



September 20, 2019

TO: Park Board Chair and Commissioners
FROM: General Manager – Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: VanPlay - Parks and Recreation Services Master Plan:
“Strategic Bold Moves” and “The Playbook - Implementation Plan”

RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT the Vancouver Park Board approve Report 3 of VanPlay - Parks and Recreation Services Master Plan: “Strategic Bold Moves”, as outlined in this report and attached as Appendix A, describing three tools to create a more connected and equitable future:

Move 1: Equity – creating Initiative Zones to assist in prioritising delivery of parks and recreation resources to historically under-served areas of the city;

Move 2: Asset Needs – detailing targets for parks and recreation amenities and facilities; and

Move 3: Connectivity – a vision for a city-wide network of parks and recreation opportunities.

- B. THAT the Board approve Report 4 of VanPlay - Parks and Recreation Services Master Plan: “The Playbook - Implementation Plan”, as outlined in this report and attached as Appendix B, describing:

- *Foundational Tasks* - setting clear policy, supporting great communication, and excelling at data and mapping, and;

- *24 Approaches for Action* - with associated initiatives to be undertaken over the next 10 years.

- C. FURTHER, that the Board direct staff to report back annually on the impact of the “Strategic Bold Moves” and status of proposed “Implementation Plan”.

REPORT SUMMARY

This report provides an overview of VanPlay, the proposed Parks and Recreation Services Master Plan, which is the result of a two-year long process to develop flexible and powerful tools for the Park Board to respond to contemporary issues, major social trends, and environmental considerations.

Building on Report 1: “Inventory and Analysis” and Report 2: “10 Goals to Shape the Next 25 Years”, which were approved in July 2018, Report 3: “Strategic Bold Moves”, and Report 4: “The Playbook - Implementation Plan”, complete the suite of master plan documents. Together, these reports represent a policy framework that puts equity, asset needs, and connectivity at the core of Park Board activities and decision-making.

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.

In July, 2018, the Board approved [VanPlay Report 1: “Inventory and Analysis”](#), which describes the current state of parks and recreation in Vancouver, including findings from community, staff and stakeholder engagement relating to current challenges and opportunities for the future, and [VanPlay Report 2: “10 Goals to Shape the Next 25 Years”](#), which sets out 10 aspirational objectives to position the Park Board to respond to challenges and opportunities.

VanPlay builds on, and provides strategic context for, the following policy documents:

- [Urban Forest Strategy](#) (2014 and 2018): to enhance the urban forest on private lands, streets, and parks.
- [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): to increase the amount and ecological quality of Vancouver’s natural areas to support biodiversity and enhance access to nature.
- [Bird Strategy](#) (2015): which provides voluntary landscape and architectural guidelines to enhance urban bird habitats.
- [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 recommends staff implementation of the report’s mid- and long-term recommendations
- [Greenest City Action Plan](#) (2010): Sets two targets to improve access to nature (planting 150,000 trees by 2020 and goal of 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.

OVERVIEW

A master plan is a long range planning tool that takes a city-wide approach 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, nor a method to approve capital expenditures or greenlight specific programs. It does not include detailed design proposals for any specific neighbourhood, park or facility.

The last parks and recreation master plan was completed over 25 years ago (1992 Park Board Management Plan). Although it was foundational, Vancouver has changed dramatically in the intervening years, and 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 services master plan provides updated thinking to address contemporary issues, major social trends and environmental considerations.

The vision for VanPlay is:

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.

This work represents a paradigm shift, a new way of working for the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation. In this complex, dynamic urban environment, powerful yet flexible approaches will help the organization respond to shifting demands while maintaining the desired course for the future. The proposed three Bold Moves and associated actions and tools enable the Park Board to focus on creating a more connected and equitable future for Vancouver's parks and recreation system.

VanPlay, the two-year long process to develop a Parks and Recreation Services Master Plan, has included robust data collection and analysis, best practice research, and consultation with the public, the Park Board, staff, partners, stakeholders and experts.

The complete suite of VanPlay documents consists of four components. The first two were approved by the Board in July 2018:



Report 1: Inventory and Analysis

A compendium to the current state of the City's parks and recreation system

Report 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

These two documents set the stage for the final two components of the Master Plan, which are the subject of this report:



Report 3: Strategic Bold Moves

Outlines strategies to meet the goals over the next 25 years (Appendix A)



Report 4: The Playbook – Implementation Plan

The plan for implementation and operationalization of the Bold Moves (Appendix B)

The relationship between the four VanPlay reports is illustrated in the graphic below (Figure 1):

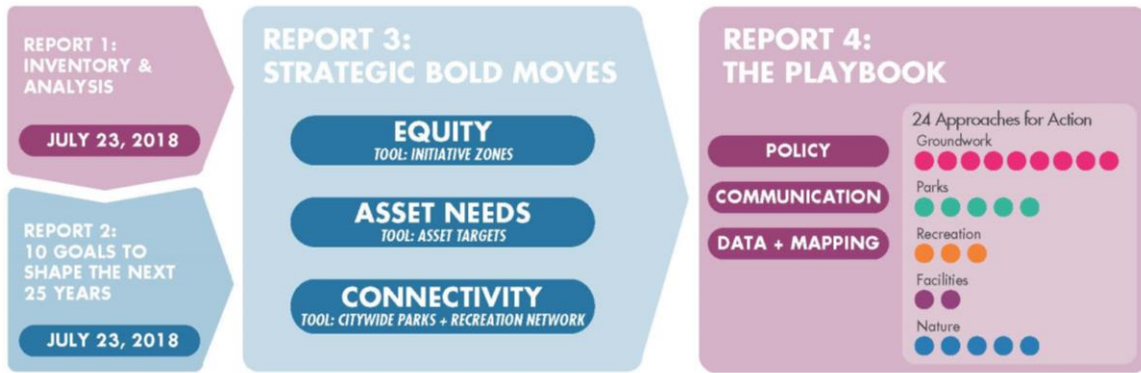


Figure 1: VanPlay Reports – Relationship

Together, the suite of four VanPlay documents provides a 100-year vision, 25-year outlook, and 10-year implementation plan. They will assist the day-to-day operations of the Vancouver Park Board by providing;

- strategies to respond to increased demand for parks and recreation services;
- comprehensive parks and recreation policy framework to advance health, wellness and social inclusion; and
- methods for prioritizing the development and renewal of parks and recreation facilities and amenities.

BACKGROUND

Process and Engagement highlights

Since June 2017 VanPlay has engaged over 30,000 residents and stakeholders in imagining the future of parks and recreation in Vancouver (see Figure 2). The community engagement strategy intended 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.

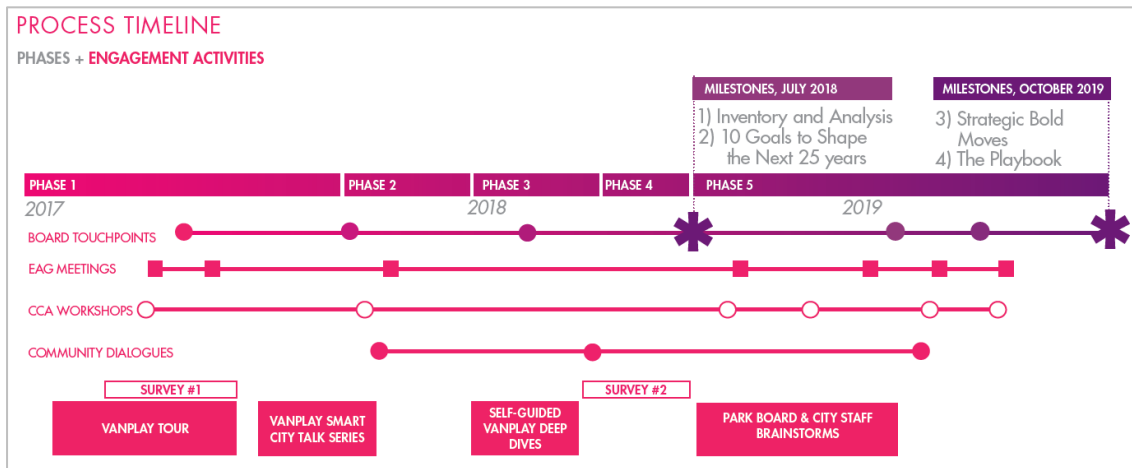


Figure 2: VanPlay Process Timeline

A multidisciplinary working group of Park Board and City staff have provided 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 provided insight. Community Centre Associations representatives, via workshops and the Van Play Deep Dives, provided a touch point to the experience of recreation provision in the community.

VanPlay progress updates were provided through the four public presentations to the Board:

- Jul 24, 2017 – [Phase 1 Project Update](#), which described the early results of VanPlay Phase 1 “Discovery” community engagement, and provided an update on ongoing technical content development for the master plan.
- Nov 06, 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.
- Feb 11, 2019 – [Draft Strategic Big Moves](#), which provided an introduction to the proposed “Equity Initiative Zones” and “Interconnected Network”.
- April 1, 2019 – [Draft Implementation Actions](#), which provided an overview of the proposed approach for implementing the Bold Moves and 10 Goals.

The Park Board is working to develop strong relationship with Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations rights holders. This ongoing work has informed these reports and will continue to shape the outcomes of the works and our vision for the future of parks and recreation in Vancouver.

DISCUSSION

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

- A. Vancouver’s Parks and Recreation: Strategic Bold Moves (Report 3)
- B. Vancouver’s Parks and Recreation: The Playbook Implementation Plan (Report 4)

A. Vancouver’s Parks And Recreation: Strategic Bold Moves (Report 3)

Responding to community, stakeholder and staff calls for a more connected and equitable parks and recreation system, Report 3 identifies three bold moves that will set a new course for the Vancouver Park Board (see Figure 3):

1. Equity
2. Asset Needs
3. Connectivity.

The “Strategic Bold Moves” report outlines techniques and tools to help the Park Board focus on creating a fair, transparent and connected system by directing resources to where they are needed most and considering decisions in the context of an ambitious vision for the future.

Designed to work both independently and together, the Bold Moves respond directly to the challenges and opportunities heard and observed through community, staff and stakeholder consultation and the subsequent 10 Goals approved by Park Board Commissioners in 2018.

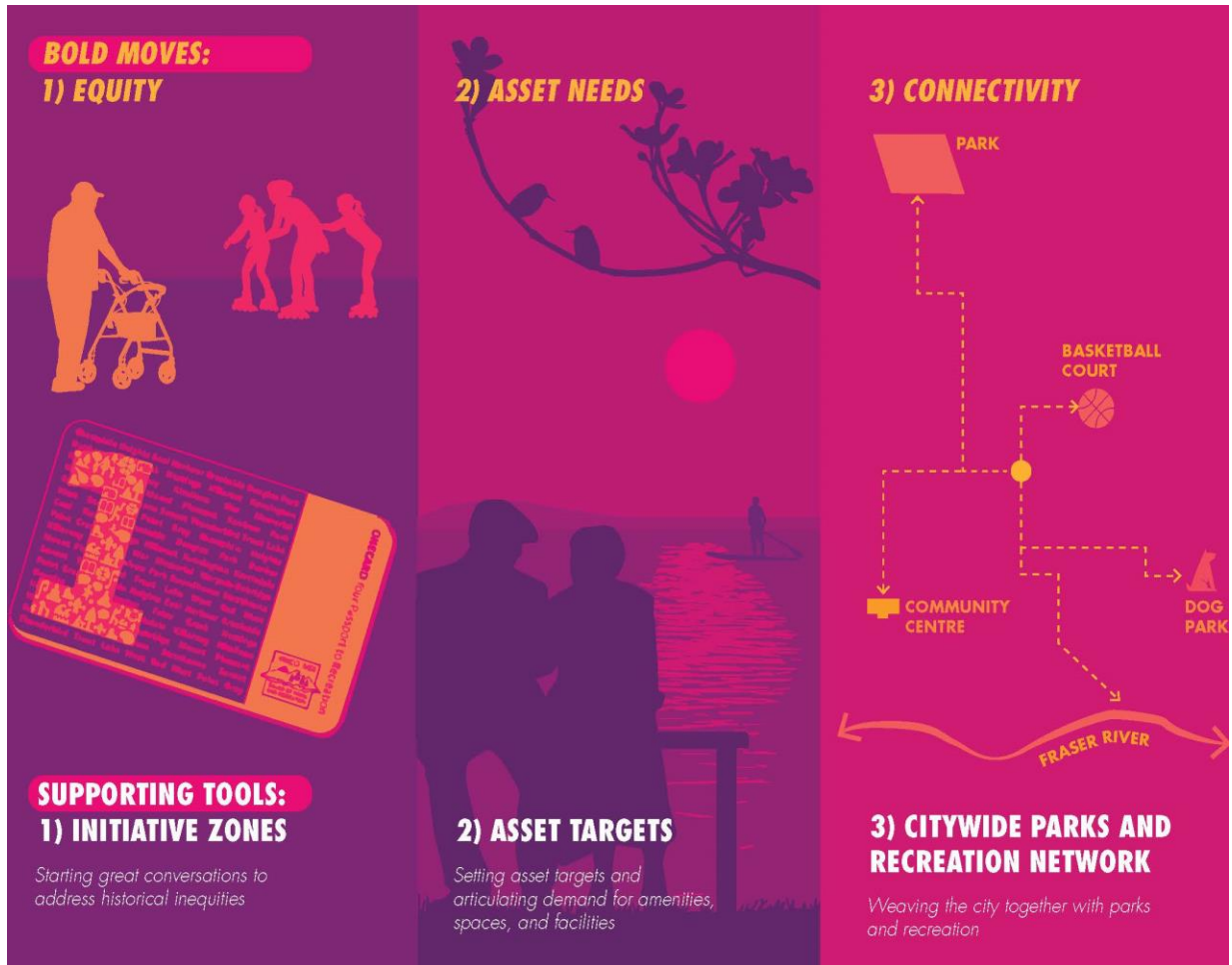


Figure 3: VanPlay Strategic Bold Moves

Bold Move 1: Equity

Intention

The goal of this Bold Move is to highlight areas of the city in need of resources so that projects, programs and resources can be focused for more equitable provision over time.

The Park Board can act to redress historical imbalance in the delivery of resources, by focusing our future efforts geographically and bringing equity to the forefront of decision making. Over time, by prioritizing investment, and updating this data, provision of parks and recreation can become more equitable.

Motive

Examining parks and recreation through an equity lens reveals the inherent privilege in access and enjoyment of parks and recreation held by some populations, and opens up opportunities to support and welcome populations without this privilege.

Due to patterns of development and investment over the history of the city, the distribution of trees, parks, lot sizes, land use, and infrastructure such as transit is uneven. These patterns of service provision, and resultant quality of life, have been

tightly tied to class, race, gender and other systems of power. Consequently, the conditions of social and environmental injustice persist.

The City's Community Benefits from Development program ensures provision of amenities for a growing population. However, funds for addressing historically underserved areas, aging infrastructure and changes in neighbourhoods that are not growing, are scarcer.

Tool

The Initiative Zones is a map created using three indicators which are layered atop one another, to reveal geographic patterns in the provision of parks and recreation opportunities. This Bold Move is simple and powerful as a priority setting and decision making tool, a method to show patterns geographically and to start conversations.

Approach

To understand how we can target historically underserved areas we can:

1. Identify priority areas (Initiative Zones)
2. Address inequity by applying an intersectional lens as we work to fill those gaps in an inclusive way (Equity Analysis Factors)

Three indicators were chosen to describe broad patterns of parks and recreation service provision on a city-wide scale:

- Park provision: showing areas of the city with low amounts of park space per person. *Measured as areas with less than 0.55ha/1000 people within a 10 minute walk.*
- Demand for low barrier recreation: showing areas of the city where there is an existing high demand for recreation amenities and programs with reduced barriers. *Measured as areas with 3 times the median registration to the Leisure Access Program.*
- Access to nature: low canopy cover from street trees, park trees, and green private open space. *Measured as areas with less than 5% canopy cover.*

These three indicators are not intended to be comprehensive. Equity Analysis Factors can be used to get a deeper understanding of community needs. The list of potential Equity Analysis Factors is long and could include data sets such as demographic patterns, vulnerability indicators, crime frequency and distribution, survey results, operational spending, past capital investment by location, and other factors that could influence access to parks and recreation.

The long term vision is for the Initiative Zones to be available on an interactive, web-based mapping program which allows staff and the community to view the zones and overlay various other geographic data sets to monitor change over time, and inform engagement strategy, project scoping, leading to more effective conversations about parks and recreation needs.

Bold Move 2: Asset Needs

Intention

By articulating parks and recreation asset needs more clearly the Park Board is better positioned to advocate for both filling current deficits and meeting needs due to population growth.

Motive

The Park Board is often asked to clearly articulate parks and recreation needs at various scales ranging from capital planning to needs assessments for community planning. Because needs and wants can be unlimited, targets for aspects of service such as renewal timelines, condition and use help us strategize and advocate for appropriate funding.

Tool

Asset targets are a reference point for negotiations and planning new developments, facilities and parks. These benchmarks provide a way to measure change over time, prioritise investments and recognize changing needs.

This Bold Move outlines 13 targets and provides placeholders for 4 more which are awaiting strategy completion. Over time the Park Board can add additional targets to describe additional parks, facilities, recreation or nature related physical space or amenities need.

Approach

Increasing access to parks and recreation amenities to meet these targets can be achieved in many ways including regular renewal, design and material choices to increase capacity and enhance resilience, providing new assets, matching maintenance to use/demand, partnerships to increase access to amenities outside park land, and renewal to repurpose, transition, and by building spaces that support multiple functions.

Each asset target recommends actions for to supply, distribution and renewal of each asset. The associated 2040 target, recommendations and other considerations respond to current state, trends and projected supply in 2040.

Bold Move 3: Connectivity

Intention

The goal of this Bold Move is to create vibrant, healthy communities by encouraging connection and integration of open space at the site, neighbourhood, citywide and regional levels.

The network will create places to play, exercise and socialise while providing pathways for the movement of urban wildlife and rainwater, while creating beautiful, direct and intuitive connections for pedestrians and cyclists of all ages and abilities.

Networks can be a catalyst for something bigger; vibrant, active lifestyles, strong communities, and healthy ecosystems.

Motive

We envision a network of parks, green spaces and recreation areas, interwoven into everyday life that connects us to nature, to each other and to ourselves. We often describe parks and recreation as a system – and for Vancouverites, it should feel that way.

A sense of proximity to parks and recreation encourages healthy, active lifestyles. Access to parks, community centres and recreation assets is sometimes limited by the site's connectivity with streets, transit and active transportation infrastructure. Vancouverites are proud of their Seawall and would like similar kinds of connected, park-like, experiences to be available throughout the city.

Ecological connectivity was cited by the Biodiversity Strategy (2016) as the key to improving biodiversity and sustainability of ecosystems. Good connectivity supports strong ecological and hydrological systems. Planning for continuous waterfronts supports accommodation of sea level rise and secures access to the water for future generations.

Tool

The city-wide concept vision will guide both coordinated effort by the Park Board (primarily parks and recreation planning, acquisition, development, urban forestry, and horticulture) and to support collaboration with the City's Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability, and Engineering departments.

The network will reflect key themes and First Nations principles, such as a strong sense of belonging on the land, relationship to the water and orientation to the waterfront, and the importance of gathering spaces and places to heal. Keeping "place" at the centre of design and management of the network is an opportunity for the City to listen and learn Indigenous ways of knowing from First Nations.

Approach

Connectivity would be achieved through a multiple benefits approach, meaning that projects are designed and managed on an ongoing basis to achieve many outcomes simultaneously. Local, small scale projects, alongside big collaborative projects all build towards creating the city-wide network.

Methods and techniques to connect the network and provide multiple benefits are guided by four key principles;

- Vibrant, Active Communities

For example:

- Walking, rolling, running and cycling trails and paths linking parks, schools, main streets, pools, rinks and community centres
- Co-location of community centres with park space to allow for indoor/outdoor programming and provide space for community events

- **Sense of place**

For example:

- Daily walking and rolling routes to employment centres, schools, main streets and community centres woven through parks and park-like experiences
- Public art, horticulture beds, street trees, cultural nodes, “play on the way” installations and interactive wayfinding to enhance physical and social connectivity through neighbourhoods and parks

- **Flow of water**

For example:

- Daylighting of historic streams and use of green infrastructure to enhance the flow and quality of water throughout the city
- Public access to waterfronts, beaches and other water bodies both now and into the future as the city is impacted by sea level rise

- **Thriving ecosystems**

For example:

- Enhancing ecological connectivity by strategically adding naturally managed areas to link larger natural areas together creating habitat corridors
- Growing the urban forest through continued tree planting and arborist care of street and park trees and canopy, and by supporting stewardship and environmental education programs
- Invasive species control to ensure the success of re-wilding efforts

B. Vancouver’s Parks And Recreation: The Playbook – Implementation Plan (Report 4)

The VanPlay Playbook outlines the plan for implementation that will pave the way for operationalization and integration of the “Strategic Bold Moves” and “10 Goals to Shape the Next 25 Years” into the day-to-day of the Park Board, over the next 10 years.

The Implementation Plan identifies three **Foundational Tasks** that will ease the implementation of the entire suite of VanPlay recommendations:

- **Set clear policy** – to support consistent and transparent decision-making and operations;
- **Support great communication** – to modernize communications methods, systems and tools;
- **Excel at data and mapping** – to enhance understanding of trends, needs and patterns.

Approaches for Action are overarching recommendations that describe how the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation should focus action in order to achieve the aspirations outlined in VanPlay. Each Approach for Action is supported by an extensive list of associated initiatives to be undertaken over the next 10 years (including plans, projects and policy steps).

These proposed initiatives are subject to future Board decision(s), community engagement, and resourcing. This document is not a financial budget or operations model, nor a method to approve capital expenditures or greenlight specific programs. As such, the initiatives described in Report 4 do not go into detail regarding design for any specific neighbourhood, park or facility.

For ease of use, the Approaches for Action are organized into the same 5 chapter headings used in Report 1:

1. **Groundwork** - for activities relating to community engagement, communication reconciliation, administration and other broad topics;
2. **Parks** – for activities relating to park acquisition, design, and maintenance;
3. **Recreation** – for activities relating to provision and management of predominantly outdoor amenities;
4. **Facilities** – for activities relating to provision and management of predominantly indoor amenities;
5. **Nature** – for activities relating to naturally managed areas in parks;

By focusing effort in these areas, an immediate and substantial difference will be made towards achieving our goals and undertaking bold moves.

CONCLUSION

Vancouver's stunning, world-class parks and recreation system is the culmination of more than a century of committed effort by the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation. From world-renowned seawalls, to lush destination gardens, and network of vibrant neighbourhood parks, it is a legacy to be proud of.

As the first comprehensive long-range parks and recreation planning exercise in well over twenty-five years, it represents a substantial change of planning, policy and service goals for the Park Board.

Vancouver's parks and recreation system is currently facing many challenges: inequity; increasing and varying community needs; climate change; aging infrastructure; stretched resources; and ever-shifting urgent priorities. This master planning effort represents a new way of tackling these challenges while considering how to make the system thrive.

The Park Board has the opportunity to fundamentally shift its relationship with Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations, to present an exciting and bold vision for a city connected with nature and community, and to make the organization work more effectively to address challenges as they arise.

In this complex, dynamic urban environment, powerful yet flexible approaches will help the organization respond to shifting demands while maintaining the desired course for the future. The three Strategic Bold Moves (Report 3) and the Approaches for Action (outlined in Report 4) represent a new way of thinking that puts equity, asset needs, and connectivity at the core of Park Board activities. Utilizing these tools in day-to-day work, strategic planning, and long term decision making will result in greater transparency and nimble decisions, which will keep the organization on course.

The completion of VanPlay - Vancouver's Parks and Recreation Services Master Plan represents a significant and defining moment for the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation; bringing the organization into the 21st century with a new commitment to equitable delivery of excellent parks and recreation opportunities in a connected, efficient manner that celebrates history of the land, place, and culture.

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