



- Extended operating hours of the park associated with the lighting would negatively impact the resident's peace and quiet throughout the year;
- Inadequacy of the treed buffer, especially in the autumn and winter when the leaves are off the trees;
- Increased traffic on local streets and parking issues associated with elevated use of the facility;
- Consumption of alcohol at the park by ball players;
- Urination in the treed buffer by ball players;

## **DISCUSSION**

Appendix 1. Contains suggestions for mitigating the impact of a number of the concerns raised by the residents. With respect to the operating issues currently associated with the park, staff have met with the Bolivar Slo-Pitch Society (the Society) to review their obligations under the existing Operating Agreement. Staff reinforced the need for the Society to institute various controls to ensure that ball teams that use the park adhere strictly to the rules of conduct outlined in the City's by-laws, policies and permit regulations. Further, both the RCMP and By-law Enforcement have stepped up their monitoring of the park to ensure that the park is being utilized appropriately and in accordance with the law.

The following points provide additional information that may assist Council in making decisions regarding this project.

### **Treed Buffers Between Lighted Fields and Nearby Residences**

The delegation compared the width of buffer at Bolivar Park with the width of buffer that separates the lighted diamonds at Softball City from the residential neighbourhood to the east, explaining that Softball City had a far greater buffer width. Drawings of Bolivar Park showing the width of the treed buffer are contained in Appendix 2.

The trees that exist on the south side of Bolivar Park were left in place primarily to satisfy environmental requirements related to a red-coded stream that runs through the park. Sound and visual buffering provided by the treed area is a secondary benefit for the residents of the area.

The width and nature of buffers between lighted fields and nearby residences varies considerably from park to park, and are not seen as an absolute requirement. For example, some parks such as Cloverdale Athletic Park do not contain treed buffers between the lighted fields and adjacent residences. At Royal Kwantlen Park, the lighted field has a treed buffer on its west side, but no buffers on its other sides. At South Surrey Athletic Park, treed buffers between the seven lighted fields and adjacent residences range from 48 meters to 65 meters.

### **Projected Increase in Ball Diamond Game Capacity**

Lighting two diamonds will provide additional capacity for evening play at Bolivar Park. In June and July, when the day length is longest, it is likely that only one additional game could be played on each diamond during the evening hours over the present situation with unlighted diamonds. In May and August, it is likely that two additional games could be played on each diamond each evening. In the remaining months of the year, cooler night-time temperatures may limit play somewhat, but the capacity of the diamonds would be dramatically increased. Staff have calculated that the lighting of two diamonds at Bolivar Park will increase the capacity for play by an additional 390 games per year, representing a 50% increase in total game capacity, or the equivalent of two additional diamonds. (Each un-lighted diamond has an annual capacity of approximately 195 games) However, it should be noted that the increased capacity would not necessarily be fully utilized in the near future.

During summertime tournament events at some other lighted four-diamond complexes such as Softball City, the lighting is used primarily for rescheduling rained-out daytime games, and for play-off games that run long. Few evening tournament games are scheduled under the lights.

The Bolivar Slo-pitch Society was asked to document their critical need for field lighting to increase the capacity of the park. In response, the Society has provided a letter in this regard, attached as Appendix 3.

### **Numbers of Surrey Residents Presently Utilizing Bolivar Park**

Bolivar Park serves the needs of league play and tournament play. Based on figures provided by the Bolivar Slo-pitch Society, it is estimated that approximately 8,500 players will use the park for games during 2006. Of these players, approximately 52% are Surrey residents. Therefore, the park serves the needs of approximately 4,400 Surrey resident adult slo-pitch players annually.

### **Competing Ball Facilities in Other Communities**

Lighted four-diamond complexes are located at Softball City in South Surrey, in Langley, in Abbotsford and in Ridge-Meadows; staff are not aware of other lighted four-diamond complexes within the lower mainland.

### **Previous Complaints from Neighbours**

In e-mail correspondence received following the public open house, residents had complained that their concerns about the operation of the park had been ignored. This is at odds with city records. The City's records show only a few complaints about the operation of the park over the years since the park was constructed. When staff discussed this issue with the residents, the residents explained that most of their complaints about noise and poor behaviour by players had been made to the RCMP or to Firebase through the Engineering after hours number; as the complaints were not considered by these agencies to be emergencies, no action was taken by them and Parks staff were not notified.

### **Bolivar Park – An Athletic Facility Planned For Future Lighting**

When development of Bolivar Park was first being planned in 1996, information was presented verbally at the open house regarding future plans to light the four ball diamonds. In the second open house held in 1998, the lighting was again discussed as a future option.

### **Revenues Generated by the Society**

The Society generates revenues through league and tournament fees, and through the sale of products at beer gardens, which in many ways is similar to the operation of Softball City by the BC Amateur Softball Association. Proceeds from these sources is used for several purposes:

- Investment in Capital Infrastructure – The Society purchased and installed the main washroom/storage room/concession facilities at the site, and is working with the City toward the development of additional washroom facilities at the park;
- Covering Operating Costs – The Society pays for graffiti control, electrical / plumbing / structural repairs, field maintenance, litter control, utility costs, etc. This will amount to approximately \$25,000 in 2006.

Following its normal practice, the City will be undertaking a comprehensive review of the Society's revenues and expenses during 2006, and will adjust the operating agreement as necessary to ensure that the City continues to get good value through its partnership with the Society.

### **Options For Consideration By Council**

The following options are available to Council regarding Bolivar Park:

#### **Option 1 – Proceed with Lighting Two Diamonds**

Under this option, game capacity at the park would be increased by approximately 50% at a cost of approximately \$542,000. Staff would continue to work with the Society to ensure that park rules are adhered to in order to address operating issues that have caused recent concern in the local Bolivar community.

Pros – Game capacity would be increased by 392 games annually (50% over existing capacity, or the equivalent of two additional diamonds), providing modest advantages for running summer tournaments, but increasing substantially the opportunity for increasing league play from September through May. Lighting the diamonds at Bolivar Park is far more cost effective than constructing a new two-diamond park in the vicinity (currently estimated at \$4,300,000 including land costs) or upgrading the existing poor diamonds at Bridgeview Park (currently estimated at \$1,355,000). The improvements carried out in 2007 would assist in meeting community expectations, and would improve the safety and playability of field No. 4.

Cons – This option is unlikely to satisfy the majority of residents who live in the Bolivar Heights neighbourhood, with respect to their various concerns related to the lighting proposal.

### **Option 2 – Do Not Install Lights**

Under this option, lights would not be installed.

Pros – This option would eliminate the concerns expressed by the neighbourhood in regards to lighting the field.

Cons – Additional capacity for extended league play will be reduced, and the ability to attract and host larger tournaments would be more limited.

### **Action to be taken at Bolivar Park**

A planning exercise will be undertaken in the autumn to determine what amenities could be constructed in the park to better meet the needs of local residents. Staff will also carry out works on Diamond No. 4 in 2007 to deal with existing drainage problems.

## **CONCLUSION**

A project to light two diamonds at Bolivar Park has caused considerable concern in the local community. This report provides some additional information to assist Council in its deliberations. Appendix 1 (attached to this report) includes suggestions on how many of the concerns expressed by the community could be addressed.

Based on community concerns relating to a shortage of neighbourhood amenities in Bolivar Park, a planning exercise will be undertaken in the autumn to determine what amenities could be constructed in the park to better meet the needs of local residents.

Laurie Cavan  
General Manager,  
Parks, Recreation and Culture

LC:dlg

Attachments: Appendix 1 – Measures to Mitigate Community Concerns  
Appendix 2 – Drawings of Park Buffers  
Appendix 3 – Letter from Bolivar Slo-pitch Society

## ***Measures to Mitigate Community Concerns***

### ***Direct Impact of Lights***

The newest generation of field lights cause very little incidental light spill past the area of the fields themselves. This is due to the steep angle of the lighting, and due to advances in the ways in which the lights are shrouded. At our newest lighted field at South Surrey Athletic Park, the light cut-off is very sharp, and there have been no complaints from area residents who live across from the synthetic turf field.

### ***Lights – Hours of Operation and Control***

For facilities with sports field lights, with the exception of Whalley Athletic Park, the City's practice is that sports field lights remain on until 10:30 p.m. when there are field bookings. Some facilities provide an additional 15 minutes of sports field lighting to allow players to pack up equipment and safely leave the field. The sports field lights proposed for Bolivar Park would be controlled by an automated system that activates and deactivates the lights based on signals from the City's facility booking software. Facility users would need to enter an access code at the facility in order to confirm that the allocated time is required for use. The automated system would ensure that ball diamond lights are deactivated at 10:30 p.m. with low intensity security lights then activated for 15 minutes to allow facility user to collect equipment and exit the ball diamonds. Staff could also work with the Society to determine if there was an earlier hour at which the lighting could be shut off, in order to reduce the impact to the surrounding neighbourhood.

### ***Noise***

The topography surrounding Bolivar Park is such that sound tends to carry up the slope to residences several blocks away. Staff will continue to work with the Society to ensure that noise levels are reasonable, that any portable loud speakers and amplifiers are not utilized in non-tournament times, and that loud speakers will be directed to the north, away from the residential area if at all possible.

### ***Traffic, Parking and Parking Lot Gate***

Parking lot gates are closed at dusk for all parks except those that have lit outdoor athletic facilities (sports fields, sport boxes, tennis courts, etc.) where gates are then closed at 11 p.m. Currently the parking lot gate opening and closing is controlled by the Society. This can be modified so that the parking lot gates are open from dawn to dusk when the Society is not carrying out activities at the park, thereby providing greater access for the local community during daytime hours, and limiting non-sanctioned use of the park during some evenings.

The proposed addition of lights to two ball diamonds at Bolivar Park will likely have minimal impact on the number of vehicles at the park at any given time. There are still only four slo-pitch games that can be played concurrently at the park; however, the addition of lights will simply provide the capacity for additional games in the evening.

Staff can work with Traffic Operations and representatives of the local community to determine whether placement of "No Parking" signs in key areas (e.g. north side of 114<sup>th</sup> Avenue) will assist in meeting neighbourhood objectives related to parking control. Further, the Society will

be asked to circulate a directive to all their slo-pitch registrants, directing them to use the designated parking lot within the park, and to refrain from parking in local neighbourhoods.

### ***Operating Agreement with the Society***

The City's Outdoor Sport Facility Allocation & Management Policy states that:

*“Facilities will be allocated to associations in such a way as to have a minimum of associations playing on a field or in a facility, to promote the concept of having a home field or park (except artificial turf fields)”*

Consistent with other community parks that contain athletic facilities, the City has established Bolivar Park as a home park for a single community sport association, the Society, with an expectation that this group will contribute positively to park stewardship, maintenance and security. The Society has been instrumental in developing sport tourism in Surrey by attracting large high-level tournaments and working with the hospitality industry in Surrey. In addition, the Society has invested in ongoing operation, capital improvements and security within the developed portion of Bolivar Park.

The facility Operating Agreement for Bolivar Park defines a list of maintenance activities that are required for the site and provides the Society with the responsibility for completing the specified works. The Agreement specifies the activities that can be carried out by Society volunteers and those that will be “contracted” to the City (who in many cases will then engage contractors). Services that are contracted to the City are then paid for by the Society. The aggregate value of the Operating Agreement is currently \$23,276 per year with \$8,358 of the works delivered by Society volunteers and \$14,918 of services contracted to the City, paid for by the Society.

To date, the Society has been diligent in meeting all financial requirements specified in the Operating Agreement. In return for the Society operating the park, the City has provided a blanket permit for all time at the facility with the responsibility for allocating individual time slots vested in the Society. In light of some of the issues that have been raised in the community consultation, staff will carefully review with the Society all its obligations of the Agreement. Staff will also review the Agreement to determine if the recoveries from the Society should be increased in light of ever-increasing use of the park.

### ***Cleanliness***

As part of the Bolivar Park Operating Agreement, the Society is responsible for litter collection and refuse removal from the park. The Society will need to fulfil this and all other requirements of the Agreement, in order to continue to enjoy the benefits that this Agreement provides to their association. Staff will increase the number of visits to the site to ensure that the Society is complying with all requirements of the Agreement.

### ***Beer Gardens***

Council has approved 49 Beer Garden Permit days for the Bolivar Slo-Pitch Society in 2006 and these will be spread over the 63 tournament days that are scheduled at Bolivar Park. Beer gardens are often a requirement for bidding for high level adult tournaments at the Provincial and National level, particularly in the sport of slo-pitch, and these are seen as an added service for tournament participants and attendees.

The City's Beer Garden Policy is a tool that is designed to limit the unauthorized consumption of alcohol in public parks by providing sanctioned times and dates where adult-sporting organizations can operate regulated and licensed beer gardens. The proceeds from these beer gardens are directed back into the parks system as the Society covers annual maintenance costs for the park and contributes to capital improvements related to the athletic facilities.

It is not anticipated that adding lights to Bolivar Park will result in requests for additional beer garden days. However, any requests received would continue go through the same review process outlined within the Policy, and would be brought forward to Council for their review and approval.

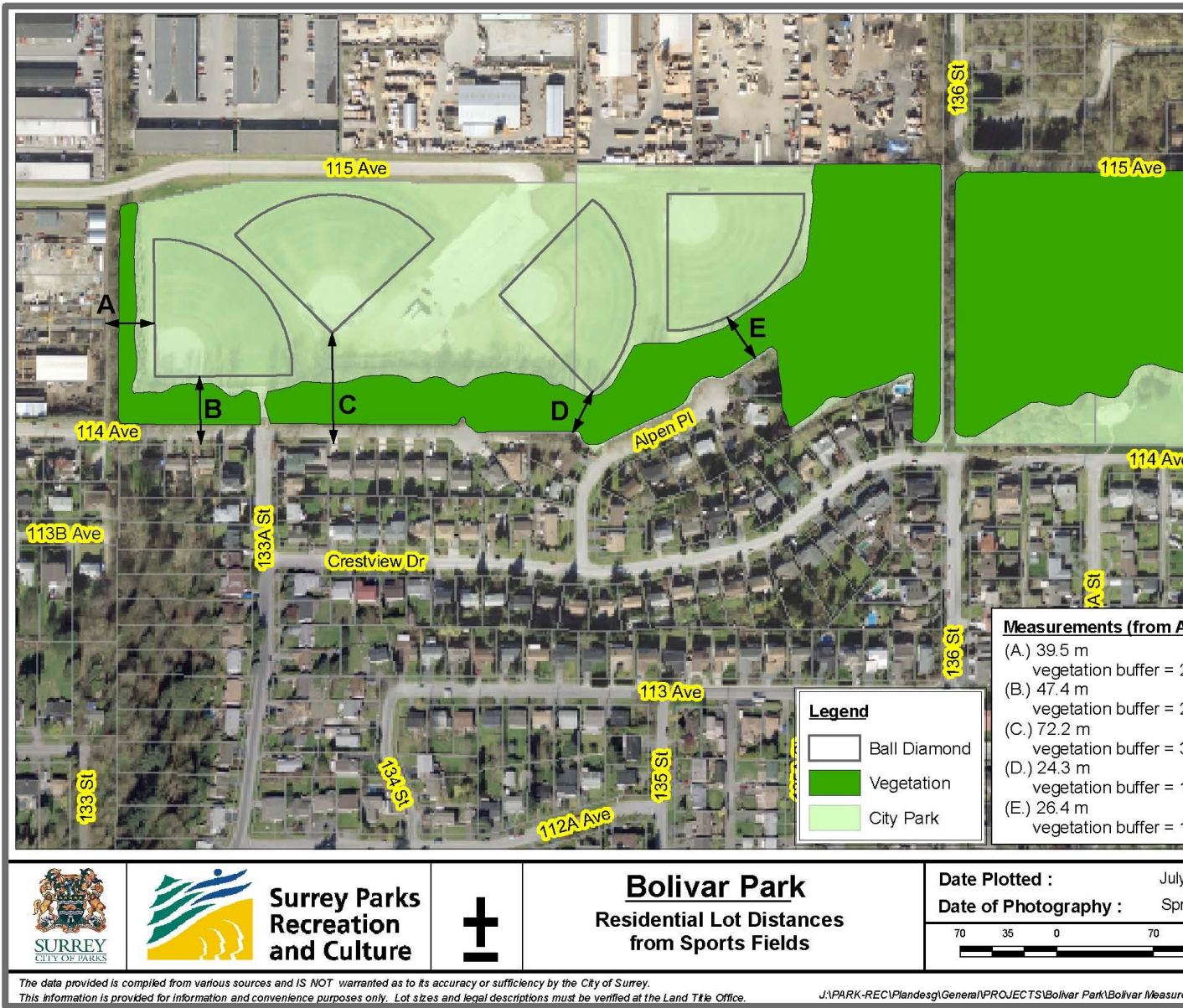
***Planning for Park Amenities to Meet Neighborhood Needs***

A number of park amenities indicated in the 1998 Concept Plan, including a sport box, water playground and landscape improvements have not been completed because capital funds have been directed to other important park development projects. Staff will work in consultation with local residents to finalize the details for these amenities where appropriate, and introduce new park elements for prioritization in the 2007 Park Development Capital program.



## Appendix 2

### *Drawings Showing Buffers Between Selected Fields and Adjacent Residences*



The data provided is compiled from various sources and IS NOT warranted as to its accuracy or sufficiency by the City of Surrey.

This information is provided for information and convenience purposes only. Lot sizes and legal descriptions must be verified at the Land Title Office.

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