



CHAIR'S REPORT – 2020 YEAR IN REVIEW

— December 8, 2020 —

The following report is intended to provide an overview of Park Board accomplishments over the past year. The accompanying presentation can be found on the [Park Board website](#).

2020 began promisingly enough with the 100th annual Polar Bear Swim on January 1. This year, however, is one that has been dominated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Park Board understands the importance of access to nature, recreation, and green space and so, throughout the pandemic, parks and beaches have remained open.

This report reflects the impact of the pandemic on our facilities and services, the resilience of our staff, as well as 2020 accomplishments.

Pandemic Response, Reopening, and Recovery

On March 16, to curb the potential spread of COVID-19, all Park Board community centres, pools, fitness centres, rinks, golf courses, VanDusen Botanical Garden, and Stanley Park Train were closed to the public and all permitted events at sports fields and parks were cancelled. In addition, Stanley Park was closed to vehicles, while the seawall was closed to cyclists.

We created a new role called 'Park Champions' to educate the public on physical distancing, as well as developed messaging and branding regarding closures and reopenings that was copied by other jurisdictions.

The Board played a key role in the province in developing reopening plans for recreation facilities. As part of a careful, phased approach, we began with reopening Fraserview and McCleery golf courses in late May with new physical distancing procedures in place to ensure a safe experience for patrons and staff. Other facilities reopened thereafter.

When reopening, our staff advocated and worked collaboratively with Community Centre Associations to identify essential programs to vulnerable families, such as outdoor daycamps. As well, we led the work on prioritizing the needs of youth, seniors and food security services, offering wellness checks, food hampers and other community outreach programs.

In consultation with the Vancouver Coastal Health and the Provincial Health Officer, we decided to launch VanDusen Festival of Lights and the Stanley Park Christmas Train for the holiday season. Both have safety protocols in place such as limits on number of visitors, but have been postponed until December 8 due to provincial health orders.

Strategies and Bylaws Brought to Life

Washroom Strategy

In November, the Board approved the Parks Washroom Strategy, which includes short and long-term recommendations to guide the planning, building, and operations of safe, clean and accessible park washrooms in Vancouver.

VanPlay Strategy

In October, the Board approved the VanPlay Framework. It is now our principal strategic plan. VanPlay sets clear direction for the future of parks, connectivity, biodiversity, and the natural flow of water in

Vancouver. To this end, the Board endorsed the Rain City Strategy's Parks and Beaches Action Plan. The strategy is long-term policy for collective action around green rainwater infrastructure implementation in Vancouver.

Parks Control Bylaw

In September, the Parks Control Bylaw regarding Temporary Shelter in Parks was enacted. This means that people experiencing homelessness can take up temporary residence in a park from dusk until 7 am the following day, unless in an area designated by the GM as acceptable for temporary daytime shelter.

An encampment at Strathcona Park was established in June. Our Parks team has developed a strong working relationship with camp leadership and working tirelessly to clean up the camp and the surrounding community.

Our Commitment to Sustainability

Beaver Lake Enhancement

Beaver Lake is an important part of Stanley Park's ecology, a popular recreational site, of cultural and spiritual significance to Coast Salish First Nations, and one of Vancouver's few freshwater lakes. An outlet at the lake is undergoing enhancements to stabilize water levels and improve the areas ecological value. The new outlet will be less prone to blockage, which will reduce flooding and maintain regular water movement in Beaver Lake and Beaver Creek. These improvements will be completed this month.

150,000th Tree Planting

In November, the Board celebrated its goal of planting 150,000 trees since 2010 and growing the urban forest. That's enough trees to cover Stanley Park almost five times over. Increasing the tree canopy was a Greenest City Action Plan target. The final 11 trees—Douglas firs—were planted at New Brighton Park. The Board's work, however, is not completed, as it needs to double the number of street trees in priority neighbourhoods such as the Downtown Eastside and Marpole.

Truth and Reconciliation

Truth and Reconciliation work is being undertaken by the Board's Arts, Cultural & Engagement Team by supporting Indigenous cultural projects such as the Wild Salmon Caravan, an annual event that celebrates and advocates for the importance of wild salmon. In addition, we support Indigenous Elders projects, including a cedar weaving group at Britannia Community Centre.

Capital Projects and Delivery

Many of the Park Board projects are large and multi-year, such as a new park at Smithe and Richards street. On January 17, we broke ground on a distinctive and dynamic multi-layered park that will become a haven for nearby workers at lunchtime and an oasis of green for residents living nearby. The park will provide almost an acre of new green space in the heart of the dense downtown core.

Other projects currently in design or under construction include:

- Tatlow Park daylighting concept approved

- East Park in design
- New park at Main and 7th in design
- New parks in the East Fraser Lands under construction
- And Brewers Park renewal under construction

Park Renewals

In June, Pandora Park received a new dog off-leash area, two restored tennis courts, six new pickleball courts, a basketball court, and children's playground.

In Jones Park, the playground features a custom concrete snail that 'drinks' from a water spigot, a large wooden ship, swings, a carousel, rubber mounds, spring toys and a new drinking fountain. A perimeter park path was also created with a small adult fitness station, which will be installed this month, and a rain garden

Cedar Cottage Park received an accessible playground, two pickleball courts, two half basketball courts. To increase biodiversity and capture and collect rain water, a raingarden was built and planted with a variety of pollinator-attracting perennials.

Slocan Park Playing Fields Renewal

Playing capacity at three grass fields in Slocan Park has increased by as much as 50 per cent due to recent upgrades, such as expanded play area, installation of new irrigation and drainage systems, and new goal posts and ball control fences at the ends of the fields.

Connaught Spray Park Renewal

This summer, a renewed and very colourful Connaught Spray Park reopened thanks to our partnership with Kitsilano Community Centre Association! The water spouts, cannon streams, and umbrella showers have been delighting local children.

Playground Renewals

A renewed playground in Kaslo Park features a slide and climbing features built into the hillside.

Charleson Park playground has just reopened and features a wooden ship play structure, in-ground trampolines, and play kitchen.

Dedicated Pickleball Courts in Queen Elizabeth Park

In August, the Board opened eight pickleball courts in Queen Elizabeth Park—the first ever dedicated pickleball courts in Vancouver. The sport continues to grow in popularity and so the Board has repainted lines on 12 other courts throughout the city so that both pickleball and tennis can be played on them.

Highlights and Special Events

100th Annual Polar Bear Swim

A record breaking 40,000 people attended the 100th annual Polar Bear Swim and 7,000 registered to swim in English Bay. Managed by the Park Board, it's one of the largest and oldest such swims in the world.



Stanley Park Rose Garden 100th Anniversary

This year, the Rose Garden celebrated its 100th anniversary. The garden was established after the Kiwanis Club donated \$3,600 to our Board. Today, the garden contains almost 3,000 roses such as hybrid tea, climbers, ramblers, and long stems.

Koi Finds New Home at Bloedel Conservatory

In the fall, the 34-year-old Dragon Gate was relocated to a newly rehabilitated pond at Bloedel Conservatory. Believed to be the oldest koi in Vancouver, he joined nine other koi at Bloedel. Dragon Gate came from Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden where he survived two otter attacks.

Park Board Leadership

Former General Manager and Director of Parks Retire

Former Director of Parks Howard Normann and General Manager Malcolm Bromley both retired this past spring. Howard had been with the Park Board for more than 40 years in various roles, while Malcolm was GM for 10 years. Deputy General Manager Shauna Wilton also left to pursue new challenges.

General Manager Donnie Rosa

General Manager Donnie Rosa joined us in September during these unsettling and challenging times. They previously worked at the Park Board as Director of Recreation and was part of a team that negotiated the new Community Centre Joint Operating Agreement.