



July 13, 2018

TO: Park Board Chair and Commissioners
FROM: General Manager – Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: VanPlay - Parks & Recreation Inventory & Analysis and Goals

RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation approve “Vancouver’s Parks and Recreation: Inventory and Analysis”, as outlined in this report and attached within Appendix A, to describe the current state of parks and recreation in Vancouver; and
- B. THAT the Board approve “Vancouver’s Parks and Recreation; 10 Goals to shape the next 25 years”, as outlined in this report and attached within Appendix B, to set guiding principles the future of parks and recreation in Vancouver.

BOARD AUTHORITY / PREVIOUS DECISIONS

- As per the [Vancouver Charter](#), the Park Board has exclusive jurisdiction and control over park land use in the City of Vancouver, including any structures, programs and activities, fees, and improvements that occur within parks.
- [Greenest City Action Plan](#) (2010): Sets two targets to improve access to nature (150,000 trees and 5 min walk to greenspace).
- [Vancouver Sport Strategy](#) (2008): The Vancouver Sport Strategy is a roadmap for sport in Vancouver. We are the first city to create a sport strategy within the Canadian Sport for Life framework.
- [Park Board Strategic Framework](#) (2012): Includes five strategic directions, one of which is Greening the Park Board. The plan states that that the “preservation and enhancement of the natural environment is a core responsibility of the Park Board” and that the Board “will develop sustainable policies and practices that achieve environmental objectives while meeting the needs of the community”.
- [Building a Path to Parks and Recreation for All](#) (2014): Outlines 77 recommendations to reduce barriers for trans* and gender diverse community members. The steering committee implements the reports mid- and long-term recommendations
- [Urban Forest Strategy](#) (2014): Policy and operational guidelines to enhance the urban forest on private lands, streets, and parks.
- [Bird Strategy](#) (2015): Celebrates the importance of birds in Vancouver, and provides voluntary landscape and architectural guidelines to enhance urban bird habitats.
- [Economic Access Policy](#) (2016): To ensure that all residents of Vancouver have access to basic programs and services provided by the Board of Parks and Recreation.

- [Biodiversity Strategy](#) (2016): Increase the amount and ecological quality of Vancouver's natural areas to support biodiversity and enhance access to nature.

Vancouver Park Board Strategic Vision: "To be the leader in parks and recreation by connecting people to greenspace, active living and community"

The Board has been updated via report references throughout the project thus far;

- July 24, 2017 – *Phase 1 Project Update* which provided the early results of VanPlay's Phase 1 "Discovery" community engagement; and an update on ongoing technical content development for the master plan.
- November 6, 2017 – *Content Development Update* which provided a high level project update on VanPlay and developing content of the master plan including inventory and trends, opportunities and vulnerabilities, emerging strategies and next steps.

BACKGROUND

The last Parks and Recreation master plan was completed in 1992, more than twenty-five years ago, and although foundational, Vancouver has changed dramatically in the intervening years. A new city-wide master plan is required to provide a significant update to long range planning, policy and service goals for the Park Board. The new master plan will provide updated thinking to address contemporary issues, major social trends and environmental considerations. Through the Capital Plan budgeting process 2015-2018, funds were identified and dedicated for the master planning process, which began in late 2016.

A master plan is a long range planning tool to determine service gaps, analyze growth trends and identify opportunities for improvements. It is a visionary document that sets the values and goals for current and future parks and facilities. It is not a financial budget or operations model, a method to approve capital expenditures or greenlight specific programs. As such, it takes a city-wide view and does not include detailed design proposals for any specific neighbourhood, park or facility.

Vision

"The Parks and Recreation Services Master Plan project will use an engaging and research supported process to develop a new paradigm that will maximize access to high-quality parks and recreation opportunities that connect people with each other, nature and themselves".

When complete, the master plan will provide a 100-year vision, 25-year outlook and a 10- year implementation plan. The master plan will assist the day-to-day operations of the Vancouver Park Board by developing a;

- citywide, urban core and growth area service level standards;
- strategies to respond to increased demand on parks and recreation, as these services continue to increase in demand;
- comprehensive policy framework regarding parks and recreation to advance health, wellness and social inclusion; and
- method for prioritizing the development and renewal of parks, recreation facilities and amenities.

Process and Engagement Highlights

The Master Plan will be delivered in four components:

Part 1:

1. *Inventory and Analysis* - a compendium to the current state of the City's parks and recreation system (Attachment A), and
2. *10 Goals to shape the next 25 years* - a set of aspirational statements to set the course for parks and recreation into the future (Attachment B)

These documents set the stage for the final two components of the Master Plan;

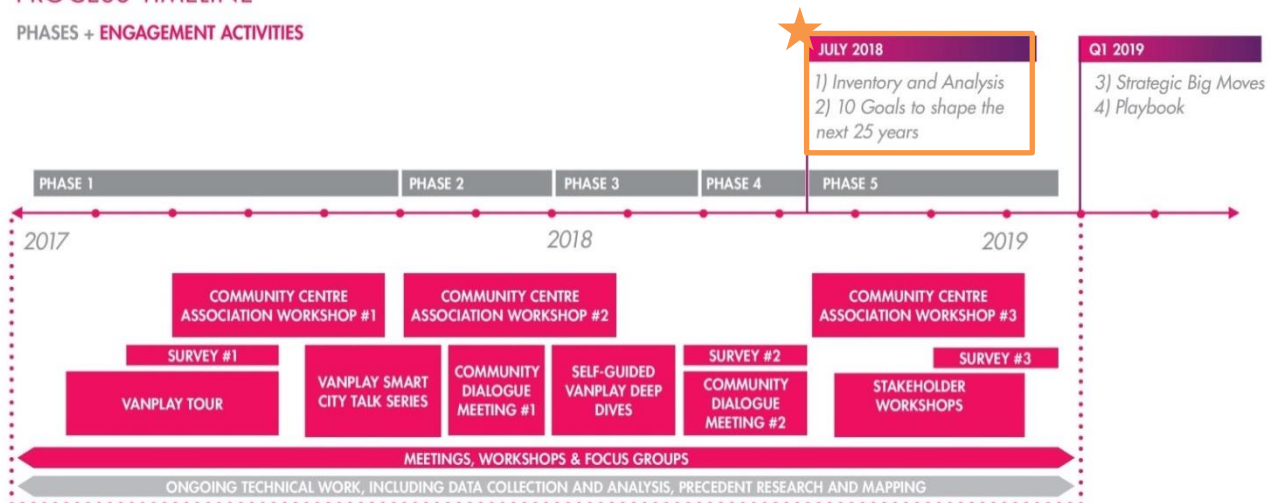
Part 2:

3. *Strategic Big Moves* – outlining strategies to meet the goals over the next 25 years (Q1 2019)
4. *Playbook* – the plan for implementation and operationalization of the big moves (Q1 2019)

All four components are the outcome of **VanPlay**; a two year long process which includes robust data collection and analysis, research on international best practice and consultation with the public, park board staff, partners, stakeholders and experts.

PROCESS TIMELINE

PHASES + ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES



A multidisciplinary working group of Park Board and City of Vancouver staff are providing detailed input to the project, with Park Board Commissioners providing leadership and guidance throughout the process. An external advisory group composed of key parks and recreation partners and service providers whose mandates are closely linked to ours, provide insight and opportunities to the team. Community Centre Associations representatives, via workshops and the Van Play Deep Dives, are providing a touch point to the experience of recreation provision in the community.

Since June 2017 VanPlay has engaged over 30,000 residents and stakeholders in imagining the future of parks and recreation. The community engagement strategy intends to inspire the entire community to get involved in shaping the strategy and to be proud of the result. High visibility events to raise awareness and provide a spectrum of opportunities for participation alongside more intimate spaces to allow for deeper conversation and room to problem solve.

DISCUSSION

The discussion section is divided into two sections, each providing detail on content of the proposed documents;

1. Vancouver's Parks and Recreation – Inventory and Analysis (Appendix A)
2. Vancouver's Parks and Recreation – 10 goals to shape the next 25 years (Appendix B)

Documents 3 and 4 (Strategic Big Moves and the Playbook) will be presented to the Park Board Commissioners for consideration in Q1 2019.

1. VANCOUVER'S PARKS AND RECREATION – INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS.

This report provides the most thorough overview of the current state of Vancouver's parks and recreation system in twenty years. It aims to provide an introduction to the Park Board's assets, programs and operations. This thorough inventory and analysis provides the groundwork for the future goals, actions and strategies outlined in the remainder of the master plan's components.

For ease of use, the document is organised into four key system elements – parks, recreation, facilities and nature.

Chapter 1 Introduction

This context setting chapter provides a introduction to parks and recreation in Vancouver including history, trends, and planning context. The 'Methods' section describes the community engagement strategy, and introduces the Park Provision Study (2016) and the System for Observing Play and Recreation in Communities (SOPARC study). Findings from these initiatives are presented in each of the preceding chapters, the full reports are provided in the appendix.

The "Framework for Equity and Welcome" introduced here is reflected in the structure of the parks, recreation, facilities and nature chapters.

Chapter 2 Parks

This chapter assesses Vancouver's inventory of parks across five classifications. Information is provided on the range of park amenities found in parks including arts and cultural experiences, horticulture, and community gardens.

Key components:

- Park Classification Framework – proposing a five-tiered classification system (Destination, community, neighbourhood, local, urban plaza) that provides a finer grain and more accurate description of Vancouver's park system than the existing 2 tiered system (neighbourhood and destination).

Chapter 3 Recreation

This chapter focuses on the activities and initiatives that activate our parks, including outdoor sport, art and play amenities – including tennis courts, playing fields, playgrounds and dog off leash areas.

Key components:

- Recreation Considerations for a welcoming system – outlining key initiatives and statistics to support welcoming recreation opportunities for all.
- Outdoor recreation inventory and analysis – city-wide provision map and trends description for court sports, basketball, ball diamonds, field sports, golf, playgrounds, skateparks and dog off leash areas.

Chapter 4 Facilities

This chapter focuses on the recreational, social and cultural services provided by built spaces such as community centres, pools, ice rinks, field houses, fieldhouses, and destination gardens such as Van Dusen Botanical Garden Visitor Centre and Bloedel Conservancy.

Key Components:

- Facility maps – including everyday facilities (washrooms, drinking fountains, concessions), operations (service yards, field houses), recreational facilities (swimming pools, wading pools, marine structures, ice rinks, community centres), cultural facilities (public art, theatres, destination gardens).

Chapter 5 Nature

This chapter explores how to bolster natural areas of ecological importance, expand wildlife habitat, and better connect residents with nature.

Key Components:

- Range of Habitats – describing the current inventory and threats to the various types of habitats throughout the city.
- Analysis of opportunities to naturalise park areas (turf, horticulture etc.) – examining potential locations to further increase habitat on park lands and golf courses.

Sample Appendixes

- System for Observing Play and Recreation in Communities Report

System for Observing Play and Recreation in Communities (SOPARC) is a reliable and feasible observational survey tool for assessing physical activity and how neighbourhood parks influence physical activity.

The survey instrument assesses who is accessing the park and provides demographic information, as well as physical activity levels by the park users. Out of the 228 parks, 24 were selected based on criteria including: presence of spaces for physical activity, parks located within City-defined growth areas, parks located in areas of a range of incomes, and park locations near a greenway.

Observational data gathering allows us to establish a good snapshot of how parks across the city and currently being used in an efficient manner. All observational data collection has pitfalls, as certainly does not seek to understand “why”, but merely the “what” in a very board sense. The data enables us to dig deeper, ask better questions, and address the barriers to access that could be the cause of the patterns we observed.

- *Park Provision Study (2016)*

Vancouver first prioritized access to parks in the Harland Bartholomew and Associates’ 1928 Plan for the City of Vancouver that introduced neighborhood parks every square mile. The 1982 Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation Master Plan expanded the City’s parks and recreation network and formalized many of the social services provided in facilities. An innovative Management Plan in 1992 set a clear standard by introducing the goal of providing 1.1 hectares of green space per 1000 residents.

In the Greenest City 2020 Action Plan, the City of Vancouver – in partnership with the Vancouver Park Board – set the goal of providing a green space within a five-minute walk of all residents. This study of the City’s park and open space network measured park access with a 400m walk radius. This “as a crow flies” methodology put 92% of the City within the five-minute walk range but did not account for how people actually walk to parks.

In 2016 the Park Board commissioned a Parks Provision Study to analyze park access through the sidewalk network to get a better understanding of how far residents actually live from parks. The study accounted for time delays at busy intersections and physical barriers to access, such as rail lines or steep hills. This study found that 80% of residents were within the five-minute walk range (and 99.5% were within a ten-minute range).

Using this new methodology we can analyse the impact of improvements to access, more clearly identify where new parks are required to fill access gaps, and conversely can measure the population catchment of parks (how many people live within a 5-minute walk, and what is the daytime population within that same distance) to see how hard are parks are working.

2. VANCOUVER’S PARKS AND RECREATION – 10 GOALS TO SHAPE THE NEXT 25 YEARS

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.

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.

The goals were developed through Park Board Commissioner, public, partner, staff and stakeholder input and research into best practices and precedents from around the world. The draft goals were verified in May/June 2018 via an online survey (946 responses), Park Board

staff survey (46 responses) and a Park Board Commissioner led Community Dialogue event (31 attendees).

Upcoming “Strategic Big Moves” (Q1 2019) and “The Playbook” (Q1 2019) will detail how these goals will be realised over the next 25 years.

The goals listed below are in no particular order and are number for convenience, not ranking of importance. Refer to **Appendix B: 10 Goals to shape the next 25 years**, for the full goal statement.

Goal 1

“Grow and renew parks, community centres and other assets to keep pace with population growth and evolving needs”

Consultation Summary:

87% of survey respondents either strongly agreed or somewhat agreed with the draft goal.

Feedback suggested that the draft goal needed to be made more future focused. Not only do we need to identify needs, we have to action them and keep up with demand – by acquiring park land and growing services. The Community Dialogue and staff survey responses highlighted the need to identify needs now but also on an ongoing basis through community engagement, data and mapping, and improved information management. The goal has been edited to reflect this.

Goal 2

“Protect existing parks and recreation spaces from loss, encroachment and densification”

Consultation Summary:

94% of survey respondents either strongly agreed or somewhat agreed with the draft goal.

Additional words to highlight the role of the Park Board to advocate and educate about the value of park land have been added reflecting feedback from the staff survey.

Community dialogue and survey feedback suggested that the draft goal could be enhanced with an added focus on growing the park system through acquisition and addition of new parks and amenities. As this goal is focused on protecting our existing and future assets from loss, encroachment and densification, the first goal (above) has been enhanced to ensure that this important topic is addressed sufficiently.

Goal 3

“Prioritize the delivery of resources to where they are needed most”

Consultation Summary:

92% of survey respondents either strongly agreed or somewhat agreed with the draft goal.

Consultation identified that the draft goal was not clear in respect to “prioritising investments”. Clarification has been added to explain that prioritising using equity mapping and analysis, the Park Board can direct park land acquisition, new and renewal of facilities, to where they are needed most.

Goal 4

“Focus on core responsibilities of the Park Board, and be a supportive ally to partners”

Consultation Summary:

88% of survey respondents either strongly agreed or somewhat agreed with the draft goal.

When community dialogue participants considered how the draft goal could be implemented many suggested that the Park Board adds significant value as a coordinator, for example, the Park Board provides accessible and affordable parks and recreation, and coordinates fair, inclusive and innovative partnerships to enable many other important services. The need to create a solid foundation and frameworks for this to occur was reflected in the staff and community survey responses.

Goal 5

“Adapt our parks and recreation amenities to a changing climate”

Consultation Summary:

91% of survey respondents either strongly agreed or somewhat agreed with the draft goal.

Survey respondents often commented on the importance of climate change and resilience planning. The goal was edited to speak to “a changing climate” rather than “climate change” to better reflect the process and planning aspects of being responsive to changing conditions.

The goal also now reflects the importance of water conservation to make the most of precious resources into the future, as raised by community dialogue participants.

Staff survey responses highlighted the need to seek additional funding to adapt amenities to respond to this need, over and above standard renewal timeframes. Goal 10 is intended to encapsulate all current and future funding requirements.

Goal 6

“Create a green network that will connect our parks, waterfront and recreation areas”

Consultation Summary:

94% of survey respondents either strongly agreed or somewhat agreed with the draft goal.

Community dialogue participants felt that the goal could be enhanced to better reflect the role of this city wide green network in connecting Vancouverites to nature. This can be achieved through both locations and design which reflects the natural features of the landscape and allows residents with access to nature close to home.

Staff and community survey respondents were supportive of universal access to parks, green spaces and recreation along the green network, achieved by providing clear connections and diverse transportation options.

Goal 7

“Restore Vancouver’s wild spaces and vital biodiversity”

Consultation Summary:

93% of survey respondents either strongly agreed or somewhat agreed with the draft goal.

Community dialogue participants suggested that there is a need to build awareness on how to engage with wild spaces and appreciation for the natural world (through educational signage

and programming). Environmental stewardship and education will be important aspects of the implementation strategies for this goal.

Survey respondents felt the science of modern urban forest management, in particular monitoring of the tree canopy and water quality, was missing from the goal. This has been reflected in the revised goal.

Goal 8

“Foster a system of parks and recreation spaces that are safe and welcoming to all”

Consultation Summary:

87% of survey respondents either strongly agreed or somewhat agreed with the draft goal.

Consultation reinforced the need to prioritize accessibility, inclusion and equity when planning and designing parks and recreation. Equal access to and use by all people (including children, youth, parents, seniors, people with disabilities, LGBTQ2S+, pet-owners, indigenous communities and low-income individuals) is important.

It was clear from the survey and dialogue responses that “safe parks” need to be better defined. Additional clarification has been added to highlight how vibrant, well-lit parks with a sense of community care and involvement create safe environments.

Goal 9

“Seek truth as a foundation for reconciliation with Musqueam, Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh nations”

Consultation Summary:

73% of survey respondents either strongly agreed or somewhat agreed with the draft goal.

Staff who responded to the survey suggested that to advance this goal additional training and support to increase the capacity of Park Board staff would be beneficial.

The community reflected the need for continued partnerships and meaningful collaboration with local First Nations in the planning, design and programming of parks and recreation. The Park Board and Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations are working together towards this goal, for example the Stanley Park Comprehensive Plan and the new park at North East False Creek.

Goal 10

“Secure adequate and ongoing funding for the repair, renewal and replacement of our aging parks and recreation system”

Consultation Summary:

91% of survey respondents either strongly agreed or somewhat agreed with the draft goal.

Staff survey respondents suggested the development of clear criteria for prioritising funding. Goal 2 proposes a method of prioritising funding based on need and will help direct resources to where they will make the biggest difference to the community.

At the community dialogue participants supported the diversification of funding sources including partnerships with external funders and donors, earned income through

commercialisation (if/where appropriate), user fees, management of infrastructure which takes into account 'whole of life costs', renegotiation of existing funding sources and foundation funds.

SUMMARY

The Parks and Recreation Services Master Plan will be the first comprehensive long-range park and recreation planning exercise in well over twenty five years. The last comprehensive long range parks and recreation plan was completed by the Park Board in 1992, and although foundational, does not address the current realities or evolving needs of Vancouver. A new city-wide master plan is required to provide a significant update to long range planning, policy and service goals for the Park Board.

Through a robust investigation of the current state of the system, the trends and issues at play and the needs of the community the VanPlay process will result in a new understanding of parks and recreation in Vancouver. With this as a baseline staff, alongside our community and partners, can set these bold goals for the future and set out a path to reach them.

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