



CHAIR'S ANNUAL REPORT Strategic Accomplishment Highlights for 2013

Introduction

The Vancouver Park Board made significant progress in 2013 towards the four directions of the Strategic Plan, and continues to provide high quality parks and recreation services, programs and opportunities to our residents and visitors. Here are some highlights:

PRIORITY: Parks and Recreation for All

OneCard

The OneCard was launched in July, and has proven to be very popular with over 80,000 residents already signed up. This inclusive pass, a joint initiative between the Park Board and participating Community Centre Associations, ensures residents have universal access to Park Board recreation facilities, and also includes a built-in 50 percent Leisure Access Program subsidy for Vancouverites with financial barriers.

Artist in Fieldhouse Studios

Evolving from a pilot project, the Artist in Studio Residence Program now includes over 50 artists in parks field houses, park facilities, marinas, and community centres. In 2013, a parallel initiative began to explore a similar arrangement with sports groups to occupy park buildings adjacent to sport fields.

New Playgrounds

New playgrounds at John Hendry, Salsbury and Carleton Parks are the result of local community input. These creative playgrounds offer accessible play areas and surfaces for children with reduced mobility.

Tennis Court Improvements

Ten tennis courts were renovated at Kits Beach to address the public demand for high-quality playing surfaces, including five courts that meet international standards.

Burrard Marina

Improvements were made to the Burrard Marina, including renovated washrooms, new kayak and canoe racks, and enhanced Wi-Fi.

Saputo Vancouver Open

Highlighting our championship golf courses, the 7th annual Saputo Vancouver Open was another great success with the largest purse ever.

Service Planning and Delivery

With a focus on service planning and delivery, inventory and mapping of horticulture and turf was completed, and service standards for horticulture and urban forest operations refined.

Facility Visits

This was a record year for visits to recreational facilities, with more than 3 million pool and rink visits. We also saw over 50,000 learn-to-swim enrolments.



PRIORITY: Leader in Greening

New and Improved Parks

New parks were created this year, and others were greatly improved:

- A small new park established at Main and 18th provides urban park space in a fun and creative way.
- The restoration of Jericho Beach returned this historic beach to its original beauty, creating habitat for local plants and animals, and protecting the foreshore environment.
- Creekway Park opened as part of the Hastings Park Master Plan. This innovative project transformed a parking lot into an ecologically rich and diverse landscape, featuring a daylighted stream.
- The Master Plan was completed for Renfrew Ravine Park and Community Centre, and provides direction for park upgrades over the next 15 years.
- Renovations to Morton Park included reinforced footings for the popular A-maze-ing Laughter sculpture, viewing areas, new paths, and an irrigation system.
- Construction began on a new park at Trillium North, as well at Empire Fields, Plateau Park, and Park Greenways in Hastings Park.

Urban Forest Strategy

To help Vancouver reach the goal of being the Greenest City by 2020, work on the Urban Forest Strategy began. The strategy will roll out in 2014. To support this initiative, 10,000 trees were planted in 2013, including major plantings at Langara Golf Course, Stanley Park, and New Brighton Park. This goes towards the commitment to plant 150,000 trees by 2020.

Local Food Assets Plan

The creative and ambitious Local Food Assets Plan was completed, and includes 55 recommendations and high-priority action items to expand food assets in Vancouver parks and community centres. Out of this comprehensive plan was a pilot project to sell locally sourced foods at five park concessions over the summer.

Farmer's Markets

Working with other City departments, clean water sources were installed behind Kitsilano War Memorial Community Centre, Nelson Park, and Thornton Park to improve infrastructure for Vancouver's farmers' markets.

Stanley Park Boardwalks

The Cathedral and Tunnel boardwalks were built in Stanley Park to protect and restore the area's ecological health. These beautiful boardwalks also allow easier access to the forest trail for those with mobility challenges.

Environmental Education and Stewardship Task Force

The Environmental Education and Stewardship Task Force was created to learn from community expertise on how to advance education and stewardship opportunities in parks and community centres. The group will bring forward recommendations in mid-2014.

Green Operations Plan

The Park Board's first integrated and comprehensive Green Operations Plan was developed with a continued focus on reducing our carbon footprint, reducing waste and promoting healthy ecosystems.



Priority: Engaging People

Stanley Park 125th Anniversary

Celebrate! Stanley Park marked the 125th anniversary of the iconic park. Over fifty thousand residents and visitors took part in this free and accessible weekend festival in late August, which hosted over 200 performers, historical and nature tours, and sport demonstrations.

GEN 7 Program

In collaboration with local and national partners, the GEN 7 program was launched at five community centres this year. The program encourages Aboriginal youth to use recreational facilities and increase their involvement in community activities.

Bird Week Celebrations

Running May 4 - 11, the annual Bird Week Celebration was an awareness-raising campaign that highlighted the need to protect migratory birds and their habitats through a series of educational walks and talks.

Remarkable Women Honourees

This year's Remarkable Women series focused on the contributions of local women to local food communities, including production, security, and policy and education. Twelve Remarkable Women posters were displayed across the city in community centres, libraries, schools and public buildings.

Website

The website continues to be a highly utilized engagement and business tool. For 2013 the Parks and Recreation pages drove more than 40% of the overall web traffic, with approximately 800,000 unique visitors each quarter.

Social Media

Park Board social media continues to grow as a valuable tool to inform and engage residents, and now has 3,200 Facebook and 9,900 Twitter followers.

Public Consultations

Over 16 public open houses, workshops and online consultations were held in 2013 to give residents the opportunity to review and provide input into concepts, designs and plans for parks, facilities, and art projects.



Priority: Excellence in Resource Management

Investment in Cost-Effective Equipment

In 2013 the Park Board continued to improve the maintenance of park spaces by using new technologies and specialized equipment, including four new wide-area mowers (for a total of eight) that reduce time, increase productivity, and enhance sustainability.

Electric Vehicle/Cellular Units

Combined electric vehicle charging stations and cellular units were installed in three English Bay parks, as part of a unique business partnership with TELUS. The project supported green transportation and also increased cell phone capacity in the West End.

Marketing and Business Development

The Park Board established a new Marketing and Business Development Advisory Committee to assist in identifying and assessing new marketing and business development opportunities. As well, recreation marketing campaigns, including the 30 days for \$30 access pass, saw great success again this year promoting rinks, pools, and fitness centres.

Fundraising and Development

The Park Board raised close to \$1 million in donations this year through fundraising initiatives that include online giving, commemorative gifts, legacy giving and endowments. Fundraising provides a source of sustainable funding for park conservation initiatives and reduces reliance on tax dollars.

Financial Accountability

A number of steps were taken to improve the timely and accurate reporting of 2013 financial information, including the rollout of the Business Intelligence reporting tool and a monthly financial review to facilitate prompt management decisions. Staff monitored budgets carefully to ensure a balanced year-end position. The 2013 forecast shows a balanced net budget of \$57.7 million.

2013 Awards

Peer and industry awards are a valuable way of measuring success over the year.

- VanDusen Botanical Garden won two awards in 2013: named the Botanical Garden of the Year by the Canadian Garden Tourism Council; and the new Visitor Centre was honoured with the Wood Innovation Award by the Canadian Wood Council.
- A City and Park Board supported event, the Honda Celebration of Light, was named Best Festival in Canada at the 2013 Canadian Event Industry Awards.