

AGENDA ITEM NO: 7-B-1

MEETING DATE: January 19, 2021

STAFF REPORT – COVER SHEET

SUBJECT: Community Engagement Summary DATE: January 6, 2021
Report: Responsible Alcohol
Consumption in City Parks

DEPARTMENT: Communications PREPARED BY: Jamie Leggatt

1. SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

On August 4, Council passed "Consumption of Liquor in City Parks Bylaw 2020, No. 4830" to permit the consumption of alcohol at Vedder Park and Crossing Park, as a pilot project until October 31, 2020. At that time, Council directed staff to initiate an online survey to allow public feedback and to report back to Council.

Three surveys were released to the public. The surveys were available at a pop-up booth in Vedder Park and online, and were advertised on social media, the City's e-newsletter, and on the radio. In total for all three surveys, the City received 733 responses.

During the pilot project, the City's Bylaw Department did not receive any complaints about liquor consumption in Vedder or Crossing Parks. Likewise, the Upper Fraser Valley Regional RCMP detachment did not report any calls for service in relation to alcohol consumption in the designated parks.

Initial public perception was mixed. On August 5, 2020, City staff were on-site at Vedder Park to gather initial feedback from park users. The on-site survey showed that 57.9% strongly or somewhat support the concept of allowing alcohol consumption in designated public spaces, with 26.31% strongly or somewhat opposed and 15.79% neutral.

The preliminary online survey was available from August 5 – 23, 2020. This survey found that only 40% of respondents strongly or somewhat support the concept, 54% of residents were strongly or somewhat opposed to the idea and 6% neutral.

A post implementation user experience survey was available online from November 17 – December 7, 2020. The purpose of this survey was to see what people observed during the pilot project. 81% of respondents said they would like to see a similar project return next summer, and 73% of respondents thought the 12pm – 9pm time frame worked okay or very well.

A full report of survey results, entitled, "Community Engagement Summary Report: Responsible Alcohol Consumption in City Parks", is attached.

2. RECOMMENDATION:

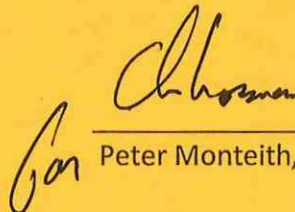
Recommendation that "Community Engagement Summary Report: Responsible Alcohol Consumption in City Parks" be received for information.



Jamie Leggatt, Director of Communications

**3. CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER'S
RECOMMENDATION/COMMENTS:**

Supports recommendation.



Peter Monteith, CAO

Community Engagement Summary Report: Responsible Alcohol Consumption in City Parks

In order to foster further opportunities for social connections outdoors while complying with provincial health guidelines, a pilot project to allow responsible alcohol consumption in designated areas of Vedder and Crossing Parks between 12 pm – 9 pm from August 18 – October 31, 2020 was initiated. Feedback was collected from the community regarding the pilot, in order to understand initial perceptions and to hear about park user experiences.

Three surveys were released to the public. The surveys were available at a pop-up booth in Vedder Park and were advertised on social media, the City's e-newsletter, and on the radio. In total for all three surveys, the City received 733 responses.

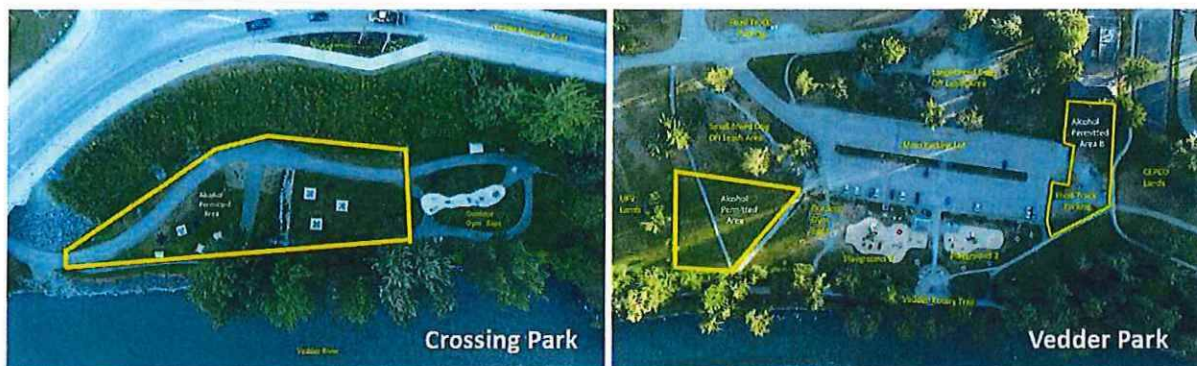


Figure 1: Maps of the designated areas in Crossing and Vedder Parks

Initial Public Perception – Preliminary On-Site Survey

On Wednesday, August 5, from 10 am – 12 pm, Communications and Operations staff were on-site at Vedder Park to gather initial feedback from park users regarding this pilot project via survey.

Demographics

Respondents were asked their age and how frequently they visit Vedder and Crossing Parks.

- 84% of respondents visit Vedder Park very or somewhat often.
- 47% of respondents visit Crossing Park very or somewhat often.

Respondent Age		
Under 19	0.00%	
19-39	26.32%	
40-64	36.84%	
65+	36.84%	

Allowing Responsible Alcohol Consumption in Designated Areas

Respondents were asked to identify which survey option best describes their opinion about allowing alcohol consumption in designated public spaces.

Strongly support	31.58%	
Somewhat support	26.32%	
Neutral	15.79%	
Somewhat opposed	21.05%	
Strongly opposed	5.26%	

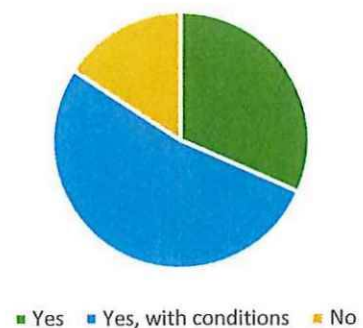
Time Frame

Most respondents supported the 12 pm – 9 pm proposed time frame for the pilot project. Some voiced that it should be extended until 10 pm, or not have set hours of operation, while others indicated they would be more comfortable with a shorter window, such as 3 pm – 8 pm.

Additional Feedback

Other comments from park users included requests for additional recycling facilities near each designated area. Several residents also suggested Sardis Park and Fairfield Island Park as other possible trial locations. While a majority of survey respondents were in favour of the pilot project, they voiced concerns about how the areas will be monitored, impairment, and the potential increase in enforcement costs to the City.

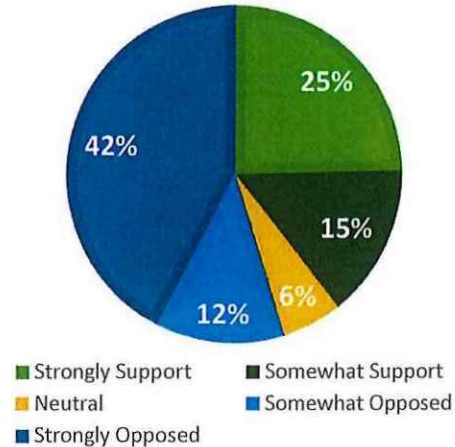
Do You Support the Time Frame?



Initial Public Perception – Preliminary Online Survey

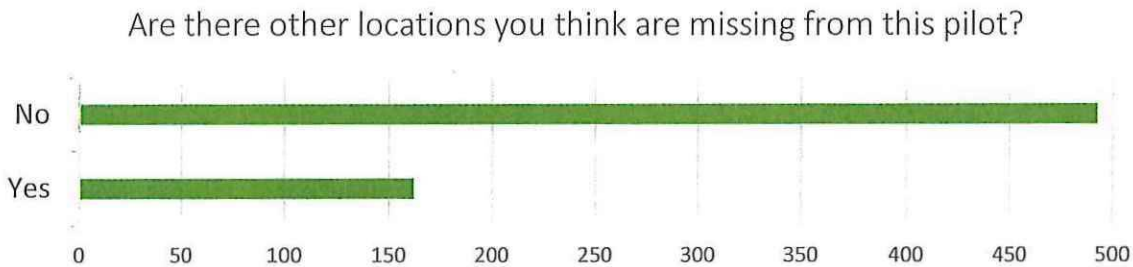
A preliminary online survey was available to the community from August 5 – 23, 2020 in order to gauge public perception and gather initial feedback regarding the pilot project that began after Council's adoption of the bylaw on August 18, 2020. 694 people completed the survey.

40% of respondents strongly or somewhat support the concept of allowing alcohol consumption in designated public spaces. 54% of respondents were strongly or somewhat opposed to the idea, and 6% were neutral.



Location

Respondents were asked if they felt there were any other locations missing from this pilot project. 25% of respondents said yes, while 75% of respondents said no.



Of those who felt there were locations missing, the most frequently suggested parks within City limits were Sardis Park, Peach Park and Townsend Park. Overarching themes in responses to this question including a desire to see the pilot project extend to the north side of Chilliwack, be expanded to all parks, and concerns about the existing locations' proximity to playgrounds and the river.

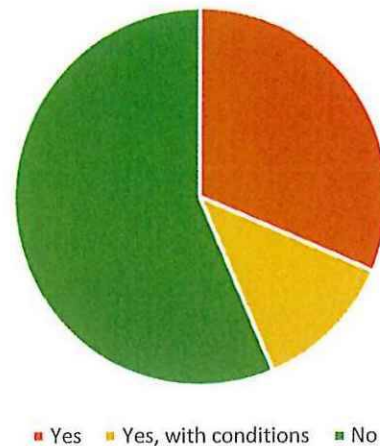
Of note, there were frequent suggestions for areas outside of the City's jurisdiction, such as Cultus Lake, Chilliwack Lake, Cheam Wetlands and Bridal Falls.

Time Frame

The pilot project allows responsible alcohol consumption in designated public spaces between 12 pm and 9 pm daily. Survey respondents were asked if they support this time frame.

While 31% supported the 12 pm – 9 pm time frame, and 12% supported it with conditions, 56% of respondents did not support the time frame.

344 people provided additional comments on this question, with feedback varying widely from opposition to the pilot project in its entirety, to requests to match the time frame with restaurant or park hours, to creating flexible hours for summer, weekends, and holidays.



Extend time frame	28
End at dusk	25
Evening hours only	18

Common concerns focused on the availability of resources to enforce the hours of operation, and user behaviour, including the potential for drunk driving, excessive noise, litter, and people failing to follow provincial health guidelines such as physical distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Additional Comments

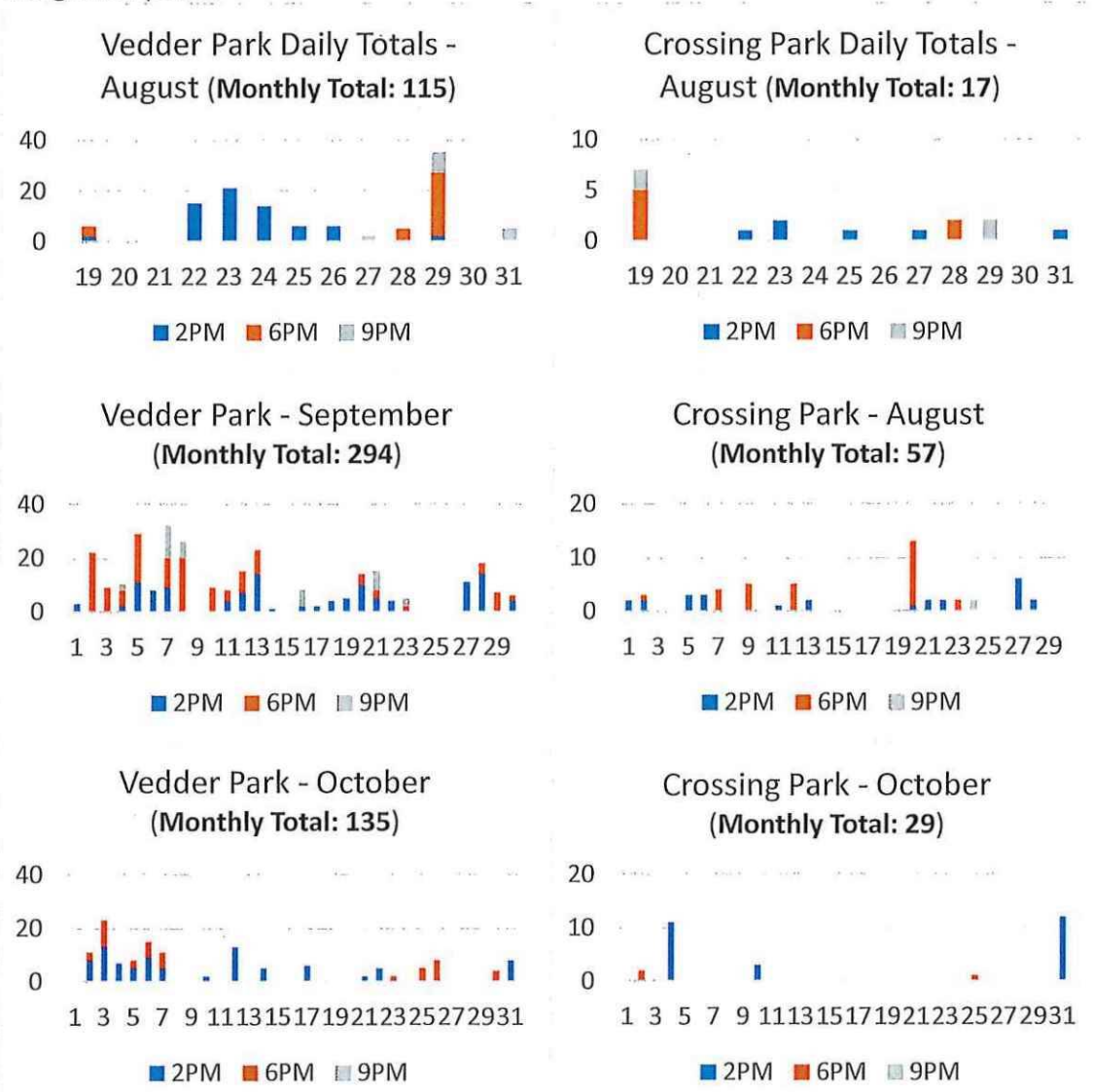
When asked for any additional feedback regarding the proposed pilot project, several key themes became clear:

- Concerns about monitoring the area and enforcing the rules, especially regarding driving under the influence
- Concerns about alcohol consumption in proximity to playgrounds/children, and the Vedder River
- Desire for increase in recycling facilities to prevent additional litter
- Idea that if you treat adults like adults and they will behave as such

Trial Period – Frequency of Use

Parks crews monitored the use of the alcohol permitted areas at Vedder and Crossing Parks with daily checks performed at 2 pm, 6 pm and 9 pm. They found the areas were well utilized. For example, during September, Vedder Park's designated area averaged 9.80 persons per day with a monthly total of 294 people. Crossing Park's designated area averaged 1.90 persons per day, with a total of 57 people in September.

During the trial period, the City's Bylaw Department did not receive any complaints about liquor consumption in Vedder or Crossing Parks. Likewise, the Upper Fraser Valley Regional RCMP detachment did not report any calls for service in relation to alcohol consumption in the designated parks.



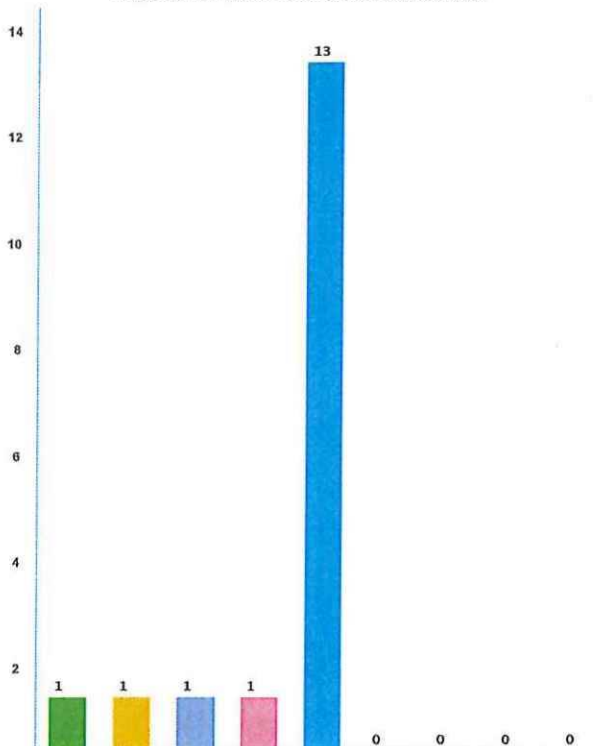
Post-Implementation – User Experience Survey

A follow-up survey after the pilot project concluded was available online from November 17 – December 7, 2020 to hear what respondents who were in Vedder or Crossing Parks during the pilot project observed. 19 respondents completed this survey.

In summary,

- Only 26% of respondents had used the designated spaces for responsible alcohol consumption. The majority of respondents were other park users.
- 81% of respondents said they would like to see a similar pilot project return
- 73% of respondents thought the 12 pm – 9 pm time frame worked okay or very well
- Other parks suggested for pilot projects included Townsend, all City parks, and other points along the Rotary Trail
- Four respondents provided additional comments, all of which indicated support for more projects like this in the future.

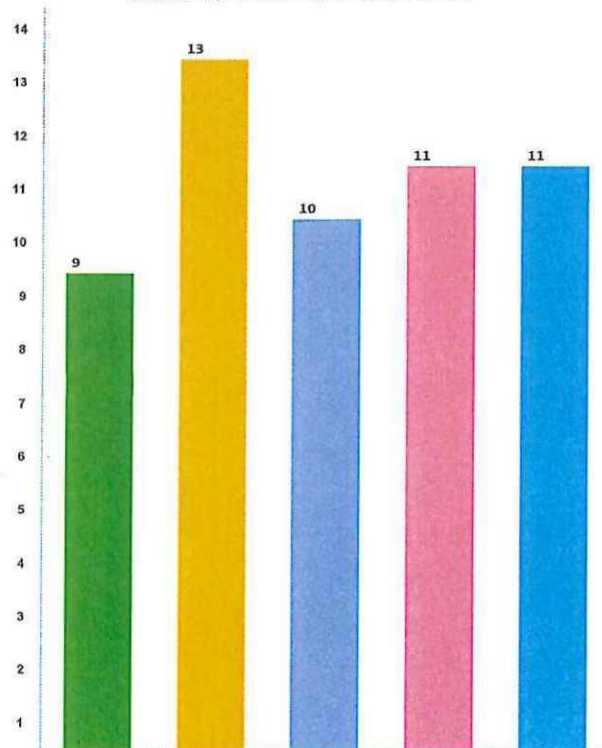
Did you also see any of the following in the designated areas:



Question options
(Click items to hide)

- Irresponsible alcohol consumption
- Excessive noise
- Inappropriate behaviour
- People consuming alcohol in the spaces before noon
- None of the above
- People consuming alcohol in the spaces after 9 pm
- Park user conflicts
- Increased amounts of litter
- Impaired driving

Did you see any of the following in the designated areas:



Question options
(Click items to hide)

- People consuming alcohol responsibly
- People enjoying the outdoor space
- People spaced apart following physical distancing guidelines
- Families enjoying the area
- Dog or dogs in the area and on leash