



## COUNCIL REPORT

Report Date: October 10, 2023  
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Meeting Date: October 18, 2023  
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TO: Standing Committee on City Finance and Services  
FROM: General Manager, Finance, Risk and Supply Chain Management  
SUBJECT: Provincial 'Growing Communities Fund': Allocation to Temporary Plazas, Turf Field at Moberly Park and Spray Park at Ross Park

### Recommendations

- A. THAT Council approve an additional allocation of \$10 million from the Growing Communities Fund (GCF) towards:
- i. the conversion of three temporary plazas to a permanent configuration and
  - ii. the Turf Field at Moberly Park and Spray Park at Ross Park projects.

This is in addition to the \$10 million that was allocated to the above projects on July 26<sup>th</sup>, 2023 bringing the total allocation to \$20 million, resulting in a remaining unallocated GCF balance of \$13.6 million.

- B. THAT Council approve a Multi-year Capital Budget of \$10 million for the conversion of three temporary plazas to a permanent configuration, to allow for the projects to commence without delay.
- C. THAT Council direct staff to report back with scope and detailed costing information for the Turf Field at Moberly Park and Spray Park at Ross Park projects in 2024.

### Purpose and Executive Summary

In February of 2023, the [Provincial government announced](#) the creation of the Growing Communities Fund (GCF), to support the delivery of infrastructure projects necessary to enable community growth. The City of Vancouver received \$49.1 million from this fund in March 2023.

On July 26, 2023, [Council approved](#) an allocation and multi-year capital budgets of \$25.5 million

from the GCF towards 6 projects, including \$10 million recommended for conversion of three temporary plazas to permanent. Council also directed staff to allocate a portion of this \$10 million to fund and support the completion of a new synthetic turf field at Moberly Park and a spray park at Ross Park and to report back once project details were refined.

The conversion of temporary plazas project is now ready for implementation with a cost of \$10 million. To ensure the timely completion of the three permanent plazas for the FIFA World Cup in 2026, it is crucial for Council to provide guidance at this point.

The projects at Moberly and Ross Parks are currently in a process to refine preliminary costing, scoping, public engagement, timelines, and to request Board direction. Preliminary cost estimates for these two projects total \$10 million.

As the costs of these three projects exceed the \$10 million allocated from the GCF, this report recommends the approval for allocation of an additional \$10 million from the remaining \$23.6 million of GCF, totalling \$20 million for the three projects. This report also recommends approval of the associated multi-year capital budget of \$10 million towards the conversion of temporary plazas to permanent configuration, in order to enable those projects to proceed immediately.

The Park Board is expected to make a decision regarding the Turf Field at Moberly Park and Spray Park at Ross Park projects upon the completion of engagement and report back. The results of the Park Board decisions for these projects, including scope, updated cost estimates, and timelines will be reported back to Council in 2024, with a request for approval of Capital Budgets at that time.

### **Council Authority/Previous Decisions**

The 2023-2026 Capital Plan was approved by Council in June 2022. The plan presents a comprehensive overview of planned City capital investments in infrastructure and amenities across various service categories, along with the associated funding strategy and debt capacity for the capital investment priorities over the four years.

Council approved the [2023 Capital Budget](#) (funding allocation from 2023-26 Capital Plan) on December 6<sup>th</sup> 2022, and subsequent budget adjustments on [May 31<sup>st</sup> 2023](#) and [August 28<sup>th</sup> 2023](#).

Council has the discretion to adjust the Capital Plan to respond to evolving circumstances during the plan's four-year timeframe, including receipt of grant allocations from senior governments. In accordance with the City's Capital Budget Policy, proposed adjustments to the Capital Plan and the Capital Budgets greater than \$200,000 are presented to Council for approval on a quarterly basis and/or as required.

On July 26, 2023, [Council approved](#) the initial allocation of \$25.5 million from the Provincial Growing Communities Fund.

### **City Manager's Comments**

The City Manager concurs with the foregoing recommendations.

## Context and Background

In February of 2023, the [Provincial government announced](#) the creation of the Growing Communities Fund (GCF), which provides a one-time \$1 billion grant to support the delivery of infrastructure projects necessary to enable community growth in British Columbia. The City of Vancouver received \$49.1 million from this fund in March 2023, the second highest allocation after Surrey.

The use of funds must adhere to certain conditions set out by the GCF, which include limitations on their use for capital investments and a **requirement to spend them by March 2028**. For more information, see Appendix A.

Upon receipt of this grant, City staff embarked on a process to identify suitable projects for this incremental funding. An eligibility criteria was established to identify and rank candidate projects, prioritizing **potential for rapid delivery and clearly defined outcomes**. For more information, see Appendix B.

Projects identified as strong candidates based on the established criteria, were brought to Council on July 26, 2023. The initial allocation of the Growing Communities Fund was approved for the following projects:

1. Beatty Street Bike Lane conversion to permanent configuration (\$2 million)
2. Transportation safety & accessibility improvements (\$3 million)
3. Marpole-Oakridge Community Centre renewal and expansion (\$3 million)
4. Downtown Eastside FireHall # 2 Temporary Annex (\$3 million)
5. Renovation of Central Children's Library – Phase 2 (\$4.5 million)

In addition, \$10 million originally recommended for the conversion of three temporary plazas to permanent, was approved with amendments. Council directed staff to allocate a portion of this \$10 million to fund and support the completion of a new synthetic turf field at Moberly Park and a spray park at Ross Park and report back once scope, cost and delivery timelines were refined.

Furthermore, Council requested a report back with recommendations for the allocation of the remaining GCF no later than the 2023-2026 Capital Plan Mid-term Update scheduled for mid-2024, prioritizing access to washrooms in the public realm and accessibility and inclusion improvements. Council also instructed staff to explore full or partial addition of means prevention barriers as part of the Granville Connector. At this point, these projects require additional work to refine scope and cost estimates.

## Discussion

### Insufficient funding to complete all three projects

Currently, \$10 million has been allocated from the GCF to the conversion of three temporary plazas to permanent, construction of a new Synthetic Turf Field at Moberly Park and the development of a Spray Park at Ross Park. However, the preliminary cost estimates for these three projects amount to \$20 million.

Project	Current Cost Estimates
Three temporary plazas to permanent and wider sidewalk at one location	\$ 10 million
Synthetic Turf Field at Moberly Park	\$8 million
Spray Park at Ross Park	\$2 million
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$20 million</b>

Both Parks projects are currently in a definition process, and these findings will be presented to the Park Board for decision. Once Board direction has been provided, staff can provide these findings to Council and request approval of capital budgets and GCF allocations.

Meanwhile, the conversion of temporary plazas project is ready for implementation now. To ensure the timely completion of the three permanent plazas for the FIFA World Cup in 2026, it is crucial for Council to provide guidance at this point.

Conversion of temporary plazas to permanent

During the pandemic, Council directed staff to reallocate road space to support the community. As a part of that response, staff implemented 22+ temporary plazas in collaboration with community partners across Vancouver. While temporary in their initial look and feel, these spaces have become well loved and integrated into the commercial areas. To better serve the neighbourhood, the temporary plazas can be upgraded into permanent spaces that include supportive infrastructure like access to electrical power and water. The current capital plan includes funding to convert one temporary plaza to a permanent plaza, as well as some smaller-scale upgrades across other plazas.

With a larger capital investment of an additional \$10 million, staff will take advantage of economies of scale and standardize the approach to plaza delivery. Although they serve different communities, these plazas have similar components. A standardized approach will deliver these important community improvements more efficiently by streamlining the design process and packaging plazas together for detailed design and delivery.

This \$10 million funding would allow for three additional permanent plazas and a sidewalk widening. Including existing capital funding, four plazas, one with significant sidewalk widening on the commercial high street, would be delivered in advance of FIFA World Cup 2026. Plaza partners are expressing interest in using the spaces for celebratory gatherings during the month of FIFA World Cup 2026, and with this funding, staff can deliver the improved spaces in advance. If funding for plaza upgrades is secured in Q1 2024 at the time of the park

improvements report back, the plaza improvements would continue through the standardized approach, but with an adjusted timeline for construction after FIFA World Cup 2026.

Beyond the currently considered plazas, there are a number of additional temporary plazas that could be upgraded through this standardized approach in future capital plans as well.

#### New turf field at Moberly Park and a spray park at Ross Park

Park Board staff are in a process to refine preliminary project costing, scoping, public engagement and timelines for the new synthetic turf field at Moberly Park and a spray park at Ross Park. This report includes a recommendation to earmark funding for these two projects from the remainder of the GCF.

Park Board staff are currently responding to two related Park Board Motions from [December 2022](#) and [May 2023](#). These motions direct Park Board staff to not only plan for a new artificial turf sports field in southeast Vancouver, ideally to be located at Moberly School or Ross Park but also to engage with residents and organizations in the Sunset Neighbourhood to explore the need for, and prioritization of, outdoor amenities. This engagement is nearly complete and has included pop-ups at events and in parks conducted from July through September, conversations with community organizations and field hockey user groups and it will culminate with a statistically valid opinion research poll including Punjabi translation in October.

The Park Board is expected to make a decision regarding the Turf Field at Moberly Park and Spray Park at Ross Park projects upon the completion of engagement and report back. The results of the Park Board decisions for these projects, including scope, updated cost estimates, and timelines will be reported back to Council in 2024, with a request for approval of Capital Budgets at that time.

Preliminary cost estimates for the Synthetic Turf Field at Moberly Park and Ross Park Spray Park are \$8 million and \$2 million, respectively. The impacts of these capital investments on the operating budget are estimated to be around \$65,000 annually.

These early estimates do not include washroom upgrades. The need for new or renewed accessible washroom facilities and the costs for these are under review and could increase the cost of these projects substantially.

If Council and Park Board align on the project approvals and funding, Park Board staff will immediately start the design and construction process and target substantial completion of the park works by the fall of 2026. Other Capital projects may need to be deferred to enable priority expedition of these projects.

#### **Financial Implications**

This proposes allocation of an additional \$10 million of the Growing Communities Fund towards conversion of three temporary plazas to a permanent configuration as well as a new turf field at Moberly Park and a spray park at Ross Park. The proposed allocation would provide sufficient funding to begin work on conversion of the plazas, while ensuring there is sufficient allocation to fund the two Park Board projects based on current preliminary estimates.

The report proposes that a \$10 million Multi-Year Capital Project budget be created for the conversion of the three temporary plazas to a permanent configuration. Based on Council approval in July 2023, there would be no additional impact to the 2023-2026 Capital Plan nor total City Multi-Year Capital Project Budget, however, the approval would add specificity to July 2023 direction from Council by confirming that the \$10 million Multi-Year Capital Project is allocated to the conversion of the three temporary plazas to a permanent configuration. Capital Budget approval for the two Park Board projects will be requested in the report back to Council in 2024.

Expenditure budgets can be managed within the current citywide expenditure budget.

If the additional \$10 million allocation recommended this report is endorsed by Council, the remaining unallocated balance of the Growing Communities Fund grant will be \$13.6 million.

**Legal Implications**

Not applicable.

\* \* \* \* \*

**APPENDIX A**  
**Provincial conditions for the use of the GCF**

Conditions for use of the funds include:

- Municipality must own the asset
- Funds cannot be used to provide contributions to third parties (no grants)
- Funds cannot be used for ongoing or operational activities
- Funds must be incremental to currently planned investments
- Funds should accelerate delivery of capital projects
- Funding must be spent by March 31, 2028, i.e. within 5 years

According to the Provincial eligibility criteria, many, but not all service categories reflected in the City's 2023-2026 Capital Plan are eligible for GCF:

<u>Eligible for GCF funding:</u>	<u>Ineligible for GCF funding:</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affordable housing</li> <li>• Childcare</li> <li>• Parks &amp; Public Open Spaces</li> <li>• Community facilities: recreation (includes libraries)</li> <li>• Public safety</li> <li>• Streets/transportation</li> <li>• Potable water, rainwater and wastewater</li> <li>• Solid waste</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arts, culture &amp; heritage</li> <li>• Community facilities: social facilities, non-profit offices, cemetery</li> <li>• Civic facilities &amp; equipment</li> <li>• Renewable energy</li> <li>• Technology</li> </ul>

Local governments are required to report back to Province on an annual basis with information on the progress of the projects which are funded through this fund, and any unused funding which is yet to be allocated towards initiatives. Further to the financial reporting, an annual report that identifies work related to Housing Needs Reports and pre-zoning requirements as applicable is required.

## **APPENDIX B**

### **City of Vancouver eligibility requirements and prioritization criteria**

All projects identified as candidates for GCF funding meet the following requirements:

1. Projects must be consistent with the Provincial eligibility requirements
2. Projects that can be delivered within the term of the 2023-2026 Capital Plan
3. Projects with clearly defined outcomes

In addition, projects must meet at least one of the below criteria to be prioritized:

4. Projects where additional funding could increase scope or accelerate project schedule in the 2023-2026 Capital Plan
5. Projects that were previously de-scoped or deferred due to insufficient funding in current and prior capital plan
6. Projects that have limited access to other senior government grant programs or other funding opportunities
7. Projects that address emerging health and safety issues

Projects were identified and prioritized based the aforementioned criteria, and taking into account the input received from Council and Boards since the approval of the 2023-2026 Capital Plan.