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**Stanley Park Wayfinding and Signage System  
Signage Review Audit**

Karo Design Vancouver, 6 April 2004

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## 1.0 Evaluation Process

Karo's professional wayfinding and signage team, using international standards for signage placement, readability and messaging, evaluated the effectiveness of the wayfinding and signage installed in Stanley Park in 2003. Special attention was requested for the traffic circle at the Georgia Street entrance to the park and the bus loop. Karo's evaluation included a briefing of the objectives and rationale for the current program by Jim Lowden of the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation, site tours, and photography of each sign. A questionnaire was also prepared and interviews conducted by Karo with park staff, commercial tenants, and other key stakeholders. The results of informal visitor surveys conducted by key stakeholder leasees located in the park were supplied to Karo to assist in preparing the audit and recommendations. The system was particularly evaluated from the viewpoint of the first time or infrequent visitor to the park.

The key stakeholders that participated in the interviews were:

Drew Allen Fish House Restaurant	Brent Davies Ferguson Point Tea House
Daniel Frankel Prospect Point Café	Ed Cooke Stanley Park Pavilion
Gerry O'Neil AAA Carriage	Lynne DeCew Vancouver Aquarium Marine Science Centre
Kerry Kerr Vancouver Rowing Club	Sean Allen Theatre Under the Stars
Wally Eggelton Vancouver Yacht Club	Lieutenant Commander Madeira HMCS DISCOVERY
Rob Stewart Brockton Pavilion Society	Sgt Craig Cairns Stanley Park Police Mounted Squad

Park Board Staff that participated in the interviews were:

Jim Lowden Director Stanley District	Alison Dempsey, Parking, Train, Farmyard, Pitch & Putt
John Gray Filming, Special Events	Eric Meagher Park Operations
Philip Josephs Food Services, Leases	

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## 2.0 Executive Summary

### 1. THE HISTORY

There has never been an approved signage policy for Stanley Park. Design, content and siting has not been centralized or viewed as a whole. Some tenants, without formal permission have installed their own directional and advertising signs.

The result has been a blizzard of different sign types which detract from the park aesthetic experience. This has over the past 20 years elicited complaints from park users.

Therefore, in 1999, a program was undertaken to redesign, standardize and limit the amount of signage in Stanley Park. The roadside phase of the work was completed in November, 2003 and Karo Design was retained to audit the result.

### 2. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SIGN DESIGN

#### 'LIONS GATE BRIDGE GREEN' RECOMMENDATIONS

The colour of the new sign program was initiated from the Lions Gate Bridge and Concourse upgrade. The colour of the current signs tends to blend too easily into the general green backdrop of the park making the signs sometimes difficult to see especially in dull and inclement weather and at dusk.

Recommendation: The recommendation is to use a darker green background with white reflective vinyl messaging for better contrast and visibility.

#### BRANDING AND LOGO

The Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation brand identity (logo) is felt to be too large on the current signage. Though it clearly signals the brand, it competes with the immediate primary messaging concerns, particularly in the smaller directional signs.

Recommendation: The recommendation is to have the logo reduced on the directional signage. With this reduction the brand is still identified without conflicting with the directional messaging (a hierarchy is established).

#### HERITAGE STYLE LETTERING

The use of the typeface Optima, though generally a good letter choice, has a stroke weight that is too thin at the current letter height. Also, because of the length of some messages, it has been necessary to have various sizes of lettering on one sign, making the signs more difficult to read.

Recommendation: The recommendation is to change the typeface to Goudy Bold, a better serif "heritage" letterform choice for signage in terms of readability, and to maintain a consistent size on each sign.

#### SIZE OF LETTERING

The current sign program uses a 4'-0" wide message blade which limits the directional information to a cap height of 3".

Recommendations: The cap height should be a minimum of 4" which would in most cases require a longer sign blade, approx. 6'-0" wide.

#### ARROW LOCATION

The current signs have left, right, or forward arrows oriented to the right side. This can be confusing and difficult to read for drivers, particularly at a distance.

Recommendation: Messages with arrows indicating right directions must appear on the right side of a sign. Messages with arrows indicating left directions must appear on the left side of a sign. Depending on the sign location (left or right side of road), messages directing straight ahead will be flush left (right side of road), and flush right (left side of road).

#### VOLUME OF INFORMATION PRESENTED

The current directional signs are a significant improvement over the former sign program but still tend to contain a lot of information.

Recommendation: It is recommended that no more than four separate messages should be on any given directional sign. This is particularly important with signs for vehicular traffic as there is very limited time to comprehend information. Where more information is required, additional signage can be placed in order of information presented (example, eight messages = 2 signs).

#### MOUNTING HEIGHTS

The current signage is inconsistent in mounting height and placement.

Recommendation: Messages should not be positioned below 2'-6" above roadway grade. An information band of about 1'-0" deep between 5'-3" and 4'-3" is the optimal placement for the display of information essential to the public in vehicles. This recommendation also applies to pedestrian oriented signage including handicap accessibility.

## 2.0 Executive Summary

### 2. Development of the Sign Design, continued

#### POSITIVE PUBLIC REACTION TO THE NEW DESIGN

The new sign program has been generally well received and is acknowledged to be a substantial improvement over to former wood blade design. Most negative reaction has come from the park's tenants. Based on this reaction and the need for a consistent wayfinding and signage standard in the park the next phase of pedestrian oriented signage is well underway.

Recommendation: As later recommended in this report there is a need to develop a sign standard for park tenant identification signs.

### 3. SIGN LOCATION ISSUES

#### WARNING – DECISION POINT – ARRIVAL

There is a need for more directional signs at key decision making points throughout the park.

Recommendation: Directional signs need to be installed at all park entrances (Beach Ave, Robson Street and Georgia Street). Additional directional signs are required: Second Beach intersection of Park Drive and North Lagoon Drive; at North Lagoon Drive and Pipeline Road/Georgia Street exit; in advance of the traffic circle off Georgia Street; the north end of Pipeline Drive; and the north intersection of Park Drive and Avison Way.

#### REINFORCEMENT OF MESSAGE

The current sign program does not consistently assure the visitor.

Recommendation: It is important to reinforce a message i.e., repeating a message at key points along a given route: 1. directional signage to a given destination, 2. at a key intersection (decision making point) directing to the destination, and 3. at the destination itself (this will depend on the complexity of the route). This is needed at the north end of Pipeline Road at Park Drive.

#### SEQUENTIAL ENTRY SIGN CLUSTERS

The signage at the Georgia Street entrance traffic circle for example is clear and generally easy to follow.

Recommendation: The effectiveness of the signs can be increased with additional advance signs. In order to keep a limit on the messages per sign, the signs should be placed approx. 100 to 150 metres apart. The messages are provided in advance of decision points. The amount of information on a sign should be kept to a maximum of four messages which will make it easier for a visitor to retain.

Within the individual signs, destinations are indicated on the sign in order of distance away, the closest destination at the top followed by the next closest, etc. (this applies throughout the system). The exception to this rule is: 1. At the traffic circles, the most important destination (i.e. The Aquarium) is identified first on the sign, and at subsequent directional signage on this route the most important destination is also identified first (at the top). 2. If there are two or more messages in the same direction, here the destinations are grouped together (left, right or straight ahead combinations).

#### SPECIFIC PARKING LOT NOTICES

There has been an increase in complaints from visitors not being able to find their desired destination in the Park. Visitors sometimes drive past the closest parking area to their destination and have to travel completely around the park. The current sign directly opposite the Information Centre parking lot entrance, for example, directs visitors to the parking lot rather than to Aquarium parking. There is insufficient signage at the new bus loop or the parking lots to help visitors find their destination or orient themselves to their location within the park.

Recommendation: The name of a specific destination (attraction or amenity) should be added to the nearest parking lot sign. This is especially important where the nearest parking lot is in advance of the destination. Add directional signage to those parking lots that are on route to park attractions (this is for vehicular traffic and pedestrian).

### 4. OTHER MINOR LOCATION ISSUES

#### WASHROOMS

The current signage does not use consistent washroom pictograms on directional signage throughout the park.

Recommendation: Add internationally recognized washroom pictograms to signs as appropriate.

## 2.0 Executive Summary

### 4. Other Minor Location Issues, continued

There is no current signage indicating the direction to almost any park amenity or specific location.

Recommendation: Within the individual signs park destinations should be indicated in order of distance away, the closest destination at the top followed by the next closest, etc. (this applies throughout the system). The exception to this rule is if there are two or more messages in the same direction, here the destinations are grouped together (left, right or straight ahead combinations).

#### VISIBILITY

Some of the current signage is installed under trees, leaving it in shadow and hard to see. Signage can also be camouflaged by low foliage and leaves, and this factor combined with inconsistent mounting height and placement contributes to poor visibility.

Recommendation: Signage must be placed in clear areas at consistent heights and at optimal distances. Foliage should be cleared from sight lines or, if necessary, signs moved to more visible locations. Shuttle Bus stop signs need to be larger and directional signs to the stops are required.

### 5. TRAFFIC ISSUES

There is a need for clarity in identifying the one way roads throughout the Park. The one way roads are particularly confusing at parking lot exits and the Beach Avenue entrance.

Recommendation: Additional Ministry of Transportation (MOT) regulatory signs are required for safety, especially 'One Way' and 'Pedestrian Crossing Ahead' signs. Stop signs should be installed per MOT standards on both sides of the road on all one way roads.

### 6. SPECIFIC SITE PROBLEMS

#### Georgia Street Entrance

Traffic circle directions are foreign to most local drivers – we don't want to add visual or mental overload near these directional signs so information can be absorbed. Signage prior to the dedicated lane separation could be dangerously distracting as many cars are lane changing between Denman Street and the park entrance.

Recommendation: Additional directional signs containing more of the park attractions and amenities information should be installed along Georgia Street north of Denman Street. A maximum of three cluster signs after park lane separation takes effect. As Georgia Street is the main entrance a more substantial entry experience should be designed.

#### Beach Avenue Entrance

Limited sight lines for cluster signs on Park Board office lawn. Attraction blade signs – no more than four messages (one message per blade) on a sign, otherwise the information will be difficult to read and retain.

Recommendation: The effectiveness of the signs can be increased with additional advance signs. In order to keep a limit on the messages per sign, the signs should be placed approx. 100 to 150 metres apart. The messages are provided in advance of decision points. The amount of information on a sign should be kept to a maximum of four messages which will make it easier for a visitor to retain.

#### New Bus Loop

There is insufficient signage in the new bus loop to help visitors find their destination or orient themselves to their location within the park.

Recommendation: Pedestrian directional signage required to assist visitors to locations within the park, and back to the bus loop. Note: Will require the addition of both a park directory map sign and the planned phase three signage trees.

### 7. TENANT SIGNAGE

Park tenants have requested the need for a standard non-park board sign designed specifically for their commercial use.

Recommendation: Develop a sign standard for park tenant identification signs with lighting (not internal). Interested park tenants would be responsible for designing the sign to the approved standard, with a clear process for Parks Board review and approval. This process would also cover fabrication, installation, and location of the power supply and maintenance.

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## 2.0 Executive Summary

### 7. Tenant Signage, continued

#### PERMITTED TENANT SIGNAGE

One custom designed sign per tenant - either free standing or on building to be located at place of business adjacent to the building or entry point from roadway (maximum sign area 25 sq.ft.); design and siting to be approved by Parks Board. In addition, one Parks Board issued sandwich board sign per tenant with message choice by tenant to be located within 100 ft. of the tenant premises, with siting to be approved by Parks Board.

#### 8. PHASE THREE SIGNAGE INSTALLATION

The internal pedestrian/cycle path wayfinding program is now substantially installed. Additional sign trees (single post with four directional blades) are required at:

Lumbermen's Arch (Coal Harbour walkway)

Bus Loop (Aquarium walkway)

Chilco Loop

Second Beach/Ceperley

Recommendation: Once the signage helps visitors find their desired destination, we have to help them return to their vehicle, bus loop or the trails leaving the park. Clear directions back to parking lots, bus loop and trails are required. Wherever applicable, the other side of the sign blade can be used to guide the return route.



### 3.0 Current Situation

A two-phase wayfinding and signage system was designed under the direction of the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation to respond to a growing need to develop a standard system for all Vancouver parks, and to eliminate the clutter of signs and the variety of sign designs that had appeared throughout Stanley Park. The objective was to develop a system that responds to the needs of park visitors to enhance their park experience, and restore the park to its natural beauty by removing unauthorized or redundant signs.

Phase one of the signage system was completed in 2003. It consists of identification signs, directional signs and park directories, and was designed to assist visitors accessing the park in vehicles. Identification signs are used to identify park entrances for vehicles. Directional signs are positioned at or near key decision making points and the messaging is restricted to indicating directions to selected park destinations/attractions and entrances to parking lots. Directories show a map of the park and identify the location of all points of interest, trails, businesses, attractions and activities, and all services. A "You Are Here" symbol is used to help visitors locate their relative position in the park. Directories are placed at popular locations and can be easily viewed by all visitors whether in a vehicle, walking, or on a bike, etc.

When installation of the phase one signage was completed, all other Parks Board installed signs and all unauthorized signs were removed.

Phase two of the signage system has not yet been installed. Once installed it will direct visitors using walkways, bike paths and the seawall. It will consist of trail identification signs with attached sign blades showing the distance in kilometers to various destinations in the park.



Identification Sign



Directory.  
*Is this map easy to read and understand?*



Directional Sign.  
*The directional arrows are not to international standards.*



## 4.0 Evaluation

### 4.1 Karo's Evaluation

The number of identification and directional signs installed in Stanley Park is very limited. While the signs eliminated the previous clutter and differing sign designs, the amount of information given is minimal. Although the visual aesthetic of the signs is reasonably attractive and complements the environment, it reduces the visibility of the signs especially on dull or cloudy days. In some cases, visibility is further reduced by foliage and other objects.

It is not always evident that a majority of the roads in the park are one way, causing some motorists to drive the wrong way.

Currently there are not enough signs or sign types to be able to deliver the level of information a first-time or infrequent visitor requires in order to reach their destination. Some destinations in the park are not identified on any signs except the directories.

The level of information and messaging is inconsistent. Sign installation is not consistent in height or placement.

Placement of some signs makes it difficult for visitors to understand their meaning.

No advanced signage exists indicating an approaching destination – motorists often pass the nearest parking lot.

There are not any signs, other than a tenant's sign, informing visitors they have arrived at their desired location.

The type size is inconsistent.

The directory signs contain a great deal of information. It is difficult for some people to orient themselves to the current map and find their desired destination.



*No advanced signage indicating an approaching destination.*



*Inconsistent type sizes.*



*Identification Sign (with directional sign blade).  
Potentially confusing to combine identification and directional information on a driver oriented sign?*

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## 4.0 Evaluation

### 4.1 Karo's Evaluation, continued

There is insufficient signage in the new bus loop or the parking lots to help visitors find their destination or orient themselves to their location within the park.

The signage at the Georgia Street entrance traffic circle is clear and easy to follow. However the effectiveness of the signs can be increased with additional advanced signs and adopting the standards outlined in section 5.0 of this manual

Signage to help visitors find their way back to their car, bus loop or exit trails does not exist.

There is not enough signage to remind visitors that pay parking is in effect throughout the park, resulting in many tourist complaints.

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## 4.0 Evaluation

### 4.2 Stakeholders and Park Board Staff Evaluation

From the stakeholder and staff interviews it is evident that signage has become an important issue since the installation of the current signage system and removal of the previous signs. Although it is generally agreed the new signs look more professional than the previous signs, most of the stakeholders have major concerns regarding the limited number of signs and lack of directional signage to specific destinations. Since the installation of the new signs they have noticed an increase in the number of questions from visitors asking for directions. Generally the stakeholders are of the opinion that the new wayfinding and signage system is worse than the system it replaced. The level of concern increases with the stakeholders' dependence on the general public and their visibility from parking lots, roads, trails and the seawall.

While critical of the existing signage system, the majority of the stakeholders interviewed were very interested in helping to develop recommendations for a more effective wayfinding and signage system for Stanley Park. A majority of the lease stakeholders would like more and larger directional signage at all entries to the park and all key decision points. They would also like more signage throughout the park directing visitors to their commercial location. This is of particular importance to the restaurateurs who often have to hold a table in anticipation of a guest reservation arriving late due to difficulty in locating the restaurant. Most of the park tenants would also like a non-park board sign designed specifically for their commercial location.

Most frequent comments received from stakeholders:

There is no signage indicating the direction to almost any park amenity or specific location.

Add more signage throughout the park.

Signs are too small and difficult to see from any distance.

There has been an increase in complaints from visitors not being able to find their desired destination.

Visitors pass the closest parking area to their destination and have to travel completely around the park.

Add directional signage from paths and seawall.

It is difficult for some visitors to orient themselves with the current directories.



## 4.0 Evaluation

### 4.3 Specific Locations or Items of Concern

1. Current sign directly opposite the Information Centre parking lot entrance, which directs visitors into parking lot rather than to Aquarium parking.
2. Lower mounting height and visual 'height' of signs lends into the background.
3. Installed under a tree, in shadow and hard to see. Signage can be camouflaged by foliage and leaves.



1.



2.



3.



## 4.0 Evaluation

### 4.3 Specific Locations or Items of Concern, continued

5. Signage obscured by foliage and garbage receptacle.
6. Signage obscured by lamp post and stairs.
7. Low shoulder installation obscure sign.
8. Signage installed on road curve and low shoulder is difficult to see.



5.



6.



7.



8.



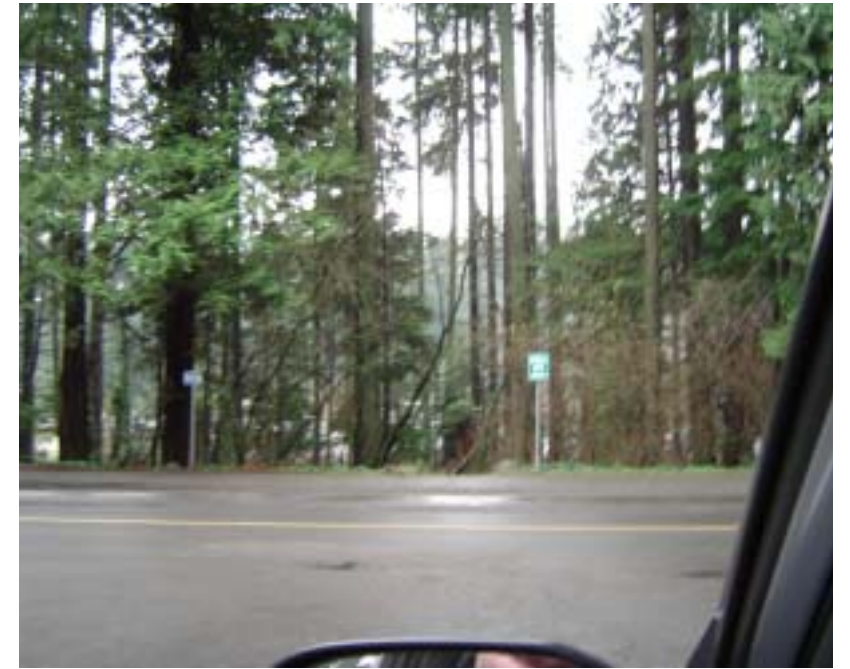
## 4.0 Evaluation

### 4.3 Specific Locations or Items of Concern, continued

- 9. Signage obscured by foliage.
- 10. Miniature Train Parking Exit.  
Add directional sign to additional parking and other park attractions.
- 11. Add washroom pictograms to signs as appropriate.



9.



10.

## 5.0 Recommendations

The intent of these recommendations is to, wherever possible, improve the wayfinding and signage system in Stanley Park by responding to the deficiencies and concerns identified in the Evaluation Section of this document. Given the number of stakeholders, their individual signage requests and the nature of operating a business within a city park, it is doubtful that we will meet the expectations of all participants.

Although commentary on the visual aesthetic of the signage system was not intended to be part of this audit, the current design adds to the problems with the sign system and needs to be addressed.

1. The colour of the current signs blend too easily into the green background of the park making the signs difficult to see especially in dull and inclement weather.
  2. The type should be larger for reading at longer distances and in moving vehicles.
  3. All type, arrows and pictograms should be made from reflective vinyl for enhanced late evening and night viewing.
  4. Signs should be installed for optimum visibility. Foliage should be cleared from sight lines or, if necessary, signs moved to more visible locations.
  5. Additional Ministry of Transportation regulatory signs are required for safety, especially "One Way" and "Pedestrian Crossing Ahead" signs.
  6. Stop signs should be installed on both sides of the road in the one-way areas.
  7. Tourists need to be made more aware of the risk of theft from autos and more signs should be installed.
  8. Install more "Paid Parking in Effect" signs.
- The desire to improve the visitor experience extends to all the attractions and amenities in the park. This includes the natural features as well as businesses located in the park. A first time or infrequent visitor will be looking for indicators to locate the various attractions/amenities throughout the park.
9. Directional signs, identifying by name the attractions and amenities, need to be installed at three distinct locations. Firstly, prior to the decision making point to prepare the driver. Secondly, at the decision making point. And thirdly, upon arrival at the chosen destination.
  10. The name of a specific attraction or amenity should be added to the nearest parking lot sign. This is especially important where the nearest parking lot is in advance of the destination.
  11. A comprehensive sign type and directional sign should be developed and installed in all parking lots and the bus loop to help visitors find their chosen destination.
  11. Directional signs need to be installed at all park entrances (Beach Ave, Robson Street and Georgia Street).
  12. Additional directional signs are required: Second Beach intersection of Park Drive and North Lagoon Drive; at North Lagoon Drive and Pipeline Road/ Georgia Street exit; in advance of the traffic circle off Georgia Street; the north and south ends of Pipeline Drive; and the north and south intersections of Park Drive and Avison Way.
  13. Additional directional signs containing more of the park attractions and amenities information should be installed along Georgia Street north of Denman Street. As Georgia Street is the main entrance a more substantial entry experience should be designed.
  14. According to a random survey conducted by the Vancouver Aquarium Marine Science Centre, between 30% and 40% of visitors arrive in the park by means other than car. Additional pedestrian/bike oriented directional signage should be installed at the new bus loop, on trails and along the seawall.

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## 5.0 Recommendations

### *Recommendations, continued*

15. Include directional signs on the Stanley Park Causeway in both directions well in advance of the actual entrances to the park.
16. Shuttle Bus stop signs need to be larger and directional signs to the stops are required.
17. Develop a standard for a sandwich board (one sandwich board for each tenant must be placed adjacent to tenant business).
18. Develop a sign standard for park tenant location signs with lighting (not internal). Interested park tenants would be responsible for designing the sign to approved standard, to approved standard, getting Park Board approval, fabrication, installation, locating the power supply and maintenance.
19. Once we help visitors find their desired destination, we have to help them return to their vehicle, the bus loop or the trails leaving the park. Clear directions back to parking lots, bus loop and trails are required. Wherever applicable, both sides of the sign blade should be used.
20. Install "Horses changing lanes. Proceed with caution" sign(s) as appropriate.

### *Specific Requests from Park Tenants (not covered in recommendations)*

At or near the entrance to the park, the HMCS DISCOVERY would like to see a 'pride' sign: "Home to HER MAJESTIES CANADIAN SHIP DISCOVERY Vancouver's Naval Reserve Division"