



Attn: Mayor and Council, City of Victoria  
Date: June 9, 2020  
From: North Park Neighbourhood Association  
Subject: Request to Open Royal Athletic Park

As the City continues to announce innovative solutions for supporting businesses and residents across Victoria during the current global pandemic, we would like to bring equitable access to green space and outdoor recreation to the forefront. The wider sidewalks on Cook Street have already significantly improved the pedestrian experience and accessibility in North Park Village; however, access to green space continues to be an issue for Victoria's northern neighbourhoods - North Park, Downtown, Fernwood, and Hillside-Quadra. **For this reason, we are calling on the City of Victoria to open Royal Athletic Park to the public for day use.** We request that this be done without delay, employing the same expediency that has been demonstrated by staff and council with existing COVID-19 response measures.

Equitable access to green space and outdoor recreation is an important health determinant for community wellbeing. Even with Royal Athletic Park in the equation, Victoria's northern neighbourhoods are still among the most park deficient. Opening Royal Athletic Park to the public as a free, outdoor recreation space would support the work the City is already doing to achieve several of the measurable outcomes in the [2019-2022 Strategic Plan](#). For example:

Strategic Objective Five: Health, Wellbeing, and Welcoming City, pg. 29

- Increase in availability of free recreation options
- Increase in people accessing nature
- Increase in number of people who are more active

Strategic Objective Eight: Strong, Liveable Neighbourhoods, pg. 43

- Increase number of people walking compared to other modes of getting around within neighbourhoods
- Increase in the amount of green space in neighbourhoods
- All neighbourhoods are thriving, distinctive, appealing, viable and have amenities

**To support the high concentration of apartment dwelling, low income households located in Victoria's northern neighbourhoods, we request that the City:**

- Open Royal Athletic Park to the public for day use for the duration of 2020
- Provide picnic tables for dining and seating in Royal Athletic Park
- Increase the number of picnic tables and bench seating in Central Park
- Provide garbage, recycling, compost collection in both Central Park and RAP
- Provide handwashing and water bottle filling stations in both Central Park and RAP
- Consider including an off leash dog run in RAP

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Many residents in North Park live in multi-family buildings with no access to private green space nor to private vehicles for travel to the region’s trails and provincial parks; these factors make access to urban green space even more important. In the 2012 OCP, two of the strategic directions for North Park were to “renew citywide recreational facilities,” and create a new neighbourhood park (See proposed location in Table 1). The need for more park space is being felt even more acutely right now, as public health recommendations for physical distancing continue through the summer.

According to Victoria’s *Parks and Open Space Master Plan*, North Park has 6.47 hectares of municipal parkland, resulting in 1.23 hectares of parkland per 1000 residents as compared to Victoria’s average of 3.16ha/1000 residents. **However, this calculation does not reflect the access to green space in North Park.** RAP, which is included in this calculation, is closed to the public except during events, which always have an associated cost to attend and no discount for local residents and taxpayers. The amount of parkland **accessible** to residents of North Park is roughly half of what is reported in the *Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan*, or **0.71ha/1000 residents**.

Table 1: Proposed Location of Additional Park in North Park, and existing Municipal Parks and Open Spaces in North Park.

Source: City of Victoria, [Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan](#), page 38.

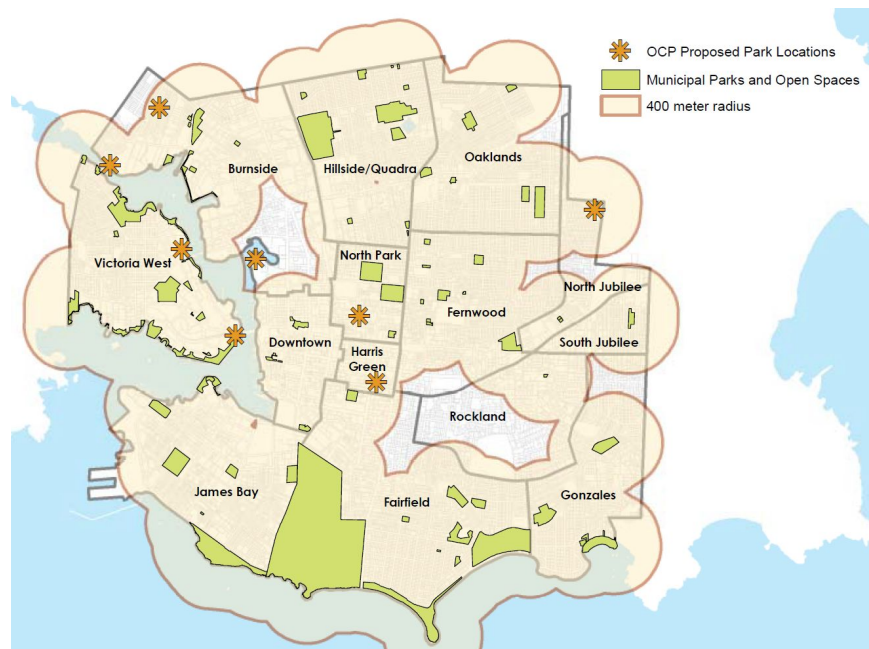


Table 2: Hectares of Municipal Park Land by neighbourhood.  
**Without RAP, North Park has 3.74 hectares of park land**

Opening Royal Athletic Park would provide many benefits to North Park and the wider area. This request supports the work the City is already doing to provide physically distanced outdoor options for residents in neighbourhoods across Victoria, while ensuring community benefit for the neighbourhoods that are most in need of support. We hope that this request is considered

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without delay, and reflects the expediency already demonstrated by staff and council for the many COVID-19 response and recovery measures supporting Victoria residents and businesses.

### **This request is submitted with the support of the following organizations:**

North Park Neighbourhood Association

Downtown Residents Association

Hillside Quadra Neighbourhood Action Committee

Fernwood Community Association

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#### Notes:

1. Downtown and North Park at [4961 people/km2](#), Harris Green and some of Fernwood at [7015 people/km2](#), North and South Jubilee at [6360 people/km2](#)