



May 2, 2019

**TO:** Park Board Chair and Commissioners  
**FROM:** General Manager – Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation  
**SUBJECT:** Recognition of Grace McCarthy – Commemorative Naming

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## RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Vancouver Park Board approve the commemorative naming of the plaza surrounding the Bloedel Conservatory in Queen Elizabeth Park as “Grace McCarthy Plaza” in recognition of Ms. McCarthy’s contributions to the Park Board, the City of Vancouver, and the Province of British Columbia.

## REPORT SUMMARY

In response to the Park Board’s motion in June 2017 seeking an outdoor space to recognize the contributions of Grace McCarthy, staff are proposing that the plaza surrounding the Bloedel Conservatory in Queen Elizabeth Park be named “Grace McCarthy Plaza” in her honour.

## POLICY / 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 the naming of facilities, as guided by the [Commemorative Naming Policy](#) adopted in 2007.

On June 19, 2017, the Board approved the motion titled [Recognition of Grace McCarthy](#), which directed staff “to work with Grace McCarthy’s family to develop an outdoor space that recognizes and tells the story of Grace’s tremendous contribution to the Park Board, our City, and the Province of British Columbia”.

## BACKGROUND

### Grace McCarthy (1927-2017)

Grace McCarthy is heralded as one of British Columbia’s most influential politicians and a trailblazer for women’s and children’s rights. Ms. McCarthy served as a Park Board Commissioner (1960-1966), and was a member of the legislative assembly for the Vancouver-Little Mountain District (elected in 1966, 1969, 1975, 1983, and 1986). Her storied political career saw many substantial achievements, including becoming the first female Deputy Premier in Canada, and successfully lobbying the federal government to introduce a law allowing unmarried women to apply for mortgages without a male guarantor.

Ms. McCarthy was elected to the Vancouver Park Board in 1960. During her three terms on the Park Board, she served as the first female Vice Chair, helped to secure open spaces for park development, and led efforts to coordinate recreational activities for people with



Commissioner 1960-66  
Vancouver Park Board

disabilities. As a former florist, Ms. McCarthy had a great appreciation for horticulture and worked tirelessly to ensure the Bloedel Conservatory was completed as a Canadian Centennial project.

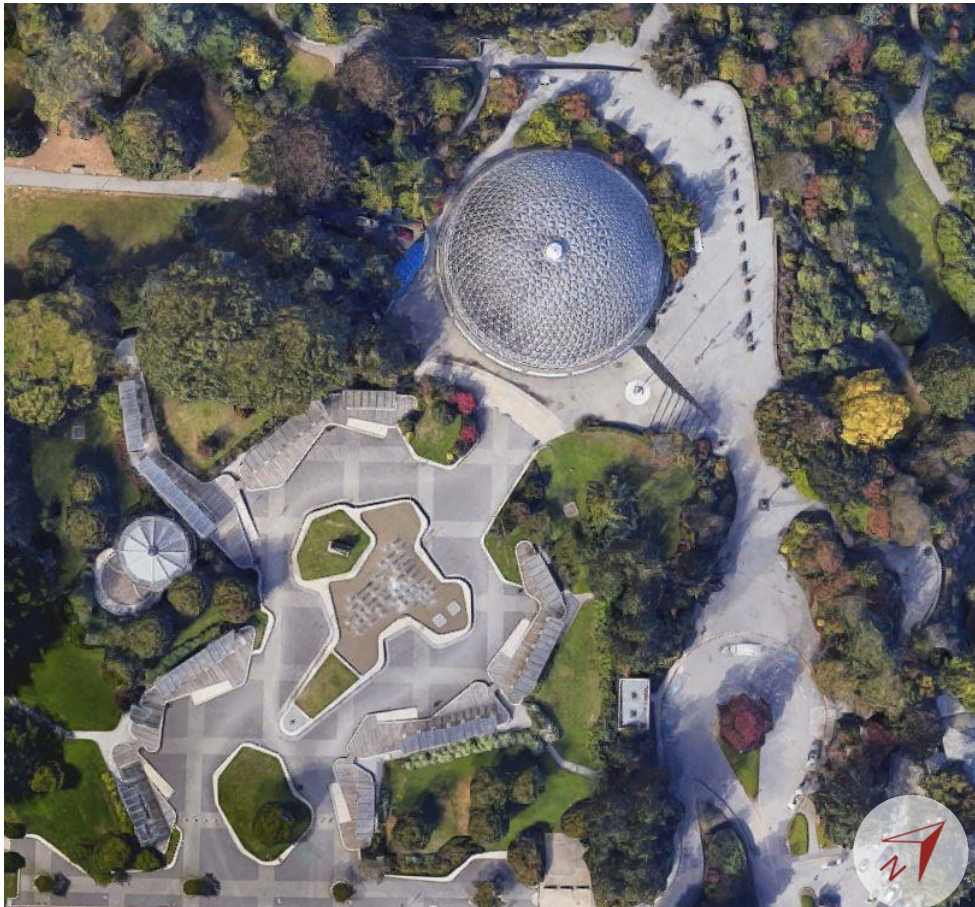
Throughout the 1960s, she campaigned for part of the abandoned Shaughnessy Golf Course to become a botanical garden, which we now know as VanDusen Botanical Garden. Once elected to the Legislative Assembly, Ms. McCarthy continued her fight to fund the garden and in 1970, she made the long-awaited announcement that the Province would provide \$1M to its development.

The legacies of Grace McCarthy can be seen across the city, and include the Stanley Park Christmas train and the lights on the Lion's Gate Bridge. In retirement, Ms. McCarthy started the CH.I.L.D Foundation, which has raised millions in research funds for children suffering from Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis, and liver disorders.

## DISCUSSION

Following the Board's decision in June 2017, staff have worked to identify suitable options to appropriately recognize the tremendous contributions of Grace McCarthy. Staff met with Ms. McCarthy's daughter and family advocate to hear their ideas for commemoration. In light of the input received, staff recommend naming the plaza surrounding the Bloedel Conservatory in Queen Elizabeth Park in Grace McCarthy's honour.

**Figure 1:** Aerial view of Bloedel Conservatory & surrounding plaza in Queen Elizabeth Park



This high profile and much-loved plaza is located in the heart of the park and at the highest peak in the city, making it a popular viewpoint and destination for Vancouver citizens and visitors alike. The location is strongly associated with Ms. McCarthy's legacy as she was instrumental in seeing the Bloedel Conservatory built. Naming the plaza surrounding the Bloedel Conservatory "Grace McCarthy Plaza" honours her significant legacy and contributions to the Vancouver Park Board, the City, and the Province. Staff have communicated this idea to Ms. McCarthy's family, who have indicated they are very supportive of this proposed commemoration.

## **NEXT STEPS**

Subject to the Board's approval of the recommendation to name the plaza in Queen Elizabeth Park in Grace McCarthy's honour, staff will develop a signage and landscape concept in consultation with her family, with a plan to hold a public event to celebrate the commemoration in late 2019. The concept will also be coordinated with initial work on the upcoming Queen Elizabeth Park Master Plan.

## **CONCLUSION**

Staff recommend the Vancouver Park Board approve the commemorative naming of the plaza surrounding the Bloedel Conservatory in Queen Elizabeth Park as "Grace McCarthy Plaza, in Grace McCarthy's honour.

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