

Date: January 23, 2006



TO: Board Members – Vancouver Park Board
FROM: General Manager – Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: Park Land Acquisition Strategy - Draft for Discussion

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Board receive the report entitled “Park Land Acquisition Strategy for Vancouver – Draft for Discussion”, attached as Appendix A, and instruct staff to undertake a public consultation process, as described in this report, to obtain feedback on the draft strategy.

POLICY

In 1992, the Park Board approved the Management Plan, which included the following park land acquisition policy: “land will continue to be acquired and consolidated for park use in the neighbourhoods with less than 1.1 hectares (2.75 acres) of park land per 1,000 residents and may be acquired in other areas if it has a unique or special merit or increases public access to the waterfront”.

BACKGROUND

At various times in its 120 year history, the Park Board or other civic agencies have prepared plans, policies and programs regarding park land acquisition. Key studies include:

- 1928 “A Plan for the City of Vancouver” (parks component);
- 1946 “Parks and Recreation and Schools” report;
- 1960 “Proposed Development Plan for Parks 1959-1976”;
- 1982 “Park Land Acquisition Priorities” report; and
- 1992 “Management Plan” (park acquisition component).

It has been more than a decade since the last major review of park land acquisition. There have been a number of significant contextual changes during this period, including:

- the conversion of most ‘let-go’ industrial lands to residential uses is either underway or in the planning stages;

- more medium density, medium scale housing is being provided, mostly without new parks;
- regulatory and/or financial tools to secure land or money for park acquisition are now well established;
- significant changes have occurred along the Fraser River, including the closing down of many river-oriented, forest-based industries; and
- the Vancouver Greenways Plan was approved in 1995.

Two notable features have not changed during this period:

- significant population growth is expected to continue over the next 10-15 years; and
- Fairview, Marpole, Mount Pleasant and Grandview-Woodland are still communities with major park deficiencies.

DISCUSSION

To address the changing context for park land acquisition, staff have prepared a draft “Park Land Acquisition Strategy for Vancouver”, attached as Appendix A, for discussion. It includes:

- an overview of Vancouver’s park system;
- a description of the ‘neighbourhood park’ ratio;
- a comparative analysis of park land provision in eight other cities in North America;
- a review of how much park land is needed in the future;
- methods to acquire park land; and
- considerations for park acquisition priorities in the future.

The report concludes with recommendations.

NEXT STEPS

The draft report will be posted on the Park Board’s website, and a copy sent to all Park Board partners, including all Community Associations and recreation clubs, academics involved in urban affairs, representatives from the development industry, and senior staff at City Hall.

Depending on the level of public interest, staff will organize one or two public workshops (half-day sessions). The focus of the workshop(s) is on obtaining feedback on the overall themes in the park land acquisition strategy, not on individual park acquisitions. Staff will also set up a feedback mechanism on the Park Board’s website.

An inter-departmental workshop will also be organized for senior staff at City Hall because park land acquisition needs to be discussed within the broad realm of municipal services. This step is similar to what occurred as part of the “Financing Growth” study several years ago.

Staff anticipate that the public consultation process can unfold between February and April 2006. Based on feedback received, staff will update the park land acquisition strategy and present it for adoption by the Park Board in the spring 2006.

SUMMARY

Vancouver's livability is closely associated with the quantity and quality of our park system. Our city faces a number of challenges with regards to park land acquisition, including increasing pressure due to population growth and uneven distribution of park space across the city. A draft Park Land Acquisition Strategy has been prepared and is ready to be reviewed by the public in order to obtain community feedback.

Prepared by:

Michel Desrochers
Planning and Operations
Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation
Vancouver, BC

:md