



Date: February 3, 2005

TO: Board Members - Parks and Recreation
FROM: General Manager - Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: ACCOMPLISHMENTS REPORT 2004

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Board receives this report for information.

DISCUSSION

Accomplishments Report 2004

Quality Programs and Services

In 2004, the Park Board continued to provide a wide range of quality programs that enrich the lives of the City's residents. Delivered directly and through partners and affiliated groups, these parks and recreation programs played a major role in building healthy families, communities, lifestyles, environments and economy.

Day to day services include...

- **People** – The Park Board provides leisure programs and services that include instruction and programming for recreational, fitness and sport activities, and supports a wide range of related activities such as environmental education, community art programs, and services for children, youth and seniors. The Board also maintains some of Vancouver's most valued tourist destinations and services which support the economic well-being of the City.
- **Places** – The Park Board provides and maintains a variety of recreation, service and park facilities – community centres, rinks, pools, fitness centres, sport courts, dining facilities in parks, field houses, clubhouses and marinas.
- **And, Parks** – The Park Board is the caretaker of the City's parks and open spaces. These include feature and neighborhood parks, playing fields, playgrounds, beaches, golf courses, display gardens and the thousands of trees that line Vancouver's streets.

The Park Board programs in Vancouver are diverse and popular:

- 220 parks comprising 1,300 hectares of land
 - Includes 3 large destination parks (Stanley Park, Queen Elizabeth Park and VanDusen Gardens)
 - 14.2 million visitors annually to the 3 parks
- 23 Community Centres
 - Including 9 indoor and 6 outdoor pools, 23 fitness centres, 8 ice rinks
 - 5 million visits annually to the community centres
- 3 Golf Courses and 3 Pitch & Putts
 - 320,000 rounds annually on the courses
- 124 grass playing fields, 3 artificial turf playing fields, 147 playgrounds
- 141 softball and baseball diamonds, almost 200 tennis and sports courts
- 18 kilometres of beaches

Overview of 2004

The year's many achievements included stunning new parks, expanded and refreshed community facilities, exciting and diverse programs, updated policies, better information for the public, improved technology, and more ways to consult with and engage residents – all focused on enhancing the well being of Vancouver's citizens and neighborhoods. Amid the accomplishments, the Park Board also faced a number of unique issues. Working with other city agencies, the organization prepared for and successfully managed operational challenges during the year to help ensure public safety and continue service to park patrons, including: health concerns around a rabies outbreak in Stanley Park; planning and readiness for fire in the urban forest and homelessness in city parks; and budget shortfalls caused by unprecedented construction cost escalation on a number of capital projects.

This report highlights the key accomplishments, enhanced programs and new services of the Board, staff and partners in support of the Strategic Plan in 2004.

I. Programs and Services

Strategic Objective: Building a service focused organization

Accomplishments:

As part of our responsibility to promote healthy living, a continued focus was placed on servicing the open space, recreation and leisure needs of Vancouver's diverse population and on achieving excellence in programming particularly for families and youth.

Special Events and Programs

Commitment to multiculturalism and the arts in everyday life continued to grow through activities and projects at community centres and parks. Six years after an extensive

consultative process for the siting of the monument, the Park Board helped unveil the Vancouver **AIDS Memorial** overlooking English Bay at Sunset Beach. In the area of **public art**, the Light Shed, a donated sculpture recognizing the unique history of the waterfront, was prominently situated on the Coal Harbour seawall; another sculpture donation was accepted from the Chilean community and located on the waterfront in Cardero Park; approval was given to develop an **Open Spaces Sculpture Exhibit**, an installation of art from world sculptors on parks and beaches throughout the City. **Diwali Week**, a diverse schedule of special programs, was held in many community centres to mark this significant cultural holiday. A plan was approved for arts and events **programming in Downtown Eastside** park and open spaces, to improve liveability of the area. 'Monsters in the Meadow' summer series of **free outdoor movies** in Stanley Park was attended by an enthusiastic crowd of 2,000. The Park Board produced '**City Edge - Vancouver's Recaptured Waterfront**', a documentary highlighting the downtown's waterfront history and creative park redevelopment over the past two decades.

Increased Accessibility

Engaging the public in the parks and recreation system helps promote wellness, invites diversity and creates fair access. During the year, there were many opportunities – through outreach and technologies - to inform, involve and consult with residents.

The Park Board continued its popular series of **community Board meetings and public Committee meetings** to bring decision making closer to neighbourhoods and allow for greater dialogue with residents. **Public consultations** were held on a host of major projects and issues. A public open house on the 2005 Operating Budget allowed residents to participate in the planning process, increase their understanding of services and programs, and share ideas. Other open houses and workshops served to get public feedback and input on the Everett Crowley Management Plan (issues and strategies), Riley Hillcrest Master Plan (development options), Gingerbread House Day Care (relocation), Sunset Community Centre (plans and models), Synthetic Turf (possible field sites), Kingcrest Park (park redevelopment), Aquarium (education centre redevelopment), Mount Pleasant Park (proposed pool closure) and #1 Kingsway (plans and services for new civic facility).

The Park Board worked with the City and community partners in a **consultative process** on public involvement and planning around major projects including the future of PNE/Hastings Park, Southeast False Creek and East Fraserlands. Public suggestions were invited for the park naming at **8th & Fraser**, involving the East Vancouver neighbourhood in the process. Following extensive consultation through the web site and distribution of community information, **off-leash dog park** hours were changed and extended at selected parks in response to feedback received from dog owners and other residents. The second phase of the **Beaver Lake Accessible Trail**, a joint project with BC Rehab and Rock 101, was opened with the wheelchair accessible trail linking Beaver Lake to the Seawall through one of the park's most scenic areas.

New Technologies

The Park Board implemented several new ways to improve customer service through technology. **On line recreation registration** was introduced to allow convenience and easy access for registration from home computers. After a successful pilot program at two community centres, four more centres were added by year end, with roll out to continue through 2005. Browsing and sign up for a wide variety of programs is now available via the Park Board's web site. **On line golf reservations** were launched, making bookings easier and faster for golfers. Features of the new program include e-mail confirmations of tee times and access to specials and discounts. The new internet tee times have already proven to be a popular option at McCleery, Fraserview and Langara public courses.

Communicating with Residents and Visitors

Marketing and communications activities increased awareness of and involvement in parks and recreation activities. Expanded door-to-door distribution of the 48 page **Leisure Guide and Annual Report** gave residents information about services and programs and promoted public recreation facilities and parks. A public launch of the **redesigned web site** officially brought a new, more intuitive address (www.vancouverparks.ca) and many updates and improvements such as colourful feature boxes, better navigation, expanded content and feedback opportunities. Traffic on the new web site increased 17 % compared to 2003. Completion of the new **Stanley Park signage** program improved roadside and wayfinding signs and destination information throughout the park. Communications support and information were provided to a wide variety of **media** interested in Park Board programs, services, policies and issues, with more than 100 news releases issued and some 300 media inquiries fielded during the year.

Strategic Objective: Developing partner and stakeholder relationships

Accomplishments:

An emphasis was put on enhancing alliances, building new and innovative relationships and coordinating service with others, all to help achieve the organization's mandate. Users of our Park Board services and programs were encouraged to become active stakeholders, partners and stewards.

Partnerships

The **ParkPartners program**, in its third year, continued to develop and enhance park stewardship opportunities with fifty active community groups and organizations. 2004 highlights included invasive plant removal by Jericho Park Stewardship Group, Dog Day Afternoon at Trout Lake, and the newly formed Point Grey Village Gardeners native plant community garden at Trimble Park. The Stanley Park Ecology Society partnered with the Park Board on the Ivy Busters program in the park to restore natural habitat. An Ideas Fair for partner groups and volunteers is planned for Spring 2005.

Community Alliances

A task force of community centre associations and Park Board staff delivered a final report on **Joint Operating Agreements** that includes recommendations to renew and strengthen the unique partnership that delivers recreation services in the city. As a result of the community based approach to deliver Vancouver's **Emergency Social Services** (ESS) programs, a number of Park Board facilities are earmarked as safe havens for residents in times of emergencies. In 2004, nearly 500 registered volunteers participated in special events, training days, functional exercises and emergency operations centre activations. The Disaster Assistance team went to 33 evacuations in the City and helped more than 175 residents find emergency shelter, food, clothing, trauma counselling and other services. Vancouver ESS volunteers travelled to Lillooet, Pemberton, Squamish and the North Shore to help with forest fires, floods and mudslides.

Inter-agency Cooperation

With heightened awareness of the fire risks in natural woodland parks in the city, the Park Board played a key role in an inter-agency group that met in 2004 to develop a coordinated and proactive approach to **fire readiness**. Working with Fire & Rescue Services and the Greater Vancouver Regional District, the Park Board shared plans, information, resources, training and communications around fire prevention, suppression and protection in the urban forests, particularly Stanley, Everett Crowley and Jericho Parks as well as Pacific Spirit Park. A city-wide steering committee was formed to share information, coordinate resources and activities, and develop strategies around **encampments** in parks and on city lands. The inter-agency group, comprised of City, Park Board, Fire, Police and Health staff, met regularly and published principles and guidelines for the City and Park Board response. Training sessions were held for staff. The Park Board and Police also shared information, protocols and ideas around homeless persons living in Stanley Park. In cooperation with City and Health officials, Park Board wildlife staff developed communications and protocols, and managed **public health** concerns around a series of rabid skunks in Stanley Park.

Environmental Leadership

The Park Board's commitment to sustainability was continued through environmental leadership by a variety of conservation measures, alternative energies, technologies, advocacy for a more natural landscape and promotion of the urban ecology. The Park Board endorsed City Council Report recommending the **reduction of pesticide use** on private lawns and gardens further supporting the Integrated Pest Management program implemented over 15 years ago. In support of this, a new 'Grow Natural' education and awareness campaign was developed. As an active participant in the 'Cool Vancouver' initiatives, a number of **energy efficiency measures** were introduced to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through capital improvements at Park Board facilities and through management practices. These measures included installing high efficiency furnaces, insulation and building controls, as well as downsizing the number and size of fleet vehicles and ordering advanced technology diesel-powered cars. Led by the Park Board and the Stanley Park Ecology Society, an ages-old style of earthen architecture

brought together dozens of volunteer hands and feet to build a **Cob House** in Stanley Park, preparing sand, straw and clay “cobs” to build the sustainable structure. Stewards of the **urban forest**, the Park Board planted 3,500 trees in 2004, bringing the total of street trees in Vancouver to approximately 130,000. Thousands of trees were also pruned, removed, inspected – for safety and beautification. Arboriculture staff organized volunteers to band trees against winter moth infestation and to rake leaves for the elderly. Public planting events at remnant woodland sites included Earth Day at Everett Crowley Park. In a program to recognize efforts of neighbourhood gardeners, a first time city-wide **Up Front Garden Contest** was held in partnership with the Garden Club of Vancouver.

Planning and Policy

By working with partners, stakeholders, city colleagues and the community, the Board was able to develop long-term strategies and plans to better serve residents. Following an evaluation of the organization’s work to date and with input from the Board, management and staff, changes were drafted to update and refresh the **Strategic Plan**, to lead the organization into the next three years. Further public discussion will take place in 2005. The new **Ice Allocation policy** was completed to ensure customer service improvement and financial sustainability of ice rinks, and to allow for centralized allocation and booking. **Stanley Park Commemorative Integrity Statement** was adopted for Vancouver’s first park, acknowledging its status as a National Historic Site, and as a reference for future decision making. Working with the City and School Board, new **child care protocols** were put in place to provide direction for improved policy coordination and integration around licensed daycare programs in community centres and on park lands.

Active Living

The Park Board is champion of personal and community health and well being. In late 2004, the Board joined forces with the City and the Province to accept the challenge of increasing regular physical activity of residents **20% by 2010**. As a key player in promoting active living, the Park Board will be putting together a host of programs over the next five years to meet the 20 by 2010 target. A first step was the approval of the Olympic Youth Legacy framework and action plan to encourage young people to be more active and involved in arts, culture and sports. Pilot programs launched by year end included “Chillin’ on Ice” late night skating and “Get Out!”, a fun, youth-driven initiative to fund and support youth ideas. Other active living plans to date include a new program to market recreation benefits and services at rinks, pools and fitness centres across the City, and more opportunities for teens.

II. Parks and Recreation Facilities

Strategic Objective: Infrastructure renewal

Accomplishments:

The Park Board set goals to meet the challenge to renew large and small facilities and parks within the 117 year old system, and to achieve quality of service and cost effective operation. Renewing the Park Board's many assets, be they green spaces or recreation facilities, continued as a high priority to meet continual growth and public expectations, and foster healthy living.

New Parks

George Wainborn Park, a jewel of a waterfront park for the growing Yaletown neighbourhood, opened at year end. Named after the longest serving Park Board Commissioner, the expansive park includes a dramatic water feature, formal and informal lawns, unique yellow Adirondack chairs, a seawall and spectacular views. The **Downtown Skateboard Plaza**, Vancouver's first dedicated skate park, opened in September to rave reviews. Designed by and with skate boarders, the street-style plaza incorporates special textures and surfaces and replicated skateable features. Six new **Playgrounds** were completed at Beaconsfield, Kensington, Kerrisdale, Delamont, Slocan and CRAB Parks - designed with community input to better meet the needs of a new generation of children and parents. The first new **synthetic turf** location in the city was approved at Kerrisdale Park/Point Grey Secondary School to address the requirements of field sport users.

Park Renewals

The last phase of the multi-year restoration of **Victory Square**, considered one of the most significant civic sites, was completed in time for the Remembrance Day ceremony . It included a new plaza and amphitheatre showcasing the cenotaph, helping to make the park safer, busier and more attractive for all users. **Strathcona Park** was upgraded via a small skate park, playfields and pathways, highlighting the success of a community-supported park initiative. A new community garden, skateboard facility, arbour and mosaic stream enhanced and expanded **Tea Swamp Park**. **Heather Park** was renewed through landscape enhancements and new seating areas helping to meet the neighbourhood's needs for greenspace. The popular **Stanley Park Seawall** underwent improvements and upgrades to widen it and better serve the mixed useage of walkers, bladers and bikers. The playing field at **Sunrise Park** was upgraded with drainage, irrigation and turf improvements.

Community and Recreation Centre Upgrades

The design was approved for the replacement of **Sunset Community Centre** – one of Vancouver's oldest community facilities - with plans to build to LEED Silver standard of environmental design and sustainability. Opening is targeted for mid 2006. **False Creek Community Centre** was expanded with an addition that included a new gym and larger

fitness area to meet the growing needs of the community. As part of the long term aquatic renewal strategy, work was undertaken on two of Vancouver's swimming pools. The **Renfrew Pool** was completely rebuilt with extensive upgrades to its tank and deck plus new hot pool and sauna, as well as fitness centre expansion. The pool reopened in early 2005. The design was approved and construction began on the **Killarney Pool**, the first new indoor aquatic facility in 25 years. The replacement pool is scheduled to open in the fall of 2005, and will feature a 'green' building with reduced use of energy and water.

Other Facilities

Ground breaking took place for the new **Millennium Sports Facility** which will house the Phoenix Gymnastics and Pacific Bowling Clubs on a public park through a unique partnership. Construction commenced for the new two-storey waterfront **Kitsilano Beach restaurant** and public facilities with plans to open in 2005. Replacement and upgrade of a number of ageing **day care portables** were approved.

III. Future Financial Sustainability

Strategic Objective: Sound planning and practices

Accomplishments:

The Park Board sought to safeguard quality service delivery through careful planning and administration, financial accountability and a program of resource stabilization and diversification.

Over the past 3 years the Board has increases in both operating revenues and program expenditures, as shown in the table below:

Park Board:	2004	2003	2002	Change between 2004 & 2002
Expenditures	83,903,674	81,601,694	77,886,823	6,016,851
Less: Fees and Charges	(32,462,275)	(31,527,889)	(31,216,074)	(1,246,201)
Budgeted COV Funds	(52,070,906)	(49,813,569)	(47,594,209)	4,476,697
Surplus/(Deficit)	629,507	(260,236)	923,460	

Gross expenditures have increased by \$6 million (8%) over the past three years. These increases have resulted from new/expanded capital expenditures (Added Basic), new Board initiatives, increases for inflation (for supplies and collective agreement increases), and increases in loan payments for golf.

Added Basic increases are for new and redeveloped parks and facilities, such as David Lam, Harbour Green, Strathcona and George Wainborn parks, Kerrisdale and False Creek Community Centre expansions, and park amenities such as benches, playgrounds, water features, street trees, and small equipment.

Increased expenditures for Board initiatives includes additional support for Arts & Multicultural programs, the expanded Ranger program, and increased support for planning, special events, festivals and district offices.

Increases for inflation are obviously spread throughout the organization, with the exception of additional expenditures for the increased payments made to the golf course loan. There have also been expanded programs at community centres, such as West Point Grey, Marpole, Kerrisdale, and Dunbar. The resulting additional expenditures are shared by the Community Associations.

Also shown in the table above, revenues received by the Board from fees and charges have increased over the last 3 years. Since 2002, the majority of increases in revenues have come from golf, community centres, parking, leases, and outdoor pools. The closure of the two indoor pools in 2004 has had an impact on net recreation revenues of approximately \$450,000, but once the new facilities open, this temporary decrease will be alleviated. Overall, the Board has been successful in generating additional revenues to offset increasing costs and support Board initiatives.

While the Board has been able to increase revenues from fees and charges, it has also secured additional funding from the City of Vancouver to support new and expanded parks and facilities and address inflationary pressures. Over the past three years the Board has received almost \$4.5 million in additional funds, which represents a 9% increase in the net budget. As a result the financial position of the Board has been secured so that it may continue to provide parks, facilities and programs in a sustainable manner.

In view of the number of new and expanded facilities, parks and programs, and the ongoing challenge of raising sufficient revenues to cover almost 40% of its expenditures from social/seasonal dependant sources subject to market fluctuations, the Board has effectively managed its budget. As shown in the table above, the Board has posted surpluses in two of the last three years through careful monitoring and management of resources and by adapting to emerging issues. While the Board did have a small deficit in 2003 (½ of 1% of the net budget), it was attributed to a funding shortfall for utilities, which has since been addressed by the City. The Board's demonstrated responsible approach to managing its financial resources in a sustainable manner has been recognized and supported by the City.

A new Celebration Pavilion for weddings, memorial services and other events in Queen Elizabeth Park was approved and is planned to open in late 2005. An **innovative financing approach** was used to fund this project, which will save the Park Board \$500,000 in interest charges and provide additional revenues for the Board in future. Funds were borrowed from Park Board Reserve accounts, which the Board currently receives no interest on, and will be paid back with interest from the revenues generated by the project.

To address the problem of **major cost escalations** on Park Board capital constructions

projects, which are due to rising construction costs in the range of 12 to 30% over the past 3 years, the Board approved measures to add funding to high priority capital works. This involved using the GST savings from the federal government, rethinking capital allocation monies from community amenity contributions and development cost levies, and reducing the scale of some projects in order to meet necessary infrastructure renewal programs.

A number of new strategies were adopted to put in place comprehensive **fundraising programs** for parks and recreation. Enhancements were made to the popular Gifts for Parks donations program, and dedicated resources approved to develop new fundraising initiatives with community partners, government and the non-profit and private sectors. In 2004, **Gifts for Parks** received donations from individuals, businesses and organizations for the installation of 123 benches, 6 picnic tables and the planting of 12 trees to improve amenities for parks and beaches. Several large donations included: funding for an elegant blue stone paved alcove featuring 3 benches and a low table for the Ted and Mary Grieg Rhododendron Garden; a bequest for the renovation of the tennis courts at Lost Lagoon and to establish an endowment fund for recreation programming in parks; and for improvements at VanDusen Gardens.

IV. Changing the way we work

Strategic Objective: Excellence in the workplace

Accomplishments:

Recognizing that staff is our greatest resource, the Park Board strove to fine tune the organization of services, improve the quality of life at work and increase workplace safety and security.

Employee Training

As an organization supportive of creativity and continual learning, the Park Board placed a high priority on **employee training** in 2004. Technical, professional development or other job related training opportunities were provided for staff throughout the year. A wide range of courses and workshops – on topics such as business writing, marketing, handling complaints, robbery prevention, media relations and supervisory skills - were signed up for by 150 front line workers and staff alike through the extensive ‘City Learn’ calendar. Employees also attended training sessions and conferences on topics such as horticulture, project management, sustainability, building designs, ethical purchasing and public works inspection. In-service sessions on attendance management, employment law, career development and workplace conduct were offered. Seventeen different health and safety training courses were conducted with 1,250 attendees. Two half-day **orientations** were held for 64 new employees to give them a unified vision of the organization. Sessions included interactive presentations on history, current issues, and employee roles and responsibilities

Health and Safety Initiatives

Incidents	Actual Incidents 2003	Actual Incidents 2004	% Decrease (Increase)
Medical aid injuries*	49	53	(8.2%)
Lost time injuries**	108	95	12.1%
Lost time recurrences	16	9	45.8%
Total incidents	173	157	9.2%

**Medical aid – injury which the employee sought medical attention of a general practitioner, but was able to work on their next scheduled work day*

*** Lost time – injury where the employee was off on compensation beyond the day of the incident*

The Park Board remained committed to providing a safe and healthy work environment for its employees. The Occupational Health & Safety program continued to move forward in the **reduction of injuries** to staff. Lost time incidents in 2004 were down more than 12%, lost time recurrences were lower by nearly 46%, and the overall number of incidents in the work place declined over 9%. The Park Board was in the fourth year of the five-year Workers Compensation Board Compliance Plan.

V. Awards

The Park Board was acknowledged for leadership and excellence by a number of groups during 2004.

Restoration of one of the organization’s earliest buildings earned the Park Board the **City of Vancouver Heritage Award** for the English Bay Bathhouse, which was brought up to date while preserving its architectural value.

Rick Hansen Wheels in Motion Accessibility Award for Leadership was given to the Park Board to highlight the progress, scope and excellence of accessibility in recreation programs across the city.

The Park Board’s role in supporting and developing lasting recreation programs for inner city families through “MoreSports” was recognized by the **Canadian Recreation and Parks Association’s Award of Excellence for Innovation.**

SUMMARY

In 2004, the Park Board strove to achieve its strategic objectives of delivering quality parks and recreation services. Faced with constant change and considerable challenges, the organization continued to provide ways to keep residents' lives balanced and healthy and the city beautiful and liveable.

From 2005 onwards, the Park Board will be guided by the directions of its new Strategic Plan (now at draft stage) which will focus on five strategic areas: Greening the Park Board, Engaging People, Working Together, Managing Resources and Meeting Future Challenges.

Prepared by:
Corporate Services
Board of Parks & Recreation
Vancouver, B.C.
AH/jc