



Date: June 13, 2002

TO: Board Members - Parks and Recreation
FROM: General Manager - Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: PARK PARTNERS PROGRAM

RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT the Board adopt the PARK PARTNERS Program as described by this report.**
- B. THAT the Board approve the allocation of \$20,000 from the Corporate Sponsorship Program to provide resourcing for the new PARK PARTNERS Program.**
- C. THAT the Board direct staff to complete the activities identified in preparation for the launch of the Program in October 2002.**
- D. THAT staff report to the Board in the Fall of 2003 with an evaluation of the accomplishments of the PARK PARTNERS Program.**

POLICY

The Board's policy on the approved use of Corporate Sponsorship Funds contains the following criteria:

1. To fund one-time expenditures to a limit of \$50,000 that will support revenue-generating activities and the money repaid into the Corporate Sponsorship account from the increased revenues within a period of three years.
2. To fund initiatives with one-time expenditures to a limit of \$50,000 that will result in improved efficiencies.
3. To fund one-time expenditures over and above the existing funding level in the operating budget which are beneficial to the overall Parks and Recreation system.
4. All expenditures require Board approval.

BACKGROUND

The Park Board' s Strategic Plan under the Strategic Alliances section includes several goals to encourage users to become active stakeholders and partners. Many successful partnerships have been achieved in our recreation services area both at community centres and through organized sports leagues, but participation in parks has been limited.

There is increasing interest in the community for opportunities to connect with the Park Board around local park issues and many requests to support a variety of interests in parks from cleanups to participating in interpretive activities and community gardens. Stewardship programs in our city are also on the increase with neighbours contributing to local enhancements as a way to improve the communities in which they live and work.

Staff have developed a program which will connect the community interests in our park system with the opportunities that already exist or can be developed cooperatively. This program is called PARK PARTNERS.

DISCUSSION

What is the PARK PARTNERS Program?

To state the Program' s objectives simply, PARK PARTNERS is a program to expand volunteering in parks, assisting those volunteers to connect into the Park Board system easily and providing the support that is required to make ideas, projects and events happen within an established framework.

PARK PARTNERS has a vision to make Vancouver' s parks more useable, attractive and safe through the support, commitment and leadership of its Park Partners.

PARK PARTNERS has, as its mission statement, the intent to "enhance and encourage the participation of all citizens in park stewardship programs to deal with conservation, education, interpretation, safety and security, cleanliness and attractiveness activities in the areas of recreation, leisure and the environment ".

How will the PARK PARTNERS Program work?

We have a number of examples of existing volunteer partnerships including programs, events and projects in all of the areas identified under the mission statement of the PARK PARTNERS Program. Activities range from the volunteer skate patrol to shoreline clean-ups, from neighbourhood festivals to day lighting of streams. A representative list is included as Appendix - A. Building on these examples, staff will be encouraging both existing partners to consider expanding their activities and increasing the awareness of others so that new partnerships are created.

Ideas/Requests Received From the Community:

The PARK PARTNERS Program is all about receiving and acting upon ideas for enhancements to parks that benefit neighbourhoods. Often the public is unaware that we can create partnerships to make these improvements and that there are opportunities for volunteer activities related to parks. A promotion of these opportunities through the PARK PARTNERS Program will communicate some of the existing partnerships to get people thinking. The promotion of the Program will also serve to encourage new ideas and broaden the scope of potential PARK PARTNERS for the future. A communications strategy as well as specific brochures to describe various aspects of the program will be developed in more detail over the next two to three months for a launch of the Program this fall.

Our staff connect with potential partners daily on issues with individual parks or interests that residents bring forward for programs, activities and/or improvements to their local park or to a location that they may visit frequently. The diagrams identified as Appendix B and C illustrate the communication links that will be followed if the community ideas are presented to either the District or the Planning staff.

Criteria for Review-

Staff have developed a preliminary list of criteria that could be used to assess ideas presented. These include:

- Does the proposal further the mandate of the Park Board?
- Does the proposal demonstrate benefits to the community, the Park Board and its PARK PARTNER?
- Is the proposal supported within the community?
- Can the size and the duration of the proposal be managed by the PARK PARTNER and do they have sufficient resources to be successful?
- Are the impacts of the proposal positive and/or does the proposal enhance activities being done through other PARK PARTNERS, or the Park Board?
- Does the proposal require additional resources from the Park Board, funds or other support in kind that would diminish levels of service elsewhere?
- Does the proposal further the concept of sustainability?

Outcomes:

Ultimately through dialogue, the interested group or individual will be ready to implement their idea with the support of staff. Depending upon the complexity or length of the activity or the need for support resources, a decision on the partnership proposal may be approved at a staff level or come to the Board for final approval. Varying levels of administrative agreements may also be necessary. A chart which illustrates how various types and sizes of groups and the level of agreement that might be required is included here as Appendix D . Some further descriptions show how proposals could be treated.

Evaluation:

The PARK PARTNERS and staff will be developing performance measurements which will assist in evaluating the success of the Program. We propose to use several pilot projects over the balance of 2002 including projects already underway such as Victory Square, Pandora Park and China Creek South and a potential new partnership with residents around Musqueam Park. We will define terms and a common understanding of how to measure the successes of these projects. These partnerships may also continue beyond the original projects and evolve to suit the needs of the community. It is anticipated that these experiences will also be used to improve how we communicate, the processes that are used to evaluate the partnerships and the levels of support these activities need. All of the evaluation steps will be co-developed with the individuals/groups involved.

Our recommendation will be to report annually to the Board on the number of partnerships initiated, how they have strengthened the Board' s mandate and how the groups have evaluated the success of their work. Where changes or improvements are required, the recommendation for how this should be accomplished will also be provided.

Activities - 2003

The PARK PARTNERS Program will continue to expand into 2003 with the experience of both the pilot projects in 2002 and any new partnerships initiated this Fall. Staff will look for ways to continue to recognize efforts and acknowledge the PARK PARTNERS projects .

Increasing Staff Awareness:

All staff throughout the organization need to be aware of the expectations of them through this program, the process to be used to consider and approve the ideas brought forward, the level of administrative framework that is required and the roles and responsibilities of each party collaborating in the PARK PARTNERS Program.

In order to ensure that the PARK PARTNERS Program and its various protocols are understood, a series of internal workshops will be held in September. Staff will be involved in generating ways to connect into the community, defining some opportunities for interesting partnerships and refining the communication and review processes.

Staff propose that these community connections, the ideas and the outcomes of the PARK PARTNERS Program be tracked on a database.

PARK PARTNERS Program - Implementation Timelines

This Program requires three key efforts to be completed at this initial stage :

Development of a Communications Strategy and supporting communication tools :
With support from the Board at this time, a staff resource will work on developing this plan and supporting material over the summer period to be ready for the Workshops in the Fall.

Staff Workshops - proposed for September 2002
Specific dates, organization of the session and preliminary work to provide staff with information will be done, ready for September.

Program Launch - October 2002
A launch with the media to focus on this new program will showcase several of our most successful Park partnerships and highlight opportunities for the public' s consideration.

PARK PARTNERS Program - Resources Required

We have developed preliminary cost estimates for the initial activities required to get the program started:

Design and development of the communication tools for the Program	\$5,000
Printing of brochures, media kits, workshop handouts etc.....	\$10,000
Software package and data entry support for a PARK PARTNER Program database	\$5,000
Total Required	\$20,000

It is proposed that these costs be funded through the Corporate Sponsorship Program under the criteria, 3. *To fund one-time expenditures over and above the existing funding level in the operating budget which are beneficial to the overall Parks and Recreation system.*

SUMMARY

There have been many successful partnerships with individuals and groups in the Park Board system but they have been primarily focused on recreation. The interest in stewardship projects and events in parks has been on the increase but there may be areas of the community that are not aware of the opportunities to connect their interests in parks. Staff are recommending the creation of a PARK PARTNER Program that encourages participation, creates opportunities and support those ideas that are of benefit to the community and the Park Board.

To get the program started, staff recommend that the PARK PARTNER Program name be used and a media launch and a communications strategy and supporting tools be developed. Staff will assist in refining this proposal in September with a proposed launch in October. A number of pilot projects will be used to assess and refine our ongoing communication protocols, approval processes and the support that is required with the intent to enhance the Program and evaluate its accomplishments.

Start-up funding of \$20,000 is required and is recommended to be provided from the Corporate Sponsorship Program.

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