

**The Parks and Recreation Commission recommends:**

**That Council approve this report for use by City staff so that the Terms of Reference that will inform the City's hiring of a consultant in 2020 to develop a Parkland Acquisition Strategy is in alignment with this report.**

**AND**

**That the draft Terms of Reference be reviewed for input by the Parks and Recreation Commission prior to public release.**

**AND**

**That this report be provided to the consultant as a guiding document and that the consultant is directed to consider it as part of their work bringing forward current trends and best practices.**

**DRAFT - NOVEMBER 2019**

**Guidance Report to inform the Development of Port Moody's Parkland Acquisition Strategy**

Parks and Recreation Commission Sub-Group, October 2019

**Introduction**

The City of Port Moody (the City) will be hiring a consultant in 2020 to draft a Parkland Acquisition Strategy (PAS) in fulfillment of Key Recommendations within the *Parks and Recreation Master Plan*<sup>1</sup> (2015). The role of the Parks and Recreation Committee (PRC) sub-group in developing this report is to help prepare the City for the initiation of this project by supporting Council and staff in (1) development of the strategic framework and terms of reference governing the project; and, (2) preliminary background research on some of the likely issues that will bear on the acquisition decisions ahead. The intent of this report is to inform the development of and be included within the City's formal direction to the consultant regarding the project (such as through the Terms of Reference) towards ensuring a PAS that is in alignment with the views, values, and vision of the community.

With its unique geography nestled between mountains and surrounding the Burrard Inlet, Port Moody serves as a green recreational oasis not only to our residents, but to people and families

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.portmoody.ca/en/City-Hall/resources/Documents/ParksandRec\\_Master\\_Plan.pdf](https://www.portmoody.ca/en/City-Hall/resources/Documents/ParksandRec_Master_Plan.pdf)

from across the Lower Mainland seeking refuge from the increasing impacts of densification on access to nature and greenspace. While there is limited land available for new parks, existing spaces are close to or exceeding their capacity as demand continues to increase. This issue is only anticipated to get worse as high-density development continues to surge, especially along the skytrain corridor. Delay in the development of a PAS to-date has placed Port Moody at risk from diminishing parkland assets as development and population growth both within and around the City continue to increase pressures on our existing urban parks and facilities while in turn limiting the ability of the City to acquire new parkland.

Meeting the increasing demands on Port Moody's parkland resources presents both challenges and opportunities for the City in ensuring every resident has and will continue to have equitable access to high quality parkland, while also welcoming visitors to our city and the socioeconomic benefits they bring. With this balance in mind, our vision is to inform the development of a PAS that guides how Port Moody plans to grow its urban parkland in order to maintain quality of life for its residents while simultaneously recognizing the PAS as one piece to fulfilling the need for master greenspace<sup>2</sup> planning within our city.

## **Current Context**

### **City of Port Moody Parks and Recreation Master Plan —A Key Guiding Document**

The City last updated its ten-year PRMP in 2015. The PRMP provides the context and key recommendations for a wide range of topics related to parks and recreation within the city including the development and acquisition of parkland. The recommendations within the PRMP, which was approved and adopted by Council, are based on the needs and desires of the community, supported by professional analysis and comparisons with population and sector trends. As such, the PRMP serves as a foundational strategic planning document for staff and Council regarding parkland acquisition. Accordingly, all decisions and planning regarding parkland should continue to support the fulfillment of the recommendations within the PRMP as adopted by Council and supported by the community. One of the most relevant recommendations was the adoption of a population-based total parkland target of 2.5 hectares(ha)/1000 people (the 2.5 Target), consisting of specific parkland acquisition targets for City, Community, and Neighborhood<sup>3</sup> parks, while addressing issues of deficiencies in parkland distribution in the city's most under-served locations.

The PRMP also makes recommendations related to the protection and expansion of the city's natural parkland areas and enhancement of our existing parkland resources. While natural

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<sup>2</sup> Greenspace is used within this document as a general reference to outdoor areas for recreational or aesthetic use such as parks, public greenways, private greenspaces, and fields.

<sup>3</sup> The 2.5 total parkland standard consists of 1.2 ha/1000 pop. for City parks; 1.0 ha/1000 pop. for Community parks; and 0.3 ha/1000 pop. for Neighborhood parks.

parkland is not included within active parkland supply calculations, it is necessary that development of Port Moody's PAS takes a holistic approach to parkland planning. In particular, the PAS should also include planning regarding the acquisition of natural parkland areas in addition to active parkland and consult the Environmentally Sensitive Areas Strategy. It should also acknowledge how it will align with and inform City planning regarding the enhancement of existing parks, and the development of green corridors and trail and walkway networks. This holistic approach should ultimately serve to support the development of a comprehensive parkland network across the city.

### **Development Cost Charges —Have We Got It Right?**

The City collects Development Cost Charges (DCCs) based on the Local Government Act for parkland acquisition and parkland improvement. These funds, charged to developments, can be used towards acquiring parkland that serves residents of new developments. The City revised the DCC bylaw in 2019 for the first time in over 30 years<sup>4</sup> to better reflect the actual costs to the City related to development projects in Port Moody. While such delay in DCC revisions have cost the City significant time and lost opportunity regarding collecting adequate funding for needed parkland acquisition, the new revised DCC rates can now serve as a starting point and as a tangible funding mechanism towards implementation of a PAS. In turn, the PAS can serve to inform ongoing review of DCC rates to ensure they are adequate to support the actual parkland needs of the city.

### **In a Nutshell: We Have No Plan for Meeting Parkland Targets in the Face of Increasing Population Growth**

Without a PAS (or through delay in its implementation once written) the City has no overall plan or strategy for how we are going to achieve and maintain the 2.5 Target approved in the PRMP. The urgency of the problem is exacerbated because the City's population continues to increase and opportunities for land acquisition continue to decrease or become prohibitively expensive.

At the time the PRMP was published in 2015, the total supply of parkland was 2.4 ha/1,000 population for City, Community, and Neighborhood Parks. This ratio is continuing to decline because of the increasing population growth and the fact that the acquisition of new parkland by the City has been below the target. While the PRMP identified 16 hectares of active parkland would have to be acquired by 2024 in order to meet the 2.5 Target, by July 2019 the City has only acquired a total of 0.6 hectares<sup>5</sup>. This means the City is now even further behind from fulfilling its PRMP targets. In addition, based on the City's rapid development, population

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<sup>4</sup> At the Regular Council Meeting on Tuesday, July 23, 2019, Council gave the draft DCC Bylaw third reading and directed staff to send the bylaw for Provincial approval.

<sup>5</sup> Per email correspondence received from the City August 16th, 2019

growth may increase beyond Official Community Plan (OCP)<sup>6</sup> projections used to calculate parkland acquisition figures contained within the PRMP meaning they may be underestimates.

Although blanket statistics regarding city-wide parkland ratios are helpful for understanding the average parkland availability, more useful for acquisition planning is understanding where parkland is most needed in relation to expected population growth. According to the OCP, most of the projected growth (upwards of 70%) will be concentrated in the City's core, particularly within Moody Centre and to a lesser degree in Inlet Centre. Both of those communities had been identified within the PRMP as already significantly lacking adequate access to Community and Neighborhood parks. The increase of development and need for parkland in these areas creates a challenge as limited availability of land and rising prices may inhibit the City's acquisition of parkland where it is needed most. It is expected that this will become even more challenging over time. This points to the critical need for a PAS to plan and prioritize the City's acquisition decisions beginning in the immediate term.

Although the current situation with regards to parkland acquisition appears daunting, the City's revised DCC scheme is early enough to provide opportunity to plan how the City will 'catch up' to meeting the PRMP parkland targets. However, in order to make this a reality, parkland acquisition needs to be prioritized by the City to reflect the critical nature of the situation.

### **Guiding Principles: Key lenses and Considerations**

The following key lenses and considerations can serve to guide the City's work in decision-making around and development of a PAS that serves to protect and expand our cherished parklands while upholding quality of life for all residents of Port Moody.

#### **Keep our Eye on the 2.5 Target**

The PRMP is a document that received significant public engagement and was approved by Council, meaning the 2.5 Target that was contained within the PRMP has also been approved by Council. As outlined within the PRMP, while this rate is in alignment with the current provincial average it falls well below the Canadian average as well as previously identified standards by the City. Accordingly, even the adoption of the 2.5 Target represents a significant compromise in relative supply of active parkland in comparison to the past. Simply put, the City of Port Moody has an obligation to meet its commitments to its residents regarding parkland and maintain this target as a minimum while also implementing additional strategies towards enhancing, expanding, and connecting the City's various urban greenspaces.

It is recognized that in certain parts of town —such as Moody Centre —the 2.5 Target may be more challenging to achieve using the current parkland classification system. Application of the

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.portmoody.ca/en/business-and-development/official-community-plan.aspx>

2.5 Target may need to include additional ‘equalizing’ measurements towards meeting the ratio in specific areas or zones of the City. For example, this may include ensuring increased access to parkland via public transportation or greenway links in areas where the 2.5 Target is not being met and prioritizing the enhancement of existing parks within these areas. This analysis can inform development of a parkland improvement strategy.

### **Develop a Sustainable and Forward-thinking Financial Plan**

Development of a PAS requires consideration of how the City will afford to implement the plan over time to reach its identified parkland acquisition goals and targets.

Although the City’s recent revision of DCC rates is a positive step, this one-time revision prior to completion of the City’s PAS is not enough. DCC calculations should be regularly reviewed and informed through built-in mechanisms for consideration of real-time market conditions and area-specific land costs in relation to the City’s identified parkland needs. In particular, the City currently uses a set price of about \$1 million per acre<sup>7</sup>, a figure well below today’s actual market rates much less representative of future pricing. In addition, the ten-year parkland need identified by the City in relation to DCCs does not appear consistent with actual population projections<sup>8</sup>. Therefore, the City appears to have significantly underestimated the true costs of parkland acquisition within its DCC analysis. A sustainable financial plan will require built-in mechanisms to ensure regular review of DCC calculations in relation to the latest market conditions and estimated costs of achieving the City’s specific parkland acquisition goals over time.

### **Parkland in the Right Places that Maintains Quality of Life for Port Moody Residents**

Decision-making and prioritization regarding how best to achieve and maintain the 2.5 Target must be informed through distribution-based analysis and supported by the application of contextual lenses that guide the identification of neighborhood-specific acquisition priorities. Identification and prioritization of potential acquisition sites should be informed through values-based considerations in addition to population and distribution analyses. This may include standards related to relative walking distance, access via transit, environmental integrity and safety, proximity to high traffic roads, opportunities for sunlight, as well as considerations related to relative proximity to other greenspaces not captured within parkland calculations but that may functionally serve as active parkland such as access to school fields, private yards or recreational areas, or parkland of neighboring municipalities. Acquisition priority areas identified

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<sup>7</sup> Per email correspondence received from the City August 16th, 2019

<sup>8</sup> [DCC presentation](#) from summer 2019 indicated a population increase of approximately 4,050 over 10 years, resulting in 10.1 hectares of parkland needs. However, this is inconsistent with current population projections and resulting parkland needs as was provided to the sub-group by the City. If reasons for these discrepancies exist, they should be clearly explained within the PAS.

as part of the PRMP were informed through both population and distribution analysis and should serve as a starting point for the City's further analyses.

Parkland acquisition planning should be undertaken with the ultimate goal of ensuring all residents and families of Port Moody have equitable access to near-by, high quality parkland that can support their personal and recreational needs. The PAS should include maps that identify specific areas and potential properties of interest for future parkland acquisition (including relative prioritization of these acquisition areas) reflective of these considerations.

### **Getting Creative: Innovation, Collaboration, and Strategic Partnerships**

As has been outlined above, a key challenge to the City in reaching and maintaining its commitment to the 2.5 Target will be ensuring the availability of adequate funding to meet the rising cost of land acquisition over time. For this reason, exploration of innovative and alternative opportunities for parkland acquisition outside of traditional land purchase should be considered as part of a PAS. For example, these may include identifying opportunities for land swaps, land leases, land donations, public/private partnerships, alternative funding models, and alternative uses for existing City-owned lands. The City should welcome and fully explore creative ideas in support of addressing parkland acquisition challenges. Opportunities for engaging and partnering with different communities, groups, and cultures within the City should be facilitated and prioritized.

Special consideration and focus are needed on identifying collaboration and partnership opportunities for expanding City Parks. Given their relatively large size, it is unlikely the City will be able to acquire enough land to develop new City Parks and there are few opportunities for expanding existing City Parks. For example, one key opportunity that has been identified is the growth of Rocky Point park as part of any future high-density development of surrounding properties.

### **Working Towards an Urban Ecological Network**

All parkland acquisition planning should consider and uphold the important role urban parkland not only has as part of the built environment, but as part of the urban ecosystem. For example, parklands and greenspaces provide critical ecosystem services to the community such as pollution removal, storm water regulation, and climate regulation/cooling effects. Parklands can also serve as habitat and food sources to local species. Networking urban parkland and green corridors will serve to prevent the isolation of parks and encourage greater recreational benefits, while protecting and enhancing the critical ecological functions of the City's urban parklands. This will become increasingly important as the impacts of climate change continue to increase. Development of a PAS should recognize and inform the need for master planning around the City's urban greenspaces.

## **Ideal Components of a PAS —Guiding Questions**

The below section outlines what the PRC has identified as ideal components of a PAS in alignment with best practices and as a reflection of our shared vision of a PAS that will serve to ensure the City maintains its unique character as a green recreational oasis and quality of life for the City's residents. Guiding questions are included for consideration towards informing the drafting of the strategy.

### **1. Vision, Values and Guiding Principles**

*What is the vision of the PAS? What timeframe is this over?*

*What are the guiding values and principles that directed the PAS's development? How were these applied?*

*How do the vision, values, and guiding principles align with other city planning documents? This report?*

### **2. Current Context**

*How much current parkland does the City possess (including any known upcoming acquisitions) as calculated under the PRMP criteria for inclusion in its acquisition formula?*

*To-date, what has guided decision-making regarding acquisitions in the absence of a PAS?*

*How much has parkland increased since the PRMP was drafted in 2015? How have any new acquisitions aligned with the priority areas identified within the PRMP?*

*Given current population assumptions what is the City's ratio of parkland to population in total and by parkland type? By neighborhood?*

*What is the current distribution of each park type across the City? Across neighborhoods? How does this compare to the PRMP ratios and walking distance guidelines? Areas of greatest current and projected population growth?*

*How much extra parkland across each parkland type would be required to meet the overall 2.5 ratio per the PRMP if Port Moody grows per the OCP projections? 2020, 2025, 2030, 2035, 2040?*

*Is the number of people that visit Port Moody parks from out-of-town relative to resident use known? Are Port Moody's parks primarily being used by locals? How will visitor rates to our parks potentially add to acquisition needs?*

**3. Goals, strategies, and objectives that reflect the Vision, Values, and Guiding Principles and include recommended actions and measurable outcomes related to:**

***What areas have been identified as parkland acquisition priority areas and what is the timeline?***

*What are identified as areas of greatest need and why? For which types of parks?*

*Is meeting the 2.5 Target within the areas of greatest need realistic given current active parkland definitions? Is there need or opportunity for consideration of additional 'equalizing' measurements towards meeting the ratio in specific areas or zones of the City?*

*How does need relate to actual potential for land acquisition given current land use and ownership within these areas?*

*Is there potential for the City to gain parkland in contribution to the 2.5 Target calculation per the PRMP parkland definitions through current or planned development?*

*What is the relative priority ranking of identified areas for parkland acquisition? What is the proposed timeline for acquisition in order to meet and maintain the 2.5 Target within the identified priority areas given projected growth?*

***What are the acquisition criteria?***

*What criteria are to be used to guide the City's year-to-year acquisition planning and decision-making?*

*How are contextual lenses to be applied to inform decision-making?*

*How will decisions on if and when to acquire a specific property be made?*

***How will the City ensure a sustainable and long-term financial plan in support of the PAS?***

*What is the total projected cost of parkland acquisition as identified within the PAS based on current and projected market trends and neighborhood-specific pricing of identified priority areas?*

*What is the projected shortfall (if any) based on current DCC calculation in relation to projected acquisition cost to maintain the 2.5 Target? How much would proper parkland acquisition cost the City, taxpayers and developers?*

*How will the City work to ensure annual review of DCC rates so that they align with real-time land values and can adequately fund parkland needs over time? This should include an immediate review of DCCs following completion of the PAS.*

***What are potential opportunities for collaboration and partnership?***

*How will new opportunities continue to be reviewed and identified?*

*What will be the City's approach to decision-making regarding moving forward with such opportunities?*

*How will the City increase or expand City Parks such as Rocky Point Park in a timeframe that meets increased population growth?*

**4. Implementation plan**

*How and by which department(s) is each component of the strategy going to be implemented? This should include a summary table(s) of proposed recommendations, commitments, and/or deliverables in relation to identified timelines*

**5. Mechanisms for monitoring and reporting**

*What are the governance mechanisms in place for monitoring and public reporting on the implementation of the PAS?*

*How will implementation of the PAS be integrated into annual City work plans? How will implementation status be reviewed by Council? How will the PRC receive regular status updates?*

**6. Additional Considerations**

***How does the PAS align with and how will it inform other existing City planning documents?***

*For example, PRMP, OCP, Strategic Plan, Environmentally Sensitive Areas Strategy, Land Management Strategy policy, Capital Assets Plan, and park management strategies?*

*How should the PAS serve to inform the development of a master plan related to the City's urban greenspaces?*

*What is the status of the City's work on the development of a trail and walkway network? An overarching parkland improvement strategy?*

***What are additional opportunities or models for considering parkland acquisition and enhancement beyond the 2.5 Target?***

*How can Port Moody work towards achieving the 2.5 Target while simultaneously focusing on alternative opportunities and plans for acquiring additional types of greenspaces across the city? What is needed to support strategic alignment across these two goals?*

*What is the role of developments in providing publicly accessible greenspace? What standards and incentives should be used to ensure new developments are providing adequate, high quality, and usable greenspace? Is the current 5% minimum enough?*

*What is the role of private greenspaces? School grounds? Natural areas? Waterways?*

**Learning from Others: Key PAS Examples**

Preparation of a PAS should be informed through an in-depth literature review including review of other PASs as well as academic research related to best practices and recommendations for parkland acquisition. The below are a few key examples that demonstrate alignment with the perspectives and considerations within this report:

Toronto <https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/accountability-operations-customer-service/long-term-vision-plans-and-strategies/parkland-strategy/>

<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/2000/agendas/council/cc/cc000607/plt5rpt/cl011.pdf>

[file:///C:/Users/19024/AppData/Local/Packages/Microsoft.MicrosoftEdge\\_8wekyb3d8bbwe/TempState/Downloads/Knowles,%20Sophie%20Lewis%20\(2\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/19024/AppData/Local/Packages/Microsoft.MicrosoftEdge_8wekyb3d8bbwe/TempState/Downloads/Knowles,%20Sophie%20Lewis%20(2).pdf)

City of Kingston

<https://www.cityofkingston.ca/documents/10180/20847/Natural+Lands+and+Parkland+Acquisition+Policy>

Capital Regional District

<https://www.crd.bc.ca/docs/default-source/parks-pdf/land-acquisition-strategy-2018-19.pdf>

Metro Vancouver

<http://www.metrovancouver.org/services/parks/ParksPublications/RegionalParksLandAcquisition2050.pdf>