

May 7, 2013

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**Centennial Park upgrades public open house**

What's in store for the playground at Centennial Park? A public open house on Wednesday, May 15, from 7 to 9 p.m. at the Sportsplex will present two conceptual designs for upgrades focusing on a natural playscape and a multi-sport court.

*"Planning for the upgrades began with two focus groups providing input into the current state and uses of the park and their ideas for potential improvements,"* explains Lynn Wark, the City's parks project supervisor.

The first focus group was Grade 6 students from Phoenix School who are frequent park visitors. The students described how they use the park now, what kinds of other opportunities they'd like to see and then they got a chance to help design the kinds of natural elements they would like to see included in a natural playscape.

The second focus group included stakeholders with special interests in the park and local childcare providers who specialize in children's needs. This group explored a three-dimensional model of the park and discussed park use, opportunities for change and ideas for enhancements.

Both focus groups demonstrated strong support for a multi-sport court, with a high desire for basketball and ball hockey space.

*"The concept of enhanced play space with the addition of a natural playscape was extremely well-received, especially by the students and childcare providers,"* Wark says.

*"Unstructured play spaces that integrate natural elements are now recognized as powerful – some research suggests critical – in assuring children's physical and mental health, and intellectual development,"* says Joyce McMann, Family Place Coordinator for Campbell River Family Services Society. *"As backyards get smaller and public neighbourhood spaces increasingly groomed, a trend back to natural play space is a vision to celebrate for a child-friendly community. The City's initiative to think about playgrounds in a much broader way than 'simply play equipment outside' is very exciting."*

Centennial Park upgrades will be funded through a combination of a Community Infrastructure Improvement Fund (CIIF) grant worth \$225,000 and \$225,000 from the City's Parks Parcel Tax.

The 2006 Strategic Parks Plan placed a high priority on replacing deteriorating playgrounds in city parks. The plan recommended developing a playground renewal program, to replace playgrounds at the end of their life cycles, which is 15 years on average. Centennial Park playground equipment reaches the end of its 15-year life cycle and is due for replacement in 2013. The upgrades and project design consultant, Jessica Gemella, introduced the concept of park planning, design and public consultation

Everyone is encouraged to view the conceptual designs and provide feedback about the park's new look at the open house.

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