



January 15, 2020

**TO:** Park Board Chair and Commissioners  
**FROM:** General Manager – Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation  
**SUBJECT:** Queen Elizabeth Park Master Plan – Project Approach

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## RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Vancouver Park Board approve the scope of work and key themes of “Culture”, “Nature”, “Connectivity” and “Service Needs”, to inform the development of a Master Plan for Queen Elizabeth Park.

## REPORT SUMMARY

Queen Elizabeth Park (the “Park”) is one of the Park Board’s largest and most significant destination parks. Located on the unceded lands of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations, the Park is situated at the highest point in Vancouver, and is home to a rich variety of cultural, horticultural, natural and recreational assets. Today, the Park is the result of decades of advocacy, passion and hard work by citizens, Park Board Commissioners and staff.

The most recent decade has seen significant changes to the Cambie Corridor, including the opening of the Canada Line in 2009 and the subsequent rezoning and densification of surrounding neighbourhoods. The majority of new and anticipated development around Queen Elizabeth Park consists of multi-unit residential buildings with little or no access to their own outdoor spaces. The Park needs to adapt and respond to an ever-changing context and consider how it will serve a rapidly growing neighbourhood of new and local park users. Due to its large size and central location within Vancouver, Queen Elizabeth Park can play a significant role in the Park Board’s new priorities to increase connectivity throughout the community and provide better access to large-scale open spaces - a rarity in Vancouver.

The master plan project aims to identify how the park is working today, what the current and future demands are (locally and city-wide), and how the park can adapt to better respond to evolving needs. The scope of work proposed in this report addresses key themes and considerations related to culture and park identity, nature, connectivity and service needs.

Subject to the Board’s approval of the recommendations outlined in report, a project team will be assembled through a Request for Proposals (RFP) process, with master plan work anticipated to begin mid-2020. Public engagement will be conducted throughout the life of the project and integrated into the development of the plan at key stages. Commissioners will be updated at key points through the process and will be provided a final master plan report for decision.

## BOARD AUTHORITY / POLICY

Per the [Vancouver Charter](#), the Park Board has exclusive jurisdiction and control over all areas designated as permanent and temporary parks in the City of Vancouver, including any structures, programs and activities, fees, and improvements that occur within those parks.

This project's scope of services and project approach align with the [goals](#), and activate the [bold moves](#) outlined in [VanPlay](#), Parks and Recreation Services Master Plan (2019).

### VanPlay Goals

- *Goal 1:* Grow and renew parks, community centres and recreation assets to keep pace with population growth and evolving needs;
- *Goal 3:* Prioritize the delivery of resources to where they are needed most;
- *Goal 4:* Focus on core responsibilities of the park board, and be a supportive ally to partners;
- *Goal 5:* Adapt our parks and recreation amenities to a changing climate;
- *Goal 6:* Create a green network that will connect our parks, waterfront and recreation areas; and
- *Goal 7:* Restore Vancouver's wild spaces and vital biodiversity.

### VanPlay Bold Moves

**Equity** – The Queen Elizabeth Park Master Plan will help prioritize the delivery of services and recreation resources to residents of Vancouver, the rapidly growing Cambie Corridor and the new Municipal Town Centre. As one of the largest parks in the city and because of its central location, Queen Elizabeth Park has an advantage in hosting assets that other parks lack. The park is located within the transit corridor and has the ability to serve the city in addition to the surrounding neighbourhood. Its wide catchment area reaches to Equity Initiative Zones identified in VanPlay.

**Asset Needs** – As it is a large park, Queen Elizabeth accommodates many amenities and a large amount of infrastructure. An assessment of service needs is required to determine priorities for future investment. This assessment will include a thorough review of current and potential service provision in comparison with VanPlay Asset targets and recommendations, an understanding of facility conditions and comprehensive community and stakeholder engagement.

**Connectivity** - Queen Elizabeth Park's central location provides it an opportunity to be a hub in the city-wide network of parks and recreation. There are many opportunities for creating connections, which include enabling access to nature and flow of water. VanPlay introduces the Little Mountain to Big River Concept, connecting Queen Elizabeth Park to the Fraser River. VanPlay identifies the area as an important environmental corridor for accommodating natural systems into the city's infrastructure.

### The Playbook, Implementation Plan

The Queen Elizabeth Park Master Plan directly fulfills on the following initiatives:

- *P.2.7* - Identify and strategically locate horticultural excellence points throughout the city to create connectivity along the parks and recreation network. These horticultural excellence points could include heritage landscapes, destination gardens (e.g. VanDusen or Queen Elizabeth Park), or other elements.
- *P.2.8* - Establish Queen Elizabeth park as a primary node in the parks network through the work of the Queen Elizabeth Park Master Plan and renewal.

The [Vancouver Biodiversity Strategy](#) (2016) outlines key principles including maintaining ecological processes (restore habitats and species), connecting citizens to natural areas in the city and celebrating biodiversity through education & stewardship.

The [People, Parks & Dogs Strategy](#) (2018) provides a framework for the next ten years and beyond, to deliver well-planned and designed parks that accommodate park users with and without dogs and minimize conflict.

The [Urban Forest Strategy](#) (2018) expands and refines the existing policies to improve management of the urban forest by protecting, planting, managing, educating, and monitoring this natural asset.

## **BACKGROUND**

Queen Elizabeth Park is one of the most popular and well-visited parks and public spaces in Vancouver. Panoramic views of the mountains framed by flourishing gardens provide a distinctive Vancouver experience. With its tranquil pathways through the quarry gardens and various water features in the park to active grounds of tennis courts, Queen Elizabeth Park is well loved by residents in the area. City views from the park are the background to morning tai chi routines and the sounds of songbirds are a distinct part of the sensory experience of walking through its garden areas. The park hosts various annual events and receives visitors from around the world.

The Bloedel Conservatory, which celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2019, provides a tropical oasis and is a significant cultural asset with its potential for environmental advocacy and education. Recent renewal and development work includes the celebration pavilion, plaza and fountain, Love in the Rain sculpture, as well as the conservatory's roof replacement, lighting upgrades, and the chiller/heat pump upgrade.

### **Context**

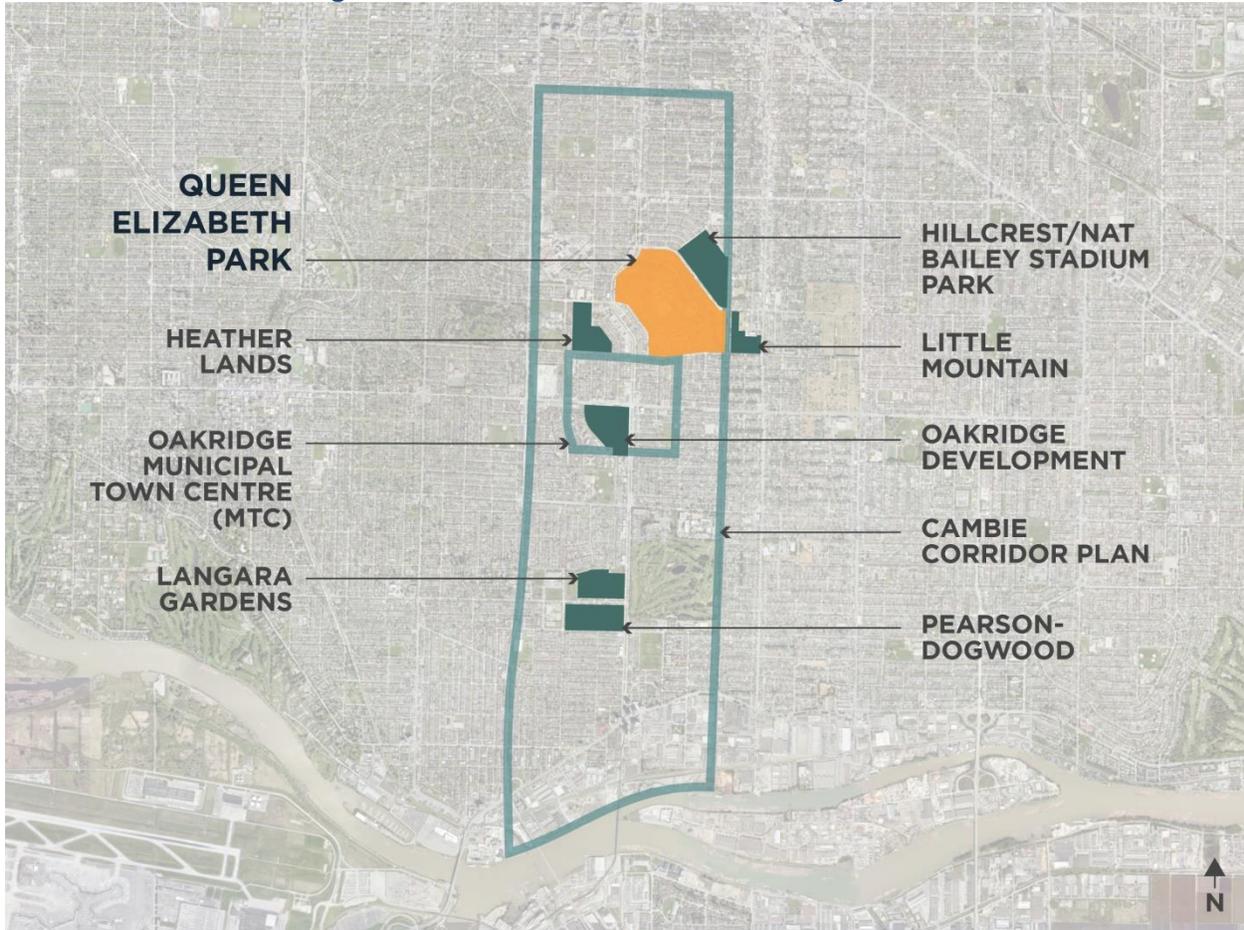
The Park is centrally located in Vancouver and surrounded by areas undergoing rapid growth and development (Figure 1). A number of Council-adopted planning policies reflect this. The [Cambie Corridor Plan \(2018\)](#) outlines a 30-year vision for the transformation from the predominantly single family residential uses surrounding the park. The plan calls for a dramatic shift to higher density forms of housing centred along the Canada Line. New mid-rise residential buildings are being introduced along Cambie Street, and family-oriented townhouses are coming to transition areas near Cambie Street and other adjacent large sites.

Cambie Corridor planning includes the new [Municipal Town Centre](#), centred around Oakridge Mall, which will be a high-density central hub for the corridor. The rezoned Heather Lands to the west of Queen Elizabeth Park will see mixed residential development and associated facilities for a significant new population as per the [Heather Lands Policy Statement \(2018\)](#). The policy statement also includes a central open space which will connect to the Queen Elizabeth Park via a pollinator corridor along a 35<sup>th</sup> Avenue extension. The [Little Mountain Policy Statement \(2012\)](#) defines the former Little Mountain housing site directly to the east of Queen Elizabeth Park, as a "Complete Community" including a substantial component of social housing, local-serving commercial uses and community facilities.

Overall, the Cambie Corridor is expecting a population increase of more than 55,000 by 2040, the second largest increase anticipated in the City after the Downtown neighbourhood. This rise

in population, compounded with both regional and tourism growth at roughly 4% annually, will result in a significant increase in the demand of green spaces.

**Figure 1: Queen Elizabeth Park and Planning Context**



### **Purpose of the Master Plan**

The purpose of the project is to develop a comprehensive master plan that anticipates growth and increased demand while preserving and enhancing the qualities of Queen Elizabeth Park. There have been numerous upgrades completed in the Park, but there has never been an approved master plan that brings together all aspects of park design, development and programming. The plan will provide a consistent planning and design approach for the implementation of all improvements to the park amenities over time.

### **Study Area**

Queen Elizabeth Park is located at the centre of the City and at its highest point. Although the focus of the plan will be within park boundaries, Queen Elizabeth Park's status as a central, city-wide park requires the plan to consider its broader context and connections.

## **DISCUSSION**

Building off previous work and background research for the Park, there are key issues that have emerged which have been summarized into the following four themes that will inform the scope of work for the master plan.

### **1) Culture - *Discovering Identity and Recognizing Cultural Diversity***

Queen Elizabeth Park is part of the cultural fabric of the City. Acting as a destination for cultural experiences, it accommodates a variety of iconic amenities and memorials. The Park helps connect Vancouverites with the City's past. The rock excavated from the Park site was used to build the first roadways in Vancouver. The former quarries were repurposed as display gardens for public enjoyment. For over half a century, the park's floriculture and horticulture have been a source of pride and accomplishment for Park Board staff.

The park is home to many significant cultural and natural assets that distinguish Vancouver as a global city and have grown over the years to include notable public art such as Henry Moore's *The Knife's Edge*, monuments and memorials, commemorative plaques and trees, and an arboretum. Destination cultural amenities include the Bloedel Conservatory, the Rock Garden, and the future Air Force Memorial Garden. The park hosts many cultural events such as the Cherry Blossom Festival, the British Columbia Buddhist Festival, Flag Day Celebration, and the recent indoor Festivale Tropicale at Bloedel Conservatory.

The master plan will articulate a vision, goals, recommendations and an action plan built on the understanding that arts and culture are fundamental to the quality of life for the residents of Vancouver. This focus on culture will align with the City's Culture|Shift policy, the Park Board's public art policy and our ongoing commitment to Reconciliation. Through creative-based engagement with the public, stakeholders, and community groups, the masterplan will guide future decision-making for the park's cultural development.

### **2) Nature - *Enhancing Ecological Integrity, Water Conservation, Access to Nature and Climate Change Resilience***

As one of the largest parks managed by the Park Board, Queen Elizabeth Park plays a significant role in providing the citizens of Vancouver access to nature. The Park is recognized as a biodiversity zone as evident through the noteworthy songbird population. There is significant potential for the natural areas of Queen Elizabeth Park to be improved, expanded and better connected to VanDusen Botanical Garden which can play a major role in increasing biodiversity for the region.

Through the master plan process, a full inventory of ecological and hydrological functions will be undertaken. This will establish the baseline to determine how the park's ecosystem is functioning today and will inform how the park can be transformed to enhance its ecological integrity, biodiversity, green infrastructure, access to nature and climate change resilience, with guidance from Park Board key policies.

Large parks are important assets for meeting urban forest canopy cover targets. An urban forest management plan specific to the Park will identify ecological values and establish priorities. The master plan process will provide the opportunity to complete a full tree

assessment, identifying commemorative trees, and implement innovative methods for tree and botanical identification.

The Park Board has a long history of horticultural excellence, as exemplified by the iconic Quarry botanical gardens. The master plan process will reflect the Park Board's [Horticulture Standards Review](#) findings and will consider ecological and sustainable horticultural best practices. Many water elements provide serenity to various spaces in the park. From the well-loved pond that houses ducks to the waterfall that flows to the ponds of the Quarry, the masterplan will address how the Park's water elements are functioning.

The Park is fortunate to have a variety of high quality amenities to support the ongoing stewardship and education of nature. The Park's environmental learning spaces provide excellent venues to engage children and youth. Exploring the role of these spaces and building off their success, these spaces can be celebrated and enhanced as an integral part of the masterplan.

### **3) Connectivity** - *Enhancing Internal Connectivity and Connecting parks, public spaces, and recreational nodes across the City*

"Connectivity", VanPlay's third Bold Move, centres on interconnecting parks, ecological systems, public spaces, and recreational nodes across the City through new amenities and routes. This Bold Move envisions vibrant, healthy communities and ecosystems by encouraging connection and integration. Queen Elizabeth Park has the potential to dramatically improve connectivity internally within the park, to its immediate context, and on more broadly, on a City-wide scale.

Currently, the Park has no single discernable internal trail system. Mass sections of the park are perceived as disconnected from one another. Wide and steep roadways originally designed for automobile movement are inadequate for pedestrians or cycling and other wheeled uses. These uses are increasingly important in a "car-less" culture. The discontinuous canopy cover in the Park contributes to the sense of fragmentation and disorientation.

Connectivity from the Park to its immediate context can be greatly improved. For example, Midlothian Avenue is a significant barrier to Hillcrest Park. Improving the Park's edge and permeability to pedestrians could dramatically improve accessibility to the many facilities Hillcrest offers, as well as improved integration and experiences complementing both parks. To the east, there is great opportunity to better connect the Park down the long Ontario Street blocks to the redeveloping Little Mountain site, including its smaller open spaces.

From an ecological point of view, the pollinator corridor proposed for the nearby Heather Street Lands is an example of how a renewed Queen Elizabeth Park can be part of a bigger natural network. The City's One Water, Rain City Strategy initiative is based on connectivity principles to support water management by integrating rainwater and absorbing stormwater through connected open spaces and parks. The southern slope of Queen Elizabeth Park is part of the Cambie watershed plan.

VanPlay's Little Mountain to Big River Concept connecting Queen Elizabeth Park to the Fraser River is an example of how the park can be a part of an emerging City-wide connected network of pathways, parks, facilities and ecological assets.

#### **4) Service Needs - Addressing Service Gaps through Improvement of Facilities and Infrastructure**

Queen Elizabeth Park is home to many recreation facilities such as the Pitch and Putt course, Disc Golf course, Roller Hockey Courts, Lawn Bowling greens and Tennis courts. The topography of Queen Elizabeth Park provides opportunities for active recreation such as jogging and fitness trails. The Park's proximity to Nat Bailey Stadium Park and Hillcrest Community Centre enables each park to benefit from more connected and enhanced recreational services and experiences.

A Condition and Service-Needs Assessment of recreational amenities in the Park and surrounding area is needed to determine the appropriate type and level of services that should be offered in the Park. This includes a review of existing facilities and identification of opportunities to work towards meeting the Asset Targets identified in VanPlay (almost all targets in VanPlay are relevant however the masterplan will focus on the provision of 'naturally managed areas', courts, and trails/pathways).

The Park will need to transition to its emerging role within a high-density context. Surrounding residents with little or no access to outdoor space will result in increased need for open space. As the surrounding population increases, trends will change and demands will increase, along with the need to renew and upgrade services for infrastructure that is already aging as it stands in the Park today.

The Park's many recreational, social, and cultural facilities include the Bloedel Conservatory, the Celebration Pavilion, Seasons in the Park Restaurant, the Lawn Bowling Club buildings, the Pitch and Putt building, a fieldhouse, two washroom buildings, and the Service Yard. The master plan will support the future vision for the Bloedel Conservatory per the VanDusen and Bloedel Strategic Plan. This plan includes a collaborative visioning exercise with the Vancouver Botanical Gardens Association, a Park Board partner, and is expected to be completed in 2020.

Currently, Metro Vancouver operates two fully-contained, concrete reservoirs within Queen Elizabeth Park: Little Mountain Reservoir (located under the Bloedel Conservatory plaza) and Kersland Reservoir. Development is restricted over the two reservoirs. The master plan will consider how best to align park amenities and facilities and coordinate the future management of restrictions with Metro Vancouver.

With the anticipated growth in the surrounding neighbourhoods, many potential new amenities for the park will need to be explored, along with services that a growing and diverse population will necessitate. The need for a more legible, connected system of pathways, as mentioned above, as well as for children's play facilities and outdoor workout elements, which the park lacks, are some of the examples of amenities to address services needed.

#### **Scope of Work**

The scope of work has been divided into four phases that are organized around the key stages of master plan development:

##### **PHASE 1: Listen & Learn**

- Project start up, planning, initial data synthesis & background research
- Opportunities, constraints, generation of preliminary goals and principles

- Public and stakeholder engagement – Round #1
- Park Board update

#### **PHASE 2: Vision Development**

- Develop draft vision, goals and principles
- Identify draft park identity
- Public and stakeholder engagement – Round #2
- Park Board update

#### **PHASE 3: Initial Concepts**

- Confirm goals and principles, validate vision, and generate ideas
- Develop initial concepts
- Public and stakeholder engagement – Round #3
- Park Board update

#### **PHASE 4: Final Concepts and Master Plan**

- Develop preferred concept and articulate project vision
- Develop phased plans with implementation and funding plans
- Public engagement – Round #4
- Finalize phased implementation and funding plans
- Park Board reports for decision

#### **Future Implementation**

Given the scale of the park, the implementation or construction of the master plan will likely be done in construction phases over a number of capital plans; these construction phases will be outlined and prioritized as noted in Phase 4 above.

#### **Engagement Approach**

Engagement and communication with the public, stakeholders, Park Board, and staff will be critical to ensuring the final plan is reflective the values and needs of Vancouverites. The public engagement strategy will consider a layered approach with different types and scales of engagement and outreach. The engagement strategy will also look at engaging park users through creative activations and programming in the park.

#### **Project Schedule**

A high-level schedule is provided below with major milestones outlined. A more detailed project schedule will be developed and published once the full project team is assembled closer to project kick-off.

Q1 2020:	Scoping and Project Team Set-Up
Q3 2020:	Master Plan Kick-Off
Q1 2022:	Draft Master Plan Completion Draft Master Plan Report to Board for Decision
2023-2026:	First phase of construction of park components (pending Board & Council approval of 2023-2026 Capital Plan)
Throughout:	Board updates at key milestones

## **NEXT STEPS**

Pending Board approval of the recommendations outlined in this report, a project team will be assembled through a public Request for Expressions of Interest (RFEOI). The RFEOI will request expressions of interest from consultant teams with experience in developing large-scale park master plans and with local knowledge and experience. A Request for Proposal (RFP) will then be issued to consultants shortlisted through the RFEOI process. This process is consistent with other large scale projects that Staff have recently undertaken. It is anticipated that this process will take approximately 4-5 months.

## **CONCLUSION**

Vancouver is experiencing a period of rapid change and growth and Queen Elizabeth Park is at the heart, immediately adjacent to the Cambie Corridor. The Park, which has not had significant comprehensive upgrades in decades, needs to transform to this evolving context: a new higher-density residential population that will depend on Queen Elizabeth Park to provide access to nature, well-being, and fulfill exercise, leisure and recreation needs.

The Queen Elizabeth Park master plan process, informed by a multi-faceted public engagement process, will identify a common vision and establish priorities in preserving and improving the Park's amenities and services. The masterplan can take advantage of the site's importance and prominence in order to engage the community in creative and meaningful ways to produce an exceptional guiding plan for the future.

Reimagining Queen Elizabeth Park is an opportunity to make significant strides towards the ambitious goals described in VanPlay (Parks and Recreation Services Master Plan), the Biodiversity Strategy and Urban Forest Strategy. These policies provide clear direction on major shifts that parks such as Queen Elizabeth can make to be relevant to the current and future citizens of Vancouver, and respond to the challenges of a changing climate.

The facilities and attractions at Queen Elizabeth Park deserve the attention and rigour of a focused master plan process to define future investments needed to ensure these entities are sustained, enhanced and to continue to be leading attractions and destinations in the Park Board system.

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