



May 08, 2023

TO: Park Board Chair and Commissioners
FROM: General Manager – Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: New Park at Main Street and 7th Avenue – Concept Plan

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Vancouver Park Board approve the concept plan for the New Park at Main Street and 7th Avenue as outlined in this report.

REPORT SUMMARY

The proposed concept described in this report is for a new compact urban park at the intersection of Main Street and 7th Avenue in the Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood. The purpose of this report is to share details of the proposed design and results of the public engagement process. The concept is informed by public engagement, policies, and a neighbourhood park needs analysis. Staff seek a Board decision on the proposed park concept plan to allow staff to proceed with detailed design and park construction.

BOARD AUTHORITY, POLICY, PREVIOUS DECISIONS/UPDATES

As 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 or major changes that occur within those parks.

The proposed concept for the New Park at Main and 7th is supported by principles outlined in the following plans and strategies:

- [VanPlay](#) (2019/2020): This Park helps address universal access to green space and tree canopy cover for the neighbourhood.
- [Biodiversity Strategy](#) (2016): The raingarden and planted areas of the park significantly improves the sites biodiversity, providing valuable habitat for our region's smaller beneficial species, such as birds and pollinators.
- [Rain City Strategy](#) (2019): This concept design surpasses the Rain City Strategy targets and will lead by example with widely permeable surfacing and with a significant raingarden capturing, filtering and temporarily storing rainwater.
- [People, Parks & Dogs](#) (2017): As per this strategies analysis the Main & 7th site cannot adequately support an Off-Leash Area (OLA) safely. Staff understand the neighbourhoods need for an OLA and are working to locate a suitable alternative location.
- [Vancouver Bird Strategy](#) (2015): The extensive planting, tree canopy and raingarden will create habitat and forage, to help sustain the regions native and migratory bird species.

- [Park Board Service Plan](#) (2022): This new park will help achieve certain initiatives within the Service Plan. Decolonisation Arts and Culture and Parks & Green Spaces.
- [Reconciliation](#): Staff are continuing to talk with the First Nations to identify opportunities for collaborative design and discuss the parks potential impact on the community. An emphasis on local materials and native plant species will be sought.

BACKGROUND

The 0.1 hectare (1,000sqm) park site is located on the northwest corner of the Main Street and 7th Avenue intersection. The land was acquired by the Park Board in 2017 with the intent of creating a public park in this location. This park will support the neighbourhood's growing population and demand for access to green space.

Adjacent to the future park is a recently completed and family focused Vancouver Affordable Housing Authority Development (VAHA), completed by the City of Vancouver in 2021. This building includes a restaurant at ground level fronting onto the park with a large patio running the length of the building.

The future park will be a very hard-working space serving 18,489 people within a 10-minute walk. Most of these people are living in medium to high density dwellings without immediate access to green space. As highlighted in VanPlay (2019), the neighbourhood is in the second highest bracket for population density (7501-10,000 people per square kilometer) and is anticipated to grow by around 6,000 by 2041. This means Mount Pleasant is in the second lowest performing bracket for 'Park Access' and will be in the lowest by 2041, if no further park space is created.

Similarly, Mount Pleasant is in one of the lowest performing tier brackets for urban forest with just 5-10% of the neighbourhood covered by tree canopy. The section of Main Street surrounding the future park site is particularly void of any street trees. The future park will help address these challenges and improve the neighbourhood's ecological and social access to green space.

Temporary improvements to the future park site were implemented during the spring of 2021 to convert the former parking lot into a usable amenity for the neighbourhood while the concept designs were developed. This included raised planter beds and native plants, beach logs, wood trellis screens, large harvest tables and the pre-existing ground murals. This space also supported numerous public events in 2021 and 2022, exhibited local art with Vancouver Mural Festival and held neighbourhood markets.

Currently, the future park is referred to as 'Main & 7th Park', however following the Park Naming Policy (2007) an official name will be identified later through a park naming process with the Park Naming Committee (PNC).

DISCUSSION

Public Engagement

The public engagement plan for this major park project included two rounds of public input. In November 2020 staff launched public engagement via a Shape Your City (SYC) project webpage that asked the public to identify their aspirations for the space and a desired park character. The survey was open for a three-week period. Approximately 2,400 people visited the project website, over 600 respondents completed the survey and over 800 ideas were submitted through open ended questions and an interactive ideas map. The results can be viewed on the SYC [project](#)

[webpage](#). This effort helped the team prioritize the possible features to be included in the park design. The key themes identified in the initial public engagement were; a playful and social, lush and vegetated park, a space to support culture and events, and the inclusion of a sheltered space.

A preliminary concept plan for the new park was developed informed by public feedback, responses from stakeholder groups, targets identified in Park Board and City-wide strategies and policies, and input from Park Board operational staff.

The preliminary concept plan was shared during a second round of public engagement in late 2022. The timing of this second round was reflective of the pause in all community engagement during the lead up to the 2022 municipal election. This second round of public engagement was held over a three-week period via the Shape Your City project webpage and a public open house at the Mount Pleasant Community Centre. Notification for the survey was promoted through mail-outs, signs posted at the park site and community centre, email newsletters and posts on the Park Board's social media channels. 188 people submitted surveys during this round of engagement and over 50 people attended the in-person open-house. Details of this feedback are outlined in the concept section below.

Proposed Concept

The design responds to the steep grades on site, the surrounding noise levels, and the lack of green space. The creation of three terraced spaces, an upper, middle, and lower area, surrounded by swathes of planted mounds help to create a vegetated buffer from the busy adjacent arterial and collector roads. These terraces sit at various levels to respond to the 3m grade change on site with the highest point at the southeast and the lowest at the northwest.

The smaller upper terrace sits level with the Main Street and 7th Avenue intersection and acts as a gateway to welcome people into the park. This upper terrace cascades down a series of seat steps into a larger middle open plaza that can hold community events and has room for approximately 250 people and a small stage area. This middle terrace holds a variety of seating opportunities for the neighbourhood to gather and relax. A canopy structure sits within this terrace providing shade to the south facing park and a focal point for the neighbourhood. A platform seating area beneath the canopy can be used to lounge upon and support small community performances and events. Finally, the smaller lower terrace meets the laneway and provides a parking space for food trucks and another opportunity for the neighbourhood to stay and enjoy the park.

Surrounding these plazas, planted mounds offer some protection from the hustle and bustle of the adjacent roads, while maintaining sightlines. These mounds will dampen the noise from Main Street and create a pleasant and relaxing park space for the neighbourhood to enjoy. Within these planting areas, a mixture of 25 trees will provide tree canopy cover. All the way from Kingsway and 13th, a group of large trees will invite people from the urban area into the lush park space.

Planting will focus on native and ecological beneficial species to provide habitat for birds and pollinators. Throughout, rainwater will either filter through permeable materials and into the ground or through a large, ecologically valuable planted rain garden that runs along the western edge of the park site. The concept plan includes approximately 50% tree coverage (at tree growth maturity), the majority of which will be large canopy trees to increase the urban forest in the area, provide desired shade in park, and help foster the feeling of a green oasis in Mount Pleasant.

Natural play is woven into the design with a large sunning rock for people to lay on and climb on, concrete stepping stones that weave through the planted areas to encourage exploration and boulders that cascade down into the raingarden to highlight rainwater collection and sustainability.



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|--|-------------------|--------------------|
| 1 Shade Canopy & Public Art | 5 Sun Rock | 8 Elevated Walkway |
| 2 Central Plaza | 6 Nature Play | 9 Planted Mounds |
| 3 Terraced Seating | 7 Stepping Stones | 10 Seating |
| 4 Platform Seating & Performance Space | | |

Figure 1: Concept Plan of New Park Main and 7th

Staff presented the revised concept plan and received 190 survey responses. On average 86% of the responses supported the proposed park concept plan. A detailed breakdown of public feedback is available on the [project website](#). In addition to the multiple-choice questions, respondents were provided an opportunity to provide open-ended feedback. The top five items highlighted by the survey were:

1. **Green space and planting** – The public responded positively to the variety of planted areas and asked that they be extended further to create a lush and natural space. As the project develops further staff will ensure the planting mounds are designed to both improve the requested natural green space aesthetic and benefit noise mitigation.

2. **Canopy, rain, and shade** – The majority of the public were in support of the canopy structure and saw it as a benefit to the neighbourhood. Some voiced concerns around potential inappropriate use of this feature. Inclusion of this item aligns with the City of Vancouver's 'Climate Change Adaptation Strategy' and the target to include built shade structures in public spaces. As such, a canopy has been included and will be refined further through the detailed design phase of work.
3. **Pedestrian flow and accessibility** – Many were happy with the accessibility of the site, however some pointed out that additional access was needed from the upper terrace. In response, an accessible pathway has been added to the concept plan, providing universal access from the upper terrace into the middle terrace. Staff will be taking this design to the Peoples Disability Action Committee for feedback when that Committee of Council reconvenes.
4. **Noise reduction** – The noise from the adjacent roads was a concern for some respondents and staff were asked to look further into reducing noise levels. Staff will detail the planting mounds and plant species further to ensure they help screen noise within the park space.
5. **Dog amenities** – Some respondents in the neighbourhood proposed a dog off-leash area on the site, as there is a demand within the Mount Pleasant neighbourhood. An off-leash dog area could not be included as the minimum space requirements need to be 0.04 hectares as outlined in the approved People, Parks and Dogs Strategy which would be half of the overall park space and cannot be accommodated in the park while balancing other amenities. Dog off-leash areas will be considered for future parks in the Mount Pleasant neighbourhood to accommodate the growth of population and demand.

FIRST NATION AND ARCHEOLOGICAL CONSULTATION

An archaeological overview assessment has been completed and no archaeological site has been recorded. A project referral for the park was sent to the First Nations in the summer of 2020 and discussions are ongoing with the Host Nations regarding the park's design.

FINANCIAL / OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

The development of the new park at Main and 7th is funded by the 2019-2022 and 2023-2026 Capital Plans. The anticipated project budget, based on a Class D/C cost estimate and validated by staff and an independent cost consultant, is up to \$3,700,000, assuming a Q1 2024 construction start. Based on standard maintenance and operation practices for parks of comparable size and program, the operating budget for this park is estimated between \$54,000 and \$71,000 per year and would be requested from the annual operating budget process.

A portion of funding required to advance the park will be reallocated through the quarterly budget adjustment process from the discontinued 2019-2022 Riley Park Pavilion project. Work on this project ceased in 2020 as there was not enough community support and as the design of the structure exceeded the available budget. Stakeholders have been informed of this budget reallocation.

NEXT STEPS

Subject to the Board's decision on the recommendation outlined in this report, detailed design for the new park at Main and 7th will commence. Staff will return to the Board for Contract Approval following the tender process, expected to be in Q4 of 2023. Construction is currently targeted to begin in Q1 2024 and to be completed by Q1 2025. The public will be notified on project progress through onsite signage, project webpage, and emails to stakeholders and participants who signed up for project updates.

CONCLUSION

The concept design for the park at Main and 7th has high overall community support and the project aligns with the Park Board's policies to deliver services equitably, increase access to nature, create new habitat areas, increase tree canopy, and manage and treat stormwater through natural features. Additionally, this concept will contribute to opportunities to foster social connectivity for residents and offers opportunities for events and vibrancy in parks. Staff recommend the Vancouver Park Board approve the proposed concept for the New Park at Main and 7th so that the project can proceed to detailed design.

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Public Engagement

Public Engagement – Round One

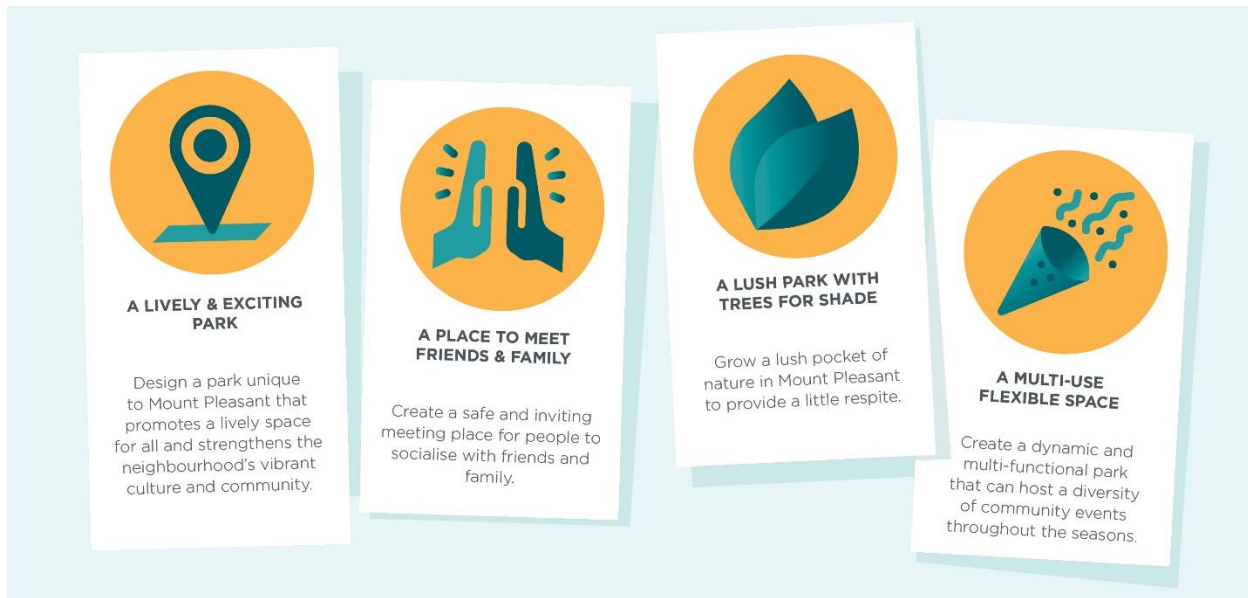
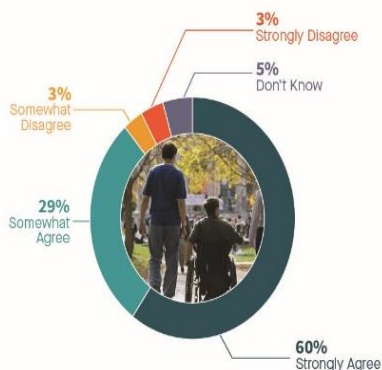


Figure 2: Key themes curated during the first round of public engagement.

Public Engagement – Round Two

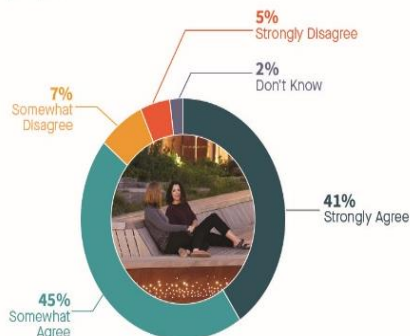
1. The proposed park design provides an accessible environment with entrances and pathways that are well connected for people of all abilities.

89% of respondents strongly or somewhat agree that the proposed park design provides an accessible environment.



2. The proposed park enhances comfort for people throughout the year by incorporating weather protection, noise mitigation, and a variety of seating opportunities.

86% of respondents strongly or somewhat agree that the proposed park enhances comfort for people.



3. The proposed park design incorporates a range of comfortable spaces, including larger open areas for gathering, and quieter, more intimate spaces for individuals, families and small groups.

86% of respondents strongly or somewhat agree that the proposed park design incorporates a range of comfortable spaces.

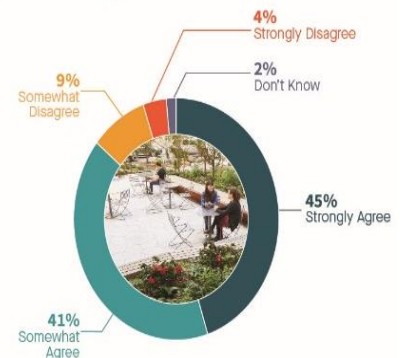


Figure 3: Questions Synopsis 1-3 from the second round of public engagement.