



# Editorial: Bonnerworth Park redesign will benefit community

Bonnerworth will get more use; skateboarding, cycling and pickleball are all increasingly popular active sports, the type of activity the for which the park is designed.

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A redesigned Bonnerworth Park plan, with much emphasis on reducing pickleball noise, does a very good job of answering the challenges raised by the project's opponents.

There is more green space, and the pickleball courts are moved farther from neighbouring homes and apartments.

There is one less parking lot and total parking spaces are cut nearly in half, so less grassed area becomes asphalt.

The trees — 275 of them — and landscaped berms city officials promised would be included in a final design are there.

And there are two fewer pickleball courts, 14 instead of 16.

Most importantly, in terms of the anti-pickleball argument, an independent consultant's noise impact study shows that as long as the updated design is followed, any increase in noise from the courts, a new bicycle track and expanded skate park will be insignificant.

That is largely due to the use of noise-cancelling fences around the courts. Cambium, the consultant company, say 10-foot and 12-foot high mesh fences covered with a plastic sound barrier will keep the highest "steady" noise level at 58 decibels, slightly higher than the current 56 decibels.

Maximum "impulsive" noise, from a ball hitting a racquet or a skateboard slapping down on concrete, will go from 59 decibels to 61 (for pickleball) and 63 (skateboards).

The accepted standard for insignificant noise increase is five decibels or less.

Where the city did not improve so much is in its communication skills.

The noise study is one of several technical reviews that neighbourhood opponents were waiting for. Their point, a valid one, is that city council shouldn't have approved a bare-bones design without the studies last fall.

Up until last week, city officials were saying those studies weren't complete and wouldn't be released in time for Tuesday's review of the new design by the city's volunteer recreation and accessibility advisory committees.

That turned out not to be true. The studies were complete, at least one several months ago, and were posted on the city website just before the Tuesday meeting.

The initial incorrect information gave a spokesperson for the Coalition to Save Bonnerworth Park the opportunity to say that without the studies the new design “changes nothing.”

That is an overstatement, to be sure. Significant changes and additions in the new design will improve it, as the noise study shows.

But the city did itself no favours on the public relations side.

And the lack of independent review is more than just a public relations concern. The chair of the accessibility advisory committee said the committee could not make an informed recommendation having received the studies so late.

A website page for public comments has been reopened to allow people to provide feedback based on the studies. The city should also give both committees time to review them and provide recommendations.

All that said, the redesign and detailed consulting review show that the \$4.4-million Bonnerworth project can and will be a benefit to the community.

The park is not being “paved over.” There will still be grassed and landscaped space, and on a per-acre basis trees provide four times the carbon capture of a grass softball field.

It will also get more use. Skateboarding, cycling and pickleball are all increasingly popular active sports, the type of activity for which Bonnerworth Park is designed.

The city will have to keep its promise to upgrade existing softball/baseball diamonds so the two existing diamonds will not be missed.

Once everyone has time to take a good look at the technical studies, there could be good suggestions for more tweaks of the Bonnerworth project, but all in all, it has been vindicated.