



December 1, 2017

TO: Park Board Chair and Commissioners  
FROM: General Manager - Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation  
SUBJECT: VanSplash: Vancouver Aquatics Strategy

## RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT the Vancouver Park Board approve “VanSplash: Vancouver Aquatics Strategy”, as outlined in this report and attached within Appendix A, to guide the planning of aquatic facilities in Vancouver;
- B. THAT the Board endorse the 10-year Implementation Plan attached within Appendix A, as the basis for making submissions to the City’s 2019-2028 Capital Strategic Outlook and 2019-2022 Capital Plan processes; and
- C. THAT the Board approve the location for a new outdoor pool in South Vancouver per either OPTION 1: Co-located at Killarney Community Centre in Killarney Park, or OPTION 2: Co-located at Marpole Community Centre in Oak Park.

## BOARD AUTHORITY / PREVIOUS DECISIONS

As per the [Vancouver Charter](#), the Park Board has exclusive jurisdiction and control over park land use in the City of Vancouver, including any structures, programs and activities, fees, and improvements that occur within parks.

The [Park Board Strategic Framework](#), includes four strategic directions:

- Parks and Recreation for All: *Accessible, diverse and quality amenities and services that encourage participation and meet current and future needs.*
- Leader in Greening: *Through our actions we demonstrate leading green and horticultural practices and preserve, protect and create green space.*
- Engaging People: *Working openly together to understand and achieve goals and strengthen relationships.*
- Excellence in Resource Management: *Use existing resources effectively and efficiently, and be innovative in developing additional resources to deliver best value for money and meet community needs.*

On March 11, 2002, the Vancouver Park Board approved the 2001 [Aquatic Services Review](#).

On [May 30, 2016, the Board approved a motion](#) directing staff to explore quick start strategies to expedite the construction of a new outdoor pool.

## BACKGROUND

In 2002, the Vancouver Park Board approved the 2001 Aquatic Services Review, setting the stage for the beginning of a transformation of Vancouver's aquatic system. The review focused on meeting current and future demand, operating services and facilities in a fiscally sustainable manner, and balancing local neighbourhood services with those of the City as a whole. The Park Board quickly implemented the first phase of recommendations, which included building a new, city-wide destination facility at Hillcrest (2010), rebuilding Killarney Pool as a community-scale pool (2005), and renovating Renfrew neighbourhood pool (2006).

In 2011, a [Pool Assessment Study](#) was completed to evaluate the outcomes from the implementation of the first phase of the 2001 Aquatic Services Review. It confirmed the success of the new hierarchy of facility sizes, provided cost per swim information, and highlighted that the number of swims per year in the indoor pool system had increased significantly as a result of these investments: from 2.4 swims/capita per year to 3.4.

No new pools or significant renewals have occurred since Hillcrest pool was completed in 2010 and the Pool Assessment was completed in 2011. With the aging of the remaining indoor pools (Britannia, Templeton, Vancouver Aquatic Centre, Lord Byng, Kerrisdale, and Kensington), it is becoming increasingly imperative to prepare an updated aquatics strategy.

## DISCUSSION

### **VanSplash: Vancouver Aquatics Strategy**

VanSplash, the 2017 Vancouver Aquatics Strategy (Appendix A), builds on the mandate of the 2001 Aquatic Services Review and the 2011 Pool Assessment Study. VanSplash expands the definition of aquatic services to include not only indoor and outdoor pools, but also beaches, wading pools, and spray parks, and introduces more innovative approaches for aquatic service delivery. VanSplash complements quantitative metrics for success by including the broader measures of improving well-being, enhancing social inclusion, creating a broader range of experiences, and providing for flexible facility design in anticipation of a changing and aging population.

VanSplash sets out strategies to maintain or improve geographic coverage of aquatic facilities and amenities. Having seen significant population growth, Vancouver is expecting a further increase of up to 15% over the next 25 years, and so the strategy focuses on not only serving the existing population but addresses key areas of growth and density. With an aging population and changing demographics, VanSplash also addresses the need for a flexible and resilient system that will enable programming and facilities to adapt to changing needs over time.

### **Vision**

Through research and input received through public engagement initiatives, the following vision was established for VanSplash:

*“To deliver a wide range of aquatic experiences for residents and visitors that support Vancouver as a highly-livable, world-class coastal city.”*

The vision is supported by principles to:

1. Recognize that water is only one component of the experience;
2. Expand the definition of “aquatics” to include beaches, wading pools, spray parks and new innovative aquatic experiences;
3. Enhance social inclusion throughout aquatic experiences;
4. Support community and personal well-being;

As well as the following goals:

1. Continue to increase annual swims per capita;
2. Accommodate Vancouver’s growing and aging population;
3. Provide a wide range of vibrant and engaging aquatic experiences;
4. Provide aquatic experiences that are accessible to all;
5. Promote and encourage active living through aquatics;
6. Provide flexible and functional facilities;
7. Establish sustainability targets for aquatics;
8. Increase connection to nature in all aspects of aquatics.

### **Strategy**

The VanSplash Strategy is informed by a technical study summarizing research and data analysis (VanSplash Appendix 3: Current State Analysis), precedent review (VanSplash Appendix 4: Precedent Review) and community and stakeholder engagement (VanSplash Appendix 5: Public Engagement). The strategy provides a 25 year vision, recommendations, and a 10 year implementation plan for the delivery of aquatic services in Vancouver.

The proposed strategy (Appendix A) provides recommendations across five categories of aquatic services. The recommendations for each category are summarized below:

#### **1. Indoor Pools**

Recommendations for indoor pools emphasize the continued renewal of indoor facilities that are nearing the end of their functional lifespans, increasing the capacity of the system to accommodate anticipated population growth and providing a balanced range of aquatic experiences throughout the system. Recognizing the rapid increase in swimming participation following the most recent pool construction, the strategy increases the Park Board’s target capacity. To address a public perception of overcrowding, and respond to those users who are deterred by this, the strategy recommends building for a slightly higher capacity to offset the perception of overcrowding.

The draft recommendations presented to the Board on June 19, 2017, were based on the technical study and Phase 1 public engagement. These recommendations have subsequently been updated to reflect additional feedback/input received from residents and users during Phase 2 engagement activities. The updated recommendations are presented below:

*System-wide Recommendations:*

- 1.1 Move away from a predominantly neighbourhood scale pool system and deliver a greater diversity of aquatic experiences at larger community and destination scale facilities.
- 1.2 Where feasible, co-locate outdoor pools with indoor pools to offer a greater range of aquatic experiences at each facility and to maximize operational efficiencies.

*Facility-specific Recommendations:*

- 1.3 Replace Britannia neighbourhood pool with a new Community-plus scale pool as part of the Britannia Centre renewal, providing a pool with a capacity equal or greater than two neighbourhood pools.
- 1.4 Once the Britannia Community-plus pool is fully operational, engage with pool users, community members and key stakeholders in a review of the impacts of the new Britannia pool on Templeton pool.
- 1.5 Provide a new City-wide Destination pool with a sport training focus at Connaught Park as part of a future arena and/or community centre renewal. This facility would replace and improve the sport training capacity of the Vancouver Aquatic Centre and would consider potential for hosting competitions at a level that the site can accommodate as part of the detailed planning.
- 1.6 Once the Connaught Park pool is fully operational, engage with pool users, community members and key stakeholders in a review of the impacts of the new Connaught Park pool on Lord Byng pool.
- 1.7 Replace the Vancouver Aquatic Centre with a City-wide Destination pool with increased health and wellness focus, with co-located outdoor amenities. Following the relocation of sport training and hosting capacity to the new City-wide Destination pool at Connaught Park, consider shifting the focus of the renewed VAC facility to a greater emphasis on therapeutic and wellness uses, in addition to typical swimming experiences.
- 1.8 Replace Kerrisdale neighbourhood pool with a Community scale pool as part of a future community centre and/or arena renewal.
- 1.9 Renovate Kensington Pool to enhance accessibility and increase opportunities for adaptive and therapeutic swimming.
- 1.10 Continue to consider building partnerships with other agencies to gain opportunities for public use of non-park board aquatic facilities.

**2. *Outdoor Pools***

The Park Board's outdoor pool system provides a wide breadth of destination pool experiences, from large ocean-adjacent lap pools to family oriented leisure pools. The outdoor pool recommendations emphasize facility revitalization, and seek to both improve geographic distribution and provide a balanced range of aquatic experiences throughout the system.

The 2001 Aquatic Services Review recommended that stand-alone neighbourhood scale outdoor pools be phased-out at the end of their functional lifespans and that future outdoor pools be co-located with indoor pools, the benefits of which are detailed in the 2011 Pool Assessment Study. VanSplash has expanded the scope of outdoor pools to include more innovative facilities, precedents of which demonstrate that larger, unique destination facilities can attract enough visits to warrant being considered as stand-alone facilities.

The 2017 recommendations for the Park Board's outdoor pool system are as follows:

*Recommendations:*

- 2.1 Continue to invest in existing outdoor pools to keep them as unique City-wide (Destination) facilities within Vancouver. Revitalize existing outdoor pools including improving or replacing changing facilities, improving the provision of food and beverage services (addressed through Park Board Concession Strategy), adding hot tubs at larger pools, and improving deck areas to enhance the quality of experiences.
- 2.2 Provide a balance of recreation, fun, socializing and fitness, through a range of outdoor pool facilities and experiences.
- 2.3 Prioritize locating new outdoor pools to fill current service area gaps in south-central and south-east Vancouver. Provide a new co-located outdoor pool in South Vancouver, considering Killarney Community Centre or Marpole Community Centre as possible locations (VanSplash Appendix 2: Considerations for Locating a Co-Located Outdoor Pool in South Vancouver). The key attributes of each alternative are provided below.

***Option 1: Co-located at Killarney Community Centre in Killarney Park***

A co-located pool at Killarney Community Centre in Killarney Park fulfills all co-location criteria, including:

- Providing co-located services with the community centre, arena, and indoor pool, and providing opportunities to explore outdoor aquatic programming in conjunction with the new Killarney Seniors Centre
- Providing design efficiencies for access and change-room facilities; and
- Providing aquatic staffing and energy operational efficiencies.

The nearest outdoor pool for southeast Vancouver residents is located in Burnaby's Central Park, which is 2.5km away, offers limited public access, and does not have a leisure tank. This is a possible short-term initiative.

### ***Option 2: Co-located with Marpole Community Centre in Oak Park***

A co-located pool at Marpole Community Centre in Oak Park provides the steadily growing and densifying neighbourhood with a much needed recreational amenity and access to aquatic services. Addressed within the Marpole Community Plan and adjacent Cambie Corridor Planning area, the population in this area is expected to increase significantly. This location meets service co-location and reception staff operational efficiencies. The nearest pool is Maple Grove leisure pool, which is 3km away from the existing Community Centre and does not offer opportunities for fitness swimming. Pool construction could occur as part of the Community Centre renewal.

- 2.4 Provide a new City-wide naturally-filtered Destination outdoor pool in South Vancouver.

### ***3. Beaches***

Vancouver's beaches are well used and loved and play an important and unique role in the Parks Board's aquatic system. They provide access to water for aquatics use in a socially inclusive, low barrier park setting as well as access to nature. The recommendations for beaches are detailed in the following section.

#### *Recommendations:*

- 3.1 Invest in maintaining and enhancing existing beaches by upgrading or replacing changing facilities, improving food service (addressed through Park Board Concession Strategy) and providing opportunities for shade.
- 3.2 Invest in swimming improvements at Trout Lake. (Refer to draft John Hendry Park Master Plan).
- 3.3 Collect quantitative and qualitative information on how many people use beaches and how they use them.

### ***4. Spray Parks and Wading Pools***

Both spray parks and fill-and-draw wading pools play a role in providing an introduction to water for younger children. However, Vancouver's wading pools are aging and do not meet provincial Health Act Standards. As well, wading pools must be staffed, limiting their hours of public access, and are not universally accessible. Spray parks, alternatively, offer a similar introduction to water, but offer a greater range and diversity of use, are universally accessible, and do not require staff supervision, which facilitates longer hours of access and a longer operating season. The recommendations for spray parks and wading pools are as follows:

#### *Recommendations:*

- 4.1 Provide destination spray parks at destination and highly urban parks serving large populations.
- 4.2 Provide neighbourhood spray parks based on greatest social and geographic need and through consultation with local communities.

- 4.3 Consider co-locating fully accessible<sup>1</sup> spray parks with indoor and outdoor pools, and in locations with washrooms and community centres.
- 4.4 Where possible, design spray parks in a way that water can be recycled for park use, e.g. adjacent irrigation or water features.
- 4.5 Distribute spray parks more evenly throughout the city corresponding to population distribution and density.
- 4.6 To facilitate the emerging spray park system, continue to convert wading pools to spray parks or decommission them, pending locational criteria and in consultation with communities.

## 5. *Innovation*

Global aquatic trends are showing that a broadened range of aquatic facilities, amenities and services help to support broader goals and principles around aquatics use, offering more opportunities for fun and spectacle, and diverse and vibrant experiences. The ideas are intended to enhance the more traditional aquatic system. Many of these would be best achieved through partnerships. Recommendations for innovation include:

### *Recommendations:*

- 5.1 Provide a combination of temporary (e.g. urban beaches) and permanent aquatic innovations to provide new and more equitably distributed innovative experiences around the City.
- 5.2 Provide wellness amenities connected with existing and future pools, such as saunas, pools of varying temperature and relaxation spaces.
- 5.3 Add outdoor hot tubs at larger destination outdoor pools that aren't co-located with an indoor pool to offer a greater range of aquatic experiences, including socialization and relaxation.
- 5.4 Build a harbour deck for improved access to our inlet.
- 5.5 Provide play structures in the ocean at existing beaches such as installations that deliver an exhilarating experience, provide excitement, and foster a high level of physical activity where possible.
- 5.6 Assess the feasibility of a floating pool in False Creek to provide a treated and filtered pool in an ocean swimming setting.
- 5.7 Consider installing temporary urban beaches in areas of the city that do not have access to natural beaches.

## **Consultation**

The process to develop VanSplash included a robust consultation program. Through this 19 month process, the planning team had over 7,000 interactions with stakeholders and the public to inform the recommendations. This included 5 open house outreach events, 6 focus

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<sup>1</sup> e.g. no perimeter fencing or admissions required

group sessions and 2 TalkVancouver online surveys with a combined total of over 6,300 responses, in addition to over 185 email submissions.

The consultation process attempted to reach both aquatic facility users and non-users, and included outreach to over 150 groups including aquatic user groups, community centres, neighbourhood houses, immigrant services, City of Vancouver advisory committees, LGBTQ2 representatives, diverse advocacy groups, persons with disabilities and seniors.

### **10 Year Implementation Plan**

All pools proposed for replacement are nearing the end of their functional life cycle, and all have public pressure for upgrade or replacement. Being able to renew or replace facilities in a timely manner will provide users with a higher quality and more diverse experience and, through increased use, will result in reduced operating subsidies.

Although our target swims per capita is 5, VanSplash recommends building for a target of up to 6. This recognizes and responds to a public perception of overcrowding in new facilities when they are designed to be operated at full capacity.

The sequencing of indoor pool recommendations is contingent on community centre and arena renewals, which, as a whole, must be considered in planning, design and capital budgeting for aquatic projects. The 10 year VanSplash implementation plan will be incorporated into the Parks and Recreation Master Plan (ongoing) in order to address these inter-relationships.

The new destination pool at Connaught Park and the Vancouver Aquatic Centre are further linked due to the need to open the new pool at Connaught prior to renewing the Vancouver Aquatic Centre in order to maintain pool access for the public at large, and for athletes who utilize the specialized sport facilities at the Vancouver Aquatic Centre. Serving an overlapping user group, the planning for these two facilities should occur in tandem, even though the detailed design and construction will occur sequentially.

In consideration of these sequencing relationships, the 10 year plan suggests sequencing and timelines of significant recommendations and includes Class D cost estimates (VanSplash Appendix 5: Capital Costs). Pending funding availability, the recommendations in the 10 year Implementation Plan include:

- Completing 2 to 3 new and replacement indoor pools projects:
  - o Britannia Community-Plus Pool (\$35M - for the aquatic facility only, does not include community centre renewal);
  - o Connaught Park City-Wide Destination Pool (\$75M - for the aquatic facility only, does not include community centre renewal);
  - o Planning, design and beginning of construction of a replacement Vancouver Aquatic Centre (\$70M - the cost and completion of which would likely span beyond 10 years);
- Implementing upgrades to Kensington Pool (\$2-4M);
- Undertaking site planning and a needs assessment to guide the renewal of Kerrisdale Pool, Community Centre and Arena, in conjunction with a Kerrisdale-Arbutus Corridor Community Planning process, led by the City of Vancouver (\$0.4M);
- Building 1 new outdoor pool in South Vancouver (\$6-9M); and

- Implementing upgrades to outdoor pools and beach change rooms (ongoing for the life of the strategy).

The VanSplash strategy provides a platform from which to explore a host of innovative amenities and facilities to complement the Park Board's traditional system. The 10 year plan suggests a target implementation of one innovation per capital plan, in part pending partnerships.

Some of the recommendations are excluded from the 10 year plan as timing is unknown. Swimming related improvements to Trout Lake are contingent on the completion of the John Hendry Master Plan, while the timing for a natural outdoor pool near the Fraser River requires land acquisition and health authority permitting.

An overall capital budget for aquatic facilities will be presented at a later date as part of a larger, integrated plan, incorporating the priorities from VanSplash, the Parks and Recreation Master Plan and other Park Board strategies.

Much of the 10 Year Implementation Plan will require additional funding over time, including additional funding to maintain and operate new or upgraded pools and related facilities. The cost to operate an indoor pool varies depending on age, condition, amenities and whether the pool is co-located with other recreation facilities; currently the estimated cost to operate ranges between \$0.3M and \$2.0M. The incremental costs to operate the new or renovated pools recommended in this report will be reviewed as part of the City's annual budgeting processes. Funding to support the first phase of implementation will be sought through the 2019-2029 Capital Strategic Outlook and the 2019-2022 Capital Plan. Funding for the planning and design of an outdoor pool is included in the 2018 capital budget.

## SUMMARY

VanSplash will increase the Park Board's aquatic system's diversity and capacity over improved geographic coverage, focusing significant investments on key areas of growth in the City. The strategy introduces a broader definition of aquatic services, and along with it, additional metrics and objectives that focus on improving health, well-being, social inclusion and increased access to nature. With an aging population and changing demographics, VanSplash also addresses the need for a flexible and resilient system that will enable programming and facilities to adapt to changing needs over time.

The completion of VanSplash will be a significant milestone in updating and advancing the Park Board's ability to provide aquatic services, and it sets forth an ambitious plan to renew and replace Vancouver's aquatic services in order to remain relevant to Vancouverites of today and tomorrow.

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