KOBAU PARK DEVELOPMENT PLAN

REGIONAL DISTRICT OF OKANAGAN-SIMILKAMEEN

PROJECT SUMMARY REPORT: March 17, 2023

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1. PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

This document outlines the process, rationale, and recommendations for the Kobau Park Development Plan. This was a community driven process meant to identify strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for the Park and the community over the next decade and beyond. LA West worked closely with the RDOS and the Community Working Group to promote the project to the community in order to gain as much public participation as possible. This document outlines the outcomes of the public engagement process and the recommendations that stemmed from that engagement.

2. PROJECT BACKGROUND

The intent of the Kobau Park Development Plan is to generate a concept plan that will inform the Provincial land tenure renewal application and guide the enhancement of Kobau Park and its amenities in the years to come. The current 30-year Provincial Lease agreement was established on September 22, 1996 and will come up for renewal on September 22, 2026. As the application process for these agreements typically takes between 1-2 years the RDOS is proactively collecting the requisite documentation for the application.

The RDOS has also just recently completed a Parks, Trails and Recreation 10 year plan which seeks to create a long-term framework to guide decision making and prioritization. The RDOS recognizes that great parks, trails and recreation systems don't "just happen" and that they require strategic planning, appropriate investment, and proactive management.

3. PROJECT GOALS

The overall goal of the RDOS parks and recreation program is to provide all residents and visitors with year-round access to a diversity of quality, inclusive and sustainable parks, trails, and recreation opportunities that protect the region's ecologically and culturally important areas; enhance the physical and mental health of residents and strengthen the community well-being and economic sustainability of the region. The Development Plan for Kobau Park has been formed through community consultation with residents and relevant community groups resulting in targeted outcomes.

Components of the Kobau Park Development Plan include, but are not limited to the following:

- Provide recommendations informed by an initial quality assessment, community consultation process, and the Regional Parks, Trails, and Recreation Masterplan. Including but not limited to:
    - Accessibility Requirements
    - Landscape Themes
    - Parks and Recreation Assets (courts, playgrounds, spray park, sport field, campground, and the like)
    - Comfort and Use Park Amenities (park furniture, washrooms, parking, shade solutions, and the like)
- Develop and deliver the Kobau Park Development Plan
- Concept Design that will guide the development of the park
- Detailed Cost Estimate derived from the Concept Plan

4. COMMUNITY WORKING GROUP (PARK COMMISSION, USER GROUPS AND PARTNERS)

The RDOS provided LA West with contact information for interested and affected parties with respect to Kobau Park. LA West would like to thank members of the working group who provided information and support throughout the process:

NAME	ORGANIZATION
John Terbasket	Band Manager with LSIB
Darryl Taylor	Similkameen Recreation Commission
Marie Marven	Kobau Park Recreation Commission
Joe Domijan	Chair of Similkameen Trails Society
Bob McAtamney	Director of Cawston Hall Society
George Bush	Area 'B' Director
Kyle Monster	RDOS Project Coordinator
Rudi Weckel	RDOS Project Coordinator
Luis Barroqueiro	Parks & Facilities Leadhand
Peter Skinner	Parks & Facilities Leadhand
Barb Stewart	Community organizer – existing park
Dion Eden	Disc Golf Coordinator
Holly Condon	Day Care Provider in Cawston
Sonja Vandenhoek	Kobau Park Recreation Commission
Justene Lougheed	Kobau Park Recreation Commission
Teshia Marven	Similkameen Minor Sports Association
Mishak Potash	Similkameen Minor Sports Association
Tammy Vesper	Kobau Park Recreation Commission
Taylor Thompson	Chair Similkameen Slow Pitch
Josee-Anne Rouleau	Similkameen Trails, PAC

LA West hosted a virtual meet-and-greet to introduce the project team to the community working group. The purpose and goals of the development plan were reviewed in addition to coordinating promotion for the first Open House. LA West circulated a questionnaire to the working group to begin to get a sense of the needs of the community, along with outstanding challenges and priorities. The information provided by the working group provided the basis for building the public survey. Members of the working group also toured the park with LA West, providing valuable insight into park use, assets and challenges. Two opportunities for park walk-throughs with the project team were offered and members of the Kobau Park Commission, Similkameen Trails Society and the Kobau Disc Golf group attended to provide their input on specific concerns on-site while LA West conducted an inventory and assessment of the existing park.

FIRST NATIONS ENGAGEMENT

The RDOS prides itself on working collaboratively and in consultation with our neighboring Indigenous communities on projects of mutual interests. In this instance, Lower Similkameen Indian Band (LSIB) were reached out to at all key project intervals of the Kobau Park Development Plan with an invitation to engage in the community informed design process. We look forward to continuing to build upon our relationship with LSIB and engage with them on future initiatives.

5. EXISTING CONDITIONS ASSESSMENT + RECOMMENDATIONS

Baseball Diamond: new baseball shale is needed for both infields, and currently only the north diamond is usable. Given the level of community involvement in the sport, there is rationale to maintain both diamonds should the community and RDOS prioritize that within their maintenance budget.

Existing Multi-use Court: concrete court is cracking and there are additional drainage issues present. Typically, concrete courts are not recommended, especially in the Okanagan where the dry climate degrades the concrete at an accelerated rate. Will require resurfacing or replacing.

Community Trees: vehicles are currently parking in the ROW, compacting the soil around the trees donated by the community. We recommend that fencing be installed along property line to protect trees from vehicles encroaching on roots. The type of fence to be determined though split rail or similar would match the surrounding rural properties. Recommend that fundraising for these fences become a priority to protect the existing community funded trees. As the roots get bigger, more and more damage will occur by vehicles parking too close.

Existing Playground: is in good condition, however a shade sail over the play structure would help prolong the life. Given the current condition and exposure it is assumed that the equipment will likely remain in good shape for the next 10 -15 years and may need to be replaced after that. Fall surfacing and condition of surrounding edger should be checked annually to ensure depth complies with CSA playground recommendations and should be topped up as needed.

Exiting Soccer Field: is in poor condition and currently unirrigated. The community indicated that the soccer field is not widely used as there are other fields in the area that are in better condition. The community did not want to renovate the existing soccer field but also did not want it removed and replaced with anything else. We understand that as part of the Parks, Trails and Recreation 10-year plan that the RDOS is seeking to better understand utilization levels and identify the highest value use for sports fields within the Regional District. Based on community feedback, we recommend keeping an open field space that could, in the future, accommodate an irrigated play field or another amenity if desired. The space is currently part of the disc golf course and is being used as is. If there is a desire in the future to irrigate the space and install an appropriate field, we recommend that it be reoriented to take into consideration sun direction.

Parking and Vehicular Circulation: Currently there is no designated parking on site. Visitors either park in the MOTI right of way (parking near the donated community trees) or have made their own roads near the dike (damage to several large ponderosa pines was observed). We recommend that parking lots be included as part of future planning.

The Dike: is currently accessible to both vehicles and pedestrians. Some safety concerns were raised by members of the community as well as concerns that vehicles may deteriorate the condition of the dike faster. It was noted that the dike does need occasional vehicle access for maintenance and emergencies. We recommend that the dike be closed to vehicular access through the installation of vehicle control devices such as removable bollards, vehicular gate etc.

6. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

The park planning process considered the interests of the community, existing and new amenities and activities, maintenance, RDOS policies and the greater community to provide recommendations.

Input from residents and key user groups and community partners was an important part in developing the overall concept plan. This section outlines what engagements took place, what we heard and how we used that feedback to finalize the Kobau Park Development Plan.

COMMUNICATIONS

In coordination with the RDOS, park user groups and community partners, LA West promoted the engagement activities through various channels in the community.

Specific communication strategies/platforms included:

- RDOS Regional Connections
- Facebook Community Pages
- Print material: posters throughout the community (Cawston Hall, Cawston Primary School, Cawston Market, Klippers Marketplace and Café, Kobau Park)
- Media: public service announcements via local radio, information release
- Direct emails to project partners and user groups (internally and externally)

ONLINE SURVEY

A public survey was opened on October 25, 2022, and was extended to November 30, 2022, based on community feedback. The public requested that paper surveys be made available for those without internet access or who may just prefer to fill them out on paper. Paper surveys were made available at the local grocery store with a drop box. The survey asked participants a series of questions about their use of Kobau Park in addition to their opinions about environmental quality, accessibility, and safety. Data analysis was performed on the results of all questions, and open-ended responses were themed and coded so that they also could be quantified. The main goals of the survey were to:

1. Look at the use and relevance of the existing features;
2. Identify any gaps in amenities and/or features;
3. Identify overall community values which will help shape the priorities for the park.

Throughout the 36-day survey period we received 64 responses in total from the Regional Connections webpage online and paper surveys.

LET'S TALK KOBAU PARK OPEN HOUSES

Throughout the course of the project, two public open houses were conducted to gather community feedback for the proposed upgrades to Kobau Park. The first was held in the neighboring community of Keremeos at the Similkameen Recreation Centre which saw approximately 35 participants from the community. The first open house was an exploratory exercise to identify strengths and weaknesses in terms of park amenities in addition to identifying any safety concerns and gaps in the current park.

Using the information gathered in the first open house in addition to the survey, two concept plans were generated for community feedback and presented at the second open house. Approximately 25 residents

attended the open house where the two plans were presented followed by a discussion in which attendees could ask questions, raise concerns, and bring forward ideas. Comments were also captured using a 24x36" aerial map, the results of which were subsequently aggregated with the results of the online spatial survey. Following the second open house, the concept plans were made available for further feedback on the RDOS Regional Connections website until the close of the public process on January 25, 2023.

7. WHAT WE HEARD

The list of priorities for Kobau Park below are a summary of the comments and perspectives shared during the two open houses, community interviews, working group meetings, public survey, and direct correspondence. Beyond the improvements listed below, there was a strong sentiment from the community that maintaining the existing amenities ought to be prioritized prior to breaking ground on any new projects.

The top priorities that emerged from these various engagement strategies were:

1. Washroom Upgrade
2. Preservation of Natural Areas
3. Playground Expansion
4. Nature Trail Enhancement
5. Improved River Access

During the second open house residents indicated that the school soccer pitch is primarily used by the community and did not believe that the popularity merited renovating the soccer field at Kobau.

WHAT WE DID WITH YOUR FEEDBACK

The concept plan shows proposed and existing amenities, buildings, parking, and landscape features. It outlines the approximate sizes, locations, connections, and overall design intent. The concept plan protects space and guides future development, ensuring that the puzzle pieces fit together.

Based on feedback received, the final concept plan for Kobau Park includes:

No.	ITEM	DISCUSSION	COST
1.0	Site Protection	Fencing to protect ecologically sensitive areas and community trees (see No. 4.0)	MED
2.0	Baseball Diamond	New baseball shale is needed for both infields, and regular maintenance needs to be established to ensure the diamonds remain usable. The ball diamonds are a well-used asset and function as a local and regional gathering place and ought to be prioritized. The community may need to look at extending the outfield fence if the area beyond is being programed with an activity area (see concept plan).	LOW
3.0	Resurfacing existing basketball court	Court should be resurfaced. Due to the climate, typically we do not recommend that outdoor courts be paved out of concrete as water tends to seep through the concrete causing cracking and drainage issues. Recommend that existing court be framed and built up with 4" of base,	MED

		resurfaced with asphalt and finished with acrylic court coating. Optionally, the base and asphalt can be skipped, the cracks patched, and an acrylic surface installed instead, however the life span will not be as long and the underlying issues will not be fixed. • New basketball nets are needed. • Optional addition: add a solid wall on one end that people can bounce balls off. Add a 12' Chainlink fence, add new court lighting.	
4.0	Parking and Vehicular Circulation	The parking strategy for Kobau is closely tied with controlling vehicular circulation to protect ecologically sensitive areas. Parking quantities shown on the concept plan are approximate and will be further refined during detailed design to meet the community's expectations and requirements. At this time the parking shown is based off current summer use when visitors are using both the baseball fields and river. We recommend that a designated parking lot along the dike, as well as associated fencing and vehicle controls (see concept plan for barrier and removable bollard placement) be incorporated first to protect the existing mature trees and to reduce public safety conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles. At this time materials are not specified though the cost estimate assumes that these parking lots will be crushed and compacted gravel w/ fines. The community expressed concerns about too much asphalt or concrete as well as cost, so this should be considered when choosing materials in the future.	MED-HIGH
5.0	New Multi-Use Court	To include linework for: Tennis, Pickle Ball and Badminton. There was strong support from the community to have an additional court added. One court for pickleball/ tennis and the existing one for basketball/ ball hockey. We recommend that the existing court be renovated first before adding additional courts. The RDOS Parks, Trails and Recreation Plan supports the development of multi-use sports courts, including emerging activities (e.g. pickleball)	HIGH
6.0	Disk Golf	There is overall support in keeping disc golf in the park. Some baskets and tees will need to be adjusted to accommodate the additional new amenities however a 9-basket course can still be accommodated in the space.	LOW
7.0	Additional storage	We propose that an additional storage unit be installed as part of the courts installation to house volleyball, pickle ball, ball hockey nets and other equipment that the community may wish to use with the courts. A suggested location for the storage is indicated on the plan.	MED

8.0	Site Furnishings	The community expressed support for including more benches and picnic tables. Given the community's history of donating trees and volunteer time, there may be an opportunity to sponsor benches or picnic tables in a similar manner. Additionally, bears have been known to frequent the site. Several garbage enclosures are not bearproof. Bearproof cans should be installed in the park.	MED
9.0	Washroom Upgrade	It was noted that the existing pit toilet is in good shape however the community expressed overwhelming support in installing an accessible washroom building with running water and change tables. The location proposed is shown near the existing canteen. The location allows for the possible integration of a septic field in the soccer area and is in close proximity to the parking lot for maintenance. This is a high-cost item and while the community showed over whelming desire to have a washroom building the main concern surrounds cost.	HIGH
10.0	Addition of Play Area for Ages 5-12	The community stated that there were limited recreation opportunities for middle school or high school aged users. During the first open house several ideas were discussed as possible additions for older children and teenage users including: a skateboard park, waterpark, adventure playground and pumptrack/ mountain bike skills park. After consultation support for a pump track and adventure playground were most widely favored. The community liked that both amenities could be built in phases and in part by volunteer groups. The location is suggested amongst the existing trees towards the dike, as both activities can fit into naturalized locations with limited impact on existing vegetation.	MED-HIGH
11.0	Picnic Shelter	The Kobau Park Commission informed us that the existing pergola and picnic table were heavily used during the summer by families and that an additional covered shelter would be desirable. A covered picnic shelter is shown between the proposed parking lot and adventure playground. While an additional shelter for picnics was in general supported by the community, there were concerns that the installation of the shelter would allow people to use it for camping. It is suggested that this shelter be installed after in installation of the pump track and adventure play area to reduce camping opportunities amongst the trees.	HIGH
12.0	Open Space	Flexible open spaces to provide opportunities for unstructured physical activities and improve user and spectator experiences during sporting activities	LOW

13.0	Access to River	A universally accessible connection from the proposed parking lot to the dike should be installed (suggested location shown on plan) to allow all visitors access to the dike and views of the river. Many participants would like to see seating added to the Dike to view the river from.	LOW

Additional comments:

The main concerns from the public are costs for construction, maintenance, and lack of funding with participants expressing concerns that the wish list is unrealistic. The one of the goals of this process is the Provincial lease renewal but also provide opportunities to acquire grants for site improvements and maintenance.

Some concerns were raised regarding the poison ivy and possible occasional seasonal flooding, these should be considered when detailed design occurs.

Amenities that were NOT included in the final concept:

- Riding Ring: while some support was shown initially, participants expressed concern about the maintenance and location of a riding ring in the park, noting that there were several other areas where people can ride. There was also concern regarding the amount of space that would be needed to include horse trailer parking and space for maneuvering.
- Skatepark: There is currently a skate park in Keremeos however many participants stated that the location is not ideal for kids to travel too. A skatepark was proposed in one draft concept for Kobau Park, however, the main factors against it were: high upfront cost, too much concrete, didn't fit with the natural surroundings and concerns of noise by users.
- Splash Pad: The main concerns voiced by the community regarding a splash pad were the high costs of installation, the water treatment requirements for a recirculating system and the potential waste of water in an area that already experiences droughts and high summer temperatures.
- Some residents wanted a more pronounced access to the river for tubing swimming, while others did not want to see this installed. At this time, we have not shown a designated access to the river as several different paths already exist and support from the community was mixed.

8. NEXT STEPS

The final deliverables of the Kobau Park Development Plan will be used by the RDOS to make application to the Province to renew the lease for Kobau Park in 2026. Following renewal of the lease, the RDOS will work with the residents of Cawston to execute the community priorities following any additional consultation, detail design, regulatory approvals or environmental assessments that may be required.

APPENDIX