



Attn: Mayor and Council, City of Victoria

Date: February 21, 2020

From: North Park Neighbourhood Association

Subject: North Park Temporary Community Centre Proposal in Former Victoria Squash Club

Recommendation

1. That the City of Victoria's real estate manager be directed to negotiate, and enter into a minimum three year lease of the former Victoria Squash Club at 1811 and unit 103- 1821 Cook Street on behalf of the North Park Neighbourhood Association (NPNA) for the purpose of providing neighbourhood-based, volunteer-driven and grants-funded arts and recreation-based programming targeted to children, youth, families, and seniors in the North Park, Downtown/Harris Green, and Hillside Quadra neighbourhoods.
2. That the annual facility operating costs (lease + NNN, and utilities) be paid by the City and janitorial services and garbage collection be managed by the City's building services department (or alternatively, a grant be provided to NPNA for these facility operating costs).
3. That the City allocate one-time funding towards leasehold improvements, to be cost-shared with the landlord,
4. That the City provide a \$75,000 staff operating grant to the community centre, if this operating grant has not already been approved in the 2020 financial plan as has been requested by each of the NPNA and Downtown Residents Association.

Background - Committee of the Whole Report for the Meeting of June 20, 2019 "[Community and Seniors' Centres Annual Report for 2018](#)" dated May 17, 2019.¹

The NPNA Board would like to appreciate the work that City of Victoria Council and staff have done to secure a permanent location for the community centre and the equitable siting and amenity selection for Crystal Pool. Regardless of this work and commitment from mayor and council, a community centre for North Park, Downtown, and Harris Green, should it be incorporated into the new Crystal Pool facility or the former Crystal Pool facility in Central Park, is still three to five years away. This report provides a proposal for an interim solution to support residents, in particular the most underserved youth, low income families, and seniors that live in North Park, Harris Green, and Downtown.

This proposal is consistent with the 2022 strategic priorities action in the 2020 draft financial plan to establish a community centre in North Park in conjunction with the Crystal Pool

¹ Community and Seniors' Centre's Annual Report for 2018, <https://pub-victoria.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=41662>

replacement project.² As it will be a minimum of three years before this facility will be available for use as a community centre, NPNA is proposing to utilize the former Victoria Squash Club space in the heart of North Park village in the interim.

City Investment in Facility Operations of Community Centres

In 2018, the City invested a total of approximately \$1.63M in supporting the facility operations of the seven community centres and three senior’s centres. The total area of these facilities is approximately 93,000 square feet, with buildings ranging from 5,000 square feet to over 15,000 square feet. The average investment for facilities operations per centre was \$148,193 (or \$17.50 per square foot). This City investment in community centres for facilities operation is for the cost of utilities, facilities maintenance and building services, as well as lease payments for Silver Threads which is not located in a City-owned facility. This City investment is above and beyond the operating grants provided to 11 community and seniors activities centres of \$75,000 per centre to contribute to staffing costs. On average, the community centres have 48 employees and more than 195 volunteers involved in operations.



Silver Threads Model

This proposal, and request for funding from the NPNA, is based on a similar model and proposal from Silver Threads that was approved by Council in 2014.

² 2020 Draft Financial Plan page 32, Strategic Objective #8: Strong, Liveable Neighbourhoods, Action #16 “Establish a community centre for the North Park Neighbourhood in conjunction with plans for the Royal Athletic Park parking lot and/or the Crystal Pool and Wellness Centre Replacement Project”.



Committee Report for the May 22, 2014 meeting, "[Victoria Silver Threads Relocation Request](#)," May 14, 2014.³ [Minutes of the May 22, 2014 meeting](#).⁴

In 2014, the City of Victoria approved Silver Thread’s relocation request to the CNIB building, committing to ongoing annual funding of \$147,200 for building lease and building operation costs, plus a one-time grant of \$200,000 for moving and leasehold improvement costs. Silver Threads now operates out of 2340 Richmond Road and receives a grant for this rent and operations as well as staff funding of \$75,000. The City’s 2020 financial plan proposes direct award grants to Silver Threads in the amount for \$75,000 for operating costs, and \$122,389 for lease costs, for a total of \$197,389.

Proposed North Park Community Centre

1. The Facility and Estimated Lease Cost

The space is already well suited to the needs of a community centre focused on arts and recreation programming for youth and others. There are several meeting rooms, washrooms (including showers, and lockers), a multipurpose room, and five squash courts. The building is owned by Stuart Logan who occupies the adjacent space in the building for Logan’s Pub. Mr. Logan, and the realtor, have expressed willingness to assist with the costs and deferred rent for updating the space (see proposed improvements below) and to make some retrofit modifications to the space to make it more versatile for a community centre focused on neighbourhood youth programming. As an added bonus, Mr. Logan is also open to loaning the stage and dance floor area of Logan’s for performances during the daytime on weekends.

The former Victoria Squash Club occupies two lease spaces at [1811 Cook Street](#) and [103-1821 Cook Street](#).

- 1811 cook street consists of the large foyer entrance, offices, storage, change rooms and larger multipurpose room in the connected space.
- 1821 cook street consists of 5 full size squash courts and bleacher seating in a room of exceptionally high ceilings (conducive to sport)

Combined, the size of the lease space is 6,781 square feet, and based on currently lease rates communicated by the owner, would represent a blended rate of \$15 per square foot (\$20/ft² + NNN on 1811 Cook, and \$13/ft² inclusive of NNN at 1821 Cook St) .

Square Feet	\$/square foot	NNN	Lease + NNN	Annual cost
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³ Committee Report for the May 22, 2014 meeting, “Victoria Silver Threads Relocation Request,” May 14, 2014. <https://pub-victoria.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?documentid=5928>

⁴ Minutes of the May 22, 2014 meeting: <https://pub-victoria.escribemeetings.com/FileStream.ashx?DocumentId=5903>



1821 Cook: 4379 ft2	\$13	\$8	\$21	\$91, 959 (includes utilities)
1811 Cook: 2402 ft2	\$20	\$8	\$28	\$67, 256 (doesn't include utilities)
Total: 6781 ft2	\$15 blended rate	\$8	\$23	Total: \$159,215 per annum (+NNN on 1821 Cook and electric and gas space heating and DHW at 1811 Cook)

Benchmarking the proposed facility:

- City-funded community centres range in size from 5,000 to over 15,000 square feet, the proposed centre would be on the smaller end of this range.
- From a cost comparison perspective, the City's average facility operating cost in 2018 was \$17.50 per square foot; the blended rate of \$15.48 ft2 + combination of NNN and metered heat/DHW would be comparable to the average community centre cost per square foot (moreover, both owner and realtor say these lease costs are negotiable so these estimates are conservative).
- As compared to Silver Threads, the City's other community centre space located in a non-City owned building and leased by the City on behalf of the society, the annual facility operating costs would be less than Silver Threads 2014 lease costs of \$147,200 (we estimate NPNA centre costs of \$105,000 per annum + some combination of direct utilities and NNN). Moreover, the space is larger than Silver Threads, more centrally located, and more conducive to recreation programming delivery.
- We estimate total annual operating costs of no more than \$200,000 consisting of facility operating costs of \$125,000 and a staff operating grant of \$75,000. This is less than Silver Threads annual operating costs of \$226,000.
- The NPNA will leverage this core funding for a community centre and staff, by enlisting local volunteers, corporate sponsorship, and grant-funded program delivery contractors. Given the pride and commitment of our local businesses to the neighbourhood, and the focus on youth and low income households, we don't anticipate any problems in obtaining grants and sponsorship for programming if the core operating costs and building janitorial services for the centre are funded and supported by the City.

City Funded Community Centre	<u>Projected 2020 Funding</u>
Burnside Gorge Community Centre	\$93,875



Quadra Village Community Centre	127,939
Fairfield Community Place	\$152,664
Cook Street Village Activity Centre	\$93,423
Fernwood Community Centre	\$83,875
James Bay Community School Centre	\$140,216
James Bay New Horizons	\$103,520
Vic West Community Centre	\$120,152
Downtown Community Centre	\$75,000
Victoria Silver Threads	\$197,389
Oaklands Community Association	\$101,486
North Park Community Centre (request)	\$200,000

Proposed Improvements

The space already has many of the elements that would make an excellent community space.

Proposed improvements are largely cosmetic; for example, upgrading lighting, replacing ceiling tiles, replacing or removing carpet, and painting. We anticipate that the owner would be willing to contribute substantially to these upgrades as they would be necessary for any tenant to consider occupying the space.

The alterations that we would suggest to further maximize the use of space would be to:

- Open up some of the squash courts for more flexible use of the space for other sport and recreation programs e.g. Basketball
- Expand the multipurpose room and open up the long hallway by consolidating the very large men’s and women’s washroom into one gender neutral washroom and smaller single stall change rooms
- Build a VIHA-approved commercial kitchen space for rental, programming, and skill training.

Unfortunately, while it could be possible to fashion some of the space for childcare and to claim some outdoor space to meet the requirements for much needed licensed daycare, the Board does not feel the space is conducive to daycare given the adjacent transition house and the lack of space for parent drop-off. When the community centre relocates to its permanent location (i.e. Central Park), the added responsibilities and physical space characteristics of running licensed daycare will be satisfied.

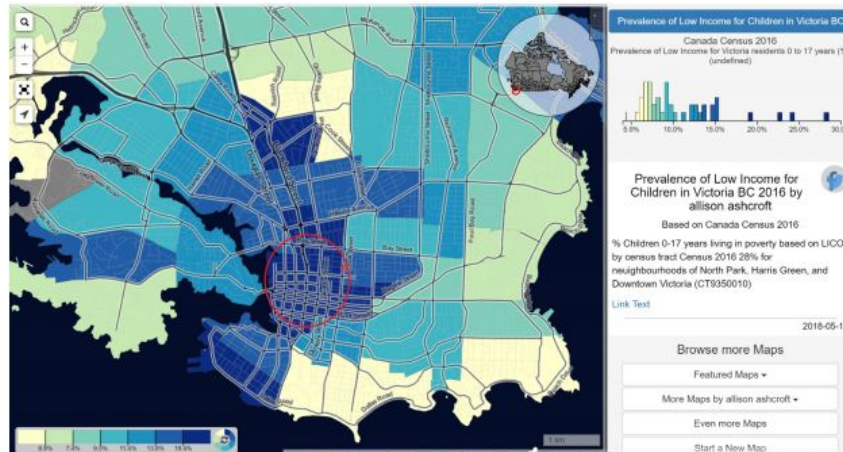
More Detail Regarding Proposed Programming and the Neighbourhood Context:
Youth, Seniors, and Low Income Households

The focus of the North Park community centre will be to offer free/near free recreation programming for households with low to moderate income; representing a significant portion of the North Park neighbourhood. In the North Park, Harris Green, and downtown Victoria census tract, 28% of children ages 0-17 are living in poverty.⁵

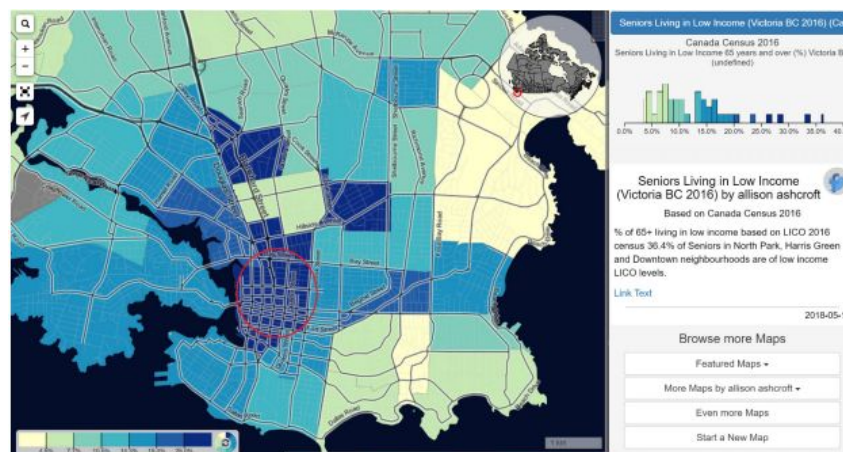


Furthermore, youth are the least served group throughout the city operated community centres. According to the May 2019 report, of the 113,796 recreation participants in 2018, only 9,224 represent youth participants. This is only 8% of all recreation participants at the City’s funded centres. The North Park community centre will provide opportunities for youth in an accessible, central, and free space. After school and weekend programming will be a focus for this demographic. For example, squash, basketball, volleyball, and other sports programs, art classes, help with homework, and skills training in the commercial kitchen.

⁵ [28% Children 0-17 years living in poverty based on LICO by census tract Census 2016 \(North Park, Harris Green, and Downtown Victoria - CT9350010\)](#)



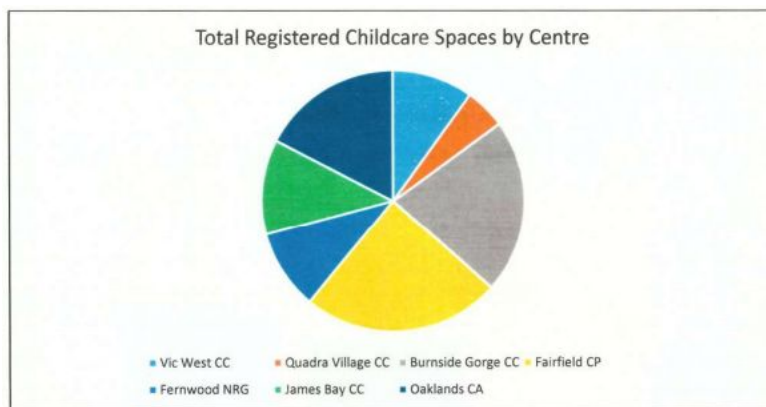
We will also offer free/near free programs and events to engage with seniors as North Park is home to a large number of seniors living in poverty. According to the 2016 census, 36.4% of seniors in North Park, Harris Green and Downtown are low income.⁶ The squash club is an accessible space from a mobility perspective. There are opportunities for intergenerational learning and recreation. We hope to offer seasonal tax clinics to help low income seniors file their taxes, repair cafes, card game socials, and opportunities for social inclusion. Low income seniors in North Park report having to take two buses to get to Cook Street Activity Centre. By offering programs and services to seniors at the community centre in the heart of North Park village, low income seniors will not have to face this barrier to inclusion.



Childcare

⁶ [36.4% of Seniors 65+ are living in low income based on LICO by census tract Census 2016 \(North Park, Harris Green, and Downtown Victoria - CT9350010\)](#)

Another important community service offered by community centre operators is licensed childcare. In 2018, seven of the City funded community centres offered a total of 1,002 spaces for families in need of childcare, an increase of approximately 162 spaces over 2016. This represents a significant proportion, roughly 78%, of the total inventory of the licensed care within the municipality. From an equity perspective, the distribution of childcare spaces does not correspond to children living in poverty. North Park, Harris Green, and Downtown Victoria are disproportionately affected by the lack of community centre run childcare.



The demand for childcare, both full-time daycare and out-of-school care continues to exceed supply in the City. Currently, additional pressure resulting from increased demand for space is placing existing child care operations, which are located within schools and other privately-owned properties, at risk.

The Squash Club is a challenging space for licensed child care (due to a lack of dedicated outdoor space, pick/up and drop off area, etc.), making a permanent space for licensed child care at Central Park still very necessary. However, there are opportunities to provide programs to families with young children at the squash club. For example, a drop in playgroup, family art classes, Best Babies classes, parenting classes and workshops, in addition to the free/near free art and recreation based programming for children and youth of all ages.



Police Presence in North Park

The residents and businesses in North Park Village are experiencing the realities of living and working in a neighbourhood that houses a concentration of social services. In discussion with business owners and Chief Del Manek there is an opportunity to incorporate a Victoria Police Department presence at the community centre. Chief Del Manek is responsive to exploring “some sort of VicPD presence at the proposed community centre ...if there were youth programs at the



community centre then I am open to seeing what VicPD can do to support these youth programs and have VicPD engaged where possible and where our resources allow us to participate.”



Cook Street entrance



Inside entrance, view of existing offices



Multipurpose room



Lockers in washroom



Shower room



Five squash courts



Squash court detail