REIMAGINE Nanaimo and other ongoing projects.
- Financial Implications: Council will review Recommendations and improvement concepts with cost estimates at a later date.

2. That the Finance and Audit Committee not recommend that Council proceed with the improvement options at Westwood Lake Park for public review and not direct Staff to return with feedback and refined improvement concepts for Council's consideration.

- The advantages of this option: Staff will focus time on other ongoing projects.
- The disadvantages of this option: Increased community use and user conflicts will continue to be unaddressed. The public may also lose faith in the REIMAGINE

Nanaimo engagement process and the not feel that they have been heard about their needs and issues.

- Financial Implications: None.

SUMMARY POINTS

- Westwood Lake Park is a very popular park in Nanaimo and the amenities require updating to meet community needs and use.
- Through Phase 1 of the REIMAGINE Nanaimo process, a number of issues and comments about Westwood Lake Park emerged.
- Community engagement regarding improvements could be dovetailed into Phase 2 of the REIMAGINE Nanaimo process and implementation of improvements could showcase the achievement of integrated community values and goals.

ATTACHMENTS:

ATTACHMENT A: Westwood Lake Park Zoning

ATTACHMENT B: Westwood Lake Park Access Points

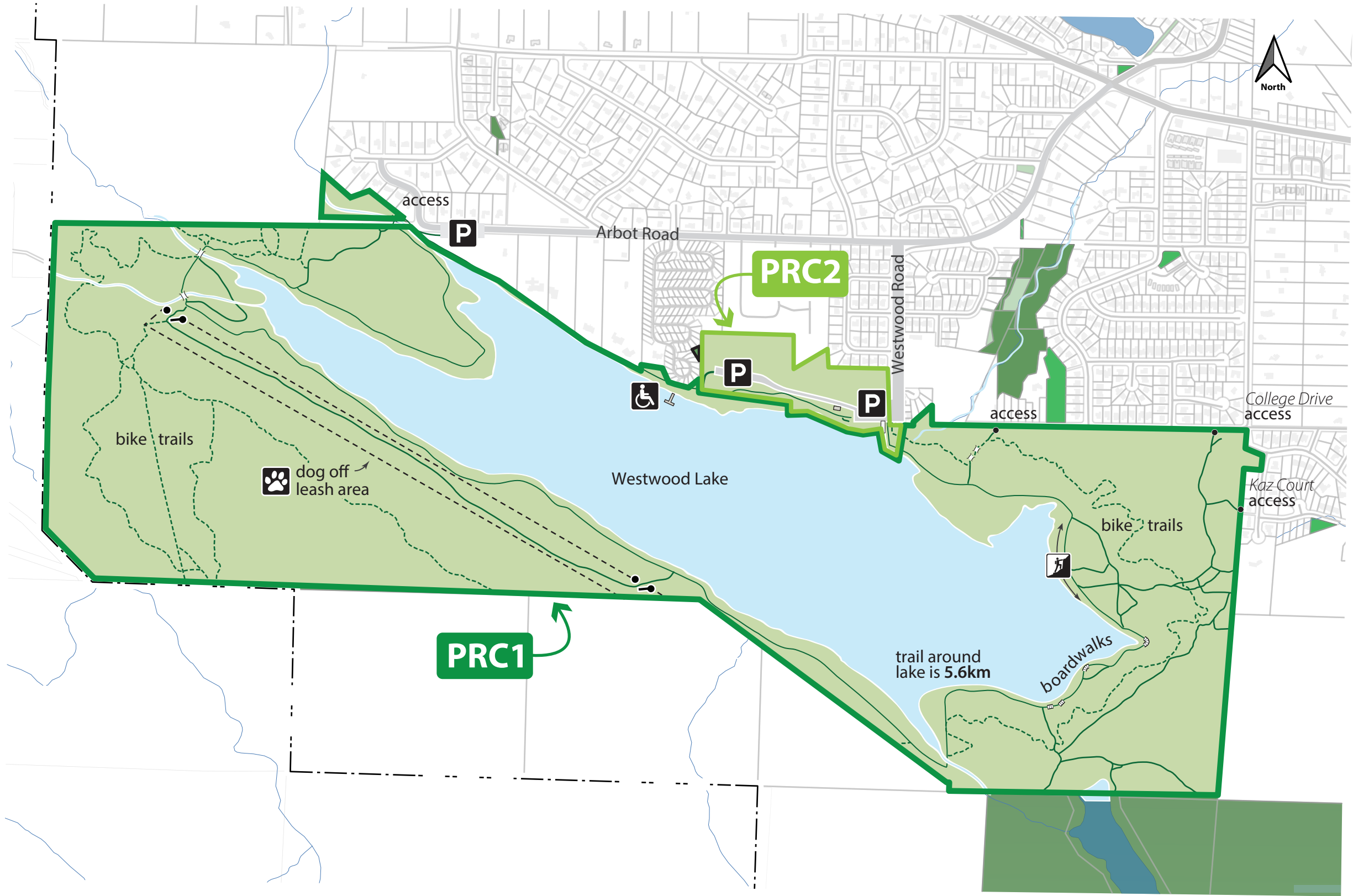
ATTACHMENT C: Proposed Planning Process

ATTACHMENT D: Westwood Amenity Improvement Concepts (First Beach and Entrance)

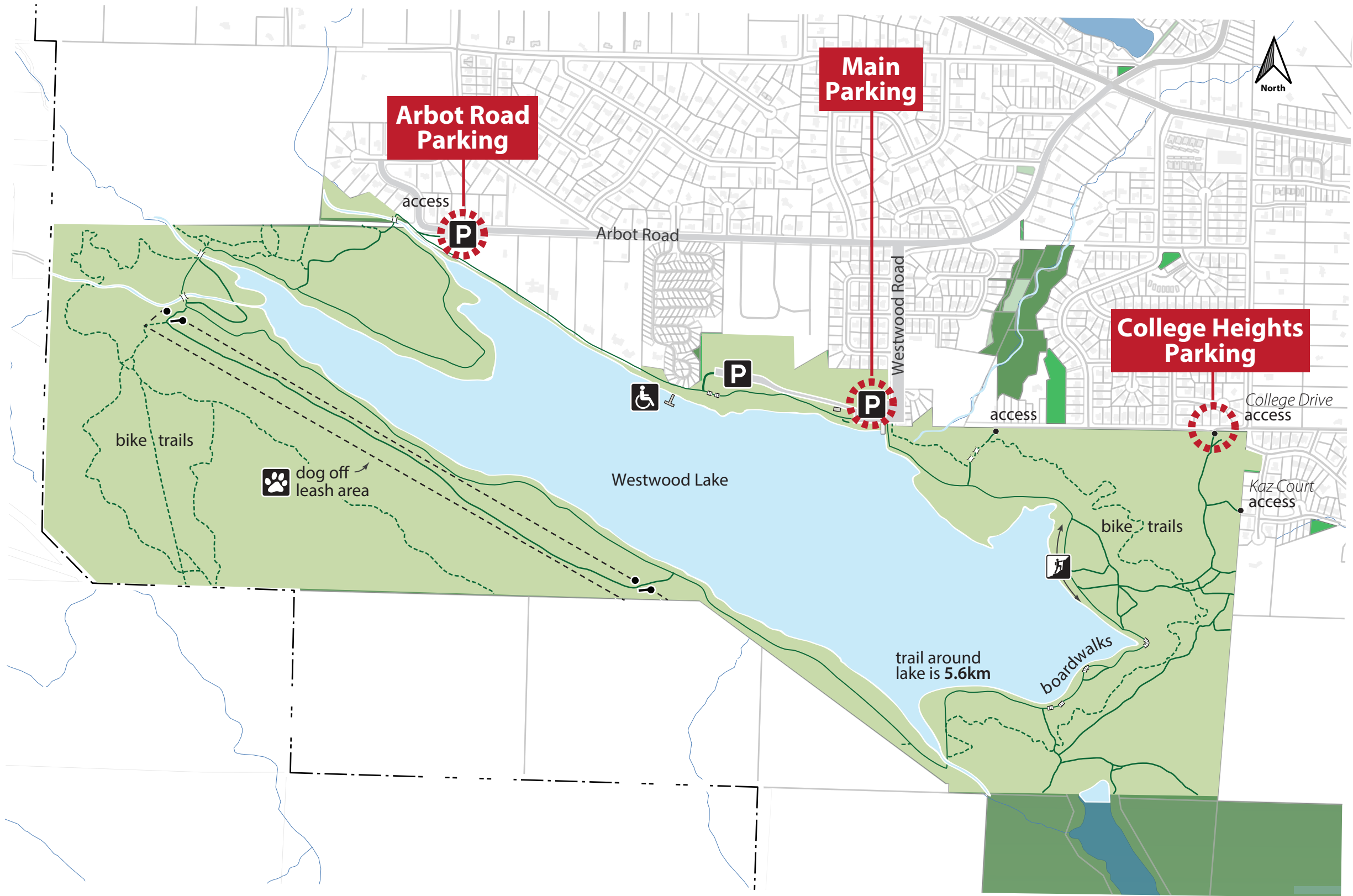
Submitted by:

Richard Harding
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ATTACHMENT A



ATTACHMENT B



ATTACHMENT C

Proposed Planning Process

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT—SUMMER 2021

- Integrate discussions about the Draft Amenity Improvement Concepts for Westwood Lake Park into Phase 2 Reimagine Nanaimo stakeholder conversations (mostly virtual)
- Install a static information about the Draft Amenity Improvement Concepts on site with integrated survey questions, QR codes and text-to to compile feedback
- As part of a Reimagine Nanaimo pop-up booth at Westwood Lake, share the Draft Amenity Improvement Concepts for Westwood Lake Park and gather feedback
- Use the get involved platform to target specific local neighbourhoods for feedback
- Post project info on social media, the getinvolved Nanaimo site and city website
- Share the Westwood Lake Draft Amenity Improvement Concepts for feedback at the Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness (ACAI) and the Environment Committee

CONCEPT REFINEMENT—SUMMER-FALL 2021

- Compile feedback from various sources
- Update and develop design options into a refined concept with some supporting details based on feedback
- Develop cost scenarios for the refined concept
- Demonstrate how the refined concept achieves integrated Reimagine Nanaimo goals

CONCURRENT WORK WITH CONSULTANTS--ONGOING

- Continue to work with Civil Engineering and landscape architectural consultants to assist with public engagement materials and detailed design work (especially in the areas of traffic flows, universal design grading, and storm water management).

REVIEW OF REFINED CONCEPTS—FALL 2021

- Share feedback summaries and refined concept and details with the Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness (ACAI) and the Environment Committee
- Share feedback summaries and refined concept and details with stakeholders who participated in the Reimagine Nanaimo process and hold sessions with stakeholders associated with Westwood Lake Park and universal accessibility for in-depth conversations
- Share refined concept and costs with Council for adoption and/or approval in principle and integrate into future budgets, implementation strategies and REIMAGINE NANAIMO documents.
- Update static info, getinvolved Nanaimo information and city website on social media, site with the refined and approved concepts and implementation steps. Share the same info with targeted audiences through the getinvolved Nanaimo platform.

ATTACHMENT D

WESTWOOD AMENITY IMPROVEMENTS CONCEPTS FIRST BEACH AND ENTRANCE



These are initial ideas. Elements from both are interchangeable

OPTION 1



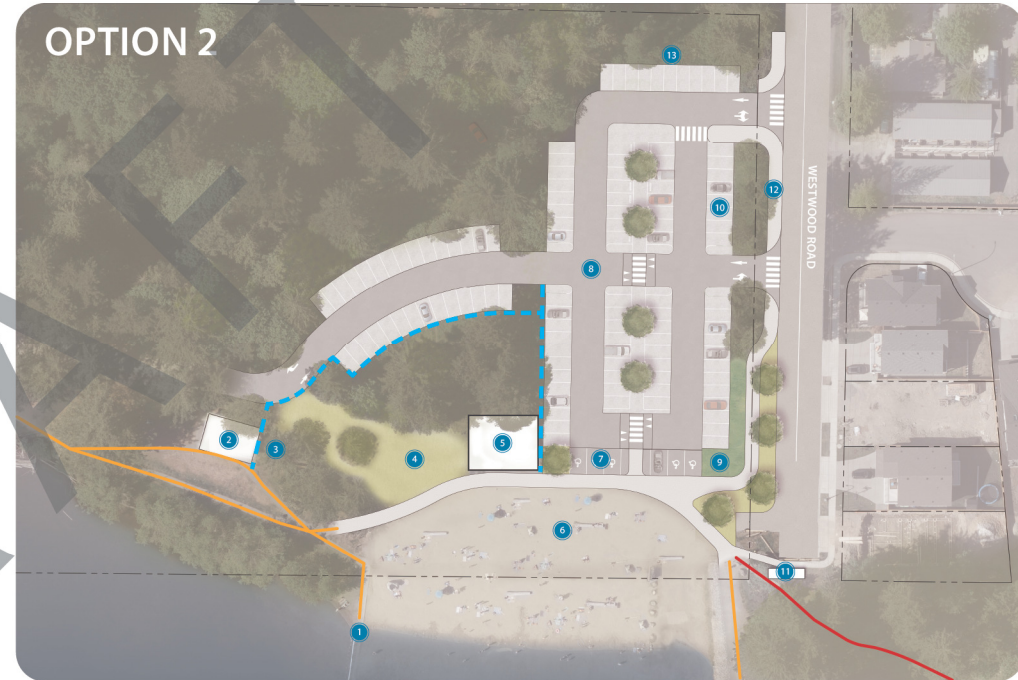
- EXISTING SINGLE TRACK TRAIL
- EXISTING ACCESSIBLE TRAIL
- PROPOSED ACCESSIBLE TRAIL

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 EXISTING ACCESSIBLE FLOAT | 8 VEGETATED SWALE |
| 2 EXISTING WASHROOM / LIFEGUARD STATION TO BE RENOVATED AND MADE UNIVERSALLY ACCESSIBLE | 9 BIKE WASH FACILITY |
| 3 EXISTING VENDOR AREA & POWER KIOSK | 10 MULTI-USE TRAIL |
| 4 NEW PLAYGROUND (DESIGN / EQUIPMENT TBD) | 11 VEGETATED BUFFER |
| 5 ADDITIONAL BEACH / PICNIC AREA | 12 ACCESSIBLE BEACH ACCESS |
| 6 ACCESSIBLE PARKING STALLS | 13 BOAT LAUNCH |
| 7 ASPHALT OR ALTERNATIVE HARD SURFACING DRIVE AISLE AND PARKING AREA | |

Key Features:

- 75 additional standard parking stalls (134 total)
- 2 additional accessible parking stalls (6 total)
- 840 square meters of additional beach / picnic area
- New playground
- New 3 meter wide multi-use trail
- Renovated washrooms / lifeguard station
- Non-motorized boat launch to remain
- New emergency access
- New trees to be planted in excess of trees removed
- Stormwater management feature to capture and filter rainwater
- Universally accessible features including beach and water access that would be wheelchair accessible

OPTION 2



- EXISTING SINGLE TRACK TRAIL
- EXISTING ACCESSIBLE TRAIL
- PROPOSED ACCESSIBLE TRAIL

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1 EXISTING ACCESSIBLE FLOAT | 8 PERMEABLE HARD SURFACING |
| 2 FUTURE SPECIAL EVENT AREA | 9 VEGETATED SWALE |
| 3 EXISTING VENDOR AREA & POWER KIOSK | 10 REINFORCED GRAVEL PARKING STALLS |
| 4 NEW PICNIC AREA | 11 BIKE WASH FACILITY |
| 5 NEW ACCESSIBLE WASHROOM / LIFEGUARD STATION | 12 MULTI-USE TRAIL |
| 6 ADDITIONAL BEACH AREA | 13 VEGETATED BUFFER |
| 7 ACCESSIBLE PARKING STALLS | |

Key Features:

- 55 additional standard parking stalls (114 total)
- 2 additional accessible parking stalls (6 total)
- Gravel parking stalls reduce impervious area
- 840 square meters of additional beach area
- New accessible washroom / lifeguard station
- New picnic area
- New 3 meter wide multi-use trail
- Boat launch to be relocated to second parking lot
- New emergency access
- New trees to be planted in excess of trees removed
- New playground at second beach area
- Stormwater management feature to capture and filter rainwater

