



February 6, 2023

MEMO TO : Park Board Commissioners

FROM : Donnie Rosa - General Manager, Parks and Recreation

SUBJECT : **Sport Field Strategy Overview and Update – Board Briefing Memo**

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Dear Commissioners,

The purpose of this memo is to provide an overview, update and timeline for the Park Board's city-wide Sport Field Strategy project, per the Board's [December 5, 2022 direction](#) for staff to bring forward the Strategy to the Board in Q1 2023.

The Strategy work is being undertaken in parallel to sport field capital and maintenance projects including early scoping work identified in the Board's Amendment D to the [2023 Service Plan, Operating and Capital Budgets](#), approved by the Board on December 5 2022.

The Strategy will guide sport field development, management and maintenance decision making for the next 10+ years and will provide a basis for ongoing capital and operating plans and budgets. The strategy is expanding on the groundwork and direction provided through [VanPlay](#), which identifies the need for further review, analysis and data collection on sport fields and ball diamonds, and provides asset target recommendations to improve quality of amenities and increased hours of play.

The Strategy builds on ongoing public and stakeholder input related to sport fields received both prior to and during the development of the Strategy. Further, it will respond to several board motions pre-dating 2022:

- An April 2019 Board Motion: [Playing Field Upgrades – Synthetic Turf & Lighting](#). *Note: Part C is further addressed through the Board's [December 5, 2022 direction](#).*
- A September 2019 Board motion related to [Artificial Turf Assessment and Remediation](#).

## Background

### Scope

The Park Board's sport field inventory encompasses approximately 150 rectangular fields, including 12 synthetic turf fields, as well as approximately 120 ball diamonds. These are located across 79 parks, approximately a third of the parks in the system. The Strategy provides an opportunity to consider the management, maintenance and updating of this inventory through a city-wide equity lens to service delivery.

Background work aims to:

- Review the current state (physical condition, attributes, and management practices).



- Use data and user/public input to better understand City-wide sport field trends, gaps and future needs.
- Assess surfacing options including environmental and human health concerns.

The Strategy will include:

- Priorities and phasing for new and renewed facilities. *Note: on December 5, 2022, the Board directed staff to prioritize a number of implementation projects outside of the Strategy development including field lights at Hillcrest mini turf field and Kitsilano high school, implementation of field projects at John Hendry Park, renewal of VanTech synthetic turf field and a new artificial turf field in Southeast Vancouver. This direction will be referenced within the Strategy.*
- Identification of optimum service levels, future needs, and potential innovative directions to help meet city-wide needs.
- An updated classification system, site development standards and maintenance standards.
- Recommendations for field allocation including equity considerations. These will be applied in the future development of an Outdoor Facility Allocation and Management policy by staff.
- Site selection criteria for proposed new or significantly upgraded facilities.
- Recommendations related to continued collaboration with Vancouver School Board (VSB) and other regional partners.
- Integration of FIFA 2026 opportunities and outcomes.

### **Project Team**

The Park Board has retained a consultant team to develop the Sport Field Strategy, jointly led by Binnie Sports & Recreation Designers (Binnie) and RC Strategies. Binnie consists of Landscape Architects and Civil Engineers who have designed over 200 Sports fields over the last 20 years. RC Strategies is an experienced consulting firm with a parks and recreation strategic planning focus. They both conduct project work across Metro Vancouver and Canada and are supported by a number of sub-consultants with additional technical expertise.

This external team is guided by a Park Board staff team that includes a project manager, a cross-departmental technical working group and a steering committee consisting of senior leadership staff.

### **Engagement**

- Partners: Staff are providing opportunities for VSB staff to review and comment throughout the development of the Strategy to ensure continued collaboration and optimization of the sport field supply.



- Rights holders: Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations were issued referrals to provide input through the Park Board's standing referrals process. To date, Squamish Nation has provided input.
- External Advisory Group (EAG): The project is further informed by an EAG comprising of 12 members of the public who were recruited through an application process.
- Public and stakeholders: Public and stakeholder engagement has been an integral component of this project to date. The team has also engaged directly with the Vancouver Field Sport Federation throughout the course of the project, gaining input through user group interview sessions and a questionnaire, providing project updates and presentations at their quarterly meetings, and distributing email updates to their members.

### Work Completed to Date

The development of the Strategy includes a series of background reports that will be included as Appendices to the Strategy:

- "Current State" Research Findings Draft Report: a detailed analysis of Vancouver's sport field inventory, including service levels and condition assessments, and a review of trends, user fees, leading practices, and benchmarks. Key findings and outcomes will be included in Phase 2 engagement materials. Finalization of a draft report is in progress
- Environmental and Human Health Draft Report: an investigation of the environmental and human health impacts of playing field surface materials. A literature review, expert interviews, and case study analysis form the basis of this report, which reviews each surface material using the criteria of cost, health, environment, and performance. Key findings and outcomes will be included in Phase 2 engagement materials.
- What we heard (Phase 1 completed, Phases 2 and 3 pending): Report 1 summarizes feedback we received during Phase 1 public and stakeholder engagement. This report is included on the project shape your city [webpage](#), with a summary on the [launch page](#). Phase 1 Engagement included a public survey (783 responses), statistically representative sampling survey (408 responses, +/- 4.9% margin of error), permit holder/user group questionnaire (46 groups), 17 stakeholder sessions (29 attendees), 4 "pop up" events.

### Work Currently Underway

The team is currently drafting the Strategy document, as described in the section above under "Scope". This work includes guiding principles (fundamental statements to guide the strategy and its implementation), recommended directions and related actions and site selection criteria.

It also includes a proposed new field classification system that will provide clearer expectations on service levels. The proposed system would align the inventory with Sport Turf Canada standards and would be the first of Vancouver's classification systems to include ball diamonds.

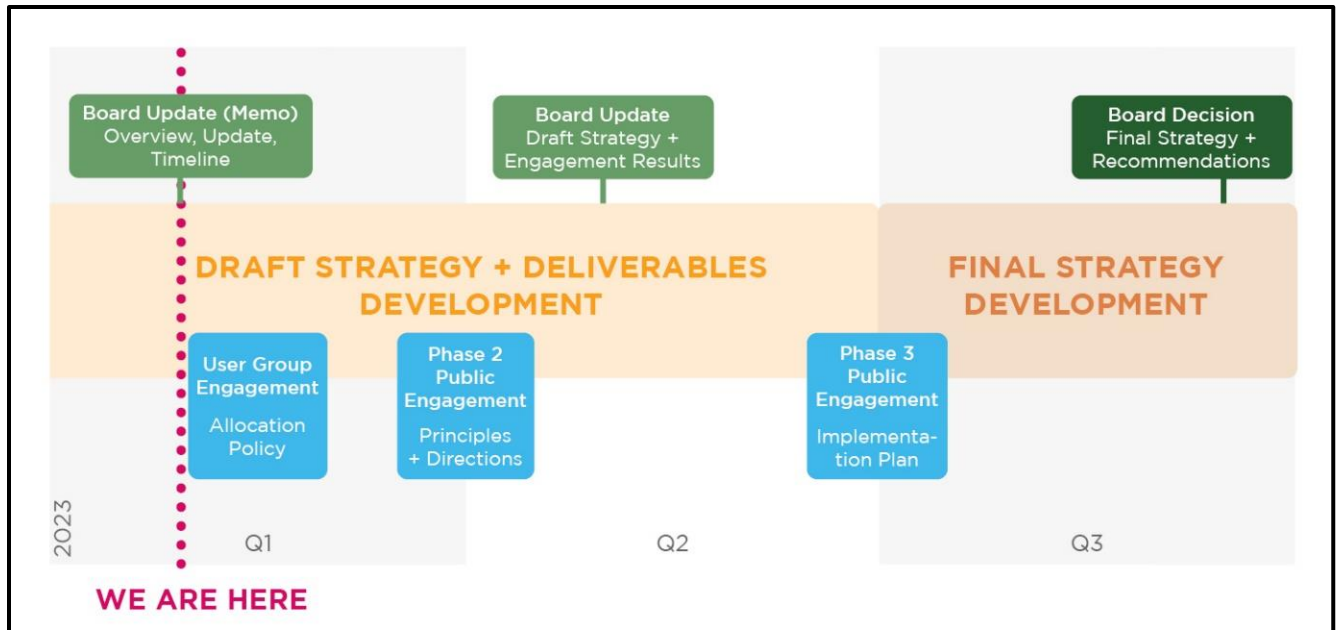


## Next Steps

Next steps are outlined below and summarized in the accompanying graphic:

- Over the coming days staff will be undertaking targeted outreach to user groups. This will provide some additional insight for use in the Sport Field Strategy but will primarily be used to inform related policies (a city-wide Affiliation Policy and new Outdoor Facility Allocation and Management Policy), being developed in house by recreation staff.
- Planning for Phase 2 engagement, anticipated to begin in late Q1, is underway. Staff will update the Board once dates are finalized. This phase will provide an opportunity for the External Advisory Group, key stakeholders and users and the general public to review and provide input on the Strategy principles, directions (especially the “big moves”) and draft site selection criteria. It will also provide an opportunity to share high level information from the “Current State” Research Draft Report and Environmental and Human Health Draft Report, which has been of keen interest to some members of the public. The MST Nations will also be provided an opportunity to review this work through the standing referrals process.
- Staff will report back to the Board between phases 2 and 3 of public engagement to present the outcomes of phase 2 engagement and to present the draft principles and implementation plan prioritization criteria to the Board.
- Following Phase 2 engagement the team will prepare an implementation plan that will outline the preferred number, type and location(s) of sport fields. This will consider public and stakeholder input provided in Phase 2.
- The draft implementation plan will be presented to stakeholders and the public as the primary focus of Phase 3 engagement. The materials will show how the directions and refined site selection criteria (reviewed in Phase 2) inform the implementation plan.

Staff are targeting Q3 to bring the Strategy to the Board for consideration of decision.



Regards,

Donnie Rosa (*they/she*)  
General Manager - Parks and Recreation

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Copy to: PB Leadership Team  
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