



# **Strategic Plan 2005**

**Vancouver Parks and Recreation**

*Lively and Diverse by Nature*

**Vancouver Parks and Recreation**  
*Lively and diverse by nature*

*Our Mission*

Provide, preserve and advocate for parks and recreation services to benefit people, communities and the environment

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**SECTION 1.0**

**Greening the Park Board**

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## 1. GREENING THE PARK BOARD

### Issues

Population growth and a rising standard of living have created multiple environmental pressures. The Park Board, as the steward of many natural areas in the city and as purveyor of recreation and wellness, views the preservation and enhancement of the natural environment as a core component of its mandate. The organization is therefore pursuing a more sustainable approach to conducting its business such that the consideration of environmental impacts informs all aspects of the Park Board.

### Update

Several Park Board sustainability initiatives are underway, featuring reduced consumption of water and energy, integrated pest management, new guidelines for more efficient fleet management, recycling programs, and the pursuit of green building technology in new major capital projects such as the 1 Kingsway and Sunset Community Centres, the Killarney Community Pool and the Hillcrest Curling Rink.

These Park Board initiatives are in part aligned with City policies, such as *The Climate-Friendly City, a Corporate Climate Change Action Plan for the City of Vancouver 2004*, and the *Green Building Strategy 2004*. Even more advanced policies are being prepared for the development of new communities in Vancouver.

### Strategic Direction

- ***Develop, advocate for and implement sustainable policies, plans, guidelines and practices that achieve environmental objectives while meeting the needs of the community.***

### Action Examples

#### 1.1 Integrate sustainability concepts into the design, construction and maintenance of parks.

- Strengthen and expand park ecology: diverse native habitat, local wildlife, stormwater management, maximizing bio-diversity.
- Maintain with less: recycling and re-using materials, reduced water and energy usage, continued integrated pest management, less invasive equipment use.
- Make parks more beautiful: environmental art, interpretation of ecological processes and environmental benefits.
- Train staff in sustainable maintenance and environmental management best practices.
- Recognise and provide for emerging trends in community gardening.

#### 1.2 Advance incorporation of green building and facility technologies.

- Integrate green building policies into facility development process.

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- Develop and implement best facility management practices including procedures for ongoing energy audits.
- Train staff in green building technology.

### 1.3 Cultivate greening of corporate practices and policies.

- Implement City ethical and sustainable purchasing policies.
- Continually review corporate activities for opportunities to introduce more sustainable practices, including measures to increase re-use and recycling programs.
- Develop employee transportation policy and review automobile-based delivery systems seeking to reduce emission of green house gases in association with *The Climate-Friendly City, a Corporate Climate Change Action Plan for the City of Vancouver 2004*.

### 1.4 Advocate for a healthy urban ecology.

- Promote efforts to protect and improve natural environments in the city through public education programs and events, in cooperation with community partners.
- Provide a forum for information on urban wildlife; promote gardening with local plant material in diverse habitat settings.
- Support City initiatives to reduce use of chemicals on private property.

**SECTION 2.0**

**Engaging People**

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## 2. ENGAGING PEOPLE

### Issues

The Park Board with its partners provides places, facilities and programs for recreation, and is thus in a unique position to have a strongly positive impact on the health and wellness of people and communities. The concept of wellness means practicing all the things that keep people well and happy: exercise, stress control, skills development, self-expression and fulfillment, good nutrition, and positive familial and social relationships. Wellness embraces a holistic understanding of how aspects of physical, mental, and spiritual wellbeing relate to each other, and how they extend into environmental, social and economic sustainability spheres.

All people must be able to participate. Recognising the rights of participation and removing physical and other access barriers are important first steps towards creating an environment where more advanced principles of social inclusion can take hold. These principles will be centered on recognising and valuing difference and diversity, on participatory decision-making and on empowerment. Universal design translates these social inclusion principles into the built environment of parks and facilities, thereby going further than the current standard of barrier-free design.

Recent public information has highlighted the alarming trends and health risks associated with declining levels of physical activity within our population, including children and youth. Physical activity, along with bringing benefits to individuals, also strengthens neighbourhoods and communities. It brings people into public spaces such as parks, trails, bike paths, pools and recreation centres where they join together to play sports, dance, train, swim and otherwise engage with others in healthy pursuits.

### Update

The Park Board's unique cooperation with community associations and other partners delivers recreational programming that is closely tailored to the needs of the local communities.

Specific programs have been developed making services more accessible, including the adapted programs that are designed to enable people with various abilities to participate, or the Leisure Access Card providing residents with limited income a reduction in fees for basic programs and services. All new or extensively renovated Park Board buildings meet or exceed the applicable access standards.

Vancouver has committed to a target of increasing physical activity within the population by 20% by 2010.

### Strategic Direction

- ***Integrate the concept of wellness in the delivery of parks and recreation services and provide opportunities for everyone to access these services.***



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## Action Examples

### 2.1 Develop strategies for broader participation.

- Analyse the programmatic, physical, social and economic barriers precluding wider social inclusion in park and recreation services.
- Reduce structural or systemic barriers, including affordability, timing and scheduling of programs, and safety.
- Develop various ways for users to influence program content and choose how they participate.

### 2.2 Make parks and recreation universally accessible.

- Make parks and recreation facilities usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design - meaningful integration of all rather than simply removing barriers.
- Apply universal design principles: Use to be equitable, flexible, simple and intuitive; information to be communicated effectively; pro-active hazard elimination; design for low physical effort; appropriate accommodation of standing and seated users.
- Train staff in universal design.

### 2.3 Advocate for wellness.

- Develop and promote the wellness concept that addresses body, mind and spirit. Understand how Park Board activities fit into the larger wellness context.
- Seek varied and balanced programming in parks and recreation facilities, in tandem with partners: fitness and exercise, arts and culture, skills development, teamwork and community development.

### 2.4 Support active living.

- Engage collaborative partners in a broad range of sectors to mobilize communities to increase the number of active opportunities available.
- Monitor and report out on progress to achieving the 20 by 2010 physical activity target.

**SECTION 3.0**

**Working Together**

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## 3. WORKING TOGETHER

### Issues

The Park Board works with and for people to create park and recreation opportunities. The public is both participant in the delivery of services and recipient of them. Since many Park Board activities have a significant impact on people's lives, their involvement in various aspects of the Park Board organisation and activities is especially important.

The scale of public involvement depends on the issue. A more expansive public process aiming for broad community support is indicated when issues are more complex or controversial, when the contemplated trade-offs are bigger, or when an issue is of particular interest to the public.

### Update

The Park Board is committed to open and transparent decision-making. Public meetings of the Board have been expanded to include community meetings where any issue may be brought forward. Further, a new structure for committee meetings has allowed for increased public discussion.

At the core of the Park Board's approach to recreation is community-based programming, conducted by community associations in the Park Board's community centres, or by many other not-for-profit groups partnering with the Park Board. The relationships between the Park Board and these partners are currently codified in agreements that range from complex legal contracts to simple leases. A flexible framework has been developed with the community associations as the basis for new joint operating agreements.

At the neighbourhood level, the Park Board has launched the *ParkPartners* program to address community concerns about parks, to create volunteer opportunities and support those who want to participate in making ideas, projects and events happen in their neighbourhood parks.

### Strategic Direction

- ***Integrate public involvement in decision-making and service delivery and expand partnerships with community groups and other agencies.***

### Action Examples

#### 3.1 Develop and implement a public involvement process.

- Establish criteria, standards and priorities for active public engagement in decision-making processes.
- Develop toolbox of innovative participation techniques for various public processes.
- Streamline communication standards for the dissemination of information.
- Train staff in public involvement processes.

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### 3.2 Advance partnership agreements.

- Implement recommendations of the Joint Operating Agreement Task Force report *Renewing the Partnership* with community associations.
- Develop a similar framework for parallel agreements with other not-for-profit partners.
- Cooperate with other agencies in service delivery.

### 3.3 Expand community partnerships.

- Expand and cultivate partnerships with external organisations and the community to implement mutually beneficial mandates.
- Support community initiatives through co-funding, space use, staff time and flexibility in policy and practice.
- Continue to further develop and explore synergies of existing programs such as *ParkPartners*, the Neighbourhood Matching Fund, the *Artists in Residence* program and other community-supportive initiatives.

**SECTION 4.0**

**Managing Resources**

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# STRATEGIC PLAN 2005

## 4. MANAGING RESOURCES

### Issues

The operation of Vancouver's parks and recreation facilities requires an ongoing investment of financial capital. The long-term quality of Park Board services depends in part on maximising the efficacy of available funding while also identifying and harnessing alternative funding sources to meet future service demands.

Maintaining quality of service in the face of funding pressures requires thinking about new ways of doing business. The creativity and resourcefulness of Park Board staff is a key ingredient for generating tomorrow's solutions. The Park Board needs to develop a corporate culture that stimulates, welcomes and accommodates innovation as a tool to control costs, improve quality of service and engage citizens, thus helping to meet present and future service expectations.

### Update

Fiscal responsibility is an ongoing task for the Park Board. The 2001 Strategic Plan provided a reference document for the alignment of department business plans with corporate direction. The introduction of SAP has delivered the detailed financial information required for increased financial accountability at all levels of the organisation.

### Strategic Direction

- ***Strengthen fiscal responsibility and pursue alternative sources of funding.***

### Action Examples

#### 4.1 Maintain fiscal responsibility.

- Ensure that all funding arrangements, including the Global Budget, are clearly articulated and understood by all staff and affected parties.
- Provide project management assistance and financial management support to staff and partners investing in Park Board facilities, parks and programs.

#### 4.2 Increase the transparency of Park Board sources, allocation and use of funds.

- Provide access to data (financial, usage statistics, etc.), and assistance and training in interpreting this data to those responsible for allocation and spending at all levels of the organization.
- Continue efforts to involve the public in the allocation of and request for funds.

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- Regularly analyze and monitor financial data to ensure that Park Board funding is allocated and used consistently and appropriately.
- Refine performance indicators and benchmarks. Create opportunities to incorporate these in allocating and using our funds.
- Make maximum use of available technology to improve customer services, financial monitoring, analysis and planning.

### **4.3 Develop and implement comprehensive fundraising programs with community partners, all levels of government and the not-for-profit and private sectors.**

- Increase public, partner, City and staff awareness of services, programs and facilities provided by the Park Board.
- Leverage government/corporate grants and donations for programming, for our partners in program delivery and to renew ageing infrastructure.
- Explore reward structures for the realization of new sources of funds.

### **4.4 Build an organization that supports risk-taking, creativity, continual learning and innovative ideas.**

- Increase opportunities for training, exposure and evaluation of different ideas/methods/approaches.
- Encourage opportunities for interaction with the public, colleagues, professionals and those with outside interests, to welcome the exploration and implementation of new ideas.

**SECTION 5.0**

**Meeting Future Challenges**

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## 5. Meeting Future Challenges

### Issues

The Park Board is the steward of an extensive recreation infrastructure containing over 200 parks with many outdoor play facilities and over 220 buildings including community centres, fieldhouses, pools, rinks, restaurants, concession stands and service buildings.

The population of Vancouver has been growing by 6,000 new residents per year. To maintain current levels of service, an extra 16.5 acres of neighbourhood park and almost 14,000 square feet of indoor recreation space need to be added yearly.

The 2010 Winter Olympic Games present a unique opportunity to achieve a number of goals and objectives while creating lasting legacies, from tangible improvements such as new or improved facilities to more intangible achievements including a greater acceptance of recreation and fitness as essential components of wellness, and a boost to community spirit.

Existing facilities are facing increased pressures to address emerging trends in recreation and facility use while continuing to satisfy traditional service levels.

### Update

Long-term plans for community centres, pools and playing fields have been completed. Other facility types and parks are being inventoried. Work is underway on a park land acquisition strategy and a waterfront policy plan.

Olympic planning has begun, with the Park Board involved in several projects and programs.

### Strategic Direction

- ***Renew ageing infrastructure and adapt parks and recreation services to accommodate growth and meet changing needs.***

### Action Examples

#### 5.1 Plan for long-term renewal and revitalisation of parks and recreation facilities.

- Pursue a long-term renewal strategy based on life cycle cost analysis for all buildings and facilities.
- Develop a park renewal strategy for neighbourhood and city-wide parks which balance the preservation of environmental assets with enhanced public recreation opportunities.

#### 5.2 Assess recreation needs.

- Inventory and analyze recreation opportunities and need on a local area scale as well as city-wide, determine existing and desired levels of service and update facility standards

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- Study current utilization of facilities and programs and implement strategies to maximize capacity use.

### 5.3 Expand services to accommodate population growth.

- Integrate facility planning into a city-wide recreation strategy taking into consideration projected overall and project-specific population growth.
- Outline a long-term park land acquisition strategy.

### 5.4 Welcome the 2010 Olympic Winter Games.

- Leverage the opportunity presented by the Olympics and other sport hosting events to realize tangible and intangible community benefits.
- Integrate all Park Board participation in Olympic planning.

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