

JULY 7, 1997

**SUBJECT: COORDINATED YOUTH SERVICES PILOT PROJECTS:
RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE EVALUATION REPORT**

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the following report be received for information.

POLICY:

The Board has developed policy and procedures to guide the development of programs and services for clients of all ages, and has also adopted strategies specific to youth between the ages of 8 and 18 years. City Council introduced a policy governing services to children and youth, and a Civic Youth Strategy.

The Developmental Blueprint for Park Board Youth Services was adopted by the Park Board, and subsequently by the Vancouver School Board, in November, 1992.

The Vancouver's Children's Policy and a Statement of Entitlements were adopted by Council in 1992, and the policy mandate and scope of the Child/Youth Advocate's concerns amended in 1993 to include youth under 19 years of age.

The Civic Youth Strategy was adopted by City Council and by a number of other Boards, including the Park Board, in 1995.

BACKGROUND

Youth worker services evolved from a relatively independent group of youth work projects in the north east and central Vancouver neighbourhoods. These services began in the early 1970's in response to specific behavioural problems at local facilities and parks. The 1991 Evaluation of Youth Worker Projects reported that services had moved from damage control to early intervention and more preventative services. Funding of these projects was creative and involved grants from the city, reallocated Park Board funding and support of the Canada Assistance Plan.

This review of common and best practices at the five original sites led to a new developmental model, known as the Blueprint for Youth Services. The Blueprint was designed to guide the expansion of youthworker based leisure services in a consistent fashion, while not being too prescriptive in terms of what services should be available in which neighbourhoods.

The need for new services had been identified in a number of studies and reports published in the early 1990's by a variety of governmental and non-profit agencies. Blueprint principles were intended to ensure that services

would be preventative, community based, cooperative, collaborative and multicultural. Further, it is recognized that young people and professionals in the health and education systems must be included in the design process.

In 1988, City Council appointed the city's first Children's Advocate, who worked with city departments to review services and develop strategies to support children and families where gaps existed in neighbourhoods or in services generally. The Advocate developed the Children's Policy, the city's Childcare Program, and more recently in partnership with the Park Board, the Civic Youth Strategy.

The Civic Youth Strategy included a statement of principles and recommended departmental objectives for working with youth. The four key principles include ensuring that: ... youth have a "**place**"; youth have a strong "**voice**" in decisions affecting them; youth are seen as a "**resource**" for departments and that "**support resources**" for youth are strengthened in the city.

Park Board youth services employ the principles stated in both the Blueprint and the Civic Youth Strategy. Action plans from these policy initiatives has led to a significant expansion in services for youth in neighbourhoods around the city.

In 1993, youth services were introduced at six new community centre locations under the "Coordinated Youth Services Pilot Projects". These projects were a partnership of the Park Board, the six community associations and the Vancouver Foundation. The Foundation committed \$ 350,000 in start-up funds over three years. Foundation funding ended in June of 1996.

Park Board and Association funding increased between 1994 and 1996 to replace Vancouver Foundation contributions, with Park Board funds reallocated via the Budget Management Program.

In 1995, Board funds were also allocated to Dunbar and Mount Pleasant Centres to sustain youth service projects in those communities, bringing to eight the total of new, full-service youth service projects developed since 1993.

Contributions to direct youthwork services now exceed one million dollars, half of it from Park Board operating budgets. The rest includes \$ 300,000 from other City departments and levels of government, and the balance is provided via the participating community associations. Recovery funds from the Canada Assistance Plan were replaced by city operating funds this year.

This report will deal with the independent evaluation of Blueprint-based youth work projects published earlier this year.

DISCUSSION

Staff consulted with community association representatives in September of 1995 to establish "Future Directions for Youth Services". Agreements were

reached by consensus on a number of subject areas, including responsibilities of the partners, funding guidelines, and a series of long term strategies.

Strategies, in order of priority, included:

1)	to stabilize the 7 youthwork pilot projects
2a)	to complete an independent evaluation of all existing Blueprint-based projects, to determine the viability of the model at all existing youth project sites
2b)	to sustain and stabilize the core service in Mount Pleasant
3	to support the development of Blueprint-based youth services in communities where community development and research has been completed (eg: Douglas Park, Kensington, Kerrisdale)
4	to support associations and staff by designing a community development and research process, similar to those above.
5	to establish a new, fulltime position with the mandate to maintain the consistent and safe practices of youth workers in community centre settings.

Update on Strategies:

1)	Youth service projects at Champlain Heights, Dunbar, Hastings, Killarney, Riley Park, Sunset and the West End have since been stabilized with regular funding. In 1996, the Board allocated a final \$ 60,000 to youth work projects at those seven locations, and in May 1997, converted those 7 positions from temporary to regular full time.
2a)	Independent evaluation of the six pilot projects above (not including Dunbar) has been completed, and the consultants' nine recommendations are the primary subject of this report.
2b)	Mount Pleasant services are temporarily supported with the assistance of a grant (\$ 20,000 in 1996 and 1997) from the city's Community Grants Fund, but youth worker services at Mount Pleasant cannot be considered stabilized at this time.
3)	Part-time services are currently in place at Douglas Park, Kensington and Kerrisdale centres, funded by significant community association dollars, and (primarily) existing Park Board resources.
4)	Research in the remaining communities is now in progress.
5)	Since the consultation meeting in 1995, youth workers, other Recreation staff and community association representatives concur that a professional practice leader is now the highest priority. The Evaluation Report also recommends that structural support for youth

workers be expanded. Currently, a youth services advisor is funded for one-quarter time, up to ten hours weekly.

Pilot Project Evaluation Report

In the fall of 1996, the Youth Advisory Committee obtained additional support from the Vancouver Foundation to conduct an evaluation of the original six pilot projects. Following a proposal call, the firm of Wallbank-Macfarlane-Tindall was contracted to conduct the evaluation. A steering committee consisting of association volunteers from the Youth Advisory Committee, and Park Board staff, guided the project.

Wallbank-Macfarlane-Tindall was contracted to prepare a full report including surveys and extensive interviews with stakeholders, and to make recommendations on program effectiveness and Blueprint validity. The report was first presented to the steering committee in February of 1997, and presented to a larger stakeholder's group in April at the Roundhouse. For detailed information on the parameters and methodology of the study, consult the complete, 137-page report.

In addition to the main report, the consultants also researched and published the following: ...

- Literature Review
- Document Review
- CYSPP Program and Service Inventory
- Framework for Best Practice Indicators
- Project Performance Measurement System

Copies of the full report were circulated to each centre, and extra copies are available from Central Recreation Services on request. Limited copies of the Executive Summary and the Document and Literature Reviews were printed, and are available from the Area Office or Central Recreation, while the Inventory, Best Practices and Measurement System are in the full report.

A copy of the Executive Summary is appended for Commissioners' reference.

Evaluation Findings:

Based on the available evidence, the evaluation found that the pilot projects are functioning as intended, and that they are having a number of beneficial impacts in neighbourhoods. Impacts include a wider range and quantity of programs, and more participation than prior to project implementation. Numbers of youth have reportedly developed social and leadership skills, have enhanced their self esteem, and improved their ability to make independent decisions on issues affecting their lives.

Youth workers have helped to resolve or prevent problems at home and in the community, and have facilitated the work of schools and youth-serving agencies through shared information and referrals.

Recommendations:

In order to improve the effectiveness of the six pilot projects, the consultants made nine recommendations, including:

- Clarify the project philosophy and mandate
- Establish guidelines to clarify the youth worker role
- Expand supervisory structure for youth workers
- Stabilize funding for youth worker positions
- Establish priorities for allocation of rooms and equipment
- Improve the orientation program for new youth workers
- Monitor community needs for youth and children's services
- Implement a performance measurement system
- Build on the best youth work practices

The recommendations have been reviewed and classified into organizational priorities, local priorities, and dual responsibilities. Work plans have been identified for the Recreation Division and its community association partners.

Local and Organizational Priorities

- Clarify Project Philosophy and Mandates

Mainstream or at-risk-youth; pre-adolescent or older youth; these options have been interpreted differently by youth workers and those with an interest in setting priorities. Consultation with the Youth Advisory Committee, the Youth Services Committee (consisting of multidisciplinary centre-based staff) and the Youth Work Action Team, is required.

Clarified philosophy and mandated areas will be included in a Youth Work Orientation Manual, to be available Fall of 1997. Association committees will review their local service area targets with community representatives, subsequent to this information.

- Stabilize Funding for Youthworker Positions

Funding for the six pilot projects was stabilized in 1996, and the positions converted to regular full time in May of 1997. This recommendation has been satisfied.

- Implement Performance Measurement System

Developing and implementing a comprehensive, consistent approach to data collection is a significant task. One of the first tasks is to ensure that the impact of youth services is quantified in a similar way to the data collection for other Park Board services, which is already in progress. Qualitative analysis of youth services, however, requires a professional practice leader to develop and guide this process, as identified above.

It is anticipated that development of a system such as this will begin in 1998, and will be at least an annual task.

Organizational Priorities:

- Establish Guidelines to Clarify the Role of the Youth Worker

Guidelines to direct the work of youth workers on a number of sensitive issues will be drafted and reviewed with youth work staff. Guidelines will be published with the Orientation Manual mentioned above, in the Fall of 1997.

- Expand on the current supervisory structure for Youth Workers

Currently, youth workers are supervised on a day to day basis by the community recreation coordinator at the centre from which they work. Strategic direction and assistance on best practices has been provided by two youth work advisors. These positions have been funded from grant money, which was terminated in June of 1997. Staff have been able to allocate limited funds to obtain the services of a youthwork advisor for ten hours each week, but this is not sufficient.

The Evaluation Report states, "the current supervisory structure does not appear to meet the needs of the project," and "... but Coordinators are not uniformly trained in youth work, and may not be able to serve as resources in all areas."

Overall coordination of youth work services has been provided by the North Area Recreation Manager, assisted by the Coordinator of Special Needs in Central Recreation Services. In both of these cases, responsibilities for the youth projects has been fitted into already onerous tasks in their regular portfolios.

The report recommends the establishment of a permanent position dedicated solely to the support of the youth workers.

Staff concur with this recommendation, although the supervisory aspects of the position are seen as secondary to the assistance that such a person could provide in the area of youth work practice. The emphasis would be heavily weighted toward the provision of advice and guidance on methods and approaches to problem solving, intervention skills and interdisciplinary work.

The evaluation report clearly outlines the tasks that need to be provided by this person.

At the present time, there are no additional funds available in the Board's operating budget which could be diverted to fund this position. During recent discussions with senior government officials with the Ministry for Children and Families, and reiterated during local network area discussions, it has been made clear that there are no new dollars available from the Ministry at this time.

A sum of about \$ 40,000 would be required. Staff believe that this position is very important, and will be bringing it forward during discussions on the 1998 budget.

- Improve Orientation Program for new Youth Workers

Staff have been reviewing city and departmental orientation programs, and have acquired orientation materials from other youth-serving organizations for comparisons. An orientation manual is being compiled, and will be available in Fall, 1997.

- Build on Best Practices

The Evaluation Report already identifies a number of best practices, although current services hold even greater potential for capturing some of these practices. Other organizations have also developed materials on sound youth work practices, which requires additional research. A youth work practice leader would concentrate on this initiative, a few months after their own orientation has been completed.

Local Priorities

- Establish Priorities for Allocation of Rooms and Equipment

Centre staff teams should review methods for the allocation of program space, office space, and the determination of equipment and supplies needs, on a regular basis. Recreation Coordinators at each community centre with a youthworker will be asked to review these priorities this fall.

- Monitor Community Needs for Youth and Children' s Services

Centre staff teams must review the community needs assessments completed in 1995, and the assessment process currently in progress, and develop a monitoring process which best suits their local needs.

A general review of youthworker goals would be expected each year, while more comprehensive reviews of community needs would occur each 4-5 years.

Staff are also participating in the development of the new child and youth Networks, coordinated recently by the Ministry for Children and Families, in the city' s six new network areas. These networks are an attempt to coordinate the collaborative efforts of all child and youth serving agencies in local areas.

CONCLUSION:

The Blueprint for Youth Services has been evaluated by independent consultants to determine its effectiveness at the six coordinated pilot project sites. The report identified that services are having a number of beneficial impacts on youth.

Nine recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of these coordinated services have been identified.

This report groups those recommendations on the basis of local and organizational priorities, or both. The recommendation dealing with stabilizing youth work positions was satisfied in May of 1997. Seven of the eight other recommendations can be accommodated over time, according to the timetables identified.

The practice leader position, which will serve to guide the best practices of youth workers, is only partially funded at present.

Staff will the need for a youthwork practice leader during discussions on the 1998 budget.

Prepared by:
Recreation Division
Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation

APPENDIX I

Youth Worker Services in Community Centre Settings

(appended to Report on Coordinated Youth Services Pilot Projects)

Original Youth Worker Sites

Centre	# youthworkers fulltime equivalent	services began	status
Britannia	3	1970' s	some permanent
Ray Cam	2	1970' s	permanent
Strathcona	2	1970' s	permanent
Thunderbird	1	1970' s	permanent
Trout Lake	1	1970' s	permanent

Pilot Project Locations

Centre	# youthworkers fte	services began	status
Champlain Heights	1	1993	permanent
Hastings	1	1993	permanent

Killarney	1	1993	permanent
Riley Park	1	1993	permanent
Sunset	1	1993	permanent
West End	1	1993	permanent

Subsequent Youth Worker Locations

Centre	#youthworkers fte	services began	status
Dunbar	1	1993	permanent
Mt Pleasant	1	1995	temporary
Douglas Park	.5	1996	temporary
Kensington	.7	1986	temporary *
Kerrisdale	.6	1996	temporary

* Kensington's youth services have evolved since their inception

Currently Conducting Community Needs Assessment

Centre	Status
False Creek	inactive
Kitsilano	inactive
Marpole-Oakridge	inactive
Renfrew Park	** temporary
West Pt Grey	inactive

** Renfrew is currently providing space to a community-based youthworker sponsored by a consortium including: the Renfrew Park Community Association, the Collingwood Neighbourhood House, and the Vancouver School Board.