

Date: April 19, 2006



TO: Board Members – Vancouver Park Board
FROM: General Manager – Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: Active Communities

RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT the Board approve the report entitled “Active Communities - Action Plan for Vancouver” attached as Appendix A, and direct staff to implement the recommendation;*
- B. THAT the Board request City Council approval of the Active Communities – Action Plan for Vancouver and request consideration of funding to support the implementation;*
- C. THAT staff seek additional support from other levels of government and partner organizations to fully implement the recommendations outlined in the “Active Communities – Action Plan for Vancouver”;*
- D. THAT staff be directed to report back to the Board annually on the progress of Vancouver’s “Active Communities” initiative.*

POLICY

In November 2004, the City of Vancouver became the first municipal jurisdiction in British Columbia to accept the “20 by 2010” challenge to work with the Provincial Government and 2010 Legacies Now to meet the target of increasing physical activity among citizens and employees by 20% by 2010.

BACKGROUND

The City of Vancouver and the Regional Municipality of Whistler will play host to the world’s largest winter sporting event in 2010. The Province of British Columbia has committed to increase physical activity levels in BC by 20% by 2010 and Legacies Now is encouraging all municipalities to become Active Communities and accept the 20 by 2010 challenge for their citizens and employees.

This challenge will promote healthy active lifestyles for citizens. Regular physical activity increases energy levels and improves the ability to fully participate in work, play,

social and family life. Physical activity reduces stress and promotes psychological well-being. Life expectancy is also increased by as much as two years in active individuals. In addition to these personal benefits, an Active Community also provides broad social and economic benefits for Vancouver. These benefits enhance the community quality of life indicators which are important factors in attracting and retaining citizens, businesses and visitors for a sustainable community of choice. An Active Community promotes community interactions and cohesiveness, embraces diversity and increases community capacity. Combined, these benefits contribute to a healthy and vibrant community ready to play host to the world in 2010 and demonstrate the benefits of an active community lifestyle in a sustainable urban environment.

The Planning Committee received an overview of the Vancouver Active Communities initiative on February 21, 2006 and staff was directed to initiate preliminary pilot projects for “Step Out” walks and the “Fitness and Adventure passport”. These pilot programs were developed and tested in early 2006 and the results provided the foundation for the development of the “Active Communities - Action Plan for Vancouver” report, enclosed as Attachment A.

DISCUSSION

In 2003, the proportion of the BC population that was active, or moderately active, was 58%. The provincial goal is to increase this activity level by 20% to 69.6% by 2010.

In January 2006, an Ipsos Reid telephone survey was conducted in Vancouver to measure baseline data on the activity levels for the City of Vancouver. These results indicate that the number of citizens who were active or moderately active was 70%. The definition used to define active or moderately active citizens was the number of people who regularly engaged in a minimum of 30 minutes of physical activities at least three times per week. Based on these results, the City of Vancouver is already setting an excellent example as an Active Community. To continue to lead in supporting healthy active living, the “Active Communities – Action Plan for Vancouver” (the “Action Plan”) focuses on the 30% of Vancouver citizens who are sedentary. The programs and initiatives in this plan will further reduce the sedentary population in Vancouver by 20% and thereby improve the overall active Vancouver population to 76% by 2010.

The “Action Plan” outlines the strategic priorities and actions to be implemented over the next four years to achieve our goal. The key strategies involve actions to:

- Build an Active Communities Brand
- Develop New Active Communities Programs
- Enhance and Optimize Current Programs
- Network and Collaborate with Others
- Measure and Support Success

Ten specific recommendations are outlined under these priorities which focus the work and measure progress.

Park Board has a key role to play in leading this initiative and stimulating broad community engagement. Active Communities is a component of the Park Board approved five year Strategic Plan and is clearly tied to the core mandate for public service in parks and recreation. Many other stakeholders also have key roles to play. Within City departments, Engineering, Community Services and Police also have significant roles to play. The City of Vancouver Human Resources Department is already committed to our corporate employee Fit City fitness program aimed at encouraging and supporting staff to engage in physical fitness and wellness activities. In the broader community context, various sectors including education, health, non-government organizations and business are involved.

Park Board commitments to date have included staff resources allocated for the development of the “Action Plan”, new program development in the form of “Step Out” walks and implementation of a test new program called the “Fitness and Adventure Passport” including access to facilities. At the same time, the Park Board has enhanced marketing efforts to enhance participation of existing Park Board recreation programs and facilities through the “Go Play” campaign targeted at rinks, pools, fitness centres and most recently, golf. During implementation of the “Action Plan”, this commitment will need to be escalated. Staff has determined that this internal staff support and enhanced marketing efforts of existing services is an appropriate commitment for the Park Board to make to this special project and provides for long-term sustainability of the program beyond 2010. The value of this Park Board commitment is estimated to be \$850,000 over the five year period.

Additional resources will be required to fund the direct costs of marketing, research, communications and specialized contracted services to support the initiative. To accomplish this, the Park Board will require operating funds. Potential sources of funds include the City of Vancouver, other levels of government, partner organizations and the private sector. A budget of \$700,000 over a five year period is considered the basic funding requirement. A request to the City of Vancouver for consideration of funding a portion of these funds is recommended. The combined commitment of Park Board staff resources and base level special project funding from the City of Vancouver will serve to demonstrate the civic commitment to this initiative and leverage outside sources of funds and other support to satisfy the full funding requirement. Other levels of government, foundation grants, private sector and other sources will be approached for support to ensure that all aspects of the Active Community Action Plan are fully implemented.

Activity levels of Vancouver residents will be surveyed on an annual basis. This information will be used to assess the success of the Active Communities programs and initiatives and be reported to the Board annually.

SUMMARY

Staff is recommending approval of the Active Communities Action Plan and approval to seek funding for implementation which will enable Vancouver to lead the province in achieving the active communities' goal of increasing citizen activity levels by 20% by 2010.

Prepared by:

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