



REPORT TO COUNCIL

To: **Mayor and Councillors**

Subject: Pilot Program Evaluation, Consumption of Liquor
in Parks and Public Facilities

File #: 0110.00

Doc #: 179527

From: Francis Cheung, P. Eng.
Chief Administrative Officer

Date: October 12, 2021

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Council receive this report for information.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to present the evaluation of the consumption of liquor in parks and public facilities pilot program.

POLICY:

The Consumption of Liquor in Parks and Public Facilities Bylaw, 2021, No. 3172 was automatically repealed on September 30, 2021.

COMMENTS/ANALYSIS:

Due to the limited opportunities for social and leisure activities caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, City Council introduced a pilot program that permitted consumption of liquor at McBurney Plaza, a selected area in Douglas Park and at picnic shelters at City Park from July 1, 2021 to September 30, 2021, every Friday and Saturday only, from 1:00pm to 8:00pm as a means to foster community spirit and connection.

In order to provide a positive and safe experience for all, the City provided additional resources for Bylaw Enforcement, security guards, collection of garbage, recycling, organic waste, litter pickup, portable toilets, and signages to support the pilot program. Signs were posted at main entrance points within each site to inform the

public of the area(s) that were permitted for liquor consumption and area(s) that were liquor free. An on-line survey was conducted throughout the pilot program to provide opportunity for the public to comment on the pilot program.

The following is an evaluation of the pilot program:

Bylaw Enforcement and Security

The City hired two additional security guards to conduct roving patrols of the three areas: McBurney Plaza, Douglas Park and City Park. The security guards worked the following shifts:

- Fridays – 4:00pm – 9:00pm.
- Saturdays – 1:00pm – 9:00pm.

City's Bylaw Enforcement staff conducted intermittent patrols on the Friday shifts from 1:00pm – 4:00pm.

The calls/interactions were almost exclusively self generated and mostly minor. There were a total of 56 calls attended. Calls were not necessarily related to the pilot program and may well have been issues in the absence of the project. There were 21 calls related to smoking in the Parks which accounted for nearly 40% of all calls. There were 7 mischief calls that consisted of removal or damage to signs, damage to bathroom areas or mischief related to the porta potty. There were 13 calls coded as "other". These calls were for minor incidents that ranged from people camping in the parks to reports of needles located in the park. One of these calls was related to a complaint from the Alcoholics Anonymous group complaining that they have their meetings in the park and thought that the pilot program at Douglas was inappropriate. There were 13 calls related to liquor consumption in an unauthorized location. People were mostly cooperative, and some were just uncertain where the designated area was.

Overall call volume was low and decreased over the life of the pilot program. No calls were generated during the last three weeks of the pilot program.

In conclusion, there seemed to be very few issues/calls directly related to the pilot program. There may have been more issues in the absence of the security patrol during the pilot program.

Survey Results

The City conducted an on-line survey throughout the duration of the pilot program. A total of 54 responses were received. A full survey summary is outlined in Attachment 2.

The following is a brief highlight of the survey results:

- 62% of the respondents somewhat support or strongly support allowing consumption of liquor in designated parks and public spaces
- 73% of the respondents experienced a positive or neutral experience in the designated areas during the pilot program
- 63% of the respondents were either supportive of or were neutral in expanding responsible liquor consumption to other parks and public spaces
- Some respondents noted that people were enjoying themselves and drinking responsibly and noted that people have been drinking in the parks long before the pilot program
- Some respondents viewed the presence of security as a positive measure as infractions such as smoking, leashes on dogs, loitering, drug dealing and after-dark loud partying would have otherwise been ignored as it has in the past
- Some respondents felt it was great that the City finally recognize adults can safely and responsibly drink in parks
- Some respondents were glad that the pilot program allowed them to host family events such as wedding anniversaries and children's birthdays at a safe outdoor gathering place during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Some respondents believe that parks should remain a safe environment for children and their families, and in allowing liquor to be consumed, it is opening up the possibility for public drunkenness and dangerous behaviour. If people really feel like they want to drink liquor, they can go to restaurants or even enjoy them in their own homes
- Some respondents noted that there were disruptive behaviours near children playing at the parks, crude language, jay walking while drinking and not crossing at crosswalks cutting drivers off, smoking marijuana, vaping
- Some respondents shared that they are less likely to visit parks with permitted liquor consumption in the future

The respondents suggested the following improvements if the program is to be continued in the future:

- 10% want to expand hours and days to fit all schedules (add Thursday and Sunday, or add any night up to 8pm)
- Designated containers for empties, garbage/recycling bins, ensure cans and bottles are separated so they don't go in the landfills, or use it to support homeless groups
- Expand to all picnic table not just reservable ones
- More bathrooms and security
- Enforce drugs and smoking issues (cigarettes, marijuana and vaping)

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS:

City Council approved \$22,000 from the Enterprise Fund for the additional resources (e.g. Bylaw Enforcement, security services, collection of garbage, recycling, organic waste, litter pickup, portable toilets, and signages) to support the pilot program.

The actual cost for the pilot program was \$16,800.00 and the cost breakdown is as follows:

• Portable Toilets (two toilets at Douglas Park)	\$ 877.00
• Garbage/Recycling/Organic Waste Collection and Litter Pickup	\$ 2,600.00
• Security Services	\$ 9,415.00
• Signages	\$ 3,908.00
Total	\$ 16,800.00

ALTERNATIVES:

None provided.

SUMMARY:

The consumption of liquor in parks and public facilities pilot program was generally successful and supported by the public. The pilot program allows people to host family events such as wedding anniversaries and children's birthdays at a safe outdoor gathering place during the COVID-19 pandemic. On the other hand, some respondents stated that liquor consumption should not take place in parks and public spaces due to concerns with drunkenness, dangerous behaviour, crude language, smoking marijuana, and vaping.

The number of complaints were low and decreased over the life of the pilot program. There were no calls generated during the last three weeks of the pilot program probably due to the fact that COVID-19 restrictions were relaxed during this period and people were permitted to gather elsewhere. Interestingly, the majority of the complaints were not related to unruly behaviour due to drinking but for smoking, leashes on dogs, loitering, drug dealing, overnight camping, and after-dark loud partying.

Based on the experience from the pilot program, City Council may consider running the program again in 2022 or on a permanent basis, under the same conditions as the pilot program or expand the program to more days and/or more sites.

Respectfully Submitted,



Francis Cheung, P. Eng.
Chief Administrative Officer

Attachments:

1. Liquor Consumption Pilot Project 2021 - Calls for Service
2. Survey Results Summary
3. Survey Questionnaire

To: Mayor and Councillors

Date: October 12, 2021

Subject: Pilot Program Evaluation, Consumption of Liquor in Parks and Public Facilities

Page 6

Attachment 1

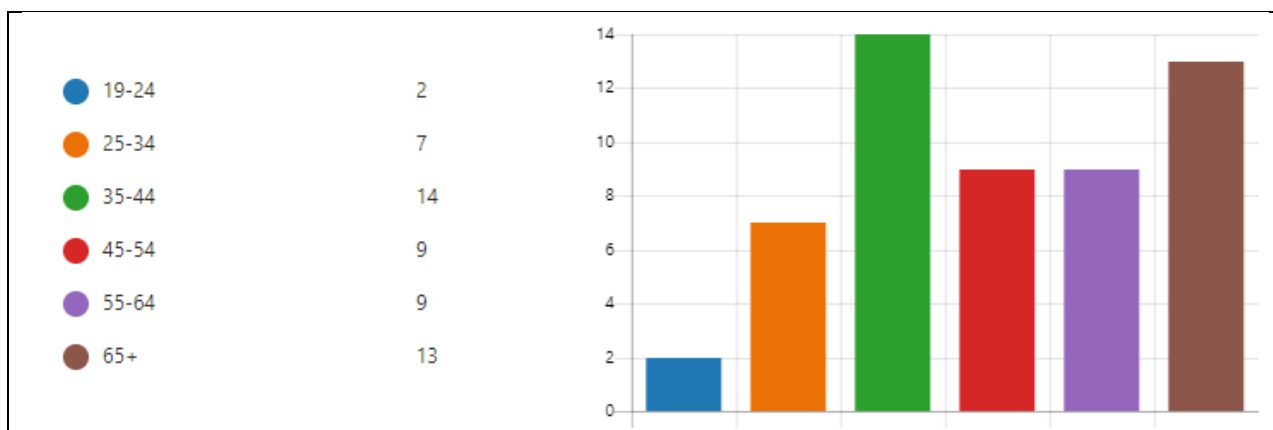
Call Type

	Jul y 2/3	Jul y 9/1 0	July 16/1 7	July 23/2 4	Au g 6/7	Aug 13/1 4	Aug 27/2 8	Se p 3/4	Sep 10/1 1	Sep 17/1 8	Sep 24/2 5	Tota l
Liquor Consumption Unauthorized Area	6	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	13
Smoking	10	2	2	0	1	4	1	1	0	0	0	21
Mischief/Property Damage	1	1	0	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	7
Other	0	3	0	2	3	2	3	0	0	0	0	13
Total	17	13	2	4	7	6	4	1	0	0	0	54

Attachment 2

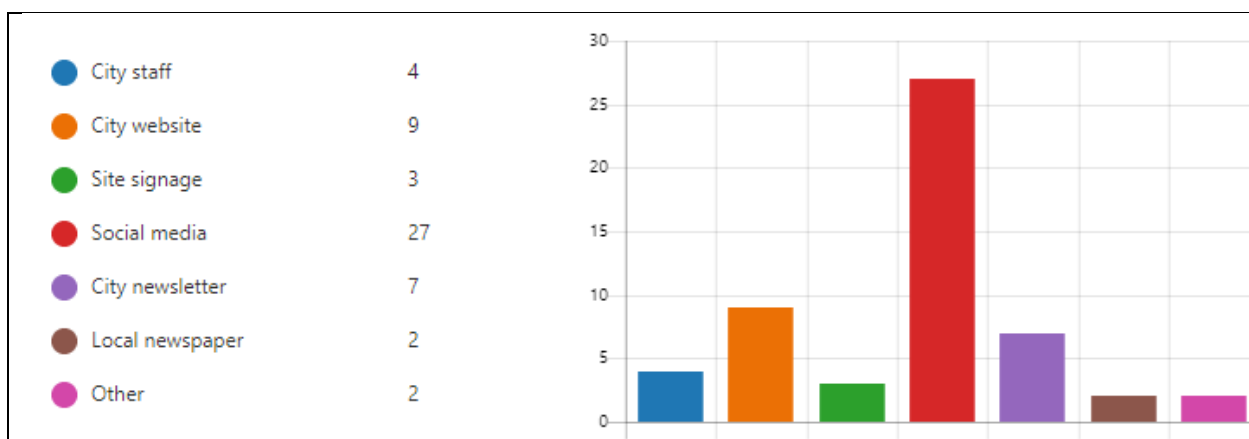
Demographics

- 67% (36/54) – live in Langley City
- 97% (52/54) - live in Langley City or the Langley/Surrey Area
- 97% (52/54) are over 25 years old



How did they learn about the pilot program?

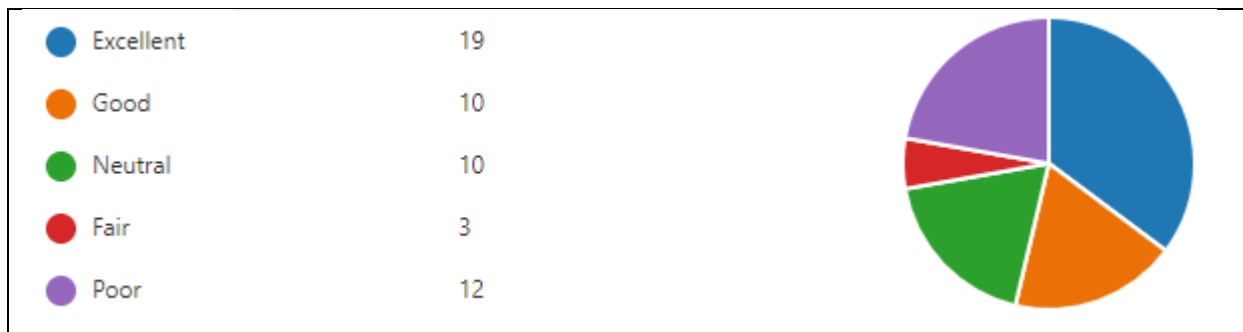
- 50% (27/54) – learned about the survey via social media
- 17% (9/54) – learned about the survey via the City website
- 13% (7/54) – learned about the survey via the City Newsletter



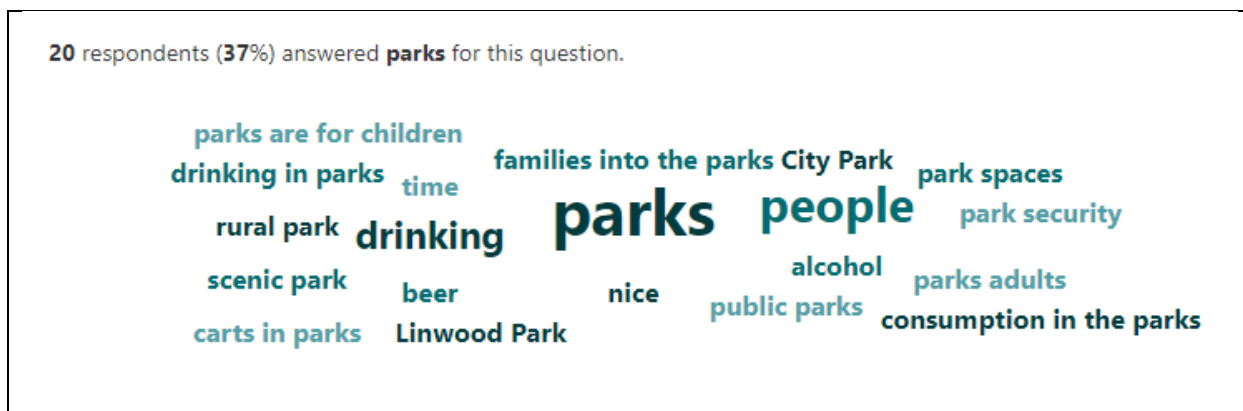
Which area did you attend?



What was your experience?



37% talked about park space when explaining their experience.



Snapshot of Experience during Pilot Program

- From what I saw passing through people were enjoying themselves responsibly. People have been drinking in the park long before this experiment
- Very responsible and clean; felt like not enough people knew about it

- What I like is the security presence. Before now regulations regarding smoking, leashes on dogs, loitering, drug dealing, and after-dark loud partying are ignored by park security and the local RCMP detachment.
- It's great to finally have the city recognize that adults can safely and responsibly drink in parks. It's a bit silly to be still treated like children and restricted to specific times and areas. Everyone was already drinking in parks anyway - the bylaws should reflect the reality.
- We had a get together for friends for our 30th wedding anniversary in one of the new shelters at City Park and it was very nice to be able to offer them a glass of wine or a can of beer. We would not have been able to host this many people in our own backyard, so this option was welcome!
- This park is very much a family park that has seen an amazing uptick in families taking advantage of the amenities, and with Covid that has soared. Many families choose this park to have family gatherings or children's birthday gatherings. Anything that encourages families, people to gather in locations that are outside and not commercial are always a good addition to any neighbourhood.
- I was not necessarily at any of the parks involved in the pilot project, but I live just down the street from Linwood Park, as well as have a community garden plot at that location, and so in spending a lot of time at this park, I have witnessed many groups of people partaking in liquoric drinks even without it being allowed. I believe that parks should remain a safe environment for children and their families, and in allowing liquor to be consumed, it is opening up the possibility for public drunkenness and dangerous behaviour. I understand that there would be the expectation for individuals choosing to drink in parks, to do so responsibly, but I can't tell you the number of times that we have come across old beer cans and beer bottles, often broken with glass scattered about, in parks and along the walking trails of Langley City. Last time my family was at Linwood park, another parent opened up the play box which is supposed to house a variety of outdoor play equipment, only to find a bunch of empty beer bottles. If people really feel like they want to drink liquor, they can go to restaurants or even enjoy them in their own homes.
- I loved the feeling of gathering with friends outside, the areas are filled with condos and the ability to have a gathering outside is so appreciated. Very Montreal feel where the parks are filled with people gathering for a meal and a drink. There is some shaming and rude behaviour from the older white population that aren't informed about things going on and seem to look for things to complain about and have unlearnt behaviours from their childhoods where shaming youth was the common practice. This practice, in my opinion, deters the homeless population from shooting up and using the park for their activities by purposely bringing the younger professionals and families into the parks. This

communicates that the park isn't just for families with kids or for the elderly to stroll around.

- Was nice Kids were swimming was nice to enjoy a cold beer in the hot weather and walk home after with my husband and kids after their swim
- Disruptive behaviour near children playing at the parks, crude language, Jay walking while drinking and not crossing on crosswalk cutting drivers off, smoking marijuana, vaping.

Opposed Summary Highlights

36% of respondents are strongly opposed to allowing the consumption of liquor in designated parks and public spaces and would not like to see responsible liquor consumption expanded to other parks area

36% (19/54) Respondents who opposed were asked to explain their experience, and the most common themes as to why they were opposed, they shared:

- 53% (10/19) do not believe drinking in the park is a good idea or appropriate
- 32% (6/19) were concerned about drug use, homelessness, and drinking and driving.
- 16% (3/19) concerns about people concerns about public drunkenness and disruptive behaviour

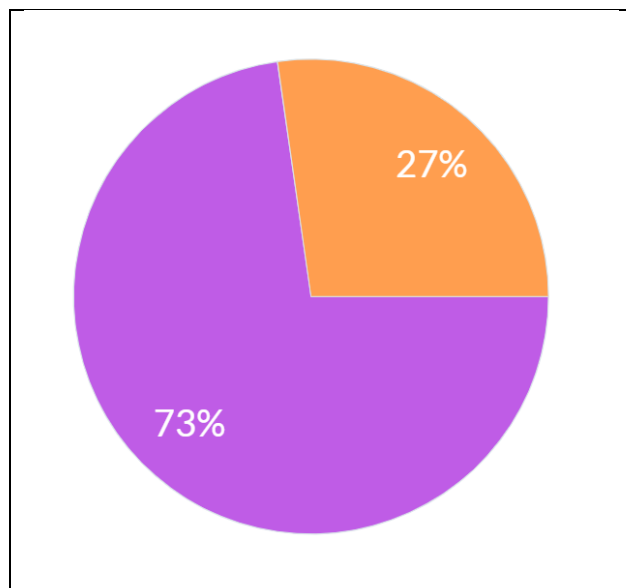
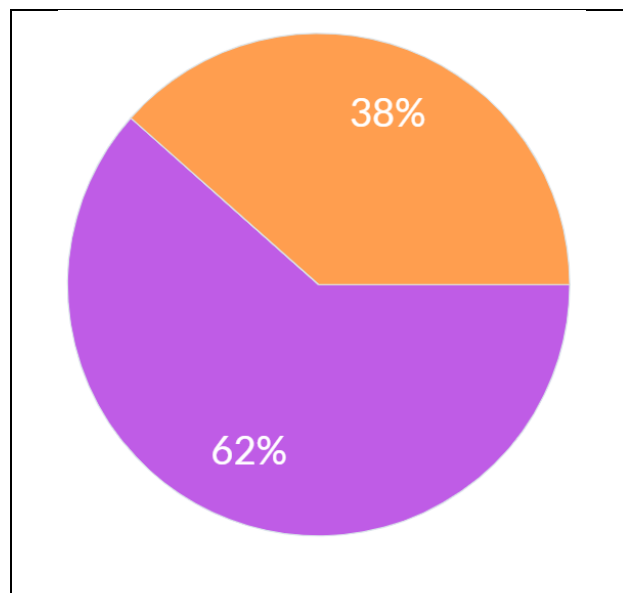
23% (12/54) of people had a poor experience and of that group 84% of them strongly oppose expanding the program

34% of people who shared that they are less likely to visit parks with the program and of the group 95% of them strongly oppose allowing the consumption of liquor in designated parks and public spaces.

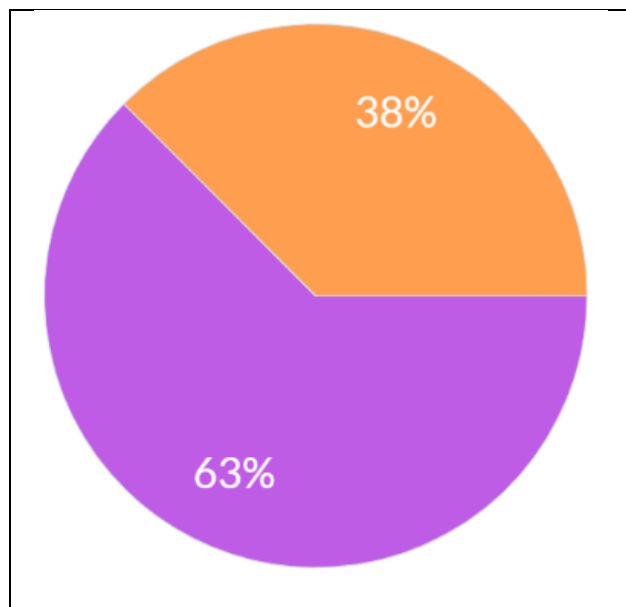
32% of people shared they are less likely to visit a park with permitted liquor consumption in the future

Support Summary Highlights

62% (33/54) somewhat support or strongly support allowing consumption of liquor in designated parks and public spaces

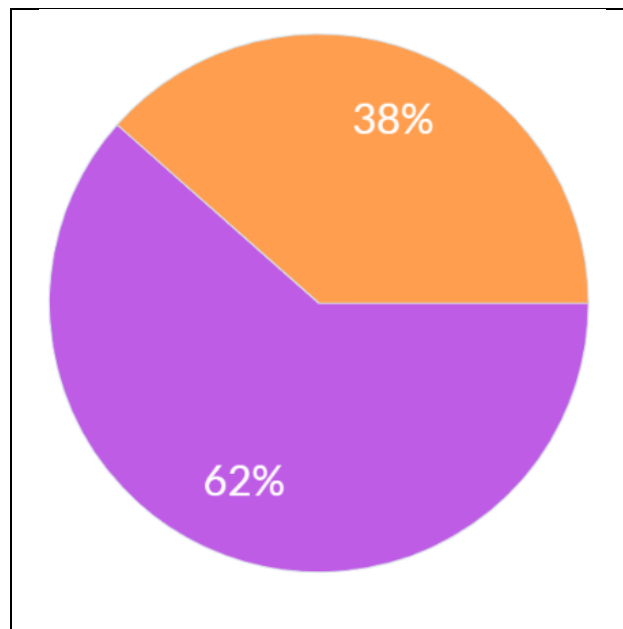


73% (39/54) experiences a positive or neutral experience in the designated area during the pilot program



63% support or are neutral in expanding responsible liquor consumption to other parks and public spaces

62% of people are more likely or feel is does not make a difference when visiting a park with the designated area for liquor consumption in the future.



Suggested Improvements:

- 10% want to expand hours and days to fit all schedules (add Thursday and Sunday, or add any night up to 8pm)
- Designated containers for empties, garbage/recycling bins, ensure cans and bottles are separated so they don't go in the landfills, or use it to support homeless groups
- Expand to all picnic table not just reservable ones
- More bathrooms and security
- Enforce drugs and smoking issues (cigarettes, marijuana and vaping)

Attachment 3