

Date: March 19, 2007



TO: Board Members – Vancouver Park Board
FROM: General Manager – Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: Accomplishments Report 2006

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Board receive this report for information.

BACKGROUND

Mission: “to provide, preserve and advocate for parks and recreation services to benefit people, communities and the environment”.

The Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation is responsible for:

People: leisure and sports, education, arts and culture, youth, children and seniors, ensuring accessibility

Places: community centres, rinks, pools, fitness centres, restaurants, concessions, marinas, clubhouses

Parks: city-wide and neighborhood greenspaces, remnant woodlands, beaches, display gardens, playing fields, conservatory, golf courses, street trees

The wide range of quality programs provided by the Park Board continues to enrich the lives of Vancouver’s residents. These park and recreation programs, delivered directly and through partners, contribute to healthy communities and families and to a healthy environment and economy for the City. Many activities have significant impact on people’s lives no matter their age, ability, interest or economic means. The Park Board champions personal and community well-being - connecting neighbours, improving the natural landscape and keeping lives in balance.

Programs are diverse and popular.

- 221 parks, comprising 1,295 hectares or 11% of the City’s land area
- 23 community centres, 9 indoor and 6 outdoor pools, 8 ice rinks, 24 fitness centres
- 3 full length golf courses and 3 pitch and putts
- 273 playing fields, 181 tennis courts, 67 other sport courts, 6 skate board parks and 151 children’s playgrounds
- 18 kilometres of beaches
- 130,800 street trees

DISCUSSION

This report highlights the key accomplishments, enhanced programs and new services of the Board, staff and partners in 2006.

Strategic Priorities

The Park Board Commissioners set priorities in their first year of office which identified important initiatives in addition to existing commitments and work plans of staff. These priorities along with the five year Strategic Plan will assist the Park Board to stay relevant, manage its resources wisely and deliver on its mission through 2010.

The Board is committed to measuring its performance against organizational objectives in order to remain accountable, continuously improve, and evaluate success. A number of performance indicators have been developed and are presented in each priority area to track progress.

2006 Accomplishments

Physical Activity

“Increase participation rates in physical activities, especially in sports...”

As leaders in the promotion and pursuit of active living, the Park Board provides opportunities and access to keep citizens well and healthy. New programs and partnerships in 2006 which support this goal include:

- The Active Communities Vancouver program was launched with \$100,000 annual funding; the new initiative features Step Out walks, community events and a web site to inspire and encourage residents to take up the challenge be one of the fittest, healthiest cities to ever host an Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games by becoming 20% more active by 2010.
- The Get Out! youth strategy, which promotes activity in and support funding for sports, recreation and the arts, continued with more than 3,500 youth participating since the program's launch.
- Development of a comprehensive Sport Strategy began to guide infrastructure, programming and support for sporting events in Vancouver.
- The Park Board continued to partner with Hosting BC to take advantage of sport tourism opportunities and benefits up to 2010.
- MoreSports, which provides inner city recreation and sport development, joined a new partnership with Sport BC to help ensure its sustainability.

Enhancements to Park Board activities and programs included:

- Rollout of the on line registration system for recreation programs to all participating community centres, allowing residents to register from their home computers.

- On-line golf bookings grew to represent half of all reservations made, giving golfers faster and more convenient tee time options.
- Go Play!, the city-wide recreation marketing campaign, was expanded to encourage participation, promote attendance and increase revenues at neighborhood rinks, pool and fitness centres.
- New communication strategies helped reach a wider and more diverse audience with information about Park Board programs:
 - for the first time the Annual Report was published in both English and Chinese;
 - new advertising and editorial relationships were formed with the ethnic media;
 - the Leisure Guide was published twice in 2006, up from once annually to keep residents up to date on seasonal activities.
 - visits to the public web site www.vancouverparks.ca were 60% higher than the previous year, with users responding to the continuous improvements in design and content about recreation and park services and programs.

Performance Measures

Park Board neighborhood facilities continue to offer fun, affordable and accessible recreation. Higher revenues at pools, rink and fitness centres reflect increases in participation.

Revenues at Pools (admissions, rentals, lessons)

2005 - \$4.2 million

2006 - \$5.1 million

Revenues at Rinks (admissions, rentals, lessons)

2005 - \$1.4 million

2006 - \$1.9 million

Revenues at Fitness Centres (admissions, rentals, lessons)

2005 - \$1.4 million

2006 - \$1.5 million

Recreation related web site visits account for 20% of the traffic on vancouverparks.ca.

Total Web Site Visits

2005 - 1.6 million

2006 - 2.5 million

Artificial Turf Fields

“Accelerate the artificial turf capital program and expand plan for playing fields...”

To add capacity for the growing number of field sport users, the Park Board has a long term plan and capital funding which plans for a total of six additional artificial turf sport fields by 2011.

In 2006, thanks to collaboration between the Park Board and the Vancouver School Board, a new artificial turf field was opened at Point Grey Secondary School/ Kerrisdale Park. A second field was approved for development at Vancouver Technical Secondary School in East Vancouver. In addition, the Board gave direction for consultation and design of the Trillium park site for sport and recreation uses, and for development of a turf replacement plan for downtown’s Andy Livingstone Park.

Performance Measures

The Park Board continues to work closely with the School Board and community sports groups to maximize field use through development of artificial turfs and other initiatives.

artificial sports fields available

2005 - 3

2006 - 4

Annual hours of permitted artificial field use

2005 - 4,086

2006 - 5,135

Public Consultation

“Develop better strategies and techniques to involve the public, as a cornerstone of decision making...”

The Park Board listens to and actively seeks the ideas of partners, stakeholders, employees and the public. Public meetings, open houses and workshops are opportunities to have dialogue directly to share information, build consensus, reduce conflicts, and plan together for the future.

Examples of this commitment to public consultation in 2006 include:

- Establishment of a new citizen-based Dog Strategy Task Force to make recommendations around the urban dog and come up with a strategy to balance the needs of all park users. The group’s work will include identification of and research on the issues, and development of rules and practices to reach solutions on shared space in city parks.

- The number of Community board meetings was expanded from six to eight (or 40% of all regular meetings) to help bring decision making closer to neighborhoods and to make it easier for residents to attend.
- Significant input and review by residents helped guide a number of park development projects, such as Nelson Park, China Creek, 37th and Oak, and Olympic venues.
- Citizens were invited to learn about programs and services, share priorities and provide feedback to the 2006 Operating Budget by way of budget information packages at community centres and on the web site.
- Progress began on implementation of new agreements with Community Associations to deliver recreation programs at Park Board facilities; a joint steering committee was formed to develop tools and resources around core services, administration, human resources and policy and program measures.

Performance Measures

Residents are invited to be part of the discussions and decisions around park and facility development.

Public Consultations Conducted

2005 - 33

2006 -39

The Park Board works to build collaborative strategies with other major agencies.

Agreements signed with community groups, governments and independent boards

2005 - 1

2006 - 7

Enterprise Financing

“Develop new, creative and responsible ways to develop additional revenues to augment Park Board core business, provide better service and meet future needs...”

Keeping budgets under control and facilities operating efficiently are priorities. The Park Board is committed to maximizing available funds, exploring new funding sources and demonstrating financial accountability.

The 2006 net Operating Budget was \$54.9 million. Revenues met or exceeded budget in all areas except golf and indoor pools, an improvement over 2005 when there were shortfalls in golf, concessions, parking, leases and Bloedel Conservatory. While the Board was able to generate additional revenue, it also exceeded its expense budget with the net result being a \$247,500 deficit. The Board’s deficit (0.5% of budget) is attributed to costs stemming from the snow and wind storms in November and December which resulted in the temporary closure of both VanDusen Garden and Stanley Parks, and damage to many street trees. The full financial effect of these storms is still being felt, as clean-up, planning and restoration work continue.

Some examples of new or innovative funding or cost saving initiatives from 2006 include:

- A new strategy was developed for a more entrepreneurial approach to food concessions in parks, providing better financial returns and rebuilding ageing infrastructure.
- A new corporate sponsorship contract was awarded to Coca-Cola and will provide funding for programs and projects, plus marketing funds and product support over 10 years.
- Additional marketing initiatives at the three major golf courses improved service and revenues; at year end, a consultant was engaged to develop longer term strategies to market golf course operations.
- To add stability to finances and increase opportunities for resident participation, the fundraising and development program raised more than \$1 million through donations from individuals, corporations and other initiatives.

Performance Measures

The Park Board seeks to reduce its reliance on tax payers and increase revenues from user fees and charges and business operations.

Share of total operating budget not funded by taxes.

2005 - \$33.2 million (38.6%)

2006 - \$36.1 million (39.5%)

Income generated from parking, golf, marinas and food operations helps to subsidize the delivery of other park and recreation programs.

Lease revenues

2005 - \$1.6 million

2006 - \$2.1 million

Concession revenues

2005 - \$2.7 million

2006 - \$3.1 million

Many residents choose to make a difference by investing in the future of parks and recreation.

Operating Donations

2005 - \$995,438

2006 - \$1.2 million

Reserves protect the Park Board in case of extraordinary events as many activities are subject to external factors beyond the organization's control.

Reserve Balances

2005 - \$2.9 million

2006 - \$3.7 million

Infrastructure Renewal

“Pursue options to accelerate long term reinvestment in ageing system...”

The Park Board has made a commitment to meet the needs of the community, keep pace with population growth and stay in tune with changing demographics.

In 2006, Capital Budget expenditures totaled \$17.3 million. Capital projects usually span several years, so the spending in any one year does not necessarily reflect the total cost of a project. The reconstruction of the new Sunset Community Centre, which is still underway, accounted for \$6.6 million or more than 1/3 of funds spent. Other large projects included the upgrade at Queen Elizabeth Park Plaza (\$2.8 million), the design for replacement of the Percy Norman Pool (\$.7 million) and major maintenance of other facilities (\$1.8 million).

During 2006, a number of outstanding parks and recreational facilities were completed.

- The new Killarney Leisure Pool was officially opened, the first new indoor pool in 25 years.
- Approval was given to expand and revitalize the Vancouver Aquarium in Stanley Park, providing improvements to animal habitats and public spaces,
- Capital improvements were made within Stanley Park, including the seawall, reconstruction of the Lost Lagoon tennis courts, reconstruction of part of Stanley Park Drive, and restoration of the historic Ballustrade at Coal Harbour.
- Upgraded parks were officially opened including:
 - Falaise Park (featuring a new wetland)
 - Quilchena Park (with skateboard park and Hellenic plaza)
 - Slocan Park (with a multi-use community shelter)
- Two recreation centre facilities were renovated:
 - lobbies at the West End Community Centre
 - a new kitchen at the Kitsilano Community Centre
- Eleven children’s playgrounds were completed throughout the City to better serve families:
 - Robson, Teaswamp, Charleson, CRAB/Portside, Killarney, Trafalgar, Cariboo, Slocan, Pandora, Connaught and David Lam Parks

Performance Measures

Capital funds are used to acquire, construct, maintain and renew the large, diverse and, in some cases, ageing system of buildings and open spaces.

Capital Budget Spending

2005 - \$21 million

2006 - \$17 million

Financial contributions from community groups and governments allow the Park Board to do more with less taxpayer funding.

Capital Donations

2005 - \$281,000

2006 - \$1.4 million

Infrastructure Grants

2005 - \$2.2 million

2006 - 1.5 million

Planned upgrading of buildings and greenspace helps the Park Board accommodate the demands of a growing city.

New/Renewed Facilities Opened (# and size)

2005 - 3 (9,192 square metres)

2006 - 3 (4,268 square metres)

New/Renewed Parks Opened (# and size)

2005 - 4 (3.15 hectares)

2006 - 3(8.88 hectares)

New/Renewed Playgrounds out of total

2005 - 6/150

2006 - 11/151

Olympic Legacy Planning

“Maximize opportunities around the 2010 Winter Games...”

There will be unique, ‘once in a life time’ opportunities out of the City’s involvement in the Vancouver 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Tangible legacies include new recreation facilities, increased tourism and a body of trained volunteers; intangible legacies include a chance to foster civic pride and a greater sense of community.

Planning to welcome the 2010 Winter Games continued at a rapid pace. In the face of rapidly escalating construction costs, a funding strategy was developed with the City to allow the three Park Board Olympic capital projects to proceed: the competition curling venue at Hillcrest Park, which will be converted into a multi purpose recreation complex post Games, and replacement ice arenas at Trout Lake and Killarney. The venues will be used by athletes for the duration of the Olympic and Paralympic Games events, then by residents over the next 40 to 50 years. The venues represent a significant acceleration in the Park Board’s infrastructure renewal plans, with residents gaining six recreational facilities overall – three new ice rinks, one community centre, one leisure pool and one new curling club as well as a branch library – all in buildings that are at the end of their lifecycles.

Through VANOC's contribution, the Park Board can offset a significant portion of the costs of the Olympic legacy facilities. The Park Board's share is 59% (\$62m) of the \$105 million facility renewal, with VANOC contributing 41% (\$43m). In addition to budget issues, many other challenges were addressed during the year related to the planning, public consultation and information, and designs for these Olympic projects. The Park Board participated in the first of a series of annual 2010 countdown celebration weeks, with free skating sessions at ice rinks and ceremonial lighting of the iconic Inukshuk sculpture on English Bay.

Safer Parks

“Pursue strategies to increase the sense of safety within parks...”

The safety of patrons in Vancouver parks and at recreation facilities is of paramount concern to the Park Board.

A range of initiatives continued in 2006 to help enhance the experience of patrons in parks and at recreation facilities and to reduce safety concerns.

- Park Rangers were on duty, principally over the busy summer months, in major parks to provide information and help to visitors and encourage compliance with rules and by-laws. Acting as park ambassadors, they worked closely with the Vancouver Police mounted squad and Eco Rangers in Stanley Park, community police in other locations, and with bike and skate patrols, lifeguards, and park, community centre and special event staff to patrol, monitor and report incidents.
- Staff continued to apply Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles in all facilities and parks under development (especially those in the most urban areas) via such measures as programming spaces, pathways, entrance points, lighting, lines of sight, social zones, removal of shrubs, signage and identification. CPTED was a major component of the Nelson Park renewal plans developed with the community last year.
- The Park Board was again an active participant in the city-wide committee on homelessness, working with the city's inter-agency group to support and assist individuals and encampments in parks and around facilities.
- A review of safety, crime and emergency response in parks was conducted in 2006, specifically addressing current practices, public perceptions, potential capital investments, maintenance improvements, policy matters and enforcement issues.
- Direction from the Board included developing awareness programs for the public and staff, reviewing wayfinding to support emergency response, formalizing a relationship with the police to annually monitor crime trends in representative parks, and design interventions to increase a sense of safety in neighbourhood parks.

Sustainability

“Develop policies and practices to achieve environmental objectives...”

The Park Board’s commitment to sustainability and environmental leadership continued through a variety of conservation measures, alternative energies and technologies, advocacy for more natural landscapes and promotion of urban ecology.

- A new by-law was launched, in conjunction with the City and Vancouver Coastal Health, which restricts the use of chemicals on private property; this regulation mirrors existing integrated pest management practices in place for decades in city parks and gardens.
- As part of the Grow Natural program, the Park Board offered information and products to help residents control chafer beetle infestation.
- A comprehensive management and stewardship plan was developed with the Stanley Park Ecology Society for the sizeable Stanley Park heron colony; it identified guidelines for protection and habitat enhancement of the threatened birds.
- High environmental performance standards (LEED Gold level) were integrated into the ‘green building’ designs of the Olympic curling venue and legacy facilities at Hillcrest Park, as well as the new Sunset Community Centre and #1 Kingsway civic centre project.
- With 2,000 community volunteers and neighborhood partners, the Park Board celebrated Earth Day in Everett Crowley Park with tree plantings and other activities.
- The second Upfront Gardens contest, cosponsored with the Garden Club of Vancouver, recognized excellent front gardens of residents.

The Park Board continued to pursue a more sustainable approach to doing business.

- The Ethical Purchasing Policy was amended in 2006 to allow staff more flexibility to operate cost effectively and offer a variety of products to customers. Certified fair trade products available at Park Board facilities included coffee, sugar, hot chocolate and chocolate bars.
- Initiatives to lower energy consumption included the installation of a heat recovery system at Templeton Pool (which will reduce energy consumption for the ventilation system by up to 40%) and choice of light emitting diode (LED) lights for the holiday light display at Bidwell (which consume 87% less electricity).
- The new culvert built across the #1 fairway at Fraserview Golf Course incorporated a retention pond as part of future plans to harvest water for irrigation.
- Staff began compiling a comprehensive inventory of natural areas in parks encompassing such features as ravines, woodlands, streams, creeks, lakes and marshes; this initiative will direct and inform acquisition, restoration and conservation of such areas.

Performance Measures

The Park Board's annual food supply tender includes items covered by the Ethical Purchasing Policy and Supplier Code of Conduct.

Fair trade products purchased:

2005 - Coffee 30 lbs, Sugar 190,000 packets

2006 - Coffee 160 lbs, Sugar 240,000 packets

More sustainable products newly purchased in 2006:

Introduction of green certified janitorial cleaning and paper supplies

Pilot program of biodegradable, compostable food containers at concessions

Use of 100% post consumer recycled paper for letterhead and business cards

Park Board environmental programs save water and energy:

Reduction in water use from conversion of fields irrigation to radio control

2006 - 18 million Imperial gallons (30%)

Reduction in energy use from new heat exchanger at Vancouver Aquatic Centre

2006 - 90 tonnes of greenhouse gases

The Arts

“Make arts and culture an important part of every day life...”

The arts provide opportunities for people to share experiences and cultures, learn new skills and create community connections.

Public art remained a key part of the Park Board's promotion of the arts.

- ‘Khenko’, the Heron sculpture was installed in George Wainborn Park and dedicated to David Lam.
- ‘Time Top’ was installed in Cooper's Park.
- More than a dozen community projects were funded under the Neighborhood Matching Fund.
- Artists-in-Residence were selected for six month residencies at Marpole-Oakridge, Kitsilano and False Creek Community Centres. As well, three other residencies – at Strathcona, Renfrew and Britannia Community Centres – were part of a larger three-year Arts, Health and Seniors project.
- The Park Board sponsored a water filter pottery project at Kensington Community Centre with auction proceeds donated to an international aid program.

The Park Board welcomed the diversity of Vancouver's citizenry by:

- Providing display kits at neighborhood facilities for Lunar New Year, National Aboriginal Day, Diwali, Chanukah and Pride Week.
- Through a community partnership, Asian Heritage Month was celebrated at four centres.
- For seven weeks in the summer, the Rest and Read initiative saw stories written by seniors affixed to park benches in Jericho and Charleston Parks.

- Staff also contributed to Youth Week Film Festival and Seniors' Weeks Arts Walk.
- Neighborhood arts events across the city included:
 - 13 free Sunday afternoon musical performances at Haywood Bandstand
 - 34 evenings of free dance instruction through Dance at Dusk in Stanley Park
 - 14 aboriginal film screenings and discussions hosted at community centres

Development of Internal Resources

“Recognize that staff is the greatest resource...”

The Park Board strives to build an organization that supports creativity, continual learning and innovative ideas.

In 2006, a high priority was placed on improving the quality of life at work.

- Technical, professional development and other job related training opportunities were provided for staff throughout the year. A wide range of courses were taken by front line workers and management through the extensive ‘City Learn’ program, in-service sessions, and other workshops, conferences and seminars.
- Half day employee orientations were provided for 50 new employees to share the Park Board’s vision and values. Sessions included history, current issues, and employee roles and responsibilities.
- The Occupational Health and Safety program continued to contribute to the reduction of injuries to staff and corresponding lost time: in the last six years, significant gains have been made to provide a safer, healthier workplace.

Performance Measures

Total # of external training courses taken by Park Board staff

2005 - 556

2006 - 479

Health and safety training courses conducted

2006 – 18 (1,350 attendees)

Reduction in lost time injuries

since 2005 – 13%

Reduction in hours lost due to Workers Compensation Board claims

since 2005 – 14%

Awards

“Strive for leadership, excellence and innovation...”

The Park Board received a number of awards from a wide range of bodies.

- Restoration of picturesque Rose Cottage in Stanley Park earned the Park Board a City of Vancouver Heritage Award of Recognition. The award honoured the project which used log siding and traditional construction methods for the Class B 1932 rustic building.
- The BC Recreation and Park Association’s Environmental Leadership Award was given for the Everett Crowley Management Plan to the Park Board, LEES and Associates Consulting and the Management Plan’s Steering Committee. The project involved strong community input and partnerships.
- Three deserving Park Board projects were recognized by the Canadian Society of Landscape Architects:
 - Award of Regional Merit for Harbour Green Park Phase II, the longest continuous waterfront park area in the downtown area;
 - Award of National Citation for Outstanding Achievement for George Wainborn Park, the spectacular greenspace on False Creek; and
 - Award of National Merit for Stanley Park Salmon Stream, the demonstration stream and joint venture of the Park Board and the Vancouver Aquarium.
- The English Bay Shoreline Protection Project won the BC Landscape and Nursery Association’s 2006 Environmental Stewardship Award. The erosion control project protected parks at Kitsilano, Jericho and Spanish Bank Beaches.

SUMMARY

In 2006, the Park Board was guided by the priorities of the Board and directions of the Strategic Plan. The year’s many achievements included expanded and renewed community facilities, new and renovated parks, better ways to engage the public and partners, additional technologies, improved information access, and strong environmental initiatives. Collectively these contributed to Vancouver’s status, once again, as a most beautiful and liveable city – a ranking officially conferred both by local agencies and outsiders alike.

At year end, the Park Board faced and managed a number of unprecedented weather crises – including the devastating snow and wind storms which battered Stanley Park and other city parks and gardens as well as street trees. The widespread and swift emergency response by staff helped ensure public safety and access. Stanley Park particularly

received a tremendous outpouring of support from Vancouverites, as well as from across Canada and internationally.

The year's accomplishments would not have been possible without the contributions of numerous partners and stakeholders, hard work of staff and involvement of the public. In 2007 and beyond, the post-storm clean up, recovery and restoration of Stanley Park and other city amenities will be a focus. The Park Board will continue to serve a population of users that is growing, ageing and becoming more diverse; the challenge remains to meet increasing expectations while effectively allocating resources.

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