



Attachment 9

Budget 2025 Departmental Memo - Parks and Recreation

Memorandum

To: Lisa Spitale
Chief Administrative Officer

Date: November 25, 2024

From: Dean Gibson
Director of Parks and Recreation

File: 2606662

Subject: Parks and Recreation Department 2025 Budget Memo: 2024 Accomplishments and 2025 Corporate Priorities

2024 ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND HIGHLIGHTS

During 2024 in support of Council’s strategic priorities related to Community Belonging and Connecting and ongoing priorities in the areas of Climate Action and the Environment, the Parks and Recreation Department has concentrated its efforts on the successful opening of t̄m̄əsew̄tx̄w Aquatic and Community Centre; Urban Forest and Natural Areas Management; Parks Services and Parks Planning, Design and Construction; City wide programming and functional operations; and Recreational Social programming.

t̄m̄əsew̄tx̄w Aquatic and Community Centre

t̄m̄əsew̄tx̄w Aquatic and Community Center successfully opened to the community on April 29 (Community and Fitness Centre) and May 14 (Aquatic facilities) of 2024. In the first 199 days of opening, the facility has welcomed over 270,000 drop in users to the fitness centre and aquatic facilities, offered over 1,600 registered aquatic swim lessons, over 120 single day and full week day camps, and expanded city wide program initiatives for seniors and youth. Average daily attendance numbers for drop-in programs account for over 1,350 visits a day. Registered program attendees and accompanying family members in addition to daily drop-in users have surpassed projected attendance patterns of over 3000 visitors a day. Multi-session sales have increased compared to 2023 (pre t̄m̄əsew̄tx̄w) as noted below:

Multi-Session Pass Sales	April 19-Nov 14, 2023	April 19-Nov 14, 2024	Quantity % change
Active 10	2,292	10,495	+358%
Active 30	1,156	4,098	+254%
Active 365	66	2,908	+4,306%

As a direct result of the opening of t̄m̄s̄ēw̄tx̄^w Aquatic and Community Center, new recreation services staff have been successfully recruited for over 200 auxiliary, regular part-time and regular full-time roles since the beginning of 2024 to support and deliver expanded core programming across all facilities. Additional customer support and building maintenance staff positions are proposed in the 2025 budget to more effectively support the service requirements of the facility's growing customer base.

The t̄m̄s̄ēw̄tx̄^w Aquatic and Community Center has been meeting and exceeding design elements performance measures pertaining to the City's 7 Bold Steps for Climate Action. Air and water quality parameters have exceeded expectations. The performance of the inBlue drum filtration system and adjoining air handling systems have maintained fresh and healthy water and air, and has reduced energy and water consumption projections. The facility's energy consumption is supplemented by a solar electrical yield that is greater than projected. The solar roof mounted photovoltaic panels have provided the facility 298.57 MWh of electrical supply to date of a projected annual yield of 300MWh.

The focus for the remainder of 2024 and moving into 2025 will be to fully commission the mechanical systems of the facility and invest staff time and infrastructure into the continual monitoring of the system performance.

The recruitment of a Business Analyst for Parks and Recreation in Q4 has supported the department in the gathering and analysis of data pertaining to mechanical performance, program performance, and park and facility usage performance. Programs and services will continue to be monitored and program delivery is planned to expand as staff are recruited.

Urban Forest and Natural Areas Management

The Urban Forestry and Natural Areas division continues to work towards the goal of increasing city-wide urban forest canopy cover to meet a 27% target by 2030 with a strong focus on equitable distribution, enhancing biodiversity and increasing resilience. Achievements in 2024 include:

- Advanced Phase 1 of the Urban Reforestation and Biodiversity Enhancement Initiative (referred to as URBEI), utilizing \$1.75M funding from the Provincial and Federal Government to plant 2,200 new trees in parks and open spaces along with the transformation of 1.0 ha of mowed turf to pollinator pasture. Completion of the URBEI Phase 1 is anticipated by March 2025.
- Secured an additional \$1.005M grant via UBCM from the Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness to partially fund Phase 2 of URBEI. Phase 2 will install an additional 532 trees in City streets in 2025/2026, improving the resiliency of the most vulnerable populations while bringing the City closer to the target of 6,300 new trees planted along city-owned streets and boulevards by 2030.

- Enhanced new and existing natural areas to support habitat for wildlife and pollinators, with integrated interpretive signage and improved pedestrian connections within and between green spaces across the City. Improved locations include the Stanley Street Greenway, Ryall Park South, Moody Park, Queen’s Park, Hume Park and Fifth Street median.

Parks Services and Parks Planning, Design and Construction

Collectively responsible for the planning and delivery of parks, natural areas systems, outdoor recreation amenities, programs and services through renewal and expansion, involving a range of staff who engage, plan, design, manage, partner, collaborate, and advocate for parks and recreation across the city. Achievements and progress in 2024 include:

- Design or construct new and renewed parks, open spaces and amenities:
 - Community sport storage space
 - Upgraded Sapperton Park Field Lighting
 - Hume Park Tennis Court Replacement
 - Improvements to dog off-leash areas (OLA) and Pilot project to introduce the city’s first shared use OLA in Albert Crescent Park.
 - Implemented Phase 1 and advancement of Phase 2 of the Farm Masterplan to support nature-based outdoor learning, programming and activities.
 - Advanced design and/ or delivery of new parks and open spaces at 660 Quayside Drive (late 2024/ early 2025) and 810 Agnes Street (2026).
 - Advanced design and tender of the Westward Expansion of Westminster Pier Park (2025).
- Development of plans, policies and initiatives:
 - Completed Quayside Esplanade Lighting Condition Assessment and Replacement Strategy.
 - Implemented Phase 1 of the Parks & Recreation Comprehensive Plan (referred to as “People, Parks and Play: Connections for All”).
 - Launch of the engagement process to determine location and scope of a new Artificial Turf Field.

Additional park operations positions are proposed in the 2025 budget to more effectively support the new and ongoing requirements for managing and maintaining the City’s park, open spaces and natural areas.

City-wide Programming and Functional Operations

In 2024, Recreation Services moved from a facility based programming model to a functional based programming model. This service delivery model change has

supported the expansion of core programs for early years, children, families, youth, adults and seniors across all City recreation facilities. Subject matter experts in each program functional area work with facility managers to provide programs across all City facilities. The creation of a Recreation Maintenance core service area has facilitated efficiencies in the scheduling, training and supervision of maintenance staff. Facility maintenance standards have been developed and staff are being orientated and trained to work across all recreation facilities. A Food Services functional area has also been created and work in this area is expanding from a solely food service provision to additionally focusing on employment skills and food security initiatives development.

Social Programming

Recreation Services in partnership with the Senior Services Society was the successful applicant for a series of United Way grants totaling \$245K. These grants fund a seniors Community Connector staff position, support for the development of a welcoming gathering space and social programming initiatives for seniors and community. The social food security initiative funds free nutritious and culturally connected meals in City recreation facilities each month, providing seniors and the community opportunities for gathering and connecting over a meal. The preparation of the meals provide opportunities for volunteers from vulnerable populations such as youth, seniors and those with cognitive or physical disabilities (who are supported by a volunteer coordinator funded from the grant) to develop food service skills.

2025 CORPORATE PRIORITIES

The Parks and Recreation Department leads one corporate priority in 2025 and plays an active role in the work of corporate priorities led by other departments:

- *People, Parks and Play – Connections for All* (Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Plan Update)

The update to the City's Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Plan has been reaffirmed as a corporate priority for 2025 given its high degree of interdepartmental dependency, urgency and impact. The plan will guide future priorities and investments in parks and recreation facilities, services, and programs for the next 10 years, while also describing a future vision to 2050. The Plan will also inform the Development Cost Charges (DCC) bylaw update as well as the new Amenity Cost Charges (ACC) bylaw and will underpin future work related to facilities, parks, recreation and natural areas asset management.

New Westminster is a densely populated community, and more growth and development are anticipated. Within this context, community input will help the City understand current challenges and opportunities for improving parks and recreation spaces and programs—and make decisions on how to better meet our diverse community's needs. The vision, goals and objectives will reflect six guiding principles: 1) Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Anti-racism, 2) Truth towards Reconciliation, 3)

Service adequacy and standards, 4) Community Connections and Wellbeing, 5) Local Economy; and 6) Climate Resilience and Adaptation.

The process to update the Plan includes a robust public engagement plan, background/analysis of interdepartmental policy documents, review of parks and recreation baseline data, development of optimum service level recommendations, gaps analysis and implementation strategy. This work started in early 2024 and will be delivered in three phases:

- 1) Background Review, Data & Trends Analysis/ Phase 1 Engagement (complete)
- 2) Growth Analysis/ Phase 2 Engagement (underway)
- 3) Final Reporting with Recommendations and Implementation Plan (Q3 2025)

The second round of community engagement is planned for February/March 2025 and the draft final plan is anticipated for Council's consideration in June 2025. Staff from multiple city departments including Community Services, Planning and Development, Energy and Climate Action, and Engineering have supported the advancement of the Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Plan work.

- *2025 Corporate priorities led by other departments in which Parks and Recreation staff are playing substantive roles include:*
 - 22nd Street Station Vision
 - Crisis Response Pilot Project
 - Climate Adaptation and Resilience Plan
 - Financing Growth Strategy
 - ACC/DCC bylaw update
 - Five Year Financial Plan