



ALCOHOL IN PARKS PILOT

Report Back

Regular Park Board Meeting
Monday, December 13, 2021



The purpose of this report is to share with the Board the findings from the Alcohol in Parks Pilot, including public feedback, monitoring results, and considerations, as directed by the Board motion from December 2018.



Agenda

- Pilot Background
- Implementation Overview
- Key Findings
 - Monitoring
 - Public Health and Safety
 - Public Feedback
- Considerations

Pilot Background



Pilot Timeline

- **December 2018** - Board Motion directing staff to develop a feasibility study for a pilot allowing alcohol consumption at select sites
- **July 2020** – 22 park sites were approved for the pilot, but implementation required amendments to the BC Liquor Control and Licensing Act (LCLA) to allow Park Board the legal authority
- **June 2021** – BC LCLA amended; Park Board approved the by-law to launch the pilot
- **July 2021** – Pilot launches to the public; staff begin monitoring and public survey goes live
- **October 2021** – Pilot ends and public survey closes; staff review monitoring data

Pilot Site Selection Criteria

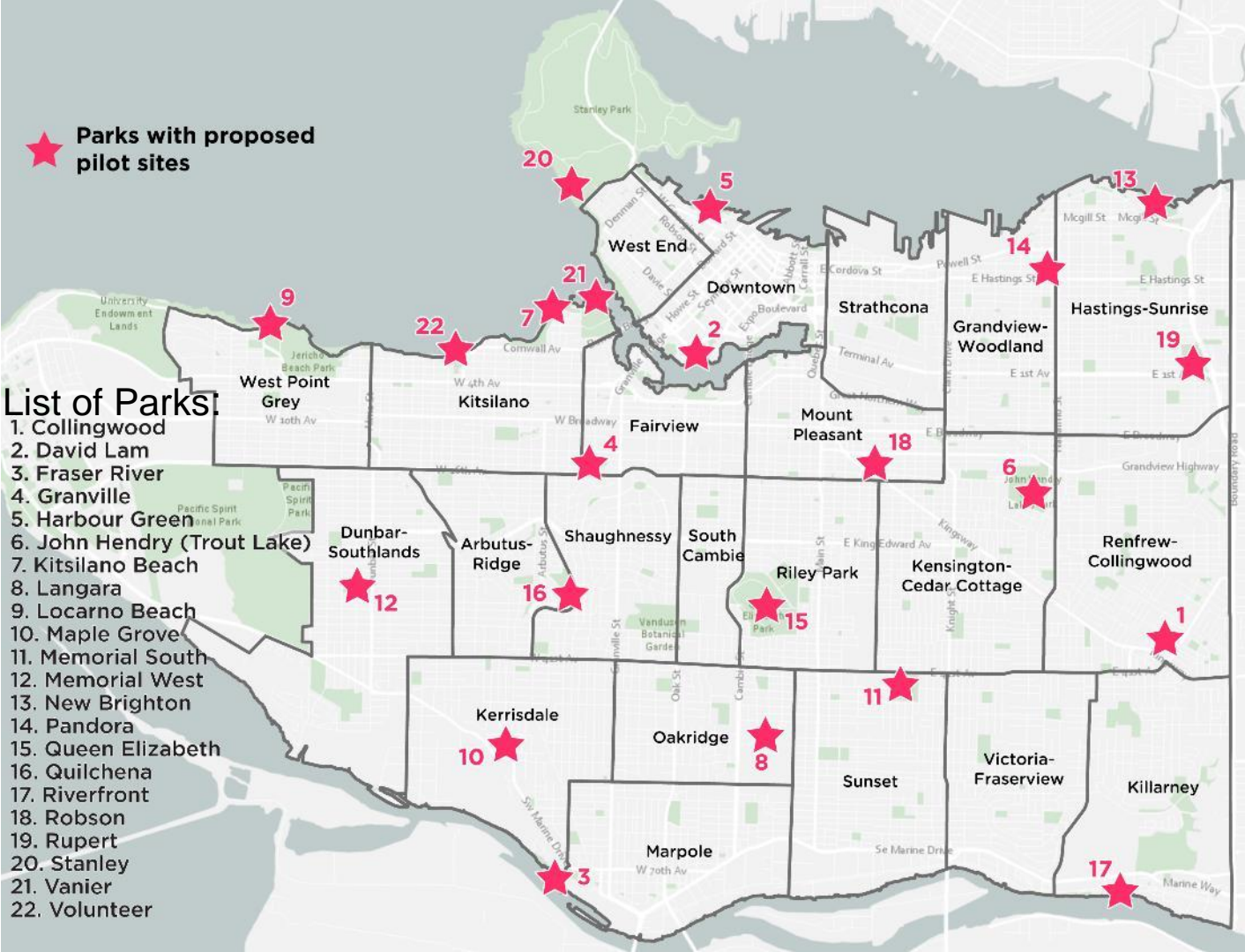
- Highly visible, non-remote locations with emergency vehicle access;
- Distribution of locations city-wide to provide equitable access;
- Washroom facilities nearby;
- Features & amenities appealing for socializing (views, benches, picnic sites);
- Pedestrian, cycling, and public transit access nearby;
- Accessibility parking nearby;
- Food & beverage services nearby;
- Minimal impacts to natural areas, purpose-built, and/or programmable spaces;
- Minimal impacts/disruptions to neighbouring residents;
- Minimum 20m from playgrounds;
- Not adjacent to schools;
- No bathing beaches (for aquatic safety reasons);
- No primary special event venues.

★ Parks with proposed pilot sites

List of Parks:

1. Collingwood
2. David Lam
3. Fraser River
4. Granville
5. Harbour Green
6. John Hendry (Trout Lake)
7. Kitsilano Beach
8. Langara
9. Locarno Beach
10. Maple Grove
11. Memorial South
12. Memorial West
13. New Brighton
14. Pandora
15. Queen Elizabeth
16. Quilchena
17. Riverfront
18. Robson
19. Rupert
20. Stanley
21. Vanier
22. Volunteer

Pilot Sites across the City



Implementation Overview

- On-site signage
- Communications
- Waste totes
- Monitoring approaches



ALCOHOL IN PARKS PILOT

COLLINGWOOD PARK



Pilot Duration: **Until October 11, 2021**
 Drinking Hours: **11:00 am - 9:00 pm Daily**

Pilot Description

As a temporary pilot, Vancouver Board of Parks & Recreation is allowing people to legally consume alcohol at select sites in parks around the city. This park contains one or more of these pilot sites. Please review the map provided to check where the designated drinking sites are.

Within these designated drinking sites and during the permitted drinking hours, the public can bring and enjoy their own alcoholic beverages throughout the duration of the pilot. Please remember to drink responsibly and respect those engaging in other park uses.

For more information on this pilot program, please visit the project webpage at shapeyourcity.ca/alcohol-in-parks-pilot, or scan this code on your phone's camera.

Survey

The Park Board is launching this pilot in part to better understand the opportunities and impacts for the city's residents.

To provide important feedback to this pilot, please participate in the survey at shapeyourcity.ca/alcohol-in-parks-pilot-survey, or scan this code on your phone's camera.

We are on the unceded territories of the x'makw'ayam (Musqueam), Sḵwəw7mesh (Squamish), and salilwəts (Tsilil-Wautub) Nations.

Alcohol in Parks Pilots
shapeyourcity.ca/alcohol-in-parks-pilot

Rules & Responsibilities

Do your part to ensure this pilot is successful. This means prioritizing your own health and safety, and ensuring others feel welcome sharing this space.

Our ask:

- Only consume alcoholic beverages within the designated sites and hours
- Do not bring alcoholic beverages within 20 metres of nearby playgrounds
- Be respectful in this shared space, and mindful of everyone's safety
- Practice physical distancing and remember to stay 2 metres apart
- Avoid any large gatherings
- Keep this space clean and use nearby washrooms and waste/recycling bins
- Keep noise to a minimum to respect nearby residents, businesses, and wildlife

Incident Reporting

General Feedback/Inquiries to Park Board: 3-1-1
 Police Non-Emergency: **604-717-3321**
 Emergency: 9-1-1

We are on the unceded territories of the x'makw'ayam (Musqueam), Sḵwəw7mesh (Squamish), and salilwəts (Tsilil-Wautub) Nations.

Children's Area

Collingwood Park is an important place for children's recreation, including day camps and other activities. Stay 2 metres away from the edge of the wading pool. As you use this park, please be mindful and respectful of other park users.

Health & Wellness

Your health and wellness is important to us. We have compiled a list of local community and harm-reduction resources that are sensitive to your unique needs and situations. For contact information, please visit: shapeyourcity.ca/alcohol-in-parks-pilot

For COVID-19 related information, please visit Vancouver Coastal Health at: www.vch.ca/covid-19.

Stay safe and well!

Alcohol in Parks Pilots
shapeyourcity.ca/alcohol-in-parks-pilot

On-Site Signage

- Pilot info
- Site map
- Survey link
- Rules and responsibilities
- Site-specific sensitivities
- Health and wellness resources
- Incident reporting

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Alcohol in Parks Pilot



As of Oct 11, 2021, the pilot has ended and alcohol consumption in all parks is no longer permitted. Thank you for submitting your feedback on the Alcohol in Parks Pilot.

Parks provide essential outdoor spaces for people to socialize, eat, rest, and connect with nature. Increasingly, more people are relying on parks for gatherings with friends and family for safer physical distancing. Not everyone has access to a private outdoor space like a patio or deck.

We understand that food and beverage play important roles in fostering social connections. The Alcohol in Parks Pilot was an opportunity to meet public demand, while testing and measuring the benefits and impacts this initiative has on the city's parks and residents.

Alcohol consumption was permitted within designated drinking areas at the following parks between July 12 and October 11, 2021:

- Collingwood Park
- David Lam Park
- Fraser River Park
- Granville Park
- Harbour Green Park
- John Hendry/Troun Lake Park
- Kinsillano Beach Park / Hadden Park
- Langara Park
- Locarno Beach Park
- Maple Grove Park
- Memorial South Park
- Memorial West Park
- New Brighton Park
- Pandora Park
- Queen Elizabeth Park
- Quilichena Park
- Riverfront Park (West)
- Robson Park
- Rupert Park
- Stanley Park (South)
- Vanier Park
- Volunteer Park

You can see where those sites are by clicking the parks above.

During the pilot, we worked closely with our Park Rangers, Parks staff, local police, and other stakeholders to ensure that these sites were safe, properly managed, and maintained.



[Register](#) to get involved!

Project timeline

- ✓ **On standby**
We are preparing to launch this pilot.
- ✓ **Pilot launch**
The pilot launches. Remember to drink responsibly and be safe.

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Parks, recreation, and culture

- Parks and recreation
 - Recreation facility hours
 - Holiday hours
 - Facilities and schedules
 - Recreational activities
 - Passes, discounts, and gift cards
- Parks, gardens, and beaches
 - Parking at parks
 - Lost and found
 - Alcohol in parks pilot**
 - Stanley Park
 - Seawall
 - Queen Elizabeth Park

Alcohol in parks pilot

To meet increasing public demand, the Park Board developed a pilot program to allow the responsible consumption of alcohol in designated drinking sites within 22 Vancouver parks.

Communications

- News release and social media posts
- Project webpage
- Shape Your City engagement page and public survey
- 3-1-1 and project inbox



Waste totes

- 28 additional waste totes ordered and installed
- Prioritizing pilot sites in more popular destination parks
- Serviced 3x per week by Engineering

Monitoring Approaches

Park Rangers

- Daily on-site visits (multiple times daily for popular sites)
- Monitored for number of park users, general atmosphere, adherence to rules, and whether or not police/emergency assistance was required

Park Operations Staff

- On-site monitoring, frequency depended on maintenance schedules
- Recording observations related to site conditions, cleanliness, condition of waste totes, and presence of vandalism

Park Experience Team

- Twice daily visits, monitoring public washroom conditions
- Recorded quality of washroom stock/supplies, litter and vandalism, alcohol containers, and time spent servicing washrooms

Monitoring Approaches

Vancouver Coastal Health

- Number of alcohol-related visits to hospital emergency departments during the 13-week pilot period
- *Compared to:*
 - A) 13-week period prior to the pilot
 - B) Same 13-week period in 2020

Vancouver Police Department

- Number of alcohol-related service calls within two-block radius of each site during the 13-week pilot period
- *Compared to:*
 - A) Same 13-week period in 2020
 - B) Same 13-week period in 2019

Pilot Findings

- Monitoring results
- Public health and safety



Park Rangers Findings

- Designated drinking areas were not well-defined and the signage available was not very effective in communicating the boundaries
- Park users didn't generally abide by designated drinking areas when drinking alcohol on site
- Despite poor adherence to drinking area boundaries, behaviour was largely respectful and non-problematic
- Rangers reported that on 94% of visits, everyone was respectful and no one needed to be reminded of the pilot rules
- The VPD had to be called for assistance on 0.3% of visits

Park Operations Findings

- Increase in wear and tear on turf where people congregated.
- Park users did not adhere to designated drinking areas, but behaviour remained largely respectful and unproblematic
- Recyclables were the most prominent and recurring issue as most park sites don't have recycling facilities
- Some instances glass was left behind, leading to broken glass (noted in at least three visits)
- Additional waste totes or more frequent collection may be needed at some sites (e.g. Harbour Green, Riverfront, and Memorial South parks)
- At Locarno Beach, Volunteer, and Kitsilano Beach/Hadden parks, staff reported large amounts of alcohol-related waste left on the beaches adjacent to (but not part of) pilot sites

Park Experience Findings

- Bathroom service workers and fieldhouse operators observed no noticeable changes in neighbourhood parks
- Downtown park washrooms required more cleaning and servicing time but this pattern is typical for the summer
- There has been no noticeable increase in drug paraphernalia.
- Litter and recyclables increased. In particular, cans and bottles were sometimes left behind but park users generally gathered them in one spot of the park
- Empty alcohol containers were noted on 35% of visits, and litter was noted on 83% of visits

Public Health Findings (VCH)

- Reported by VCH that there was **not a significant difference** in the average number of alcohol-related visits to emergency departments per week
- Ambulatory calls were not included in this analysis due to the very small number of calls in 2021

Limitations of Findings

- Individuals may be visiting emergency departments without mentioning alcohol use
- Cases with mild symptoms may not be presented at emergency departments or hospitals at all
- Data records acute health impacts; longer-term impacts such as chronic illness are not recorded

Public Safety Findings (VPD)

- The final data presented by VPD showed **no increases in the number of alcohol-related calls**
- Numbers tracked were consistent with the number of calls from the two prior years, indicating that the pilot, during this time, had little impact to police resources

Limitations of Findings

- Does not account for disorderly behaviours where police were not called
- Data is only indicative of a short 'snapshot' in time
- General upsurge in public drinking in other parts of the city (e.g. Granville Entertainment District)

Public Feedback

- Survey results
- 3-1-1 and other



Public Survey Feedback

- **Two types of surveys: general and site-specific.**
- **589 responses combined**, of which 69% were supportive, and 20% were unsupportive
- **Differences in support** between general (71% of total) and site-specific (29% of total):
 - For the general survey, 86% were supportive of drinking in parks
 - Level of support among those who **live or work near a site** were more mixed. Roughly half were supportive of the pilot, and the other half unsupportive.

Respondents who live near **Kits Beach/Hadden, David Lam, and John Hendry/Trout Lake Parks** were more supportive (57-64%) compared to the general average (47%).

According to survey results, these three parks also received more responses and were more used for drinking.

General Survey Feedback (Benefits)

The **top three benefits** cited for allowing alcohol in parks were:

1. “More opportunities to enjoy the outdoors - not everyone has a private yard or patio” (296 counts)
2. “More opportunities to connect with friends and family” (218 counts)
3. “More opportunities to enjoy take-out, picnics, and food/beverages” (181 counts)

Summary of open-ended feedback in **support of alcohol in parks**:

1. Suggestions to expand the pilot to more parks or making it a permanent use (41 counts)
2. Allowing alcohol consumption in parks as more equitable and progressive (40 counts)
3. Alcohol in parks made for a more enjoyable social atmosphere or improved sense of safety and wellness (38 counts)

General Survey Feedback (Concerns)

The **top three responses regarding concerns** cited for allowing alcohol in parks were:

1. “I don’t think there are concerns” (191 counts)
2. “More waste and littering” (179 counts)
3. “People being loud, obnoxious, and creating nuisances” (141 counts)

Summary of open-ended feedback voicing **concern for alcohol in parks**:

1. Concerns about disruptive behaviour (35 counts)
2. Concerns about enforcement, regulation, or communication (32 counts)
3. Concerns about cleaning, litter, or trash and recycling (20 counts)

Site-Specific Survey Feedback

- Generally, respondents felt washrooms, waste, and parks were well maintained.
- 41% of respondents stated alcohol in parks made their last visit more enjoyable, whereas 34% said it made their visit less enjoyable.

When asked what **services/features would have made their experience more enjoyable** (open-ended), the most common themes were:

- More garbage and recycling totes, litter pick-up (38 counts)
- Clarifying drinking area boundaries or improving the locations in relation to other park features (25 counts)
- More enforcement, monitoring, or regulation (20 counts)

Site-Specific Survey Feedback

63% respondents said other park users were **respectful and responsible**, compared to 17% who felt other park users were not being respectful and responsible.

When asked if there had been a **change in feelings of personal safety with the pilot**, 27% of respondents reported that their feelings of personal safety had decreased, citing the following reasons (open-ended):

- Disruptive behaviours, or behaviours that violate park/pilot rules (61 counts)
- Gender, race, or age-based threats, or other threatening behaviours (16 counts)
- Disruption of “family-friendly” environment (16 counts), where alcohol consumption is not seen to be family friendly.

Other Public Feedback

Project inbox:

- Reports on people drinking/gathering past hours, and leaving garbage at particular sites
- Emails about the pilot being paternalistic and that people should drink freely
- Concerns about “incompatible park use” for families and children
- Petition against drinking near ecologically sensitive areas – Vanier, Kits Beach, Locarno, and Volunteer parks (300 signatures)

3-1-1:

- 10 reports collected in total, Riverfront and Robson parks received multiple reports each – mainly complaints about noise and waste

Considerations



Considerations

Key learnings:

- Survey is generally supportive about drinking in parks
- Seen as progressive and responsive to people's needs
- Park users were largely respectful and responsible

However, there are notable **areas for improvement**:

- Maintenance, litter, waste, recycling management
- Needs for increased on-site monitoring and enforcement
- Clarity on pilot sites boundaries

Waste and Maintenance Considerations

Challenges:

- Increased waste and litter, no recycling facilities
- No additional staff resources in Park Operations to support this pilot (existing staff absorbed increased work load)

Opportunities:

- More popular destinations should be equipped and serviced with recycling options, and increased washroom servicing
- Additional paper picking to reduce litter and maintain quality of parks

Site Monitoring Considerations

Challenges:

- Polarizing perceptions of alcohol use and public behaviours
- But some respondents did note the presence of alcohol impacted their feelings of safety, and that they felt that nobody was on-site to enforce rules
- Lack of staff resources to support more frequent on-site monitoring

Opportunities:

- More resources and support for Park Rangers would better support this initiative – increasing on-site presence and responsiveness to issues

Clarity of Pilot Sites & Boundaries

Challenges:

- People did not follow boundaries of designated drinking areas despite being largely respectful and responsible
- Boundaries are detailed and sometimes confusing

Opportunities:

- Boundary issues could be addressed by eliminating boundaries and identifying entire parks as pilot sites, and communicating that there are general rules of conduct within the park.

Health & Wellness Considerations

Challenges:

- Data is superficial and does not reflect long-term impacts of alcohol.
- Health and wellness resources are passive for this pilot – available online only.

Opportunities:

- Explore and support more active outreach approaches that bring awareness to alcohol and substance use

Health & Wellness Considerations



Equity Considerations

Challenges:

- Site selection did not include DTES due to existing issues with the parks at the time
- Resulted in the neighbourhood being excluded from the pilot

Opportunities:

- A pilot in DTES parks could feature more community-tailored approaches, including potential partnerships with local community service providers

Financial Considerations

Work Group	Additional Costs (Approx.)
Park Rangers	\$30,000 (Jul + Aug, 2021)
Park Experience (Janitorial)	\$11,100
Park Operations (Maintenance)	\$8,500
Engineering (Garbage Pick-Up)	\$5,100
Structures (Signage)	\$21,000
Planning (Project Management)	\$31,300
Overhead	\$10,900
TOTAL	\$120,000 (Approx.)



Questions

