
CITY OF KELOWNA
MEMORANDUM

Date: January 10th, 2004
File No.: 0910-01
To: City Manager
From: Parks Manager
Subject: Waterfront Walkway - Response to Walley Lightbody Council Submission

Prepared by: David Lange, Parks Planning & Administration Supervisor

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council receive this information in response to the Waterfront Walkway presentation made to Council by Mr. Walley Lightbody on November 24th, 2003.

BACKGROUND

In 2002, the Parks Division prepared a Waterfront Walkway Concept Plan that would connect Kinsmen Park to the Royal Avenue Beach Access with a publicly accessible walkway adjacent to Okanagan Lake. The concept was, and remains, responsive to the community's desire for more access to the waterfront and the popularity of recreational trails.

The Waterfront Walkway Concept Plan was approved by resolution No. R663/02/07/29 which was adopted at the Regular Meeting of July 29, 2002. Subsequent to this approval, the City has been able to secure property that would enable development of the walkway along 85% of the required shoreline. Less than 15% of the foreshore remains directly adjacent to private residents.

On November 24th, 2003, Mr. Walley Lightbody made a presentation to Council to express the view, on behalf of a number of waterfront property owners and others, that the current waterfront status provides access along the lake and that the proposed walkway is not necessary. A brief summary of the major points made at Mr. Lightbody's presentation follow:

- Access already exists along the foreshore of the waterfront in this area and current waterfront owners do not deny access.
- The proposed walkway should be called a throughway for bicycles, roller-bladers, etc., in addition to walkers and joggers.
- The walkway plus fencing will total approximately 20 feet in width.
- A walkway downtown is different in context than in the location proposed because it does not intrude on residential properties.

The presentation also included a written submission that was provided to Council on October 28th, 2003. Items presented in the October 28th submission related to issues of:

- Existing public access to the lake,
- Opposition to parking adjacent to Kinsmen Park,

- Possible extension of the Abbott Street Recreational Corridor from Strathcona Avenue to Cedar Avenue.
- Possible impacts on Maude-Roxby Bird Sanctuary as a result of walkway expansion.

The conclusion of Mr. Lightbody's October 28th submission was that *"the waterfront area in question, be left in a natural state and funds allocated for the Waterfront Walkway be used to continue improvements along Abbott Street."*

The Parks and Leisure Services Department has been requested to comment on the presentation and submissions made by Mr. Lightbody relative to the City's Waterfront Walkway Plan.

STAFF COMMENTS

Access along the foreshore (foreshore is considered to be the area that is between the low water level and the high water level) is protected by the Province for public access. However, the area of foreshore fluctuates with water levels and the quality of the foreshore in the area of the proposed walkway varies from sandy beach to rock and gravel. Access along the foreshore is therefore limited to able bodied citizens.

The Council approved walkway is based on planning and design principles that will provide an amenity that will benefit all residents of Kelowna, regardless of age or ability. The planning and design principles encompass:

- Universal access along the waterfront (e.g., wheel chairs, walking surfaces for the less ambulatory, child strollers, recreational biking roller blading, jogging etc.)
- Providing safe and convenient off-road connections between waterfront parks and beach accesses
- Providing this access throughout the year (above the high water level of the foreshore)
- Maximizing passive recreation, educational and viewing opportunities along the lake.
- Improving public safety and security along the waterfront
- Tourist appeal
- Enhanced public access to the lake

Benefits to the community at large include physical recreation and fitness, development of an integrated and accessible leisure service that is critical to the quality of life of people with disabilities and disadvantaged individuals, and in general enhancement of community pride and lifestyle.

In the Public Meeting held at Kinsmen Park in June 2002, of the 36 area residents that responded to the survey, 85% were in support of the Walkway Plan. Many Citizens also applauded the proposed width of the walkway to ensure adequate area for all users.

In addition to the planning principles and public benefits, the Waterfront Walkway Concept Plan also supports existing civic goals and policies and reflects the public's current values. These are expressed in the City of Kelowna's Strategic Plan and Official Community Plan respectively and supported by the public's response to the 2003 Citizen Survey .

1. The current Strategic Plan was initiated to prepare a broad plan which would provide Council with direction for making important decisions about the future development of the City. The Plan documents 18 "Primary Goals" that underpin decisions to be made in charting our future.

The sixth goal is very clear in the direction it provides:

“To improve access for the public along the shoreline of Lake Okanagan”

2. The goal of the Strategic Plan is reinforced in the current Official Community Plan, (OCP). Under the Parks and Leisure Policies (Section 14 of the OCP), Civic Investments, Policy 14.1.6 states:

“Waterfront Trails. *Provide waterfront trails to connect major City beaches and waterfront parks;”*

3. The Annual Citizen Survey confirmed that waterfront parks are the most widely visited parks in the City of Kelowna and that our Citizen’s highest level of dissatisfaction (in the area of parks) related to the **availability** of Beach Parks.

It is interesting to note that the community indicated that Mission Creek Greenway, a waterside walkway, as their favourite park in Kelowna, while placing “Natural Open Spaces and Trails” as their top priority for park development.

With respect to the issue of parking at Kinsmen Park, parking will be provided only as there is a demonstrated need. The environmental review is currently on-going and implementation of a walkway through Maude-Roxby has still not been finalized. However when we proposed a walkway at the waters edge as opposed to widening the existing boardwalk through Maude Roxby, the Naturalist’s Club favoured the existing boardwalk location but was more concern with protecting mud bay as a feeding ground for migrating birds. 2003 was the first year the Parks Division did not clean up mud bay to satisfy neighbourhood complaints.

In summary, the Waterfront Walkway supports a goal of the Strategic Plan and policy provided in the OCP. It is an initiative that efficiently combines the community’s top park priorities within a single project. As such, the project remains in the interest of the general community and the process to acquire and develop the walkway over time and as property becomes available, will minimize impact on owners of property who remain directly adjacent to the proposed walkway.

Joe Creron
Parks Manager

Cc Director of Parks and Leisure Services