

Date: October 15, 1999

SUBJECT: Millennium Commemoration

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Board adopt 'Greening the Environment' as the central theme for its millennium commemoration.

INTRODUCTION

This report recommends to adopt 'Greening the Environment' as the central theme for the Park Board's millennium commemoration, and to develop a tree planting project for all of Vancouver's parks as a real, but also symbolic, enhancement of the environment.

DISCUSSION

The imminent turn of the millennium has spurred preparations for countless celebrations and commemorations. Typically, these projects include a reflection on and interpretation of time. The past is reviewed, significant events are recalled, or traces of previous millennia uncovered. The present is documented, preserved and packaged into time capsules. The future is envisioned, programmed, hoped for, and commitments are made to not repeat mistakes of the past.

Many public millennium projects are funded by the Federal Government through their *Canada Millennium Partnership Project*, and by the Provincial Government through their *British Columbia 2000 Community Spirit Grants*. The City of Vancouver has launched their *Portrait V2K Millennium Project* in partnership with many municipal agencies, including the Park Board. In addition to these publicly sponsored projects, a tsunami of commercial ventures has been unleashed seeking to capitalise on this once-in-a-millennium opportunity.

The turn of the millennium is widely anticipated with hope for the future, but also with a measure of anxiety. People are especially concerned about the effect of population growth and industrialisation on the natural environment, including possible climate change, the deterioration of air and water quality, loss of significant habitats, a reduction in biodiversity, and a decline of the long term food supply. Many millennium projects therefore have an environmental focus. Undoing industrial pollution, preserving important landscapes, improving access to natural areas and creating new parks are elements of many projects.

Preservation and enhancement of the natural environment are also central to the Park Board's mandate. Parks are a retreat from the angularity and harshness of the city, while contributing real benefits to the physical environment. Many of these benefits derive from trees. Trees reduce pollution, intercept rain, moderate the urban heat island, aid air flow while buffering wind, reduce glare and block noise. Trees provide habitat for a myriad of species, and soften the appearance of buildings and pavement.

This report recommends to adopt 'Greening the Environment' as the central theme for the Park Board's millennium commemoration, and to develop a tree planting project as a real, but also symbolic, enhancement of the environment.

Preliminary discussions have yielded a preference for a tree planting project that would involve every park under the jurisdiction of the Park Board. One tree or more would be planted in each park. The project will deliver measurable benefits to the urban environment while expressing people's hopes and aspirations for a naturally sustainable future.

Details of this tree planting project are proposed to be developed by Park Board staff, including selection of species and planting sites, implementation cost, work program and time line, public process and ceremony. Funding for the tree planting project will be allocated from existing accounts for park development, cultural community development, district park maintenance and, possibly, an infusion from the corporate sponsorship fund. Funding details will be reported to the Board for approval at a later date.

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