



February 17, 2023

**TO:** Park Board Chair and Commissioners  
**FROM:** General Manager – Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation  
**SUBJECT:** Naturally Managed Park Plan – Gibby's Field

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## RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT the Vancouver Park Board approve the draft concept plan for the new park site known as Gibby's Field, and direct staff to design and implement the path, rainwater retention, and vegetation work as described;
- B. THAT the Vancouver Park Board direct staff to work with the City of Vancouver Engineering Department staff to include this work as a part of a grant claim for federal funding assistance; and
- C. THAT the Vancouver Park Board direct staff to work with City staff to consolidate the parcels at 1454, 1458, and 1462 East 18<sup>th</sup> Avenue as a single park parcel and designate the consolidated parcel as permanent park.

## REPORT SUMMARY

The Park Board recently acquired three parcels, known as 'Gibby's Field' in an area of the city with low natural habitat provision. While a relatively small and sloped site, this location offers potential for an improved access / through path, rainwater retention and infiltration (also known as green infrastructure), ephemeral wetland habitat, urban forest, and environmental education. Staff have been exploring options to enhance Gibby's Field as a publicly accessible, naturally managed, green infrastructure park to build on the past community vision developed by the Gibby's Field Group and subcommittee. Plans include earthworks to shape a basin of periodic rainwater, tree planting, and an enhanced pathway. Grant funding to support the capital costs of the plan implementation is available.

## POLICY

[VanPlay](#), the Board's Parks and Recreation Services Master Plan (2019/20) set priorities and provides tools and policies to support the pursuit of equity, connectivity and access to parks and recreation for all. Goal 7 is to "*Restore Vancouver's Wild Spaces and Vital Biodiversity*". This project aligns with the VanPlay Framework's direction for Nature, to acknowledge historic streams to help manage and filter storm water, and to connect the city's ecological network. In terms of Equity, this particular area of Vancouver has few naturally managed areas or wildlife habitat compared to others.

The City's [Rain City Strategy](#) is a 30-year plan to change how the City of Vancouver manages rainwater. Nature-based solutions such as the ones proposed in this project support City-Engineering in meeting the goals, objectives, targets and action plans of the Rain City Strategy. Park Board endorsed the Parks and Beaches component of the Strategy in 2020, and directed staff to seek opportunities to integrate rainwater into parks.

The proposed naturally managed park plan in this report is also aligned with aspects of the following strategies: [Biodiversity Strategy](#) (Park Board and City 2016), [Bird Strategy](#) (Park Board and City 2015, updated 2020 – City and Park Board), and [Urban Forest Strategy](#) (updated 2018 – City and Park Board).

### Climate Emergency Action Plan Implications

This proposal supports the Climate Emergency Action Plan Big Move 6 in that a naturally managed park and tree canopy naturally remain cooler and sequester more carbon than mown turf grass. It will also offer more shade and user cooling opportunities.

### BACKGROUND

These three lots were once part of 19 acres purchased by Irish-born Moses Gibson for a dairy farm. This proposed park parcel contains the last part of Gibson Creek, and is commonly known as Gibby's Field. It is likely the site where two tributaries of China Creek once met. As Vancouver developed, most creeks were piped into sewers and buried. A heritage [Places That Matter](#) page and plaque on-site explain the wider site and namesake.

Following a geotechnical study and a proposed residential development, a group of citizens came together in 2000-2001 to form the 'Gibby's Field Group' to protect the area from further development. The Group pressed the City to place a development moratorium on the sites of 1454, 1458, and 1462 E 18<sup>th</sup> Ave. Park Board purchased these undeveloped properties from the City Property Endowment Fund in 2020. The properties are located approximately one block south of recreational Clark Park, and are now under the Care, Custody and Management of the Park Board.

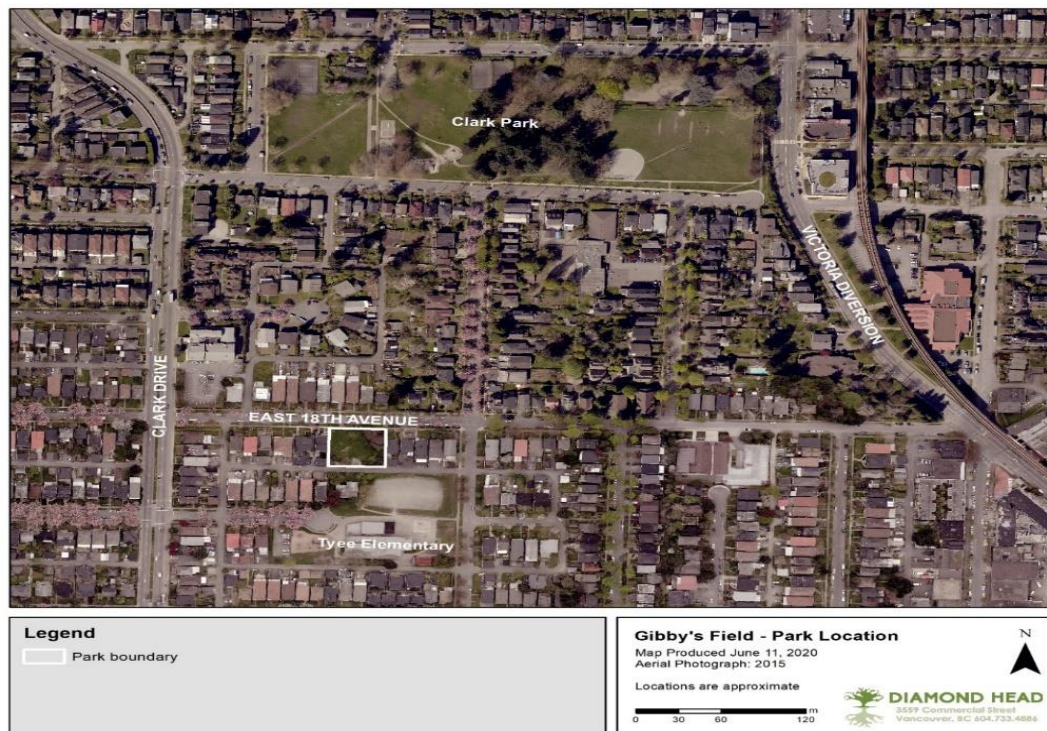


Figure 1: area location map showing relation to Clark Park

There is a registered City right-of-way over the central portion of the site due to the location of a major combined sewer trunk. An informal pathway exists along the western edge of the site, as shown in Figure below.



**Figure 2:** summer existing conditions of the western portion of this site, showing informal path

## DISCUSSION

While a relatively small and sloped site, this park offers potential for an improved access / through path, rainwater retention and infiltration (also known as green infrastructure), ephemeral wetland habitat, urban forest, and environmental education. Park Board staff has been developing plans for this site after the purchase of the properties in accordance with its potential as based on recent infiltration testing, adopted policies, and local considerations.

In terms of engagement, directly adjacent residents were contacted individually to share these draft plans, as was Tyee Elementary School and the Community Association of Montessori Parents (both located south of the site). A public [project webpage](#) was created, and two large project notification signs (with the rendering shown in Figure 2) were erected on-site in January of this year. Comments received to date have been supportive, and questions seeking clarification have been answered.

Staff have also shared the draft plans with members of the original Gibby's Field Group who have expressed support for the design.





**Figure 3:** Rendering of proposed park plan

As in the attached Appendix A plan rendering, some earthwork would be required to construct a crushed gravel pathway through the park. This will provide a highly visible and direct mid-block connection between E 18<sup>th</sup> Ave and the schools to the south. The addition of three trees, native shrub and groundcover plantings, a low fence on the south, and ongoing vegetation management are also proposed to increase both the habitat value and aesthetic appeal. For passive recreation or outdoor education, the addition of habitat logs and boulders is planned.

As has been discussed with Metro Vancouver, the existing water drain in the deepest part of the site would be modified with a beehive/weir inlet to temporarily retain and pool rainwater during large rainfall events. Additional runoff is planned to be captured from the alleyway catch basins located south of the park. This water retention and pooling is important to promote rainwater infiltration into the ground, and reduce runoff volumes into the sewer network. During extreme rainfall events, rainwater will overtop the beehive/weir inlet and prevent localized flooding. The average depth of water in the park during extreme rainfall events will be approximately 0.25 m. Due to rapid infiltration rates, pooled water is estimated to recede within 1-3 days in the absence of rain.

Some volunteer stewardship work has already taken place on this site to control invasive vegetation. Tyee School has also expressed interest in developing student partnerships for this park.

City Council is responsible for designating lands as permanent parks. This site could be part of the next Permanent Parks Council report.

While the site is commonly known as Gibby's Field, a formal park naming process will be undertaken once the Park Naming Policy has been updated in collaboration with the Host Nations.

### **Financial Considerations**

The approximate costs to implement the recommended site plans are estimated to be \$300,000, including design and a contingency. There are sufficient funds in the Park Board capital budget to cover these project costs, and the City of Vancouver has an opportunity to receive 60% funding assistance through a senior government grant designed to support green infrastructure projects such as this one, if spent before the end of 2024.

The project is planning to have a 2-year post-construction maintenance period by the contractor. After that, operating costs are expected to be \$33,800 annually based on works to maintain the new path surface, control invasive vegetation, and maintain trees. These will be funded as part of the Operating Impacts of Capital Budget process. Urban Forestry has already invested some time on hazard tree management, and pruning for existing tree health.

### **NEXT STEPS**

Pending a Board decision, staff will proceed to detailed design and implementation and coordinate the project with the City's Engineering Department. Subject to available contracted services, this work could be complete by early 2024.

### **CONCLUSION**

This new park site offers potential to advance VanPlay - Nature goals and grow access to nature where it is lacking in East Vancouver. The plan to create an improved accessibility path, accommodate rainwater slowing and filtration, ephemeral wetland habitat, urban forest, and environmental education is supported by the community and aligns with past community vision for the site and adopted policies. An external funding opportunity to support the capital costs also makes this project timely.

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