

TO: CHAIR AND MEMBERS
PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

DATE: 2017 Sept 28

FROM: DIRECTOR PUBLIC SAFETY &
COMMUNITY SERVICE

DIRECTOR PARKS, RECREATION &
CULTURAL SERVICES

**SUBJECT: SAFETY & SECURITY ENHANCEMENTS IN PARKS AND PUBLIC
PLACES**

PURPOSE: To seek Council's approval in principle to initiate measures to enhance safety and security in parks and public places.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. **THAT** Council approve in principle the additional safety measures in parks and public places as outlined in this report.

REPORT

1.0 Background

Council has asked staff to review safety measures that may be considered to enhance public safety and security in city parks and public spaces. The requested review also provides an opportunity for staff to review best safety practices and bylaw compliance as part of the consolidated public safety functions established within the City organization in late 2016. Burnaby is proud of the exceptional parks and green spaces that it has created for its citizens. Presently, 25% of the City's land is devoted to green space and parks. Many kilometres of walking, hiking and cycling trails are within these green spaces. Many Burnaby citizens use these green spaces and enjoy the natural environment and the abundance of wildlife that co-exist with the human population.

While public safety in parks is of paramount importance, a balance between protecting the natural environment and public safety must be maintained. The City has implemented best practices in Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) for park and trail design. In response to the public safety review requested by Council, additional safety measures to improve the general safety and security of parks

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and public spaces are identified and presented in this report for Council's approval in principle.

It should be noted that while the recommended improvements will enhance safety in parks and open spaces, the public should always be mindful of their personal safety as there is a vast amount of park space throughout the City and increased risk occurs when attending isolated and remote areas alone and during night time when the park is used by the public infrequently.

2.0 Proposed Measures to Improve Safety and Security

In consultation with the RCMP and other City Departments, and through an evaluation of measures that have been successfully initiated in other similar jurisdictions in Canada and internationally, the following measures can be considered for implementation in Burnaby:

Bike Patrols

The RCMP have found that bike patrols reach into areas quickly that are not accessible by motor vehicle. Additionally, these bike patrols are less conspicuous, which allows for a greater ability to find offences in progress, that might otherwise not be discovered by a motorized vehicle. Parks such as Central Park, Robert Burnaby Park and Burnaby Lake Park, and in particular trails and forested areas, can utilize the bike patrol model staffed by municipal employees to gain quick access to patrol the more remote places. The additional benefit of a park bike patrol program is the deterrent effect of the unexpected presence of uniformed bylaw officers deep in forested areas.

For operational efficiency, staff are proposing to expand the existing bylaw enforcement group of City staff to create a bike patrol unit which would operate in parks and public areas. This City staff group would focus on patrolling trails and forested areas to enhance the presence of bylaw officers in the park, to provide service when the need arises and to enforce City bylaws. It is proposed this staff group be uniformed so they are easily identified by park patrons, and they have the authority to enforce the Park Regulation Bylaw, the Street and Traffic Bylaw and other applicable bylaws in order to deter nuisance activities in these areas. This staff group will maintain close communication with the RCMP to ensure prompt response when illegal activity is encountered in the same manner that Burnaby's parking bylaw enforcement and park patrol staff groups currently operate. Staff are recommending that the initial deployment of the bike mounted bylaw enforcement group be in key City parks as a pilot project for one year. Subject to Council approval of this report, staff would assess the number of staff required to provide a reasonable coverage in Central Park, Robert Burnaby Park and Burnaby Lake Park, and the financial requirement for Council approval.

Security Cameras

Security Cameras are currently used in various City facilities and locations to deter illegal activity. They are useful as a tool for law enforcement as an investigative aid, and as a deterrent against potential illegal activity when it is known that an area is being monitored. Security Cameras have been integrated into the landscape and are used to varying degrees internationally according to laws that govern information access and privacy in each jurisdiction. In Canada, the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA) determines the extent to which security cameras can be deployed and used within Canadian jurisdictions. Currently all of the devices used by the City of Burnaby comply with FIPPA regulations.

Staff are proposing to install security cameras at selected key access points in Central Park which will comply with FIPPA regulations. Recorded footage of these cameras will be used to provide law enforcement and investigators with a greater ability to gather potential evidence in the event that illegal activities take place within the park. The camera locations will be made known through prominent signage in compliance with the applicable privacy protection law. Currently the City monitors other outdoor areas such as frequent illegal dump sites and recreation facility common areas to deter illegal dumping and theft. In a similar manner, staff are proposing to expand the use of security cameras to key Central Park access points to provide an added level of safety and security for park patrons.

Trail Lighting

Many park users feel that increasing lighting along trails will make them safer to use at night. While this may be true in some circumstances, it is not universally true for all environments. Lighting attracts and at times invites use, and in some instances it will build the perception of safety while creating shadows for people to hide and nefarious activity to occur. Lighting in remote areas may create a false sense of security if there is no natural surveillance, as lights alone do not deter criminal activity. Nocturnal lighting also has negative effects on flora and fauna in natural areas and lighting these areas should be avoided if possible. However, where it is used appropriately, lighting can guide people to use trails more safely. By illuminating areas that can be naturally monitored by surrounding residents or drivers, or by illuminating connections between lit areas which are used frequently at night (such as a pathway from a stadium to its parking lot, or between a facility that is busy at night and a residential neighbourhood), these connections can become safer.

While it is not recommended that trails through natural areas be lit, staff recommend that enhanced lighting be installed at major trailheads/entrances to trails and on pathways that connect facilities used frequently at night. Particularly, it is important to illuminate signage at perimeter trailheads at night to ensure people are informed about

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the trail network. Staff will also review park usage patterns to discourage the use of any unintended pedestrian cut-throughs.

Call Boxes

Call boxes are used to provide a secure and accessible emergency communication system which connects people instantly with first responders. While there is little definitive data to show that call boxes deter crime, affording users an opportunity to summon help rapidly is comforting and helpful. While cell phone use is common these days, not everyone has a cellphone to call for help if they feel they are in danger. Call boxes are designed to require little maintenance and can be powered efficiently, which makes them an efficient compliment to other safety and security measures that can be implemented within parks and public spaces. Staff are mindful that it is unreasonable to expect call boxes to be available in all trails, parks and open spaces. A proliferation of call boxes would have a negative impact on the natural and ecological environment of the parks. Therefore, staff recommend the City consider the installation of a few call boxes only on a trial basis to gauge their effectiveness and usefulness. These trial boxes would be installed at heavily used locations within the trail network in Central Park as a compliment to the bike patrol and security camera initiatives. These call boxes will provide instant and direct contact to 911 dispatch. They will be designed to be a 'Help Zone' which is lit, with clear signage that a video monitoring device is built in to record activity in a specific vicinity around the box. Help Zones designed in this manner, will be FIPPA compliant and will provide park users with a defined space that anyone can attend should they feel threatened in any way. The Help Zones will also be equipped with an auto locator that will provide instant location information for emergency dispatchers which is sometimes problematic or leads to a critical delay when a cell phone is used.

Park Closure

A park closure bylaw is another effective tool to allow bylaw enforcement officers to control access to park areas at certain times during the night. Illegal and nuisance activity most often occurs during late night hours, and without a closure bylaw it is often difficult for law enforcement to justify removing people from a park or acting on complaints if officers are not on hand when the activities are taking place. Staff recommend that the City consider the advisability and feasibility of a park closure bylaw through public consultation to identify certain parks, and specific areas in parks to be closed at night to allow enforcement officers to remove unwanted traffic from parks which are not in operation during the night.

Signage

In concert with the above recommended safety and security initiatives, staff will review park signage to ensure that there is clear and visible wayfinding signs, and clear and visible information signs to ensure people understand how to appropriately use trails and pathways. In addition, staff will ensure that adequate and appropriate signage is installed to inform people about the use of security cameras and call boxes. As noted above it is important that the signage be visible and understandable by all park users for it to be as effective as possible. New sign kiosks have been recently installed at five key access points in Central Park (see Attachment 1), and staff will expand this signage into the park interior and other major parks in the near future.

3.0 Funding Sources, Cost and Proposed Timing for Implementation

Subject to Council approval of this report, the cost of implementing the proposed measures will be included in the upcoming capital and operating budgets discussion. Gaming Fund and Capital Contingency Fund will be considered to fund capital items such as security cameras, call boxes, signage and lighting. Operating expenditures such as the staff cost of the pilot bike patrol program will be included in the operating budget once the detailed parameters and requirements are identified in detail. Council approval for these expenditures will be sought through the budget review process.

Should Council approve of these measures in principle, staff will work toward a detailed assessment of the cost of implementation and staff will prepare a report back for approval. This detailed assessment will include information on the number of additional staff required and the associated cost, a description of the equipment required and its function, proposed locations and the installation cost for such things as security cameras and call boxes. It is estimated this assessment can be completed over the next few weeks, which would allow implementation to occur by the start of 2018.

4.0 Conclusion

Burnaby's numerous parks and open spaces offer excellent opportunities for recreation and leisure activities, and these open spaces account for 25% of the City's entire land area. Council understands that public safety in these open spaces is important and has requested staff to review additional safety measures that may be considered to enhance public safety in parks, trails and open spaces. While public safety can always be improved, the City cannot be at all places at all times. The general public should always be mindful of the environment they are in and they should avoid entering into isolated and remote areas alone and areas that are used infrequently by the public. This report summarizes several measures that have been used successfully to deter illegal activity, to provide law enforcement with more tools to monitor, investigate and respond to emergency situations. Staff are recommending that Council approve in principle the safety measures identified in this report to improve public safety in parks and open

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spaces. Staff will provide a further report to Council at a later date on the implementation details such as cost, equipment requirements, installation locations and other relevant information.



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cc. City Manager
Director Finance
Acting Chief Superintendent, Burnaby RCMP

NEW SIGN KIOSK LOCATIONS, CENTRAL PARK = X

