

Service 660 Comox Valley Exhibition Centre Conceptual Design Plan

PURPOSE

The purpose of the briefing note is to provide an update to the Recreation Commission on the work related to the Conceptual Design Plan for the Comox Valley Exhibition Grounds.

OVERVIEW

In 2020, the CVRD engaged Urban Systems to develop a Conceptual Site Plan and Implementation Strategy for the Comox Valley Exhibition Grounds (CVEG). The goal was to assess potential impacts, issues, and opportunities for the long-term development of the property. The Conceptual Site Plan was presented to the Recreation Commission in May 2021 for information only, as Agricultural Land Commission approval is required to move forward with the plan.

The plan incorporated design principles from the 2002 and 2017 master plans, including:

- Maintaining an agricultural focus for the grounds
- Grouping buildings and facilities to create positive open spaces
- Designing the site to accommodate simultaneous events efficiently
- Ensuring facilities are multi-functional wherever feasible
- Planning for efficient vehicle movement, especially during large events
- Protecting and managing the forested riverside area as a nature preserve

Conceptual Site Plan Highlights

The plan envisioned CVEG as a central community hub and regional events center, while preserving its agricultural and natural heritage. Key priorities included:

- Improving site access, mobility, and parking
- Upgrading infrastructure
- Addressing environmental considerations such as floodplain management and riparian protection

The implementation strategy outlined short, medium, and long-term phases over 10 years, with an estimated cost of \$7.2 million (2021 dollars):

Short-term (1-2 years)	\$2,638,300
Medium-term (3-5 years)	\$3,600,000
Long-term (6-10 years)	\$950,000
Total	\$7,188,300

Changing Conditions Since 2021

Several factors have influenced the feasibility and priorities of the original plan:

- Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) Approvals:
 - A temporary use permit was submitted in 2022 for all plan elements; only the perimeter walkway around Market Field was approved.
 - In October 2024, the ALC indicated approval for the Spine Road and additional parking would be difficult to obtain, though repairs to the existing parking footprint are permitted.
- Floodplain Considerations:
 - New flood mapping by the City of Courtenay shows most of the grounds are within the floodplain.
- Event Changes:
 - Major events have declined with the discontinuation of MusicFest and relocation of Jeepapalooza.
 - The grounds remain heavily booked for equestrian events.
- Emerging Needs:
 - Covered pavilion for the Comox Valley Farmers’ Market
 - Horse boarding is at capacity - continued need for turn-out pens and pastures to support boarders

Current Focus

While the Conceptual Site Plan offers valuable ideas, recent trends suggest the priority should be maintaining existing facilities and adding minor amenities to support current agricultural and equestrian uses. The following tables outline:

- Projects proposed for future years
- Projects requiring further evaluation and investigation
- Projects not recommended due to changed conditions

Proposed Work

Location	Proposed Improvements	Status	Year Budgeted
Zone D: Market Field	Upgraded Farmers’ Market vendor area, asphalt parking lot, pedestrian connections, improvements to electrical and drainage	Electrical upgrades completed; ALC provided approval for the circular pathway; waiting on ALC approval for resurfacing market field & improving drainage; Field upgrades will not take place until a decision is made regarding the possible addition and siting of a Farmer’s Market Pavilion which may impact the extent of the field upgrades.	2026 (carried forward since 2024; funds likely to be carried forward again pending ALC approval and whether a pavilion will be added for the Farmer’s Market)

Location	Proposed Improvements	Status	Year Budgeted
Zone E: Curling Centre & Kin Hut Field	Tsolum Way trailhead improvements, incl. new washroom, covered picnic shelter & bike parking	Pending ALC approval: Pedestrian walkway to Tsolum trailhead planned for 2027; Washroom planned for 2027; Covered picnic area & bike parking planned for 2028	2027 & 2028
Zone F: Upper Ring & CVTRS	Consolidate storage area	Planned for 2027 to increase secure storage capacity for the CVRD and user groups.	2027
Zone F: Upper Ring & CVTRS Barn	New central washroom building near CVTRS Barn, along future Main Spine Road.	Washroom development pending ALC approval	2031
Roads & Multi-Use Pathways	Wayfinding signage and map kiosk(s), incl. on-site Tsolum trail system	CVRD would like to work with K'omoks First Nation on developing signage and interpretive messaging; timing will depend on KFN capacity	Not currently budgeted 2026-2030

Projects that Need Further Evaluation

Location	Proposed Improvements	Status	Original Estimated Cost
Zone E: Curling Centre and Kin Hut Field	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creation of arrival plaza and drop-off zone at main entry to Curling Centre Reconfiguration and redevelopment of 'east' parking lot into a flexible urban plaza for events. Upgraded 'south' parking lot, incl. pedestrian connection between CC and CVTRS Barn. 	The ALC has indicated that it is unlikely that the CVRD would obtain approval for additional parking, however, is free to reconfigure parking and traffic flow within the existing footprint of the asphalt parking that is currently on-site. As staff work with the Comox Valley Farmer's Market on options for a covered market/pavilion, parking and traffic flow will also be considered and in consideration of the new bikes lanes on Headquarters Road.	\$581,000
Zone G: Stonehenge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relocate Upper Ring (from Zone F), incl. access and parking improvements for equestrian users New covered riding ring. Open air shelter. 	Staff would like to investigate improvements to the Stonehenge riding ring, including drainage, new footing and options to cover the ring.	\$522,000

Projects Not Recommended to Proceed

Location	Proposed Improvements	Status	Estimated Cost
Roads & Multi-Use Pathways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relocation of Headquarters Road driveway access (Zone D) and construction of first phase of Main Spine Road (for access to new Market Field parking). Wayfinding signage and map kiosk(s), incl. on-site Tsolum trail system Main Spine Road connection between Market Field and Dove Creek Place, incl. gated access control points (Zones D, E, F, G). Decommissioning and reconfiguration of existing Curling Centre driveway on Headquarters Road, for emergency and event access only (Zone E). Widening and redevelopment of Tsolum Way secondary road (Zone E). Upgraded primary entrance driveway at the Vanier Drive intersection (Zone F), including connection to Main Spine Road. 	Do not recommend relocation of Headquarters driveway access to Curling Centre. Staff feel that for the safety of the horses and riders on the grounds, the current configuration of driveways and roadways on the grounds is sufficient.	\$1,510,000
Zone G: Stonehenge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relocation of Teaching and Education Plots to Stonehenge New gravel parking lot 	The location that was identified in the plan for the gardens are needed for the horse borders for turnout pens and pastures and the Tsolum (Lush) garden was expanded in their current location.	\$426,000
Off-site improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Off-site crosswalk across Headquarters Road, connecting CVRD Sports Centre, Vanier Secondary and associated parking lots (Zone D). 	New crosswalk was installed in 2025 between Schellinck Drive (G.P. Vanier) and the Exhibition Grounds by the City of Courtenay.	\$50,000
Zone A: Dove Creek Field	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New gravel trailhead parking lot at end of Dove Creek Place, incl. grading and drainage. 	City of Courtenay has gated Dove Creek Place in order to manage traffic and disturbances to residents	\$79,000
Zone C: Rotary Bowl	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New access lane, incl. gated control and stream crossing. 	No longer required due to a decrease in major events	\$171,000

Zone E: Curling Centre & Kin Hut Field	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• New central Events Plaza and Logistics Centre; Amphitheatre seating overlooking Lower Field.	No longer required to meet the demand of large events; focus will be on identifying ways to support the Comox Valley Farmer's Market with a covered pavilion	\$340,000
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Attachments -

- Comox Valley Exhibition Grounds: Conceptual Site Plan and Implementation Strategy – June 25, 2021
- Conceptual Site Plan Map and Exhibition Grounds Map