

Year in Review

2019



From the Chair & General Manager

The Vancouver Park Board's 2019 Year in Review reflects a year of planning for the future of parks and recreation.

The Board endorsed several major strategies, with input from thousands of residents, that will guide Boards well into the future.

VanPlay, the Parks and Recreation Services Master Plan, will protect and improve parks and recreation across the city for the next 50 years.

The VanSplash Aquatics Strategy lays out an ambitious 25-year vision for the future of aquatics through a city-wide planning approach.

The Track and Field Strategy will guide investment, management and programming, including the development of Vancouver's first regulation competitive track and field training facility.

The On Water Strategy will provide a framework for the future direction of non-motorized watercraft recreation, expanding opportunities and participation.

The Board also approved the proposed schematic park master plan for Oak Park, which includes the location of a new Marpole Community Centre and outdoor pool.

This year, the Board completed a number of infrastructure projects. They include an accessible age-friendly outdoor fitness facility at Memorial South Park, a new bike pump track in Vanier Park, and a new park in the East Fraser Lands—a small portion of 10 hectares of parks and green space planned for that neighbourhood.

Parks and recreation are an integral part of a happy, healthy city. We encourage you to explore them.

Here for you...every day

Vancouver Park Board mission: *To provide, preserve and advocate for parks and recreation services to benefit all people, communities, and the environment.*

The Board is the steward of 242 parks and green spaces—1,360 hectares (3,361 acres) or 11 per cent of all land within Vancouver.

Formed in 1888, the Board operates community centres, playing fields, tennis courts, indoor and outdoor swimming pools, water parks, outdoor volleyball courts, skateboard parks, rinks, playgrounds, fitness centres, golf courses, pitch and putts, marinas, a plant nursery, a botanical garden,

a floral conservatory, the seawall and even the Stanley Park train.

The Board employs a wide variety of talented staff, including planning and park development who design parks and recreational amenities, urban forestry staff who plant and care for trees both in parks and on sidewalks, gardeners who grow and plant flowers and shrubs, recreation and arts programmers who bring cultural and sporting activities into our parks and community centres, and park rangers who provide information and wayfinding, educate the public about park regulations such as the smoking ban, and enforce bylaws.



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Achievements



Meadow at China Creek Park North

VanPlay sets bold new course

As the first comprehensive long-range parks and recreation plan, VanPlay was developed over the past three years with input from thousands of residents, stakeholders, partners, and consultants.

The plan, which will guide the Board over the next 50 years, represents a commitment to the equitable delivery of excellent parks and recreation opportunities in a connected, efficient manner, while celebrating the history of the land, place, and culture.

The Park Board will now begin to deliver on VanPlay's 10 goals.



Bike pump track at Vanier Park

Other major strategies approved

The VanSplash, Track and Field, and On Water strategies, approved this year, will help the Board meet residents' current and future needs, while setting out how we can make Vancouver the best place to live, work, and play.

VanSplash, Vancouver's Aquatic Strategy, charts a course for new and renewed pools and aquatic innovation over the next 25 years.

Key immediate outcomes include a new outdoor pool in South Vancouver and a renewed pool at Britannia Community Centre.

With approval of the Track and Field Strategy, several projects will now be able to proceed, including the development of the city's first regulation competitive track and field training facility at Vancouver Technical Secondary School.

The On Water Strategy will guide the planning and design of facilities and programs serving non-motorized watercraft over the next 10 years.

All strategies were developed and supported through a comprehensive public engagement process.

Bike pump track for beginners

Vanier Park in the Kitsilano neighbourhood is home to a new bike pump track that was designed with young people in mind.

Previously, a dirt jump track at the site was used mainly by expert-level riders.

The facility is located in the wooded area just west of the south end of the Burrard Street Bridge.



VanPlay Master Plan



Accessible fitness facility at Memorial South Park

Other improvements include the installation of a permanent eagle nesting pole, and stewardship initiatives such as removing invasive plants and garbage, planting new trees, and improving trails and signage.

The project was delivered with a goal of protecting the environment and archeological resources.

Renewed China Creek North

China Creek North Park now has a colourful wildflower meadow and new playground with safety flooring made from recycled shoes.

The playground is the first in Vancouver to use recycled shoes in the rubberized surface. The flooring is reminiscent of the flowing creek buried under the park. More than 6,000 pairs of Native Shoes™ were used in this project.

The playground also features a double width slide and multiple climbing options embedded in the hill, a play house, and swings.

The track has also been restored and new exercise equipment was added.

Accessible outdoor fitness centre

Memorial South Park now has the city's first accessible age-friendly outdoor fitness facility.

The park was identified for this pilot as it has an established active seniors' group.

The outdoor facility features assisted row/push up bars, a cardio stepper, and tai chi wheels. It provides seniors with a variety of activities they can enjoy regardless of physical ability.

Nine other parks in Vancouver have outdoor exercise equipment.

Park opens near Fraser River

Neighbourhood Park South—part of 10 hectares (25 acres) of new parks and green space planned for the East Fraser Lands—opened late this year and is already becoming an important part of a new and growing community.

The 0.33 acre park features platform benches and picnic tables, as well as robust planted berms composed of native vegetation and a variety of trees.

The East Fraser Lands will eventually be home to 15,000 people.



Highlights

Oak Park schematic approved

The Board approved a schematic master plan for Oak Park, which includes a significantly larger centre and a full-size outdoor pool.

Staff consulted with the community to identify the best location for the facilities, while considering existing park uses and preserving and expanding green space.

The new community centre and pool are expected to open in about five years.

Mitigating climate change

The impacts of a changing climate are being observed globally and locally. In Vancouver, extreme rain, windstorms, and heatwaves are anticipated to increase in frequency and intensity.

The Park Board is taking steps to mitigate its impact, directing staff to:

- investigate and evaluate the climate change forecast and its impact on the urban forest, establish a mitigation toolkit, explore improved selections of trees, and work with academia and botanical institutions
- develop a strategy to transition to gas-and diesel-free generators
- develop a plan to replace gas-powered landscape maintenance equipment with emission-free equivalents

The Board also supported the Sustainabilityteens on a youth-initiated non-violent Global Climate Strike event that was held September 27.

Challenges

4/20 cannabis protest

The 4/20 cannabis protest has occurred annually at Sunset Beach Park since 2016.

Despite a smoking ban in parks and concerns regarding the impacts to the public, local residents, and nearby businesses, the unsanctioned and unpermitted 4/20 protest event took place again this year.

Although a special event permit was not issued for this initiative, staff continue to work collaboratively with organizers and other key stakeholder groups to ensure public health and safety. This has proved effective in mitigating risks and minimizing impacts of the event.

Killarney Seniors Centre is gold

The Killarney Seniors Centre celebrated its one year anniversary with LEED® Gold certification by the Canada Green Building Council.

LEED® is an international program for sustainable building design and construction.

The centre is the sixth Park Board facility to receive LEED® certification.

The centre has experienced a 20 per cent increase in patronage since it opened in June 2018. The hot lunch program is one of the most popular programs. On average, 90 seniors attend the thrice-weekly luncheons.

New partnerships have brought enhanced programming into the centre, reducing transportation and mobility barriers for seniors.



Seniors at Killarney Seniors Centre

Bloedel celebrates a half century

Bloedel Conservatory celebrated its 50th anniversary in December with a gala celebration.

Today, the conservatory is home to 750 plant species—some that have been there since the beginning—150 birds, tropical and subtropical climate zones, and 115 volunteers.

Constructed through a donation from Prentice Bloedel, the conservatory was dedicated at its opening "to a better appreciation and understanding of the world of plants."

Bloedel is jointly operated by the Board and the Vancouver Botanical Gardens Association.



Staff using emission-free landscaping equipment

Homelessness

Homelessness continues to be a major social issue. A Vancouver homeless count in 2019 found 2,223 residents identified as homeless with 614 living on the street.

Tent encampments in parks, including Oppenheimer, are appearing in greater numbers and with greater frequency.

The Park Board continues to be concerned about the safety of those in Oppenheimer Park, the surrounding neighbourhood, and wider community. The Board is committed to finding a resolution and supports the goal of voluntary decampment, in conjunction with the provision of greater access to temporary housing to bridge the gap to long-term housing.



Oak Park schematic master plan approved

PARK BOARD BY THE NUMBERS



9 indoor & 5 outdoor pools



3 golf courses & 3 pitch & putts

Social media

The Park Board has more than 50,000 followers on social media (27,000 Twitter, 15,000 Facebook, and 9,400 Instagram). Social media supports marketing and engagement campaigns and enhances two-way dialogue with the community.

Online awareness



50,000+

Aquatics

2.6M



Almost 2.6 million visits were made to indoor and outdoor pools (including lessons and drop-ins). 42,600 people registered for swim lessons.

Leisure access

19,034



19,034 people participated in the Leisure Access Program, the most ever in the program's 26-year history. The program is for residents with a low income.

Trees

4,625 trees were sold this year during the spring and fall Park Board tree sales. Since 2016, there had been eight tree sales and almost 15,000 trees sold to Vancouverites who are helping enhance the urban forest canopy.

4,625



Aquarium



35 Ocean Wise® and the Park Board signed a new licence agreement, which will allow the Vancouver Aquarium to remain in Stanley Park for the next 35 years. The aquarium has been in the park since 1956.

Charitable giving

\$1.045M



Donations help build, maintain and protect the spaces and places that define Vancouver. In 2019, 359 donations were made and \$1,045,710 raised to support the preservation of parks and enhancement of recreation programs and facilities.

Public engagement



2,300+

Engaging with the public is a core fundamental element of all the work the Park Board does. From open houses to workshops, pop-up events, advisory groups, surveys and collaborations with other City departments and stakeholder groups. In 2019, at open houses alone, more than 2,300 residents provided input on a wide range of park planning and development initiatives.

Gardens

This year, 480,000 annuals—ranging from fuchsias and begonias to spider plants—were planted in gardens at golf courses, community centres, Stanley Park, English Bay and Queen Elizabeth Park.



480,000