

Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation

# Strategic Plan

2005 - 2010



# lively and diverse by nature

## OUR MISSION

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

## 1.0 Greening the Park Board

- Integrate sustainability concepts into the design, construction and maintenance of parks.
- Advance the use of green building and facility technologies.
- Build on current corporate greening practices and policies.
- Advocate for a healthy urban environment.

## 2.0 Engaging People

- Develop strategies for broader participation.
- Make parks and recreation universally accessible.
- Advocate for wellness.
- Support active living.

## 3.0 Working Together

- Develop and implement a public involvement process.
- Advance partnership agreements.
- Expand community partnerships.
- Coordinate services with others and seek new strategic alliances.

## 4.0 Managing Resources

- Maintain fiscal responsibility.
- Increase the transparency of Park Board sources, allocation and use of funds.
- Develop and implement comprehensive sustainable fundraising programs with community partners.
- Build an organization that supports risk-taking, creativity, continual learning and innovative ideas.

## 5.0 Meeting Future Challenges

- Plan for long-term renewal and revitalisation of parks and recreation facilities.
- Assess recreation needs.
- Expand services to accommodate population growth.
- Welcome the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games.



## INTRODUCTION

We live in one of the most beautiful, liveable cities in the world. Yet, like so many others who choose to make their homes in urban centres, our lives today are filled with daily demands that challenge each of us. What can you do each day to ensure that you succeed at keeping your balance, health and well-being in spite of all the stresses of city life? How can your Park Board help you, your family and neighbours to achieve these goals?

The Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation (Park Board) is a champion of your personal and community health and well-being. We want to help you connect with your neighbours and we want your ideas and input in providing park and recreation programs.

For over one hundred years we have been creating and maintaining Vancouver's public green spaces and protecting our natural environment. We build and maintain facilities including community centres, rinks, and pools that support wellness and bring people together. With our partners we provide leisure, sports, arts and educational

programs for people of all ages, interests and abilities. Our parks and facilities also support a strong local economy by attracting millions of visitors to our city each year.

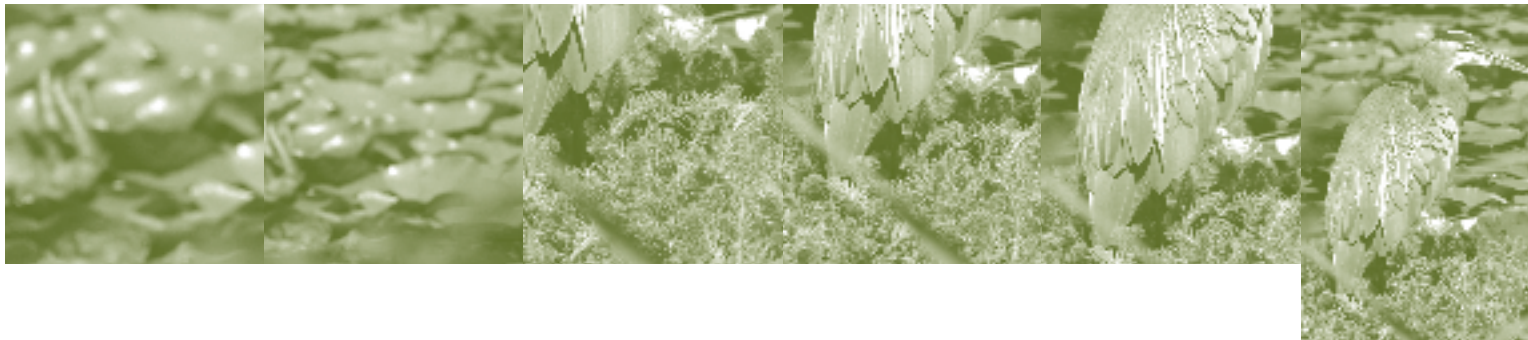
Five years ago the Park Board adopted a Strategic Plan which laid out the organization's mission, values and priorities that would help us to serve you better. A review of that plan began in early 2004 to refresh it for the future. Commissioners, staff and stakeholders were asked for their ideas and input. Through this process a draft Strategic Plan was written. This spring, the public, stakeholders and

staff were asked to review the draft plan. This document represents a synthesis of ideas and strategies achieved through this consultation process.

The new Strategic Plan helps to frame our work plans so that we can improve on our efforts to help you and your community maintain balance, health and well-being. The plan will help us adapt to our changing needs while continuing to maintain Vancouver's exceptional parks and recreation system. The plan sets out the priorities, values and directions that will guide our organization over the next five years.

While most of the everyday work we are doing today – from keeping our parks clean and green to providing a wide range of recreational and leisure activities – will continue, the goals and long term vision of the organization will be guided by the new Strategic Plan. It will ensure that your Park Board will stay relevant to your changing needs, that we take advantage of opportunities created by the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games, that we manage our resources wisely and that we provide park and recreation services that benefit you, your community and the environment.

## 1.0 Greening the Park Board



The preservation and enhancement of the natural environment is a core responsibility of the Park Board. We are pursuing a more sustainable approach to providing programs and services.

### ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERSHIP

The Park Board has many environmental programs underway: reducing the use of water and energy; providing integrated pest management; managing vehicles and equipment more efficiently; expanding recycling programs, and using green building technology in new major projects such as the new 1 Kingsway and Sunset Community Centres, the Killarney Community Pool and the Hillcrest Curling Rink. These programs are aligned with City policies, such as *The Climate-Friendly City*, a *Corporate Climate Change Action Plan*, and the *Green Building Strategy*.

### STRATEGIC DIRECTION

We will develop sustainable policies and practices that achieve environmental objectives while meeting the needs of the community.

### ACTIONS

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

- Preserve existing native habitat and vegetation.
- Strengthen and expand natural park environments: local wildlife, storm water management, native biodiversity.
- Maintain with less: recycling and re-using materials, reduced water and energy usage, drought-resistant plants, continued integrated pest management, less invasive equipment use.
- Make parks more beautiful: incorporation of environmental and community art, environmental art, innovative 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.

Advance the use of green building and facility technologies.

- Integrate green building technologies into the facility development process.
- Implement best facility management practices such as ongoing evaluation of energy use.
- Train staff in green building technology.

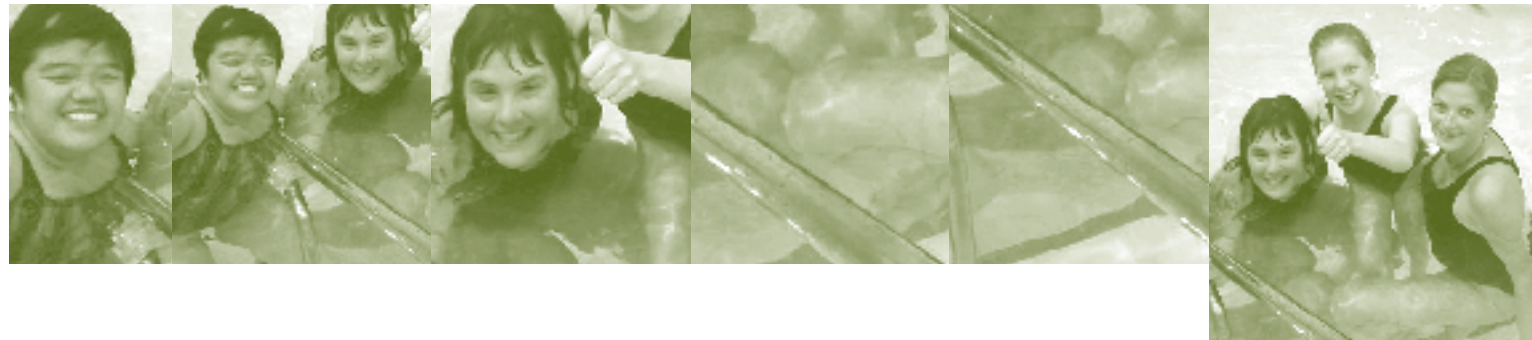
Build on current corporate greening practices and policies.

- Apply ethical and sustainable purchasing policies.
- Seek opportunities to introduce more sustainable practices, including measures to increase re-use and recycling programs.
- Develop an employee transportation policy and review automobile-based services to reduce emissions of green house gases in association with *The Climate-Friendly City* and a *Corporate Climate Change Action Plan*.

Advocate for a healthy urban environment.

- Promote and improve natural environments in the city through partnerships and public education programs.
- Provide a forum for information on urban wildlife.
- Promote gardening with local plant material in diverse habitat settings.
- Support initiatives to reduce use of chemicals on private property.

## 2.0 Engaging People



We are committed to supporting wellness. The concept of wellness means practicing all the things that keep people well and happy: fitness and sports, enjoying the arts, learning new skills and building community spirit. All people must be able to participate. Removing physical and access barriers are first steps. Recognising and valuing diversity will further broader participation. Universal design principles will be used in parks and facilities.

### INCREASING ACCESSIBILITY

Through cooperation with community associations and other partners, we provide recreational programming that is tailored to the needs of local communities. We are creating ways to meet Vancouver's commitment to a target of increasing physical activity within the population by 20% by the year 2010. Our services are increasingly more accessible, including the adapted programs that are designed for people with various abilities to participate, or the Leisure Access Card for residents with limited income that provides a reduction in fees for basic programs and services.

### STRATEGIC DIRECTION

We will integrate the concept of wellness into our park and recreation services and provide opportunities for everyone to access these services.

### ACTIONS

#### Develop strategies for broader participation.

- Analyse the physical, social, cultural, economic and programming barriers that restrict participation in park and recreation services.
- Reduce these barriers, with special attention to affordability, scheduling of programs, language of communication and culturally appropriate methods of engagement and safety.
- Develop multiple ways for users to participate and provide input.

#### Make parks and recreation universally accessible.

- Make parks and recreation facilities usable by as many people as possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design – allowing meaningful integration 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; use universal non-verbal symbols and appropriate accommodation of standing and seated users.
- Train staff in universal design.

#### Advocate for wellness.

- Develop and promote the wellness of body, mind and spirit. Understand how Park Board programs 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.

#### Support active living.

- Engage partners in a broad range of sectors to increase the number of opportunities available for more active living.
- Monitor and report on progress on achieving the target of 20% increase in physical activity by the year 2010.

## 3.0 Working Together



The Park Board works with many individuals and organizations to create parks and recreation opportunities. Many Park Board activities have a significant impact on people's lives and their involvement in various aspects of the Park Board is especially important. A broader public process is needed when issues are more complex or controversial, when the trade-offs are bigger, or when an issue is of particular interest to the public.

### OPEN AND TRANSPARENT DECISION MAKING

We are committed to open and transparent decision-making. Board meetings are regularly held out in the community, and a new structure for committee meetings has allowed for increased public discussion. Recreation services are community-based, conducted by community associations in the Park Board's community centres and other partner groups. A flexible, new framework for partnering with these associations has been created that will improve services. The ParkPartners program addresses community concerns about parks, creates volunteer opportunities and supports those who want to participate in making ideas, projects and events happen in their neighbourhood parks.

### STRATEGIC DIRECTION

We will integrate public involvement in decision making and services and expand partnerships with community groups and other agencies.

### ACTIONS

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

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

#### Advance partnership agreements.

- Implement recommendations of the Joint Operating Agreement Task Force report.
- Develop a similar framework for parallel agreements with other not-for-profit partners.
- Cooperate with other agencies to provide services.

#### Expand community partnerships.

- Expand and cultivate partnerships that are mutually beneficial.
- Support community initiatives through co-funding, space use, staff time and flexibility in policy and practice.
- Continue to develop and explore the potential of existing programs such as ParkPartners, the Neighbourhood Matching Fund, the Artists in Residence program and other community-supportive initiatives.

#### Strategic alliances.

- Coordinate and collaborate with City departments and external agencies to provide integrated services.
- Continue development of facilities and parks with the City and School Board in providing civic services.
- Establish working partnerships with VANOC, the Board of Trade, TransLink and others.

## 4.0 Managing Resources



Keeping Vancouver's parks and recreation facilities operating efficiently requires an ongoing investment of financial capital. The long-term quality of Park Board services depends in part on maximising available funding while also seeking alternative funding sources to meet future needs. We must think about new ways of doing business and welcome innovation as a tool to control costs, improve quality of service and engage citizens.

### FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Improved information systems have assisted us to increase awareness of both operating and capital funding. They have allowed us to closely monitor our spending, evaluate our progress, improve customer services, and balance our budget in a timely and efficient manner. Action steps are taken to work with the City, partners and stakeholders to protect and increase our current funding and services. We are also working to increase grants and donations from new sources.

### STRATEGIC DIRECTION

We will strengthen fiscal responsibility and pursue alternative sources of funding.

### ACTIONS

#### Maintain fiscal responsibility.

- Ensure that all funding arrangements, including the Global Budget, are clearly explained 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.

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

- Provide access to data such as financial and usage statistics, and assistance and training to staff at all levels of the organization who are responsible for funds.
- Continue efforts to involve the public in the allocation of and request for funds.
- 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.

Develop and implement comprehensive sustainable fundraising programs with community partners, all levels of government and the not-for-profit and private sectors, including charities and foundations.

- Increase public, partner, City and staff awareness of services, programs and facilities provided by the Park Board.
- Seek and support 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.

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

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

## 5.0 Meeting Future Challenges



We are the stewards of an extensive recreation system containing over 200 parks with many outdoor play facilities and over 220 buildings including community centres, field houses, pools, rinks, restaurants, concession stands and service buildings. As the City's population continues to grow, we will need more parkland and recreation facilities to meet these demands. The 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games present a unique opportunity to create a lasting legacy of new and improved facilities while supporting recreation, fitness and the arts as part of our commitment to personal and community wellness.

### PLANNING AND RENEWAL

Long-term plans for renewal of 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. Community centre programming is continually evaluated to ensure that our services meet the needs of the community, keep pace with population growth and are in tune with changing demographics. Olympic planning has begun, with the Park Board involved in several projects and programs.

### STRATEGIC DIRECTION

We will renew ageing infrastructure and adapt parks and recreation facilities to accommodate growth and meet changing needs.

### ACTIONS

#### Plan for long-term renewal 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 balances the preservation of environmental assets with enhanced public recreation opportunities.

#### Assess recreation needs.

- Inventory, analyze and determine recreation programs and needs on a local area scale as well as city-wide, use this information to update facility standards and plans.
- Study current utilization of facilities and programs and implement strategies to maximize capacity use.
- Review trends for impact on Park Board programs and facilities.
- Consider and respond to the cultural diversity of the population.

#### Expand services to accommodate population growth.

- Integrate facility planning into a city-wide recreation program strategy in the context of population growth and needs.
- Outline a long-term park land acquisition strategy, including focus on neighbourhood park deficiencies, population growth, acquisition opportunities and unique site attributes.

#### Welcome the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games.

- Make use of the opportunity presented by the Olympics and other sport hosting events to realize tangible and intangible community benefits.
- Develop a comprehensive and integrated strategy for Park Board participation in Olympic planning processes.



# glossary

## BIODIVERSITY

A healthy, natural environment in our region that consists of many species of plants and animals, all of which play an important role in the balance of life.

## GREEN BUILDING TECHNOLOGY

Approaches to designing, constructing and operating buildings that are efficient and environmentally sustainable.

## ETHICAL PURCHASING

Purchase of goods and services from companies that comply with applicable labour, health, safety and environmental standards and laws.

## GLOBAL BUDGET

The maximum operating funds that the Park Board receives from City Council each year.

## INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT

Maintaining plants through a combination of techniques to suppress pests effectively, economically and in ways that are environmentally sound.

## JOINT OPERATING AGREEMENT

A document that outlines the partnership between the Park Board and Community Centre Associations and the responsibilities of each in providing recreation services to the community.

## NEIGHBOURHOOD MATCHING FUND

A program supporting community development projects with groups who want to improve and develop parks and facilities.

## SUSTAINABILITY

Actions by which the demands placed upon the environment by people and commerce can be met without reducing the capacity of the environment to provide for future generations.

## UNIVERSAL DESIGN

Refers to designs of facilities that accommodate the broadest range of potential users, including people with mobility and visual impairments and other special needs. (Also referred to as Inclusive Design, Accessible Design or just Accessibility.)





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