



**Van
Play**
*Imagine
parks+recreation*

10 Goals to Shape the Next 25 Years

VANCOUVER'S PARKS & RECREATION

PROPOSED REPORT 2 | JULY, 2018



table of CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation.....	iii
VanPlay: Imagine Parks and Recreation.....	iv
What is this document?.....	v

TEN GOALS

Grow and Renew Assets.....	2
Protect Existing Parks and Spaces.....	4
Prioritize Delivery of Resources.....	6
Focus on Core Responsibilities.....	8
Adapt to Climate Change.....	10
Create a Green Network.....	12
Restore Wild Spaces.....	14
Foster Safety and Welcome.....	16
Seek Truth and Reconciliation.....	18
Secure Funding.....	20

END NOTES



VANCOUVER

BOARD OF PARKS AND RECREATION

The Vancouver Park Board is the only elected body of its kind in Canada. Formed in 1888 as a committee to manage the new Stanley Park, its history is as old as the city's itself. It has exclusive possession, jurisdiction, and control over more than 230 public parks in Vancouver and a large public recreation system of community centres, pools, rinks, fitness centres, golf courses, street trees, marinas, playing fields, and more.

The Vancouver Park Board's mission is to provide, preserve, and advocate for parks and recreation services to benefit all people, communities, and the environment. The elected nature of the Park Board, and the strength and focus of its mandate have resulted in urban parks and recreation that today hold an enviable and esteemed position world-wide.

The City of Vancouver, including the Vancouver Park Board, is regulated under the Vancouver Charter, a provincial statute. The Charter contains the rules that govern how the City operates, what bylaws City Council can create, and how budgets are set. The seven members of the Park Board (Commissioners) are nominated and elected at the same time and in the same manner as City Councilors.

The elected Park Board is supported by a dedicated team of over 2000 City of Vancouver staff who oversee everything from lifeguarding at our beaches, tending to colourful gardens, growing the lush urban forest, and fostering vibrant events, to crafting welcoming parks, facilities and services and much, much more.



Vancouver Park Board Strategic Vision:

To be the leader in parks and recreation by connecting people to greenspace, active living and community.

VANPLAY

imagine parks + recreation

Vancouver's stunning, world-class parks are the culmination of more than a century of committed effort by the Vancouver Park Board. From our world-renowned seawalls to our lush destination gardens to our network of vibrant neighbourhood parks, it's a legacy we're proud of.

What's next for parks and recreation in Vancouver? How do we respond to the challenges we are currently facing and thrive into the future?

To answer these questions the Park Board set out to create a new "Parks and Recreation Services Master Plan", we've called the journey "VanPlay." The first city-wide review of parks and recreation services we've done since 1992¹. In 2017 we commenced a robust data collection and analysis process, research on international best practice and consultation with the public, park board staff, partners, stakeholders and experts.

The result of this work is presented in four parts:

1. ***Vancouver's Parks and Recreation: Inventory and Analysis*** - a compendium to the current state of the City's parks and recreation system (2018)
2. ***Vancouver's Parks and Recreation: 10 Goals*** to shape the next 25 years – a set of aspirational statements to set the course for parks and recreation into the future - **this document** (2018)
3. ***Vancouver's Parks and Recreation: Strategic Big Moves*** – outlining bold strategies to deliver on the vision for the future over the next 25 years (2019)
4. ***Vancouver's Parks and Recreation: Playbook*** – the plan for implementation and operationalization of these big moves (2019)

WHAT IS this document?

This document sets out 10 unique goals intended to guide provision of outstanding parks and recreation opportunities for Vancouverites over the next 25 years.

Each action is supported by an explanation of work currently underway, trends and issues of note which describe “why” these are so important to take on, or continue to take on.

These goals were developed through public, partner, staff and stakeholder input and preliminary research into best practices and precedents from around the world.

We believe that this renewed focus will not only improve our parks and recreation, but also enrich the beauty and livability of Vancouver. Intended to be bold, the goals will set the course towards more equitable, accessible, inclusive and resilient parks and recreation over the next 25 years.

For information on how these actions will be realised over the next 25 years please see “Strategic Big Moves”(2019) and “The Playbook” (2019).

An aerial photograph of Vancouver, British Columbia, is the background of the page. The image is partially obscured by a large, solid pink shape that covers the top and left sides. Overlaid on the map are several white circles and a dotted white line. The circles contain text about community centres, distinct neighbourhoods, and parks. The dotted line outlines a specific area in the central part of the city.

24

Community Centres

24

*Distinct
Neighbourhoods*

240+

*Parks Throughout
Vancouver*

GOAL 1:

GROW AND RENEW PARKS, COMMUNITY CENTRES AND OTHER ASSETS

to Keep Pace with Population Growth
and Evolving Needs

Our green spaces and facilities keep us healthy and ensure our wellbeing by providing important venues for learning new skills, being outside, connecting with friends and neighbours, vibrant community cultural events, and playing sport.

Vancouver's growing population means more people with competing ideas of what a park should be. Some are looking for a quiet spot, some a setting for social gatherings, and still others a place to play sports. Increased density means a growing number of people with limited to no access to personal outdoor space. This has many of us looking to our city parks to fill that need.

Balancing these different interests, especially as they grow and change can be a challenge. The Park Board is committed to continually identifying,

through community engagement, data analysis, and mapping, each neighbourhood's dynamic needs, and adapting spaces and facilities to meet them.

Accommodating and balancing these needs can mean acquiring land for new parks, building community centres and facilities, renewing existing ones, or by making parks and facilities flexible enough to meet each community's interests as they change. These measures will not only allow us to address today's needs, they'll help us keep pace with tomorrow's.



**+125,000
RESIDENTS**

*are estimated to
move to Vancouver
over the next
25 years.²*

GOAL 2:

PROTECT EXISTING PARKS AND RECREATION SPACES

from Loss, Encroachment & Densification

While Vancouver has more park space today than it did 25 years ago, the significant increase in our population and the city's increasing density has put greater pressure on our parks' system. This is especially true in neighbourhoods like Vancouver's downtown, Mt. Pleasant, False Creek and the Cambie corridor where the majority of new residents are living in condos with little or no access to private outdoor space or to nature.

That means the park space we do have is working harder to meet our collective needs. That's why today it's more important than ever that we preserve our existing parks and recreation spaces not just for now, but for future generations.

With growth comes the necessity for new roads and upgraded infrastructure, but finding space for these is increasingly challenging and can result in encroachment on park uses. Shadows from new buildings adjacent to parks can dramatically change the nature of these green spaces and our enjoyment of them. And while the city has worked hard to balance the need for new buildings while maintaining solar access for

our parks and streets, the building of increasingly taller structures needs to be carefully considered. We believe that sunshine is a fundamental building block of our parks, which is why we're developing clear policy to help preserve it.

To prepare for tomorrow, we must preserve, honour and build upon what we have today. To that end, the Park Board is committed to increasing public awareness and understanding of the importance of Vancouver's existing park land to the city and its residents. By recognizing the value of our green spaces and recreation system, we're helping to safeguard them - not just today, but for many years to come.

A photograph of the Vancouver skyline across a body of water, with several high-rise buildings visible under a clear sky.

99%

*of Vancouverites live within
a ten-minute walk of a
greenspace (a level of
access second only to San
Francisco)³*



GOAL 3:

PRIORITIZE THE DELIVERY OF RESOURCES

to Where They are Needed Most

Vancouver is a city of diverse neighbourhoods with very different needs, including the need for parks and recreation facilities. Add to this, not all neighbourhoods of the city have equal access when it comes to the accessibility of green spaces⁴. That's why the Park Board is working to ensure the equitable delivery of our limited resources.

There are many ways to measure accessibility of parks – the walking distance to green spaces, the availability of public transportation or how many people are vying for use of the same patch of grass, the kinds of facilities and programs offered once you reach the park and whether those are what's needed for that particular community.

Some neighbourhoods require more resources in order to have the same level of access and service as others, which is why the Park Board is

developing a comprehensive mapping and analysis system to measure the accessibility of parks and services throughout Vancouver.

This process will allow us to locate those neighbourhoods that require additional services and to help address the shortfalls, because it is only by prioritizing our investments, including the renewal of older facilities, the building of new ones, and the acquisition of land for future park development, that we improve the accessibility of our parks and facilities for those who need them most.



The Park Board
coordinates with

100+
PARTNERS

government, community
and nonprofit to deliver
exceptional services.⁵

GOAL 4:

FOCUS ON CORE RESPONSIBILITIES

of The Park Board, and be a Supportive Ally to Partners

At the Park Board, there is a limit to our budget and resources, and that affects our ability to meet all of the public demand for amenities and services. This sometimes means having to say no to exciting new opportunities. By coordinating with and enabling our hardworking partner organizations, we can share the planning, funding and delivery of many aspects of our parks' system, allowing the Park Board to focus on its crucial core responsibilities.

The Vancouver Park Board has a proud history of providing outstanding, affordable park and recreation experiences – from adventure playgrounds, to stunning public gardens, to lifeguards on duty at our beautiful beaches. Helping us to build on those valuable services are dozens of trusted partner organizations, including Community Centre Associations that encourage health and wellbeing through educational, cultural, social and sports programming.

By continuing to develop and foster fair, inclusive and innovative relationships with our partners, we can ensure the delivery of programming and services to Vancouver's diverse communities.

Meanwhile, we at the Park Board can take the time to revisit and, when needed, recalibrate our core responsibilities allowing us to continue to meet the needs of the public and our partners.



SEA
LEVEL
RISE
threatens
11%
*of Vancouver's
landmass.⁶*

+1M
*of rise predicted in
next 80 years⁷*

GOAL 5:

ADAPT OUR PARKS AND RECREATION AMENITIES

to a Changing Climate

Our rapidly changing climate can already be felt in Vancouver, with warmer, wetter winters and hotter, drier summers. These changes will have numerous implications for people, parks and infrastructure. So how do we prepare for the difficult road ahead? At the Park Board, we have already begun to protect our population and our green spaces, both for today and the decades ahead.

Scientists predict that sea levels in Vancouver may rise by a meter in the next 80 years⁸. Now consider that those rising waters will threaten some of our most precious shoreline parks and beaches. The Park Board is working to safeguard our waterfront by rebuilding aging seawalls to withstand more powerful storm surges, and helping to restore our coasts' natural resiliency by re-establishing the wetlands and salt marsh that helped protect them.

Robust, drought tolerant vegetation is also key to adapting our green spaces to a changing climate. By changing our palette of plants and trees, our parks and green areas can thrive despite reduced rainfall and increasingly warmer temperatures. These measures are allowing us to significantly decrease

our water use, while continuing to provide beautiful park spaces.

Helping the people in our communities deal with climate change is also integral to the Park Board. Planting additional and more adaptable trees in neighbourhoods that lack green canopy provides shade and reduces temperatures. And by opening up our community centres during periods of extreme heat or cold, we can provide vulnerable residents with a comfortable and secure place.

These measures will not only work to protect and preserve our environment, they will help maintain the safety of our citizens and the health and beauty of our parks.

At
22KM*

*Vancouver has the
longest continuous*

SEAWALL

in the world⁹



*NOTE: approximate length of connected seawall for recreational access – Canada Place to Alder Bay.

GOAL 6:

CREATE A GREEN NETWORK

That Will Connect Our Parks, Waterfront and Recreation Areas

The Park Board has a history of big ideas, none more influential than our world-renowned 22-km seawall. But for many areas of the city access to the waterfront is very limited. Along the Fraser River, shoreline access is restricted and on the east side the Port of Vancouver occupies much of the waterfront.

Although Vancouver's well-loved parks are well distributed across neighbourhoods, connecting to and from our green spaces and recreation areas can be a challenge. To address that, we envision a vast network of running and walking paths, bike routes, and green corridors. This network will provide pathways for the movement of urban wildlife, and a place to showcase rainwater management, while allowing pedestrians and cyclists to travel safely from park to park. You'll be able to easily connect from the downtown core to our city's beautiful shorelines, and include a visit to the park into your everyday routine.

At the Park Board, we're working to not only preserve and reclaim our waterfront, but to make it more accessible to everyone. Creating a citywide network of parks, greens spaces, shorelines and recreation areas will dramatically change the way we navigate our city and enhance our commutes to work, school and recreation. And by integrating exercise into our day-to-day lives, we improve our health and well being while seeing the city from a new perspective.



There are
83
**GREAT
BLUE
HERON**
*nests in
Stanley Park¹⁰*



GOAL 7:

RESTORE VANCOUVER'S WILD SPACES

and Vital Biodiversity

Although Vancouver is surrounded by wild spaces, the city itself has very few of them. You've told us that you want more access in the city to nature, including the opportunity to watch birds, see salmon spawn or just admire majestic trees. The Park Board is working to restore the city's environmental integrity by reintroducing wild spaces, monitoring the health of ecosystems, rehabilitating our shorelines and re-establishing our tree canopy.

In the years prior to the development of environmental values and legislation, many of Vancouver's streams were filled in and much of its forests cleared. Today just 6% of the city's natural areas are still intact.¹¹

That's why the Park Board is supporting the region's naturally rich biodiversity by enhancing habitat for birds, restoring salt marsh at New Brighton Park, daylighting creeks and streams, planting trees throughout the city to improve the health of our forest canopy, and encouraging stewardship so city residents can actively take part in the care and protection of our urban forest and natural areas.

We have much to learn from Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh nations who have managed and stewarded the landscape since time immemorial. Their knowledge of horticultural cultivation, sustainability, and the preservation of ecological balance has the potential to transform our relationship with nature.

Continuing to grow, protect and enhance our natural areas and wild spaces ensures that they not only improve access to nature for us humans, but also provide healthy habitat and valuable corridors for our rich bird and urban wildlife population.



Men



TRANS
PEOPLE
WELCOME

**MORE
THAN
HALF**

*of Vancouverites
feel a sense of*

**community
belonging¹²**

GOAL 8:

FOSTER A SYSTEM OF PARKS AND RECREATION SPACES

That Are Safe and Welcoming to All


A core value of the Park Board is the desire to create welcoming parks and recreation services for all. That's why we are committed to improving the safety and inclusiveness of our spaces through programming, education, activities, events, and enhanced park design.

Vibrant, well-lit green spaces and recreational facilities contribute to our physical and mental health by allowing all members of the community to connect with nature and enjoy the outdoors. Safe, inclusive parks also encourage social connections, helping to alleviate feelings of loneliness and isolation and improving our overall resilience.

At the Park Board, we will continue to foster a welcoming environment for all, regardless of income, ability, gender, sexual orientation, age, or ethnicity. Our initiatives include our Leisure Access Program, which makes

recreation more affordable for low-income residents; gender neutral washrooms, upgraded pathways, beach mats and Jericho's new adaptive pier to improve access for persons with disabilities; and swim and fitness programs that offer a safe space for the Trans, Gender Diverse and Two-Spirited communities.

By fostering an environment of inclusiveness, and community connectedness we are ensuring our green spaces and recreational facilities remain safe and welcoming places for everyone.



*In 2016, the Park
Board endorsed*

11

STRATEGIES

*to advance the Truth and
Reconciliation Commission in
programs and facilities.¹³*



GOAL 9:

SEEK TRUTH AS A FOUNDATION FOR RECONCILIATION

With Musqueam, Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh Nations

The City of Vancouver was founded on the unceded territories of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh, and those Nations have endured decades of unjust treatment at the hands of the colonizers. At the Park Board, we are committed to the hard work of truth telling; the acknowledgment that First Nations are integral rights holders in the future of public parks and lands; the important process of reconciliation with the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations; and working towards a relationship built on equality and reciprocity.

Our steps towards reconciliation have included hiring a reconciliation planner along with Canada's first archaeologist with a specific focus on First Nations cultural history. Going forward we are committed to celebrating Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh art, stories and culture.

Continued training and supporting Park Board staff will ensure we continue to listen and grow, especially as we take on planning and programming of parks to reflect First Nations values. This knowledge and capacity building on First

Nations values and world-views can have tremendous impact on the design of our green spaces, the ongoing introduction of aboriginal language, and the programming of events that clearly and visibly reflect First Nations communities.

By acknowledging First Nations' intricate understanding of the environment we can improve our collective stewardship of the land, allowing people from all backgrounds to continue to experience and enjoy our cherished parks.



Park Board

funding

from the **Development
Cost Levy program** has
been reduced by

23%¹⁴

GOAL 10:

SECURE ADEQUATE AND ONGOING FUNDING

for The Repair, Renewal and Replacement of our Aging Parks and Recreation System

Today, Vancouver's parks are at a major crossroads. Many of our green spaces were created and their facilities built nearly half a century ago. Now they're in need of significant repair. At the Park Board, we're looking to secure funding dedicated to the ongoing maintenance of our green spaces, and the renewal and replacement of our aging recreation facilities.

Many of Vancouver's recreation spaces and facilities were created during a rapid period of growth in the 1960's, 70's and 80's. Now these facilities are showing their age and their renewal and repair is necessary. Our city's growing population also means more people are using our recreation spaces, which increases their ongoing upkeep and repair costs.

With limited funds available for the maintenance, renewal and replacement of existing parks and facilities, we at the Park Board are faced with some tough decisions about where we

allocate what money we do have. That's why we're working towards funding that prioritizes looking after these valuable green and recreation spaces. Avenues include the development of new funding and donor partnerships, factoring full life-cycle costing into our financial planning and thoughtful consideration of commercial opportunities.

These strategies will not only improve the publics' enjoyment of our parks and recreation amenities today, they will safeguard their long-term sustainability for future generations.

END NOTES

- 1 Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation. *Management Plan*. Vancouver, BC, May 1992.
- 2 City of Vancouver. *A Portrait of Social Infrastructure in Vancouver*. Vancouver, BC, 2016.
- 3 Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation. *Park Provision Study*. Vancouver, BC, 2016 / 2018.
- 4 Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation. *Vancouver's Parks & Recreation: Inventory & Analysis*. Vancouver, BC, 2018.
- 5 City of Vancouver & Greenest City 2020. *Climate Change Adaption Strategy*. Vancouver, BC, 2012.
- 6 City of Vancouver & Northwest Hydraulic Consultants. *Coastal Flood Risk Assessment*. Vancouver, BC, 2014.
- 7 City of Vancouver & Greenest City 2020. *Climate Change Adaption Strategy*. Vancouver, BC, 2012.
- 8 Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation. *Vancouver's Parks & Recreation: Inventory & Analysis*. Vancouver, BC, 2018.
- 9 Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation. *Vancouver's Parks & Recreation: Inventory & Analysis*. Vancouver, BC, 2018.
- 10 Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation. *Biodiversity Strategy*. Vancouver, BC, 2016.
- 11 Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation. *Biodiversity Strategy*. Vancouver, BC, 2016.
- 12 City of Vancouver. *A Portrait of Social Infrastructure in Vancouver*. Vancouver, BC, 2016.
- 13 City of Vancouver, News. "Park Board approves 11 recommendations in response to Truth and Reconciliation Commission." Vancouver, BC, January 12, 2016.
- 14 City of Vancouver. *Community Benefits from Development*. Vancouver, BC, 2017.

