



Report Date: September 27, 2024

VanRIMS No.: 08-3000-30

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TO: Park Board Chair and Commissioners
FROM: Director, Business Services
SUBJECT: Corporate Sponsorship Funds Request - VanDusen Botanical Garden and Bloedel Conservatory

RECOMMENDATIONS

- A. THAT the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation ("Park Board") authorize an expenditure of up to \$50,000 from the Corporate Sponsorship Funds for the construction of a new secured outdoor storage unit for VanDusen Botanical Garden ("VanDusen").
- B. THAT the Park Board authorize an expenditure of up to \$50,000 from the Corporate Sponsorship Funds for pathway replacement work at Bloedel Conservatory ("Bloedel").

PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

VanDusen and Bloedel are cherished horticultural green spaces within the city and are frequented by many local and international visitors each year. Often considered an urban oasis, VanDusen inspires the community to understand the vital importance of plants to all life, connecting them to the garden through botanical collections, educational programs, and special events. Located at the top of Queen Elizabeth Park, Bloedel is home to more than 100 birds and 500 exotic plants and provides a unique tropical paradise and serves as a respite within the bustling city.

As visitation continues to grow at two of Park Board's top destination attractions, so does the need for investment into failing infrastructure and asset improvements. VanDusen and Bloedel have two unfunded projects that require immediate attention to meet the needs of the public and replace aging assets that negatively impact daily operations. Staff are seeking Board approval for the use of up to \$100,000 from the Corporate Sponsorship Funds to support these projects.

BOARD AUTHORITY / PREVIOUS DECISIONS

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 that occur within those parks.

Corporate Sponsorship Funds

All expenditures for the use of [Corporate Sponsorship Funds](#) require Board approval.

VanPlay Goals

Request for funds supports implementing Goal 10 outlined in VanPlay, [Vancouver's Parks and Recreation Services Master Plan \(2019\)](#).

Goal 10: Secure adequate and ongoing funding for the repair, renewal and replacement of our aging parks and recreation system.

VanDusen Bloedel Strategic Plan

The joint [VanDusen Bloedel Strategic plan](#), approved on October 18, 2021, defines the future vision and mandate for VanDusen and Bloedel. The Strategic Plan lays the foundation for aligning operating partner efforts and outlines the goal and values for the gardens to successfully meet our Mission and Vision.

Strategic Plan Vision - To be a leading garden of transformative experiences and botanical discovery.

Strategic Plan Mission - To inspire a deeper understanding of plants and a passion for biodiversity, and to encourage generations to conserve, protect, and enhance the natural world.

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

VanDusen and Bloedel currently have no dedicated funds in its operating budget for capital maintenance or asset improvements. Although both facilities generate a net revenue above operating costs, the net revenue is budgeted to cover other expenses within Parks and Recreation, like other revenue generating business units. At this time, there is no existing funding mechanism where VanDusen and Bloedel can reinvest into their own aging assets. This means that any infrastructure needs – new requirements or replacement of end-of-life assets – remain unfunded.

DISCUSSION

Approval for use of the Corporate Sponsorship Funds falls under three criteria:

- To fund one-time expenditures to a limit of \$50,000 that will support revenue-generating activities, and the money repaid into the Corporate Sponsorship account from the increased revenues within a period of three years.
- To fund initiatives with one-time expenditures to a limit of \$50,000 that will result in improved efficiencies.
- To fund one-time expenditures over and above the existing funding level in the operating budget which are beneficial to the overall Parks and Recreation system.

The following projects are currently unfunded and require funding to deliver the intended business outcomes for each scenario.

VanDusen Secured Outdoor Storage Units: Cost for construction and installation of units is \$200,000. Staff are seeking Board approval to use \$50,000 from the Corporate Sponsorships Funds to support this expenditure as it aligns with criterion “A”.

Bloedel Pathway Reconstruction: Reconstruction cost of the pathway is \$100,000. Staff are seeking Board approval to use \$50,000 from the Corporate Sponsorships Funds for this expenditure as it aligns with criterion “C”.

VanDusen Secured Outdoor Storage Units

VanDusen Festival of Lights (FOL) is entering its 40th year of hosting Vancouver’s premier holiday lighting event. Over the past five years, visitation has increased by 30% and the event has grown in size and scale, creating the need for more event storage space.

The existing storage units on site are located 800 meters from the main service yard, are at maximum capacity, and have no electrical feed or nearby power source. The distance from the main service yard requires a 15-minute round trip for event operations staff when the garden is open and pathways are busy.

To create more space and increase efficiency of event set-up and tear down, VanDusen requires the addition of three new units with power at the main service yard to be closer to the operations crew and the footprint of the FOL event.

The new storage units will provide more storage space and boost efficiencies by limiting travel time and providing quicker access to staff. They will provide secure, dry storage that is within 50 meters of the main service yard building and will be serviced with an electrical feed, giving the crew the ability to test new and old lighting structures with ease.

Bloedel Pathway Reconstruction

The pathway around the Conservatory is constructed with a mix of paving stones and asphalt which are now at the end of their life cycle and require full replacement. Most sections of the paths are cracking and sinking due to base failure from the erosion caused by daily wear and tear and operational practices such as watering. Root heaving is also prominent throughout the paths as the tree roots are coming into conflict with the infrastructure. Roots are pushing their way up from the ground, creating uneven surfaces.

Temporary fixes to the asphalt have been made with a fiberglass patching material but a permanent solution is required. New asphalt cannot be poured as there are many risks and negative impacts in using an oil-based material inside an enclosed building. The paving stones have been set with sand between the joints but sand is an ineffective bonding material with daily watering. The result is an increase in gaps and holes between the pavers, causing tripping hazards for staff and the public.

Understanding the challenges and needs of our site, the Parks Construction Department completed a new treatment of the path last winter by using a different under layer material and top layer stone to reconstruct two sections of the pathway. The result has been a beautifully levelled path with a permanent bonded surface and longer service life. This new treatment will alleviate future cracking and levelling issues and will decrease the need for continuous maintenance.

The existing pathway is currently an amalgamation of patched up areas with temporary fixes that need constant repair. Reconstruction of the pathway will include removal of garden beds and expanding areas which will create greater access for public and staff.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

For the period ending July 31, 2024, the balance of the Corporate Sponsorship Funds is \$2.96M. The total of the funds requested to support the below initiatives is \$100,000, or 3.4% of the available fund.

The two projects listed need to be completed in order for the business units to continue operating effectively, efficiently and in line with the garden's strategic plan. If not approved, VanDusen and Bloedel will not have sufficient budget to implement these much-needed capital maintenance needs. Not implementing these projects will negatively impact the financial performance and guest experience at both attractions.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Should the Board not approve funding for the Bloedel pathway reconstruction, Staff will work with the Park Operations division to reprioritize other Park Board projects in order to execute the work.