



City of Richmond

Report to Committee

To: Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services
Committee

Date: November 15, 2016

From: Serena Lusk
Senior Manager, Recreation and Sport Services

File: 11-7125-01/2016-Vol
01

Re: South Arm Community Centre Upgrades

Staff Recommendation

That \$500,000 from the Council Community Initiatives Fund be considered in the 2017 budget process to assist in funding renovations to the South Arm Community Centre fitness centre as described in the staff report titled, "South Arm Community Centre Upgrades," dated November 15, 2016, from the Senior Manager, Recreation and Sport Services.

Serena Lusk
Senior Manager, Recreation and Sport Services
(604-233-3344)

Att. 1

REPORT CONCURRENCE		
ROUTED TO:	CONCURRENCE	CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER
Engineering Finance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
REVIEWED BY STAFF REPORT / AGENDA REVIEW SUBCOMMITTEE	INITIALS: 	APPROVED BY CAO

Staff Report

Origin

Increased fitness centre usage and decreased usage of the squash and racquetball courts at the South Arm Community Centre led the South Arm Community Association's Fitness Committee to recommend that an expansion of the fitness centre be considered.

In March 2014, the South Arm Community Association (SACA) approved \$20,000 to fund a feasibility study to examine the options and estimated costs of renovating the existing second floor fitness cardio room, weight room, aerobics studio and racquet court areas at the South Arm Community Centre to increase the available space for the fitness centre, as well as improve the space to meet modern user expectations of a diverse community. The fitness centre was last updated more than 20 years ago. Working with the City and an architectural consultant, the feasibility study was completed in late 2014.

The purpose of this report is to outline the recommended option and cost identified in the feasibility study. This report also recommends that Council support the renovation of the fitness centre by contributing \$500,000 from the Council Community Initiatives Fund (CCIF) along with a contribution from the South Arm Community Association and a potential contribution from the Federal Government through the Western Economic Diversification fund.

This proposed renovation supports Council's 2014-2018 Term Goal #2 A Vibrant, Active and Connected City:

Continue the development and implementation of an excellent and accessible system of programs, services, and public spaces that reflect Richmond's demographics, rich heritage, diverse needs, and unique opportunities, and that facilitate active, caring, and connected communities.

2.3. Outstanding places, programs and services that support active living, wellness and a sense of belonging.

Analysis

South Arm Community Centre Facility Usage

The current fitness centre at South Arm Community Centre is more than 20 years old and averages approximately 400 to 500 visits per day. Over time, trends in fitness facilities and user requirements have changed. Usage of the cardio room, weight room and aerobic studio has increased to the point that it is often over capacity, particularly at prime times. Since 2012, there has been an increase in fitness passes sold per year.

The table below shows a 21.5 per cent increase in the total number of fitness passes sold from 2012 to 2015:

	January 1 to December 31, 2012	January 1 to December 31, 2015
Total Number of Fitness Passes Sold	4,604	5,591

In 2015, there were 136,352 visits to the cardio room, weight room and aerobic studio. There has been a consistent decline in the usage of both squash and racquetball courts in the same period of time. Squash bookings have decreased 24 per cent and racquetball bookings have decreased 46 per cent since 2012.

The table below shows the occupancy rates for squash and racquetball courts (including wallyball):

Court Type	Number of Bookings in Fall 2012	Total Per Cent Occupancy in Fall 2012	Number of Bookings in Fall 2015	Total Per Cent Occupancy in Fall 2015
Squash	1,027	22%	782	16.7%
Racquetball	840	18%	448	9.6%

In response to the declining participation, staff have attempted to increase racquetball usage by offering free racquetball lessons and promoting use of the courts in partnership with the Racquetball Association of British Columbia. Despite this, the South Arm Racquetball League folded in 2014, after many years of operation.

The table below shows prime time usage rates for squash and racquetball courts:

Court Type	Prime Time Usage Jan. 1 to Dec. 31, 2015 5:00 p.m. to closing on weekdays (per cent of available hours)
Squash	42%
Racquetball	35%

Feasibility Study

Staff and members of the Community Association board worked together with a consultant to develop the feasibility study. After consideration of the physical space as well as participation trends at South Arm Community Centre and in the fitness services in general, a suitable option to meet the long-term fitness needs of the South Arm community was developed.

The feasibility study proposes creating a bigger fitness centre space by removing the walls between the current fitness and cardio studios, repurposing one squash and one racquetball court, and reconfiguring the changing rooms. The total space dedicated to fitness services would more than double. This increased space would create a safer environment and more room for people of multiple abilities and fitness levels to more comfortably use the fitness centre. Other proposed functional improvements include new flooring, lockers and mirrors.

Consultation

This project was initiated by the South Arm Community Association and discussed at Board meetings. In addition, the Community Association Fitness and Building Committees have been involved in defining and reviewing the project.

Through the process, concerns were raised by racquet sport players about the potential loss of courts. Staff and members of the SACA met with a group of racquet sport players in early February 2016 to review usage statistics and identify and attempt to resolve concerns about the potential renovation. The group consisted mostly of racquetball players, but also included squash and handball players.

The group noted the decline in racquetball court availability in Richmond and across the Lower Mainland, as courts are being closed or repurposed. They also noted that South Arm Community Centre is now the only racquetball facility in Richmond. While the group expressed their continued commitment to racquetball, they commented that having access to only one court will have a very negative effect upon the sport in Richmond which they feel serves as a valuable recreation and social activity. During prime time, groups of players swap in and out so more than four persons may play during a single booking. The group asked staff to review other alternatives for expansion of the fitness centre that would not impact the racquet courts. A petition was subsequently submitted to the City to review the proposed design.

In response to the comments, staff reviewed alternatives, such as moving portions of the fitness facilities to other floors in the centre and installing a moveable wall in one of the racquetball courts. Upon further investigation, to meet racquetball players concerns, and better serve fitness participants, SACA revised the proposal to retain two racquetball courts, with a movable wall in one court to accommodate squash. The fitness centre would then expand into the two squash courts.

Staff had a follow up meeting with representatives of the racquetball players in April 2016, and they indicated they were satisfied with the new proposal.

In early May 2016, two open houses were held at South Arm Community Centre, to review the proposed renovations. Feedback from the open house was generally supportive of the proposal.

Impact of Renovations on Court Users

If the proposed renovations proceed there would be two courts available for racquetball at South Arm Community Centre. A moveable wall will be installed in one of racquetball courts, allowing the court size to be adjusted so that squash can be played in the court. The fitness centre would expand into both of the current squash courts.

Squash courts are also available at Steveston and West Richmond community centres, as well as nine courts at private facilities in Richmond.

The table below shows the 12 options for squash players in Richmond if the proposed renovations proceed:

Location–Richmond	Number of Squash Courts
South Arm Community Centre	1
Steveston Community Centre	1
West Richmond Community Centre	1
The River Club	4
Sport Central	5

South Arm Community Centre would have the only racquetball courts in Richmond. The City of Vancouver has four racquetball courts in total, located at four community centres. The closest court to Richmond is the Marpole-Oakridge Community Centre on Oak Street.

Phased Approach

The renovation is proposed to be co-ordinated with existing planned maintenance to South Arm Community Centre's building systems occurring in the spring and summer of 2017. In the 2014 Capital program, \$650,000 was approved to update the mechanical system to provide better energy efficiency and to replace the roof.

Financial Implications

The South Arm Community Association has confirmed its commitment to funding this project. It has already spent funds on the feasibility study and has committed \$600,000 to the initiative as described in the letter in Attachment 1, of which approximately \$500,000 will be towards the capital costs with respect to the project.

In June 2016, Council approved a submission requesting a \$500,000 grant from the Federal Government through the Western Economic Development fund for this project. At this time, the grants have not been awarded; however, an announcement is expected shortly.

An additional \$500,000 commitment from the City would allow the project to be fully realized.

It is expected that one outcome of this project will be increased revenues from fitness centre usage. As per the operating arrangement between the South Arm Community Association and the City, these revenues will be retained by the Association and reinvested in the South Arm Community Centre and its programs and services. The Association will also be responsible for any increased operating costs related to staffing and equipment replacement. There are no operating budget impacts directly to the City from this project.

The proposed funding for this Capital Project is similar to others, where there were joint contributions from both the City and a community partner, such as when the Thompson Community Association and City funded the renovation of the kitchen. Other projects, such as the repurposing of the West Richmond Community Centre's racquetball court were funded solely by the West Richmond Community Association. The City also funds projects completely, such as the construction of the new City Centre Community Centre.

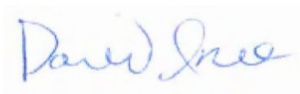
Financial Impact

There is no tax impact from the proposed South Arm Community Centre Upgrades. The proposed budget is estimated to total \$2,150,000 to be funded as follows:

1. \$650,000 from 2015 Capital Project South Arm Community Centre - Renewals & Upgrades
2. \$500,000 contribution by the South Arm Community Association for the Fitness Centre renovation;
3. \$500,000 grant submitted to the federal government through the Western Economic Development Fund; and
4. \$500,000 from the Council Community Initiatives Account

Conclusion

The renovation of the South Arm Community Centre will better meet demands for fitness, wellness and recreation in Richmond. This will provide the South Arm Community Centre with the space necessary to be adaptable and flexible to support trends, increase safety and improve accessibility. Any projected increased revenue will continue to be reinvested by the South Arm Community Association back into the community.



David Ince
Manager, Community Recreation Services
(604-247-4930)

Att. 1: Letter from the South Arm Community Association



SOUTH ARM COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

May 25, 2015

Western Economic Diversification
Canada 150 Community Infrastructure Program

To Whom it May Concern;

This letter is to express our unreserved support to the City of Richmond in its application for Federal Canada 150 Community Infrastructure Program Funding. These funds, plus our matching funds, would be applied towards the repurposing and infrastructure upgrading of the aging fitness area at the South Arm Community Centre.

Our fitness area is now overused and often gets very crowded. We consistently receive complaints from clients including women, seniors and people with disabilities who find our facility either difficult or uninviting to use. We have exhausted all the minor fixes and changes available to solve the problems of an aging facility. This includes the conversion of a hot tub room into a cardio room (approximately 10 years ago) and the recent purchase of \$100,000 in new strength equipment that has a smaller footprint. Even still, this area has the look of a 22 year old, out of date and overcrowded fitness facility.

South Arm Community Association has earmarked \$600,000 of our Association's funds to repurpose this area and make it more accessible, efficient and user friendly. We initially invested \$15,000 to obtain a detailed feasibility study by Shape Architecture, which has since been approved by the City of Richmond. With Canada 150 funding we can effectively more than double the usable existing 285 square meters of cardio and strength training space into 640 square meters of fitness use. There will be no increase to the actual floor space in this area, it will be repurposed and opened up to provide more efficient use.

By removing walls and repurposing 2 of the 4 underused racquet courts in the fitness area, South Arm will be positioned to continue to provide an even higher level of service to our community. Two important aspects of this are:

1. Our Society will be better positioned to provide neighbourhood-based, cost effective yet quality fitness service to all of our residents - youth, adults, seniors and those with disabilities. This is in alignment with the City of Richmond's Wellness Strategy and Physical Literacy Initiatives.
2. Our Society, through its Operating Agreement with the City of Richmond, will generate increased revenue that is wholly returned to our community through a wide range of services and opportunities. Our Youth, Senior's and Community Development Coordinators are fully funded from these monies. Many of the programs and services, we offer including health, wellness, special events, child, youth, adult and seniors programs are subsidized from fitness initiative.

Please let me know if there is any other information or details you require in support of this valuable project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ian Shaw".

Ian Shaw P.Eng, Ph.D.

Vice President – South Arm Community Association, Building Committee Chair