



2021 July 26

**TO:** Mayor Nenshi and Members of Council  
**FROM:** Chris Arthurs  
**RE:** Administrative Inquiry – Richmond Green Needs Assessment Concerns and Questions

This memo is in response to the 2021 June 21 Administrative Inquiry submitted by Councillor Farkas regarding PFC2021-0834 *Richmond Green Needs Assessment*. The Councillor's questions and Administration responses are below:

1. The total available publicly accessible open space is still unclear without detailed information around water security (Needs Assessment page 3). What portion of the remaining park space will be used for water reservoir expansion? What will the security requirements be for that space?



**Response:** Water Resources and Parks will become co-stewards of all the land shown in blue/green on Figure 3 of the Needs Assessment (see image above). This means that approximately 38 acres of land will be reserved for use by both business units. Parks uses the surface, while Water Resources primarily uses the sub-surface (similar to how Richmond Green Golf Course has functioned). The project team is working with Corporate Security to complete a Threat and Risk assessment, which will remain confidential. Security for the reservoir will be managed in the same manner as it has in the past primarily by alarms, CCTV, and fencing. As



security will be needed at the disc golf area, a gate will be in place that is unlocked during the day and locked at night by a custodian (likely from Parks, as was the operation of Richmond Green Golf Course). As the water infrastructure builds out, the surface open space will change, and security will evolve with it. It is still intended to be publicly accessible.

Future water reservoir construction would be incremental and will occur over a long period of time. Water Resources completes long range plans every five years. The current long-range plan indicates Richmond Green will remain as is for 10-15 years. Water Resources would engage Corporate Security in advance of future reservoir expansion to minimize impacts on existing public use and the community.

2. **The upper baseball diamonds may be the ONLY large chunk of unencumbered space remaining in the park after the water reservoirs have been expanded. Could some low cost remediation work be done on the OWC land so that we can leave the ball diamonds alone?**

**Response:** Figure 3 in the Needs Assessment shows the proposed Municipal Reserve (MR) parcels that will be dedicated and be unencumbered park land in perpetuity. This includes a new little league ball diamond, and the existing tennis courts and tot lot/playground. Improvements or changes to underground infrastructure doesn't preclude a loss of open space as a space can have co-benefits for the community. As indicated in response #1, golf was played over top of the water reservoirs, meaning the co-function of open space and below ground utilities occurred quite seamlessly.

The Operations Workplace Centre (OWC) is being redesignated from residential development as currently shown in the Currie Barracks Canadian Forces Base (CFB) West Master Plan, to future open space, resulting in a net gain of ±4.0 acres of open space over the entire park area.

The Needs Assessment shows the low-cost remediation work for the OWC. The proposed remediation of the OWC site is the low-cost option as redeveloping the OWC lands as residential would require considerably more removal of existing soil to a greater depth to accommodate concrete residential foundations.

3. **The Richmond Green Golf Course was supposed to be open in Spring of 2020 with disc golf as a temporary use. It is STILL not open. Why is this the case? What needs to be done before it can be opened?**

**Response:** Administration received Council direction to begin to explore disc golf at Richmond Green at PFC2020-0952, which was on 2020 October 13. Recreation subsequently worked with the Calgary Disc Golf Association to prepare a letter agreement to determine obligations and expectations for the interim use at the site. A disc golf layout was submitted by the disc golf associated and reviewed by Recreation and Water Resources. Preparation of the site began in Q2 of 2021.



Due to United States border restrictions related to COVID-19, materials and infrastructure components to complete the disc golf course were delayed. The course will be opened in August 2021.

- 4. The revised LOC application indicates that there will be a land use change with a reduction/cap on the FAR since this application first came forward. What is the potential impact on the sale price?**

**Response:** Confidential Attachment 3 in PFC2021-0834 (Richmond Green Needs Assessment) describes the land sale anticipated by Real Estate & Development Services (RE&DS). We don't have a formal appraisal in place to compare the modified floor area ratio (FAR) to a larger FAR. The strength in the value of the site is more weighted by its proximity to downtown, established area location and the MU-1 district itself.

- 5. Needs Assessment page 4—CLC is responsible for building the road. If they need to demolish the clubhouse, there would be some funds for small upgrades. Is further technical work required on the proposed access road off of 33 Ave SW in order to make it BRT compliant?**

**Response:** The preferred alignment for the road and connection to 33 Avenue SW has been shown in the Needs Assessment and will not require the demolition of the existing clubhouse building. The proposed design is intended to accommodate Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and requires further review and approvals by Transportation and Transit.

- 6. The only areas which are to be preserved as M-R/park space are the proposed non-standard ball diamond, the tennis courts and the playground. The rest is unknown due to water resource requirements. How can we consider this proposal as an increase in park space given the many unanswered questions?**

**Response:** The Needs Assessment, approved by Council on 2021 June 21 indicates an overall net gain of open space of ±4.0 acres. As noted above, publicly accessible open space will increase with the former golf course being added to the overall park space. Historically, this space was a pay-to-play amenity. The baseball diamond is also not non-standard and is intended to replace the existing little league baseball diamond. It has also been confirmed that any lost hours of little league baseball can be accommodated at other diamonds within the Calgary West Little League (CWLL) catchment boundary, or will be accommodated through the conversion or addition of other diamonds.

- 7. As per PFC2020-0952, REDS is supposed to provide the current public utilization rates for all of the amenities in Richmond Green Park. Where are these?**

**Response:** We have pasted the utilization rates below. They were included in the confidential Richmond Green Needs Assessment (PFC2021-0834), Attachment 3.



| Table 1—Richmond Green Park Assets   |   |
|--|---|
| Existing Asset   | Usage Details   |
| Three (3) Baseball Diamonds  | Calgary West Little League is the majority user with +400 hours booked across the three diamonds. The spring and summer seasons have the highest utilization rate (above 70%). Adult groups mainly use the larger ball diamond after August. It would be challenging to make up the little league bookings if both diamonds were not replaced. The replacement cost of the two (2) smaller diamonds is estimated to be \$330,000 each. The diamonds are rented out based on age/demographics, not size of diamond and the rates are: \$2.50/hr for youth and \$22.54/hr for adults. Adult groups typically don't rent the smaller diamonds as they are sub-standard for adult baseball. |
| Four (4) Tennis Courts. One (1) practice wall for tennis. Tennis courts double as pickle ball courts | The tennis courts are well used from spring until mid-October and pickleball is played here as well.  |
| One (1) Tot Lot  | N/A   |
| Various pathways   | Identified as well used. Connections available to pedestrian crossing over 33 AVE SW.   |
| One (1) Tobogganing hill   | Only hill in Richmond area.   |
| One (1) Parking lot  | Parks maintains this asset. The parking lot is considered to be well used during baseball season and when the golf course was in peak season.   |
| Tree Canopy  | Technically part of Urban Forestry (within Parks). Estimated ~1000 trees with a value of \$4.9M. Average tree is close to \$5000.   |
| Irrigation system  | N/A   |
| Flower beds, fences, benches   | N/A   |

**8. Public Engagement was conducted for this application, but a detailed What We Heard Report has not been provided. Where is it?**

**Response:** The 'What We Heard Report' was posted to The City's project website 2021 July 15 and is included in the 2021 July 26 Public Hearing package. The report includes public engagement pertaining to both LOC2021-0043 and PFC2021-0834.

**9. Richmond Green Golf Course houses some of the largest water reservoirs in the City and has done so since the early 1900's. It can never be developed and should therefore never have become part of a discussion to sell golf course land for golf course operations. What is the rationale for including it in the first place?**

**Response:** While the existing and future reservoir lands can never be developed, there is an opportunity to re-purpose the surface of the reservoir sites for future open space similarly to how the former golf course was used. The rationale to do so is that the public may access ±20.0 acres of open space that previously was used as a pay-to-play golf course. Over time, this green space can be repurposed for recreational amenities that do not impact the operation of the reservoirs.

**10. On what basis did REDS choose the baseball diamonds? What benchmark/threshold did they use to determine that 2 very well baseball diamonds should be sold?**

**Response:** Council directed RE&DS to analyze land sale opportunities to support Golf Course Operations across all golf courses, as part of a motion arising in the One Calgary Service Plans and Budgets 2019-2022 (C2018-1158). Council directed RE&DS to include the baseball diamond



land when the Richmond Green results were presented to Committee and Council in PFC2020-0952, with the direction that it be included in the Needs Assessment. The Needs Assessment was conducted across the remainder of the park as due diligence for the baseball diamond potential sale and to inform Council that there are no further land sale opportunities that should occur at Richmond Green Park. Additionally, the Council-directed Needs Assessment confirmed that the lost hours of the ball diamonds can be replaced at one new diamond and other locations.

**11. At the October 13, 2020 PFC meeting, Councillors were not informed that Richmond Green was a major/regional park, one of 34 in our land use bylaw. Councillor Farrell suggested that maybe it should BECOME a regional park. Why wasn't Council made aware that Richmond Green was a regional park when this process started? Why would a regional park that is an athletic park be considered any differently than our other regional parks?**

**Response:** Council was informed that Richmond Green is a regional park at subsequent PFC and Council meetings (i.e. 2021 June 08: PFC 2021-0834) and has supported continuing the process underway at Richmond Green. Calgary Parks also supported the proposed changes to Richmond Green. Additional funding from the proposed sale will help to support and upgrade the park without additional budget asks for new funding. Calgary Planning Commission (CPC) in CPC2021-0799 also supported continuing with the process, with the knowledge that Richmond Green is a regional park.

**12. All of this work is being undertaken as part of the direction of PFC2020-0952. The EOI Attachment 2 end of page 2 indicated that further investigation was required to provide the City and interested parties with required details of a proposed contract structure to assess impacts to operations and finances... Why was this investigation not undertaken? Why did RE&DS turn to the sale of baseball diamonds in a regional park instead?**

**Response:** Richmond Green Golf Course was closed 2019 September as per Council direction in 2019 June (C2019-0790 – Notice of motion for closure of Richmond Green Golf Course). The contracting structure work was directed by Council after the closure in 2019 November and involved the remaining City-operated golf courses. This is a separate scope of work from RE&DS's Need Assessment. Both scopes were directed to Administration by Council as part of the Golf Sustainability Program.

**13. There is almost \$9.5 million of projected costs with most of the costs associated with remediation of the OWC land and administration fees. Another \$675,000 is going into replacing an existing ball diamond. Only up to \$500,000 is allotted for upgrades to the tot lot and offsite ball diamonds. How can this be viewed as improvements to the park space?**

**Response:** A synopsis of the detailed project costs identified in PFC2021-0834 *Richmond Green Needs Assessment* is provided below:

- Repurposing of 9-10 acres of brownfield land to new open space;



- De-risking The City by demolishing outdated and end-of-life buildings at the OWC;
- Tree replacement costs to support our urban tree canopy should trees be lost at the development parcel;
- One new baseball diamond at Richmond Green;
- Offsite baseball diamond improvements to ensure no loss of little league baseball hours;
- Tot lot improvements;
- Confirmation of land due diligence that the ~5.5-acre parcel is suitable for development and can be sold;
- Consultant costs to complete this work and action the next phase of planning, which includes further public engagement; and
- Real Estate Fees.

It is important to note that Council directed the balance of sale proceeds back into Richmond Green Park. With this direction, there is an improvement to the through both an additional net ~4 acres of open space to Richmond Green Park and the related funding.

**14. Needs Assessment page 3—OWC land is contaminated, so it has no real value, just expenses. Why would book value \$ be given to Facility Management for having contaminated the land?**

**Response:** The OWC land has value. Salt contamination is much different than hydrocarbon or other types of contamination. Real Estate and Development Services utilizes the Corporate Land Management Framework for adjudicating internal land transfers. Facility Management (FM) was the steward of the OWC, Calgary Roads and Calgary Parks were the operators of the OWC. As per the CFB West Master Plan this land was intended to be sold for residential development. With Council approval of PFC2021-0834 (Richmond Green Needs Assessment) and that the OWC is being retained by The City for Park/Water land, it was determined that book value was an appropriate transfer of money to FM per the Corporate Land Management Framework.

**15. Why are we even considering the sale of regional park space to remediate contaminated Roads Depot land? Why shouldn't this be coming from Roads budget?**

**Response:** The clean-up of the Richmond Green depot is not currently funded. Should Council direct the depot repurposing [and forego the land sale] to make the entire space a Park, a new budget and funding source would be required. Facility Management (FM) would likely make this request to Council for funds and undertake the clean-up in conjunction with Environment & Safety Management (ESM), Parks and Water Resources input.

**16. PFC2019-1227 (Attachment 3B) stated that there would be no net loss of baseball diamonds, and that the diamonds would meet the current City standard. This Needs Assessment indicates that only 1 non-standard diamond can be provided on site, and no other site has been identified for a second diamond. Westgate has been suggested as a community to transition the ball diamonds to. Given that these diamonds require a significant amount of parking, has the Westgate Community Association actually been engaged?**





**Response:** Subsequent work from PFC2019-1227 completed by RE&DS indicated that only 1 of the 2 diamonds could be replaced at Richmond Green. There are two diamonds in the nearby community of Westgate. There is another diamond at Westgate that has not been maintained and is underutilized, thus the Council approved PFC2021-0834 is to provide funding to improve/enhance that diamond. Parking would be available at the Westgate School, Westgate Community Association lot and the adjacent community streets.

Administration is working with the Calgary West Little League (CWLL) Association on both the interim and ultimate baseball diamond replacement strategy. The Westgate diamonds would only be used on an *interim* basis until the new diamond in Richmond Green is constructed and the new diamond in the community of Aspen is online.

If there are any further questions, please don't hesitate to contact Michael Carnegie, Project Manager, Real Estate & Development Services.

Sincerely,

Chris Arthurs  
General Manager  
Deputy City Manager's Office