



Vancouver Parks and Recreation Services: Proposed Governance Transition – Planning Update 2

RTS 16593; November 27, 2024



The City of Vancouver acknowledges the unceded and ancestral territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh). We recognize they have been stewards of these lands since time immemorial, and their unique relations, title and rights in these territories remain intact.



Vancouver Parks and Recreation Services: *Proposed Governance Transition: Planning Update 2*

- 1) Overall Project Approach
- 2) Planning Updates
- 3) Next Steps

(30 slides)

1) Project Approach

Opportunity

- Significant service improvements, process simplification and faster decision-making, reduction in duplication, opportunities to better leverage expertise across departments, increased permanent park designations.

Approach

- Seeking timely amendments to the Vancouver Charter by the Provincial government.
- Addressing critical issues for transition, while laying foundation for early post-transition moves and longer-term opportunities.

Considerations

- Park Board direction to staff to not support planning for a transition
 - Impacts planning for operational integration
 - Creates uncertainty for Park Board staff

1) Engagement with Local Nations

***Commitment:** We can confirm that there is no intent to disrupt any of the ongoing work with the Nations in relation to the Stanley Park Comprehensive Plan and its inter-governmental working group or other parks related work or considerations with the Nations. More generally, consistent with Council's foundational commitment to UNDRIP, we expect to maintain the close engagement with the three Nations in relation to parks.*

Relationships with First Nations are treated as government-to-government relationships.

Intergovernmental Relations: Multiple channels for engagement

- Mayor's Office is in direct engagement with Nation leadership.
- Council-to-Council discussions will continue and matters can be raised there as Nations see fit.
- MSTV UNDRIP Table continues its work and matters can be raised there as Nations see fit.
- City will remain responsive to each Nation's preference for how they would like to provide feedback to Council on any matter they wish to discuss.

Proposed Transition Planning Work Update

- This is a progress update report with no recommendations.
- Once Council has received this report (today), staff will seek to engage with the Nations prior to the finalization any recommendations to be brought forward to Council.



2) Planning Updates

- A. Governance, Legislation, Regulatory, Legal Obligations, Parks Designations
 - i. Legislation, Regulatory, Legal Obligations
 - ii. Policies: Corporate and Parks and Recreation
 - iii. Governance
 - iv. Permanent Park Designations

- B. Operational Integration
 - i. General Approach
 - ii. Early Operational and Service Opportunities
 - iii. Mid to longer-term opportunities
 - iv. Major Infrastructure Planning and Delivery
 - v. Financial Savings Estimates

2A) Planning Update: Legislation, Regulatory, Legal Obligations

(1) Legislation: Vancouver Charter Amendments

- Staff have been in discussions with the Province regarding the outcomes being sought through revisions to the Vancouver Charter. Staff are awaiting further updates.

(2) Regulatory (By-laws)

- There are 6 Park Board By-laws. There are 18 City By-laws that reference the Park Board.
- City by-laws will need to be amended to remove references to the Park Board. This should be straightforward.
- Several Park Board by-laws will need to be repealed. Two Park Board administrative by-laws that duplicate City policies would no longer be necessary.
- Staff would recommend that Council adopt its own by-laws that regulate parks and recreation activities.

(3) Legal Obligations

- To facilitate the transition, the City is willing to assume all the Park Board's legal obligations and supports an amendment to the Vancouver Charter that would clarify this.
- The City already acts as the insurer for the Park Board. The City is also already the employer of all Park Board workers, and the owner of all Park Board assets.

2A) Planning Update: Policies – Corporate and Parks and Recreation

(1) Corporate Policies

- Generally good alignment between Park Board and City policies so corporate practice integration with the City in these areas should be reasonably smooth.
- Staff will recommend aligning authorities delegated to the General Manager of parks and recreation services with the level of authorities delegated to other General Managers.
 - Will enable the parks and recreation department to be more nimble and responsive, with lower staff workload.

(2) Parks and Recreation Policies

- 20 parks and recreation policies, mostly strategies and plans (Appendix A).
- Staff will recommend that Council be informed by these policies moving forward until such time as they need to be updated.

2A) Planning Update: Governance (Appendix C)

Transition Working Group

- **Working Group Scope:** How Council will structure its governance responsibilities and manage engagement with key community stakeholders and the public in relation to parks and recreation services.
 - The Working Group will provide recommendations and feedback to Council on **efficient, effective, and meaningful pathways for community engagement** with and input to Council in its proposed governance role for parks and recreation services
- **Members:** Mayor's Chief of Staff; Elected Officials: Mayor, Cllr Sarah Kirby-Yung, Cllr Rebecca Bligh (until Nov), Commissioner Marie-Claire Howard; Community members: Catherine Evans, Jordan Nijjar, Shauna Wilton, Jennifer Wood, Gregor Young
- **Key Activities:** Community stakeholder engagement and jurisdictional scan
- **Duration:** January 2024 to November 2024

Reminder:

- *Relationships with the First Nations are treated as government-to-government relationships.*
- *Ongoing relations with First Nations Council-to-Council and through the MSTV UNDRIP Task Force are key places to discuss matters specific to City relations with the local Nations and Nation interests in City work, similar to how the City works with other levels of government.*

2A) Planning Update: Governance - Transition Working Group (Appendix C)

Stakeholder Engagement

Methods

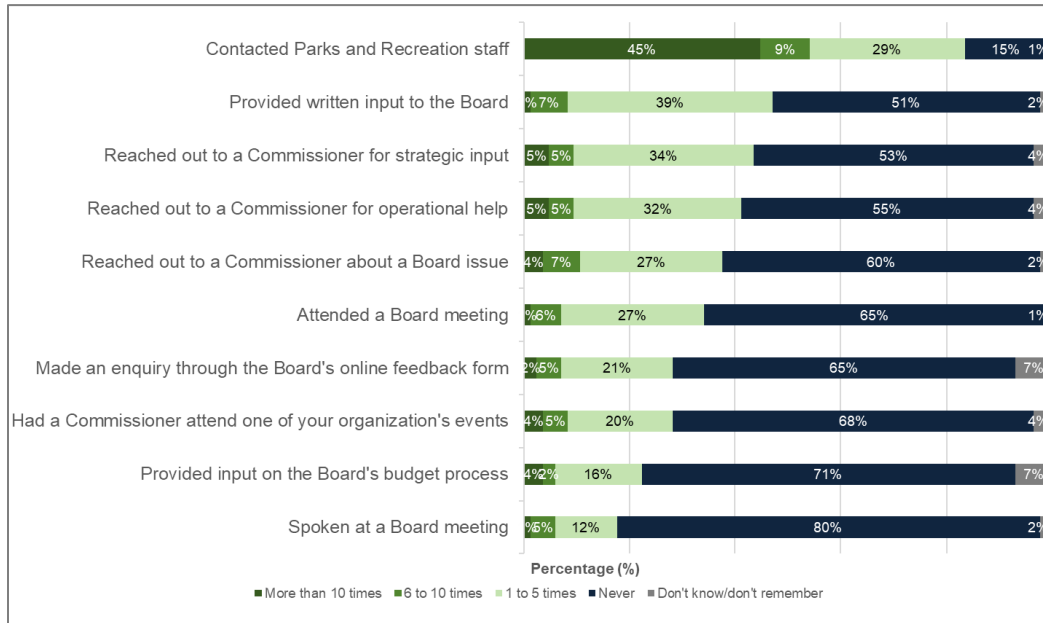
- Survey: Sent to 502 community organizations in Vancouver.
 - The survey was live for 4 weeks, and reminders were sent throughout the survey period.
 - In total 73 organizations completed the survey.
- In-Person/Virtual Meetings
 - 86 organizations identified and invited, June through October
 - A facilitated discussion which focused on current experience with engagement with Park Board and input to future Council governance of Parks and Recreation.
 - 15 stakeholder meetings with 29 organizations in total

Key Questions

1. Stakeholders' existing methods of engagement with Park Board and their perceptions of what was working and where opportunities for improvement may exist.
2. Stakeholders' input into 'meaningful, effective and efficient' means of engagement for Council moving forward post-transition.

2A) Planning Update: Governance - Transition Working Group (Appendix C)

Stakeholder Engagement Results: Survey (73/502 respondents)



Open-ended responses

Respondents were also asked about what was currently working well in their engagement with Park Board.

Responses in this area were decidedly mixed:

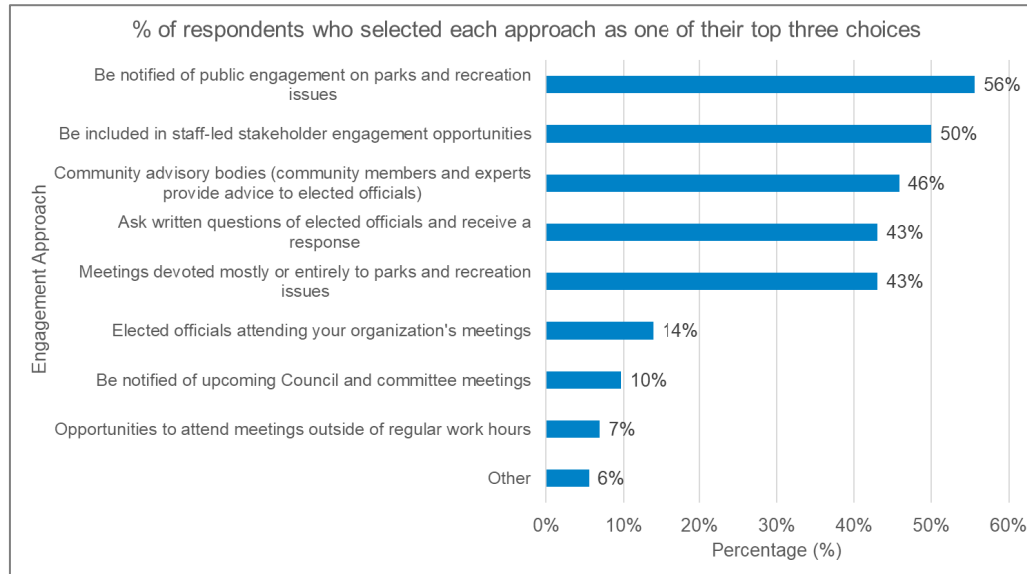
- Many noted that staff contacts were the most effective, especially when there was a dedicated support or staff liaison.
- Some respondents noted there were benefits of direct engagement with Commissioners either through Board meetings or other outreach.
- There were also several comments about challenges with engaging with Park Board generally or feeling like their input was heard.

2A) Planning Update: Governance - Transition Working Group (Appendix C)

Stakeholder Engagement Results: Survey

Future Form of Engagement

Respondents were also asked to identify what was important to them in future Council governance mechanisms for parks and recreation issues should the transition proceed.



2A) Planning Update: Governance - Transition Working Group (Appendix C)

Stakeholder Engagement Results: Discussions

Paths of Engagement – Staff and Commissioners

- Many noted that their primary contacts and input to Park Board happen through staff engagement.
- Some respondents noted the benefit of having the ability to connect with Commissioners directly, especially when there are challenges, as well as being able to provide input to them as an elected body.
- Several noted the challenges in getting responses from Commissioners, recognizing the number of stakeholders and limited time that Commissioners have.

Intermediary Organizations and Structures

- There were a few comments received around the role of intermediary organizations, which play a role in bringing together multiple organizations from a given sector or around a particular issue and representing their members to Park Board on related issues.
- There were concerns raised that - while the respondents understand the role these intermediaries could play – some of the intermediaries were perceived as ineffective, not truly representing their constituent groups, or served as an insulating buffer between Park Board and the individual organizations.

2A) Planning Update: Governance - Transition Working Group (Appendix C)

Stakeholder Engagement Results: Discussions

Importance of Staff

- Reinforced the important role that staff play in engaging with community and ensuring that the voices of community are presented to the Park Board; being points of contact to resolve critical issues; and providing expert advice to the Board.
- Several representatives expressed concern that the transition of governance to City Council may lose some of that expertise and knowledge.

Navigation and Representation by Staff

- Several organizations noted that they had a regular point of contact at the staff level who helped them to navigate the bureaucracy, as well as in getting their input in front of Park Board. However, it was noted that for many of these staff, this was being done off the corner of their desk, in addition to their core job responsibilities.
- Others expressed that they would find similar staff approach beneficial, as there can be significant challenges in knowing who to contact, knowing how to navigate issues, or in some cases even getting a response from elected representatives or staff. This was noted especially when the issue required both Park Board and City processes.

2A) Planning Update: Governance - Transition Working Group (Appendix C)

Stakeholder Engagement Results: Discussions

Limitations of Current Park Board Commissioner Liaison Model

- The Park Board currently has a Commissioner liaison model, in which Commissioners are designated to be elected Park Board liaisons to specific organizations.
- Several of the organizations who participated in the discussions had an appointed Commissioner liaison, and some noted challenges with the model.
- Many of the CCAs, who all have appointed Commissioner liaisons, chose not to participate in discussions. Of the CCAs that provided feedback through these sessions or other discussions, there was mixed feedback: some find the liaison model very effective while others noted they had no contact with their liaisons.

Challenges for Smaller Organizations

- Some of the respondents also noted challenges that exist for smaller or upcoming organizations compared to some of the larger and more established organizations, and their desire for some ways of ensuring that the diversity of organizations have ways of being heard by elected decision-makers.

Challenges with Navigating Bureaucracy When Issues Cross Park Board/City Jurisdiction

- Respondents noted challenges in navigating the bureaucracy. While most of these challenges are captured in the operational issues section, it is included here as some respondents noted additional challenges when their issue required both Park Board and City approvals.

2A) Planning Update: Governance - Transition Working Group (Appendix C)

Stakeholder Engagement Results: Future Council Governance of Parks and Recreation

- Importance of informed Elected Representatives and the Role of Staff
- Venue with a Focus on Parks and Recreation Issues
- 'Partners, not just Users'
- Equity for smaller groups
- Structured and Ongoing Engagement
- Staff as Liaison

2A) Planning Update: Governance - Transition Working Group (Appendix C)

Jurisdictional Comparisons

Municipality	Council Committee Structures	Powers of the committee
Burnaby	Parks, Recreation & Culture Committee	Provides advice to Council.
Surrey	Parks, Recreation and Sport Tourism Committee	Provides advice to Council.
Calgary	Community Development Committee	Can make final decisions within their mandate without Council approval.
Edmonton	Community and Public Services Committee	Provides advice to Council.
Winnipeg	Standing Policy Committee on Community Services	Provides advice to Council.
Toronto	The Infrastructure and Environment Committee	Provides advice to Council.
Ottawa	Standing Community Services Committee	Provides advice to Council. Has limited delegated powers
Halifax (HRM)	Environment and Sustainability Standing Committee Community Planning and Economic Development Committee	Provides advice to Council
Montreal	The Commission sur l'eau, l'environnement, le développement durable et les grands parcs.	Provides advice to Council

2A) Planning Update: Governance - Transition Working Group (Appendix C)

Recommendation 1: Establish a Council Sub-Committee on Parks and Recreation

- **General Terms:**

- membership of five Councillors, appointed by Council;
- advisory to Council on all issues related to parks and recreation;
- Members of the proposed Sub-Committee could also represent Council in discussions with other elected bodies related to parks and recreation issues (e.g., Community Centre Associations that have a tripartite agreement with VSB).

Note: There would be no delegated authority to the sub-committee; role is advisory with final decisions made by Council as a whole.

- **Addresses Stakeholder Needs:**

- Specific, efficient venue for Council governance of parks and recreation issues and
- Some specialization of Councillors to ensure there are elected members who have a focus on, deeper knowledge of, and accountability for, parks and recreation issues.

- **Implementation of a Sub-Committee:**

- Brings Vancouver into alignment with other major municipalities whose Councils govern parks and recreation services through similar Council sub-committees.

2A) Planning Update: Governance - Transition Working Group (Appendix C)

Recommendation 2: Parks and Recreation Community Partner Relations Office

- The Office would strengthen and formalize effective engagement and governance of parks and recreation across successive elections.
- This office would have staff dedicated to different service facets, with the mandate to respond to issues raised by stakeholders:
 - Foster relationships with community partners who activate parks and recreation spaces;
 - Provide ongoing and structured engagement opportunities to support advice to Council;
 - Provide a pathway to ensure that Council is well-informed on issues facing community partner organizations;
 - Provide 'single point of contact' to help community organizations navigate the bureaucracy;
 - Consider issues in parks and recreation administration that may have unintentional or undue negative effects on community use of parks and recreation spaces; and
 - Support the broad diversity of community partner organizations, including identifying ways of ensuring smaller organizations are represented.
- A small team of 3 to 5 FTEs, drawing on reassignment of existing staff, with reassignment anticipated to be made possible following operational realignment arising from the proposed governance change.

2A) Planning Update: Permanent Park Designations (Appendix B)

Permanent Park Protections

- As part of the resolution, Council asked for changes to protections for parks that strengthen protections.
- These requests were shared with the Province to consider.

Type	Current Jurisdiction and Change of Use	Changes Proposed by Resolution	Impact on Park preservation
Permanent Public Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Exclusive jurisdiction and control of the Park Board.• Change of use requires a 2/3 vote by both Council and Park Board.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Change of use requires unanimous vote of Council• Provisions for a public referendum	Strengthened
Temporary Public Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Exclusive jurisdiction and control of Park Board.• Change of use requires a 2/3 vote of Council.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No changes suggested	Same
Custody, Care and Management (CCM) Lands	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Powers prescribed by Council are granted to Park Board.• Change of powers granted to Park Board requires a majority vote of Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No longer a need for CCM category of parks as all parks will be governed by Council.	n/a

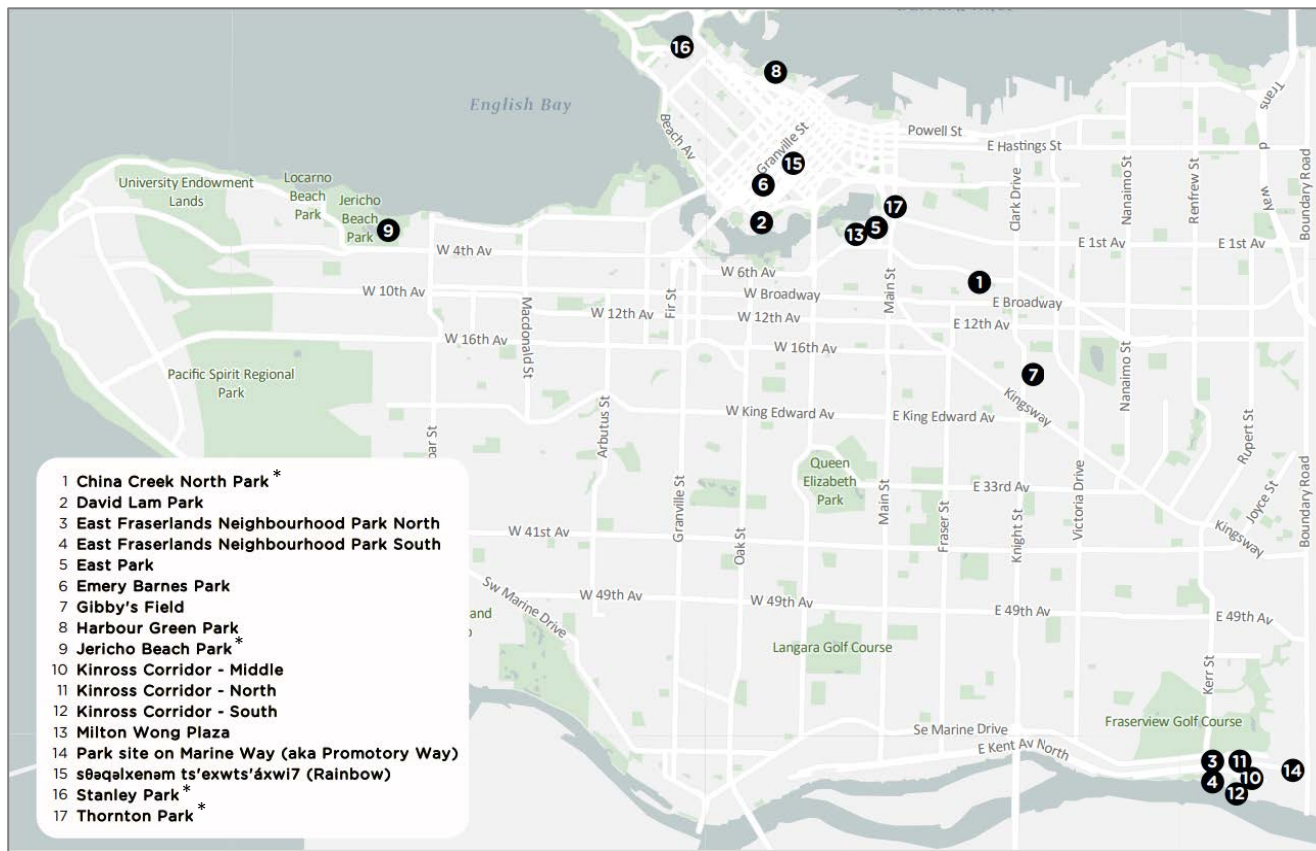
2A) Planning Update: Permanent Parks Designations (Appendix B)

Staff have identified the list of potential temporary parks and “custody, care and management” (CCM) parks for designation as Permanent Parks should the transition proceed.

Total additional park area that could be designated Permanent:

**~36 hectares
(89 acres) across 17 parks**

Note: Staff would not recommend these be designated Permanent if the transition does not proceed because of risk of access to critical City infrastructure impeded by processes of a separate governance body that has no accountability for the infrastructure.



*These parks are already partially permanent. This would be to designate additional portions of the park.

2B) Planning Update: Operational Integration – General Approach (Appendix D)

- Opportunity: look across all City operations – significant service improvements, process simplification and faster decision-making, deduplication and leverage expertise, increased permanent park designations, improved policy coherence
 - *Important: these opportunities are evident on both sides of the current operational structure – City and Park Board – and arise primarily from areas in which decades of the dual governance structure have resulted in operational duplication, service complexity, inefficiencies, and/or additional costs.*
- Ability to plan impacted by Park Board direction to staff re: not participating
 - Recognize that this has created uncertainty for staff
- Nonetheless:
 - Immediate redirection/integration in some areas
 - Some clear areas of duplication – transformation work already underway will continue
 - Early and mid- to longer-term transformational opportunities

2B) Planning Update: Operational Integration – General Approach (Appendix D)

Guiding Principles

- Deliver the greatest benefit to users, residents and taxpayers
- Minimize disruption to public and ensure services continue to work.
- Seek administrative and service simplicity and efficiency
- Be clear and transparent on the public and taxpayer benefit: Measurable outcomes – service experience, financial, etc.
- Time is of the essence: Efficient, informed decision-making
- Be considerate as possible of the impacts of change and uncertainty on our employees
- Respect labour and employee relation obligations

2B) Planning Update: Operational Integration (Appendix D)

Planning Update 2: Operational Opportunities

- High-level analysis of early opportunities for operational alignment, service improvements, or customer service efficiencies.
- Two areas: (A) Operational Integration Opportunities and (B) Major Infrastructure Planning and Delivery.

Reminders

- Any type of service or operational restructuring can create uncertainty for employees.
- With respect to any impacts on specific positions, we will seek to manage those impacts through existing vacancies.
 - We will be engaging with the Unions to facilitate a transition process for positions impacted by integration efforts.
- The City always respects obligations in employment contracts and collective agreements.
 - We will keep the unions apprised, seeking feedback and agreement on labour relations matters when appropriate.

2B) Planning Update: Operational Integration – Early Opportunities (Appendix D)

Early Opportunities: 0-6 months

Work Area	Current situation
Park Board Operations	Park Board Operations supports PB meetings; City has City Clerk Office
Public art	Both City and PB have public art programs and policies
Arts and culture policy	City and PB both have Arts and Culture teams
Social Policy	City and PB both have policy staff working on similar social policy items
Engagement	City and Park Board both currently have engagement staff
Communications and Marketing	Both City and PB have communications (and marketing, in case of Park Board) teams
Film and Special Events Office	Both City and PB have Film and Special Events Offices with different policies, permits, and processes
Indigenous Relations	Both City and PB have Indigenous relations teams
Information Management (ATIP and FIPPA)	Both City and PB have information management staff
Mountainview Cemetery	Only large outdoor business operation with significant horticultural work operated by City
Urban Forestry	PB Urban Forestry team manages park and street trees; City responsible for all other trees on City land
Parking Management	Both City and PB manage parking
Small Equipment	PB and ENG both manage small equipment; different policies/procedures
Structures (Bridges)	Both COV and PB manage bridges
Roadway Lighting Through Parks	Both COV and PB manage lighting
Green Rainwater Infrastructure	PB and City both have a green rainwater infrastructure team
Seawall	Split jurisdiction

Range of Anticipated Benefits:

- ✓ Policy coherence
- ✓ Improved responsiveness to community
- ✓ Clear and simplified public accountabilities
- ✓ Single community service processes for areas that currently require two processes
- ✓ Opportunity for staff to be a part of a larger team and expand experience base
- ✓ Reduced reliance on contractors
- ✓ Clearer and more efficient intergovernmental relations
- ✓ Economies of scale
- ✓ Administrative efficiencies
- ✓ Potential position savings for reinvestment

2B) Planning Update: Operational Integration – Early Opportunities (Appendix D)

Anticipated Range of Early Opportunity Savings: \$1.8M to \$3.3M per year (18M to 33M over 10 years)

- Note: Preliminary information presented needs validation with Park Board colleagues
- Position duplication: estimated 10-20 positions (Staff to be reassigned/transferred to other work and resulting vacant position savings captured for reinvestment.)
- Other associated savings: Board member salaries and expenses, technology services, Communications consulting services

2B) Planning Update: Operational Integration – Mid- to Longer-term Opportunities

Work Not Yet Scoped

Contracted Works

Park Board relies significantly on external contractors to deliver their public works. There is potential for Engineering to take on much of this work in house at a smaller incremental cost due to efficiencies of scale and internal reallocation. These opportunities will be explored after the transition.

Mid-term Integration Opportunities

- Management of bike share, e-scooters, street furniture
- Development review
- Management of marinas/docks
- Signage, electrical and fabrication shops
- Management of plazas
- Lease management
- By-law enforcement, urban issues/encampment response
- Fleet management, radio systems
- Performance stages *(added since August 2024 update)*

General Comments

Proactive and Consistent Infrastructure Asset Management

- Major infrastructure is generally managed by Park Board when they occur in parks, where everywhere else, they are managed by Engineering Services.
- Given the limited Parks staffing attached to these issues, they may be managed on a reactive basis.
- The City's Engineering Services Department has a robust asset management system, given the substantial number of assets under management.
- Structured maintenance approaches under good asset management can significantly reduce downtime and costs, as preventative maintenance can be 50-80% less expensive than emergency repairs.
- Savings associated with proactive and consistent infrastructure management have not been quantified.

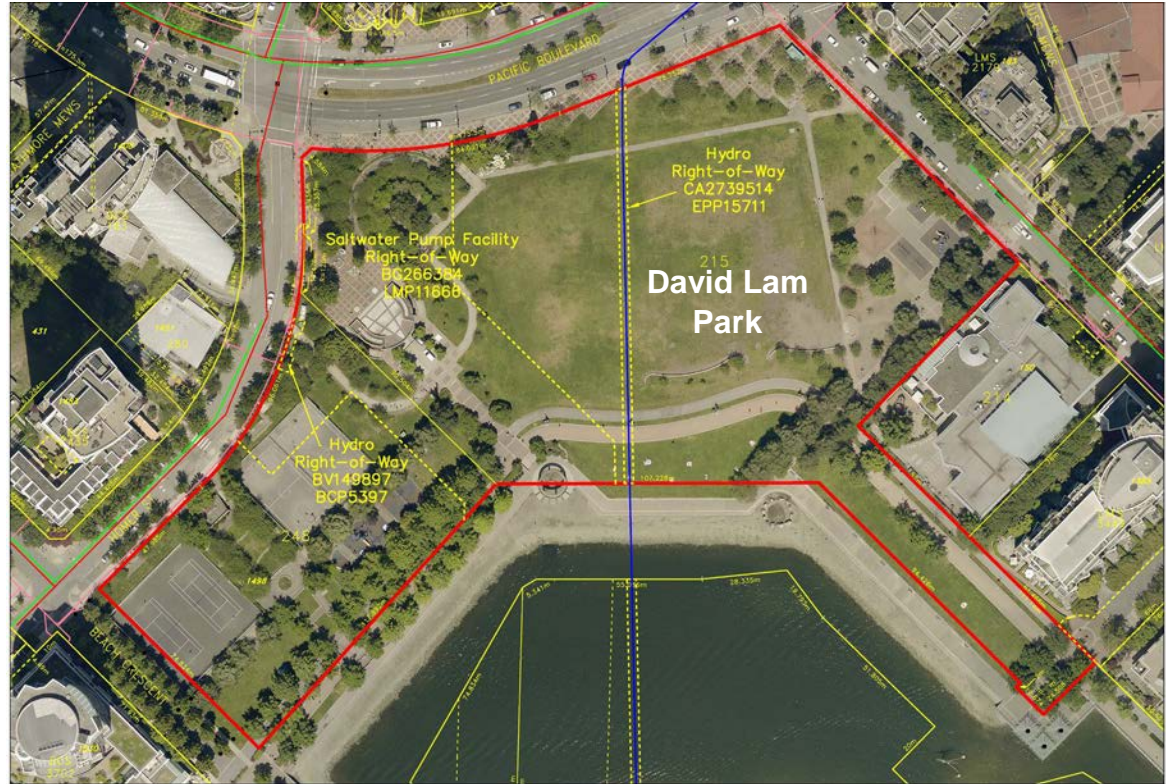
General Comments

Dual Governance creates delays and increases costs

- Experienced significant costly delays caused by need to negotiate access agreements between Park Board and City.
 - Over the past four years, projects with dual governance faced delays ranging from one to two years for sewer, green infrastructure, streets, and public space projects, and up to 3.5 years for pump station projects.
- These delays have contributed to:
 - lack of clarity on pathways for implementation of capital programs,
 - mounting risks of critical asset failure and disruption of essential service delivery,
 - real and perceived inefficiencies by the public, partners, and the community.
- These delays increased construction costs of impacted projects in the City's current 4-year capital plan by a total of about \$15M.
 - Have not quantified the significant additional staff time and legal costs associated with extensive negotiations and back and forth between the staff of the two elected bodies.

2B) Planning Update: Operational Integration – Major Infrastructure Planning & Delivery (Appendix D)

- 60% of parks in the City have Statutory Right of Way (SRW) encumbrances
- Any utility encumbrance necessitates a tailored SRW agreement to be negotiated between the elected bodies
- Example: David Lam Park:
 - Saltwater Pump Facility Right-of-Way (DFPS)
 - Third-party utilities
 - Interface between street ROW and park boundaries
 - Added complexity relating to the seawall and adjacent active transportation route



2B) Planning Update: Operational Integration – Major Infrastructure Planning & Delivery (Appendix D)

AREA OF WORK	CURRENT SITUATION
Sewer infrastructure siting, design, and maintenance	Fragmented jurisdiction on park land
Street design and Maintenance (incl. transportation, public space, green rainwater infrastructure, and waterways)	PB has jurisdiction and responsibility for streets on park land, ENG for rest of City
Water infrastructure siting, design, and maintenance	Fragmented jurisdiction park land

Range of Anticipated Benefits:

- ✓ Unified policies and strategies for streets asset planning and management, transportation and public space planning and management, and landscape management
- ✓ Better asset management
- ✓ Efficiencies through economies of scale
- ✓ Consistent management and operational and maintenance practices
- ✓ More cohesive system of infrastructure
- ✓ No legal negotiations between Park Board and City required
- ✓ More strategic and consistent approach to maintenance
- ✓ Reduced delays due to coordination issues
- ✓ Efficiencies through economies of scale
- ✓ Reduced delays due to governance and/or coordination issues

2B) Planning Update: Operational Integration – Financial Savings Estimates

Combined anticipated savings from operational efficiencies, reduced contracting, increased operational effectiveness and cost avoidance after these early integration opportunities are implemented are estimated to be **in the range of \$7M per year or up to \$70M over 10 years.**

- *Early Operational Integration Opportunities (Appendix D, Section A): **\$1.8M to \$3.3M per year (18M to 33M over 10 years)***
 - Position savings: Estimated \$1.5-3.0M per year (\$15-30 million over 10 years)
 - Board costs: Estimated \$280,000 per year (\$2.8M over 10 years)
- *Major Infrastructure Planning and Delivery (Appendix D, Section B): **Estimated \$15 million over each 4-year Capital Plan (\$37.5M over 10 years)***
 - Construction cost avoidance through elimination of dual planning/approval processes

Please note that it is not feasible to accurately account for the amount of staff time spent negotiating or navigating the intersection of the dual governance, for example staff and legal time attempting to negotiate access to enable critical infrastructure works or navigating the overlapping policy areas. However, the effort is significant and such staff attention and effort could be redirected to advance other priorities and services should the transition proceed.

Any savings presents Council with an opportunity to reinvest in parks and recreation service improvements and other public service priorities.

3) Next Steps

- Ensure project transparency through continued regular and ongoing updates (available [online](#)).
- Discuss with Unions how to enable the transitions to happen in a manner that avoids layoffs.
- Liaise with the Provincial government to understand their intentions related to timing for the requested Vancouver Charter changes.
- Consult with the local Nations.
- Finalize final report and recommendations to Council pending status update from Province.



Thank you

