



November 9, 2015

TO: Park Board Chair and Commissioners  
FROM: General Manager - Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation  
SUBJECT: Sunset Park Revised Concept Plan

## RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Vancouver Park Board approved the revised concept plan for Sunset Park as described in this report.

## POLICY

The Vancouver Park Board approves major changes in Vancouver parks including the design and development of parks.

## BACKGROUND

Sunset Park is 3.4 hectares in size and is located between 51<sup>st</sup> and 53<sup>rd</sup> Avenues. It is bordered by Main Street to the west and John Henderson Elementary to the east. Prince Edward Street, which is a city bikeway, divides the park. The neighbourhood is primarily single family homes with a commercial area nearby on Main Street. The Sunset Community Centre, Sunset Rink, a sport field and playground utilized by the elementary school, passive lawn areas, orchard planting, and the Park Board nursery and service yard are all located in this park.



The 1950's community centre and pool on the east side of the park were demolished in 2006. The building and pool sites were converted to lawn and a new Community Centre was constructed on former nursery land to provide a Main Street accessible entry and a geothermal field. This resulted in significant changes to the park and nursery, disconnected the park active areas, and left the playground and a parking lot isolated in the eastern portion of the park. The need to reconnect park elements along with community desires to see improvements to Sunset Park have prompted this planning process.

The planning process formally began in 2013, with the hiring of PWL Landscape Architects to assist in the engagement and design process. This project was also identified as a priority in the 2015-18 Capital Plan park renewal funding program.

This report describes the community engagement process and proposes a concept plan for park improvements.

## DISCUSSION

The project team has developed a plan that incorporates the aspirations of the community while maintaining the important functions of the nursery and yard. The following is a timeline of the process to date. A complete list of all stakeholder meetings is attached as Appendix A.

- Fall 2013: first meeting with Community Centre Association representatives, consultant retained;
- May 2014: South Hill Festival information booth advertising the planning process;
- Spring 2014: stakeholders, community centre, and operations staff meetings;
- July 1, 2014: information display at the Canada Day celebration at Sunset Park (to seek community priorities for plan);
- Summer/Fall 2014: preliminary design development (4 scenarios and 8 principles);
- November 27, 2014: Open House #1 at the Sunset Community Centre;
- Spring 2015: design refinement based on feedback from Open House #1 and collaboration with Parks Operations staff;
- July 1, 2015: Open House #2 at the Canada Day celebration at Sunset Park (proposed concept plan on display);
- August - October 2015: input from Parks Operations staff, community groups, John Henderson Elementary School staff, community police officers, and the City's Engineering Department results in plan refinement.

## Public Engagement

Park staff began promoting the process during the May 2014 South Hill Festival, as well as during the July 2014 Canada Day celebration. Initial comments and contact information from participants were recorded at these events.

There were two formal community engagement events for this project; the first was held on Nov 27/14, and a second on Jul 1/15 (Canada Day). These events were advertised in multiple

forums, including large signs in the park, flyers distributed to homes within a 2-block radius around the park, advertising in the Vancouver Courier, information posted on the City of Vancouver and Park Board websites, and an email invite to all public stakeholders on the project contact list (this list was updated after each open house with additional email addresses as provided by attendees). A display was set up in the Sunset Community Centre and staff worked with the Community Centre Association to advertise to its members. Park staff also met with the adjacent school and who mounted posters at the school site, and communications staff advertised on social media channels.

Participants at the events were provided with a survey to complete in-person or on-line. The graphic displays from each open house were also placed on the Park Board project page with a link to the on-line surveys. The open house display boards remained in the community centre after each event.

### *Open House #1*

Initial comments from the community and input from Parks Operations resulted in the 4 proposed scenarios and 8 design principles for a renewed Sunset Park that were displayed at the first open house on Nov 27/14. Existing park photos and the 4 scenarios are attached in Appendix B. The proposed design principles are as follows:

- 1) Incorporate sustainability strategies and goals identified in the Park Board 2013-17 Strategic Framework, as well as best management practices.
- 2) Identify, promote, and enhance connections to city greenways.
- 3) Create inclusive, accessible features that respond to park user needs.
- 4) Address continued operational requirements of adjacent Sunset Nursery and service yard.
- 5) Be adaptable to changing user needs; a phased park development.
- 6) Create highly safe, visible pedestrian routes that connect park components.
- 7) Enhance connection between current and future park facilities and features.
- 8) Develop programs that reflect community identity.

Scenarios 3 and 4 were considered longer-term visions, including future facility changes, whereas scenarios 1 and 2 were based on shorter-term improvements. It is not anticipated that the rink will be replaced in the near future due to the recent upgrades to the rink cooling system that capture waste heat from the rink for re-use in the nursery.

A questionnaire was used to explore the community's values concerning Sunset Park, to understand the issues and opportunities facing Sunset Park, and to help identify directions and priorities for park improvements. 114 residents completed the survey either at the open house event or online by Dec 15/14. Below is a brief summary of what we heard in response to the Nov 27<sup>th</sup> open house:

- at least half of the respondents are regular Sunset Park visitors, visiting the park 1-2 times a week or more often, in both the spring/summer and fall/winter;
- visiting the Sunset Park Community Centre and visiting the ice rink are the two most common activities respondents do when visiting Sunset Park;

- a majority of respondents (57%) support the eight draft principles that were developed, while 26% say they support the draft principles but with certain changes;
- among the existing amenities at Sunset Park, half of the respondents say they would like to see the ice rink changed or improved in the future;
- almost all respondents (98%) said a children's playground is 'very' or 'somewhat' important in a future Sunset Park;
- while Sunset Park could evolve to a future scenario 3 or 4, scenario 2 best reflects the objectives of connecting the park in the shorter term, while providing future space for the additional amenities desired by the community.

### *Open House #2*

The second open house was held in the park on Jul 1/15 at the Canada Day celebration. Results of the first open house were presented and a preferred concept, based on scenario 2, was further developed to reflect the comments and feedback.

At this event, residents were asked to comment on and prioritize the various park elements that were proposed. The public were presented with a survey at the open house which remained available online for feedback from July 1<sup>st</sup> through July 31<sup>st</sup>. The open house displays are attached in Appendix C.

Park Board staff met with approximately 250 people at the open house on Jul 1/15, and received 74 responses to the survey (the majority of respondents viewed many aspects of the design positively). Comments that covered a range of topics were received, with one of the most common being the desire for pool/water activities in the park (a water play element is included in the plan). Future pool locations will be considered through an upcoming Aquatics Strategy and will not be included at Sunset Park due to a lack of space.

When asked to rank the importance of 15 elements that were proposed for the renewed park, the following top 5 improvements were stated:

- 84% of respondents felt that new paths and seating were a very or somewhat important element in the concept;
- 83% respondents felt that the playground renewal was a very or somewhat important element in the concept;
- 78% of respondents felt more natural forest areas were very or somewhat important in the concept;
- 76% of respondents felt that the water play/spray park was a very or somewhat important element in the concept;
- 75% of respondents felt that the naturalized area celebrating the historic stream was a very or somewhat important element in the concept;

### **Concept Plan Description**

To improve park connections, a new path is proposed starting at the community centre and continuing unobstructed through to Prince Edward Street. To accommodate this improvement, the southern portion of the existing tree and material storage area would be relocated to the northern half of the existing dog off-leash area. This path will be bordered by a row of trees and new amenities for the park.

To accommodate this reconfiguration, 15 parking spots will be relocated to the eastern edge of the existing lot. The stream that historically ran through Sunset Park will be acknowledged in the construction of a new swale, rain garden, and seating area adjacent to the promenade. This feature will highlight the history of the area, as well as store a portion of the storm water runoff from the surrounding parking lot and nursery. At the east end of this new path, a picnic table area will accommodate small groups and will be surrounded by a community garden.

The connections within the park will be further enhanced if the proposed trial closure of Prince Edward Street is successful. The conversion of the street will continue to accommodate the bikeway while increasing green space in the park. The street modification will also help calm traffic by eliminating vehicles that are currently passing through the park and facilitate safer pedestrian connections.

Space for the relocated dog off-leash area will be accommodated by the removal of the old community centre parking lot. The dog off-leash area will be fenced and surrounded by a gently bermed natural forest area. Additional paths through the north east corner of the park will further improve connections and include seating as well as outdoor exercise equipment. The two existing playgrounds on the east side will be consolidated and an exciting new playground will be developed closer to John Henderson Elementary. Minor improvements are proposed for the existing playing field including additional goal posts and seating for viewing the field.

On the north side of the community centre, a small skate park and a ball court are proposed. The landscape in front of the existing heritage field house on the north side of the nursery is to be modified to create a better visual connection with neighbourhood. The grassy hill on the south side of the community centre will be reconfigured to improve sight lines and additional trees will be planted providing shade for community events. A small spray park will be added to this area playground with the water from this feature channeled to the rain garden.

The following points summarize the aspects of the design that are mindful of the Park Board Strategic Plan and the Greenest City 2020 initiative:

- **Accessibility:** pathways and possible changes to Prince Edward Street encourage residents to walk and cycle more and enhance the user experience in Sunset Park, making it safer and more comfortable for people of all ages and abilities.
- **Urban Forest Strategy and Access to Nature:** The renewed park includes 160 new trees furthering the goal of planting 150,000 new trees by 2020.

### **Prince Edward Street - Partial Closure**

The potential closure of Prince Edward Street to connect the southern segregated portions of the park is consistent with the long-term goals approved in the City's Transportation 2040 plan to make walking and cycling in Vancouver safe, convenient, and comfortable for people

of all ages and abilities. Residents were asked if they supported the proposed closure of a portion of Prince Edward Street to vehicles.

The existing bike way and pedestrian walks would continue to pass through the street right of way. The majority of respondents were in favor of the potential closure, with 61% supporting it and 15% opposed.

Park Board staff are working with the Engineering Department to further this initiative. A six month trial closure of the street in 2016 is proposed, followed by additional public consultation before moving forward. Park Board and City staff will work together after the trial to determine if there is enough community support to make the closure permanent.

### **Skateboarding and Basketball**

Residents were also asked if they supported the inclusion of the small skateboard facility and basketball half court in the northwest corner of the park. The majority of respondents were in favor of this element with 64% supporting it and 19% opposed. Respondents' comments included mention of the positive impact of a skateboard park for youth, and also included some concerns about noise that may be associated with this feature.

Subsequent dialogue with community police representatives indicates support for this feature in this location, and recommends that a bowl style park be installed to help minimize potential noise impacts. Locating a skateboard facility adjacent to a community centre, where supporting amenities such as washrooms and program opportunities exist, is ideal. This location is compatible with the Vancouver Skateboard Strategy guidelines.

### **Sunset Nursery and Service Yard**

The Sunset Nursery and Service Yard are integral to Parks Operations in the south area of Vancouver, and for Urban Forestry city-wide. This plan identifies opportunities for an enhanced interface and program opportunities between the community centre and nursery, and for the service yard and neighbourhood on 51<sup>st</sup> Avenue. Landscape improvements along 51<sup>st</sup> Avenue are needed, and there is an opportunity to renovate the front gardens and fencing of the heritage home to give it street presence. Access and egress for the yard throughout the working day have been accommodated primarily on Prince Edward Avenue and include an overflow access for peak tree planting times through the parking lot. Staff will ensure this occurs safely.

A plan for the service yard will be considered through a separate process and led by the city's Real Estate and Facilities Department. As one of the oldest service yards in the City, it is due for renewal. Current issues at the yard include: boggy and muddy ground conditions, a need for additional lighting, a lack of covered area to undertake maintenance work on vehicles and machinery, a need for locker/shower upgrades, a lunch room, and additional washrooms and offices.

Staff are planning to develop a concept plan for the yard by early 2018 so that it is a candidate for capital upgrades in the 2019-22 Capital Plan. In the meantime, the following improvements are being explored:

- Small renovations/upgrades and painting within the proposed footprint;
- Covered soil and compost bins funded through the green operations program;

- Flooring/finishing (may be directed to heritage home conversion to office);
- Lighting.

### Revised Concept Plan

While the results of the second open house demonstrate general approval of the concept, follow-up meetings with stakeholders provided additional feedback.

As the park is south facing, the local Indo Canadian Senior Men's group requested covered seating and tables which have been included in the revised concept plan along with a few large picnic tables to accommodate 6 to 8 people each. Shade trees were also requested for the seating area and the lawn south of the Centre and these too are included in the plan. The Indo Canadian Women's group requested power/event receptacles and these will be accommodated if the budget permits. At a meeting with these groups it was determined that the new community garden area and main pathway are the best location for benches with shade structures.

The adjacent John Henderson Elementary School staff and Parent Advisory Council chair provided written concerns about the proximity of the relocated dog off-leash area to the new playground, however the relocation of the dog off-leash area is what makes the park connectivity and service yard reconfiguration possible. In order to address these concerns, the dog off-leash area has been modified to increase the distance between the playground and pathway features. This also increases the open space that is used by the school on sports day. Details of the dog off-leash area will be refined in the next phase of design development and will include a low fence, gentle berms, and a perimeter path.

School board staff were also concerned about the amount of the playground space proposed and the potential loss of existing swings. The existing playground areas will be consolidated on the eastern edge of the park and there will be room for new swings. Park Board staff will work closely with the school on the detailed design of both the playground and the dog off-leash area in the next phase of the planning process to create an exciting new playground that is well buffered from the relocated dog off-leash area.

The concept plan proposed at Open House #2 was revised to address these concerns and is attached in Appendix D. Staff propose that this revised concept plan be adopted.

### NEXT STEPS - FUNDING AND SCHEDULE

If the revised concept plan is approved, Park Board staff will competitively procure the services of consultants and contractors to prepare detailed design and construction documents so that priority improvements can be delivered as soon as possible.

The preliminary concept plan construction cost estimate is \$3.0M for a full build out of the plan (not including street or yard renovations). Presently, \$700,000 is earmarked in the 2015-2018 Capital Plan for construction. Additional funds for the dog off-leash area and youth amenities may be accessed in the 2017 budget when the refined cost estimates are confirmed. Detailed design, cost estimates, and funding resources will be completed in 2016 and construction will begin in 2017.

## SUMMARY

A comprehensive public engagement process, including 2 outreach sessions, 2 open house events and 18 stakeholder meetings, resulted in a well-received concept plan for a renewed Sunset Park.

This plan incorporates many elements important to residents, considers Park Board Strategic directions and Greenest City initiatives, reconnects disparate park areas, and increases green space. The plan also presents opportunities to relink the service yard and nursery to the neighbourhood.

Upon Board approval, staff will prepare detailed designs and a construction tender package for the community's priority elements in 2016, and construct the improvements in 2017.

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**2014**

Sunset Yard and Nursery Operations staff Jun 11, Aug 11  
Sunset Community Centre staff Aug 25

**2015**

Sunset Yard and Nursery Operations staff Apr 6, Jun 11, Oct 5

Community Police Officers- Reviewed open house drawings and field checked design elements Mar 5 & Oct 6

Sunset Community Centre Association meeting Apr 9

Neighbourhood Parking and Transportation Branch Jun 10

HUB Cycling- discussed potential Prince Edward St. closure and Main Street crossing at Jul 1<sup>st</sup> open house and follow up correspondence in October Jul 1

John Henderson Elementary staff and PAC chair with Parking and Neighbourhood Transportation staff Sep 22

South Vancouver Neighborhood House Oct 6

Sunset Community Centre Staff meeting Oct 6

Sunset Youth Group Oct 7

Indo Canadian Seniors Society of Vancouver Oct 8

Indo Canadian Women's Group Oct 9

Sunbrite Chinese Seniors Society Oct 9

**Groups notified about open houses by email**

Marpole Soccer Association  
South Vancouver Neighbourhood House  
South Hill Neighbours Group  
Fraser Street BIA

Photos of Existing Park



East side open lawn area



John Henderson Elementary - Eastern park edge



Sunset Rink



Orchard



Sunset Community Centre



Existing play equipment



Prince Edward Street at 53rd Avenue



Proposed Scenarios 1 and 2

SCENARIO 1

Share your feedback online or in-person using our questionnaire



Main Initiatives

1. Partially close Prince Edward Street to vehicular traffic to reinforce park connectivity.
2. Divide the Nursery and Operations space to allow for the creation of a major pedestrian pathway that connects the east and west sides of the park.
3. Rearrange the grassy berms in the festival area to create an amphitheater bowl that is less steep than the current berms.
4. Create a space for Community Gardens near the corner of Main Street and 51st Ave that includes opportunities for programming and information exchanges with the nursery staff.
5. Develop a new play area next to the elementary school.
6. Place a meadow near the play area to allow for informal play, exploration of wildlife, and create opportunities for education.
7. Plant a naturalized forest that protects the play areas from the street and creates a healthy urban forest.

Legend

- Enhanced Bikeway
- Primary Connection
- Exercise Circuit
- Sunset Nursery and Park Board Operations Vehicular Connection Only
- Vehicular Access
- Sunset Nursery and Park Board Operations Vehicular Access
- Lost Stream
- Stormwater Collection

SCENARIO 2



Main Initiatives

1. Partially close Prince Edward Street to reinforce park connectivity.
2. Rearrange Ice Rink Parking and Sunset Nursery and Park Board Operations site closer to the Ice Rink.
3. Revise the Community Centre Parking to allow for a connection between the east and west sides of the park.
4. Leave the existing berms and festival area intact.
5. Shift the south edge of the Sunset Nursery and Park Board Operations to allow pedestrian access through the site.
6. Relocate the off-leash dog area and community gardens.
7. Implement a Skate Park and ball court at the NW corner of Main Street and 51st Ave.
8. Develop a new play area next to the elementary school.
9. Place a meadow near the play area to allow for informal play, exploration of wildlife, and create opportunities for education.
10. Plant a naturalized forest that protects the play areas from the street and creates a healthy urban forest.

Legend

- Enhanced Bikeway
- Primary Connection
- Exercise Circuit
- Sunset Nursery and Park Board Operations Vehicular Connection Only
- Vehicular Access
- Sunset Nursery and Park Board Operations Vehicular Access
- Lost Stream
- Stormwater Collection



Proposed Scenarios 3 and 4

Share your feedback online or in-person using our questionnaire

SCENARIO 3



Main Initiatives

1. Partially close Prince Edward Street to reinforce park connectivity.
2. Expand the Sunset Nursery and Operations space into the ice rink area.
3. Relocate Community Centre Parking to create a connection between the east and west sides of the park.
4. Remove the berms and expand the festival area.
5. Leave the off-leash dog area in place.
6. Add community gardens to the south side of the Sunset Nursery and Operations area.
7. Add skate park to the NW corner of Main Street and 51st Ave.
8. Develop a new play area next to the elementary school.
9. Place a meadow near the play area to allow for informal play, exploration of wildlife, and create opportunities for education.
10. Plant a naturalized forest that protects the play areas from the street and creates a healthy urban forest.

Legend

- Enhanced Bikeway
- Primary Connection
- Exercise Circuit
- Vehicular Access
- Sunset Nursery and Park Board Operations Vehicular Access
- Lost Stream
- Stormwater Collection

SCENARIO 4



Main Initiatives

1. Partially close Prince Edward Street to reinforce park connectivity.
2. Add a Future Civic Facility to interface with the Community Centre.
3. Leave the existing berms and festival area intact.
4. Expand the Sunset Nursery and Operations site into the ice rink area.
5. Add community gardens on the south side of the Sunset Nursery and Operations site.
6. Add a ball court and water play next to the existing Community Centre parking area.
7. Develop a new play area next to the elementary school.
8. Place a meadow near the play area to allow for informal play, exploration of wildlife, and create opportunities for education.
9. Plant a naturalized forest that protects the play areas from the street and creates a healthy urban forest.

Legend

- Enhanced Bikeway
- Primary Connection
- Exercise Circuit
- Vehicular Access
- Sunset Nursery and Park Board Operations Vehicular Access
- Lost Stream
- Stormwater Collection



Perspectives

BIRD'S EYE PERSPECTIVE LOOKING NORTHWEST



PERSPECTIVE LOOKING NORTH ALONG THE BIKEWAY



Features:

- |  |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|
| <p><b>1</b>  <b>Children's Playground:</b> play opportunities for a variety of different ages and abilities with a mix of structured and unstructured play</p>                                 | <p><b>2</b>  <b>Existing field:</b> an improved quality field that can be used for organized sports or informal play and group activities</p>                                      | <p><b>3</b>  <b>Ball court:</b> a flexible space focused on youth activities that can accommodate outdoor sports including ball hockey, basketball and badminton. Provides a flexible hard space for other community centre / park activities</p>  | <p><b>4</b>  <b>Off-Leashed Dog Area:</b> a space that allows dog owners to exercise and socialize with their dogs in a secure off-leash area. Amenities include seating and dog play elements like rocks and logs. Park Board will undertake a Dogs in Parks Strategy in 2015</p> |
| <p><b>5</b>  <b>Informal play meadow:</b> a naturalized meadow that supports and promotes ecological activity while also accommodating informal play and community gathering</p>               | <p><b>6</b>  <b>Public interface:</b> nodes at strategic locations that offer opportunities for education and community interface with Park Board Nursery and Operations staff</p> | <p><b>7</b>  <b>Community gardens:</b> growing plots for community centre users, school students, and/or residents with composting facilities access to water</p>  | <p><b>8</b>  <b>Skate park:</b> a park that accommodates all ability levels and includes hang out areas and seating</p>  |
| <p><b>9</b>  <b>Naturalized forest:</b> an open but heavily canopied tree area that enhances biodiversity, habitat, and ecological activity in the neighbourhood</p>                           | <p><b>10</b>  <b>Water play:</b> a spray park with activated water features and play areas</p>   | <p><b>11</b>  <b>Exercise circuit:</b> a walking loop with outdoor exercise equipment along the way</p>  | <p><b>12</b>  <b>Promenade:</b> a pedestrian pathway that connects the park</p>  |
| <p><b>13</b>  <b>Stream/rain garden feature:</b> a feature that celebrates the location of a buried stream through ecological treatment, educational signage, and a themed gathering space</p> | <p><b>14</b>  <b>Outdoor dining:</b> allows for outdoor communal gathering and dining events located next to the community gardens</p>   | <p><b>15</b>  <b>Bikeway and road closure:</b> closing King Edward Street at E. 53 Ave to traffic allows pedestrians to safely move from one side of the park to another and also provides an off-street separated bike route through the site along a City of Vancouver bike route supported by bike amenities such as bike racks, fix stations, and water fountains.</p> | <p><b>16</b>  <b>Berm Slide:</b> a special feature added to the large berm by the community centre to create another play feature</p>  |



