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To: ["Direct to Mayor and Council - DL"](#)

Date: 4/26/2022 6:04:36 PM

Subject: [Invitation: Drop-in Event - Smithe & Richards New Park - Soft Opening *APR 29, 6pm*](#)

Attachments: [INFO SHEET - New Park at Smithe & Richards.pdf](#)

Dear Mayor and Council,

We invite you to join Park Board Commissioners and staff this Friday, April 29 (6pm-7pm) at Smithe and Richards (872 Richards St) for a first peek of our brand new, multi-dimensional park of the future.

At this informal drop-in, Park Board staff will be on hand to provide tours of this new space that not only pushes the boundaries of park design but creates a unique opportunity for people to connect to the unceded land it sits on through programming and art.

With an abundance of spaces to gather and play, lush green foliage, dramatic skyframes and elevated walkways that offer a whole new perspective on the city, this park marks an important chapter in the transformation of Downtown Vancouver. This is a place where people can live, work, socialize and play in their neighbourhood. It's about building community, creating complete neighbourhoods, and we would be delighted to introduce you to this whole new take on what a downtown park can be. An information sheet with key facts and FAQs is attached for your reference.

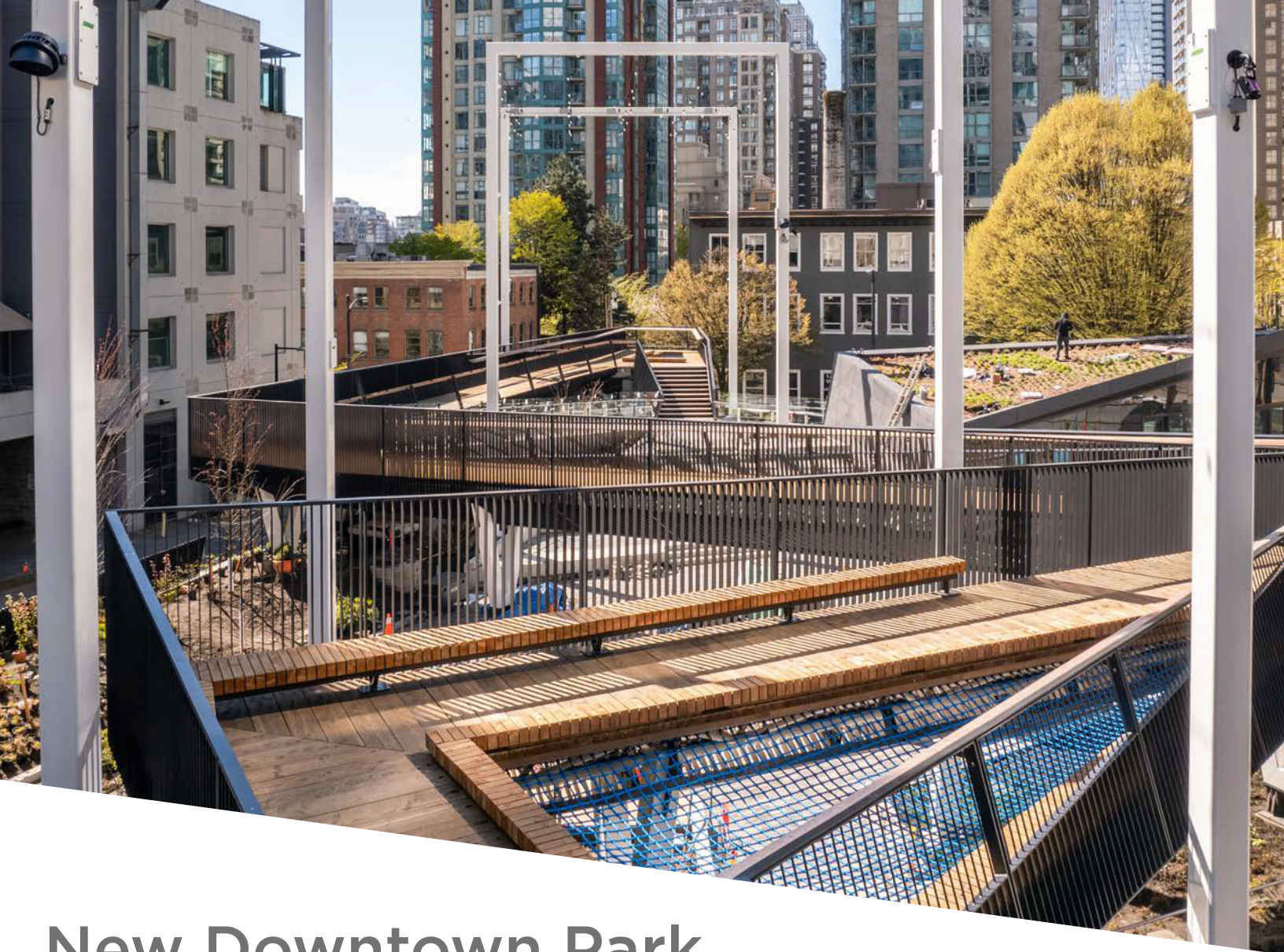
Should you have any questions, please contact Donnie Rosa, General Manager of Park Board (Donnie.Rosa@vancouver.ca).

Best,
Paul

Paul Mochrie (he/him)
City Manager
City of Vancouver
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The City of Vancouver acknowledges that it is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam), S^kwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.



New Downtown Park at Smithe & Richards

Key Facts & FAQs

A Park for the Future

- It's been ten years since a new park was created in downtown Vancouver. Within that time, the population of Vancouver boomed, with demand on the city's greenspaces intensifying like never before.
- A former parking lot, this 0.8 acre site has been transformed into a park of the future, with innovative design, dynamic play areas, art installations and multi-dimensional walkways that go far beyond the traditional concept of a park.
- Projected as the hardest working park in the city, the site will serve over 10,000 residents and 17,000 employees in the surrounding area who live and work within a five minute walk of the site.

A Green Park like No Other

- Designed with progressive sustainability in mind, this is the epitome of a green park.
- A third of the site is planted with over 6000 shrubs, perennials, climbers, aquatic plants and mature trees, many of which are significant to and used in Indigenous culture, food and medicine.
- Rain and water from the plaza's water feature is collected, filtered and channeled for irrigation and flushing toilets, or cleaned before entering the City's storm sewers
- The café is designed with a 30% reduction in energy use and features a green roof

Decolonizing Through Greenspace

- More than just a park, this project is a significant step in decolonizing the city through parks and greenspaces and connecting with over 60,000 projected annual users about unceded Indigenous territory.
- This site represents a prime opportunity to work with the three host Nations in educating the public about whose territory they are on, through art installations and cultural programming.
- An official naming ceremony will announce the Indigenous name gifted by the Nations for this park in Spring 2022.

KEY FACTS

1. An urban park to support a densifying and evolving Vancouver downtown core

From 1991 to 2016, the population of downtown Vancouver increased seven fold. In response to this increasingly densifying downtown core and the need for corresponding green spaces, City Council adopted the Downtown South Plan in 1992 with a goal to build 2.8 ha (7ac) of parks for new residents.

Despite scarcity of land and escalating land values in the downtown core, the Park Board was able to secure a rare plot of land Smithe and Richards in 2013, through Development Cost Levies (DCLs) and Community Amenity Contributions (CACs), to develop a park.

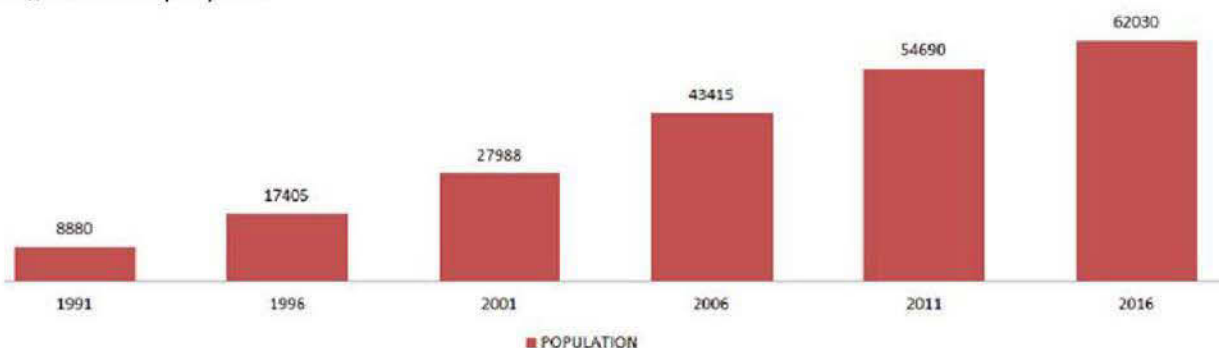


Figure 1: Population of Downtown Vancouver

2. 8 Key Features of the Park

This is an urban park packed with features designed to address the gaps in park amenities in the downtown area as outlined in the [Phase 1 Report](#) including playgrounds for children, opportunities for public art, places to gather and connect and with activities that promote social interaction and active civic engagement.



KEY	ELEMENT	DESCRIPTION
1	Kafka's Cafe	<p>Located in the southwest corner of the site, the café provides sustenance for park visitors, animates the park at all times of day and facilitates social connections.</p> <p>Designed with sustainability in mind, it features a green roof; 30% reduction in energy use by using air-source heating system with heat recovery ventilator, plus energy efficient LED lighting and controls, and high performance cladding and windows.</p> <p>There are also two accessible public washrooms.</p>
2	Plaza with Decorative Water Feature	<p>The plaza includes a flexible programming space flanked by seating and small stage/platform with electrical outlets to facilitate events.</p> <p>It has a recirculating in-ground decorative water feature where the grey water is collected in an underground cistern, treated and used for irrigation and flushing toilets.</p>
3	Pedestrian Bridge/Overhead Walkway	<p>The bridge weaves over the park in a dynamic and dramatic form that becomes a unique space of its own. It provides an accessible and elevated journey across the site.</p> <p>The south viewing platform offers views down Smith Street and the bridge provides comfortable places to 'perch' and take in the many unique vantage points into the park from above. Its two integrated hammocks provide comfortable spaces to relax and add a fun experience for park goers.</p> <p>The bridge increases the overall usable park square footage, freeing up a significant portion of the site ground level to be planted.</p>

KEY	ELEMENT	DESCRIPTION
4	Skyframes	The design includes a series of six structural metal frames that align diagonally down the spine of the park. The skyframes add a flexible creativity to the site and will be used installations of art pieces, banners, or lighting.
5	Children's Play Area	<p>A destination play space, the children's playground features 2 in-ground trampolines, 3 custom designed towers and a smaller climbing ribbon for younger children.</p> <p>The park takes advantage of the naturally sloping site and accentuates it with a double-wide roller slide, various climbing and rope features.</p> <p>The top of the slope has a disk swing and provides additional bench seating and a view across the park.</p>
6	Planting	One third of the park is planted (1067m2) and includes a significant number of native plants and trees. Raised concrete planters protect the greenery and provide additional soil volume to support a lush environment.
7	Lighting	<p>The park features catenary lights and spotlights fixed to the skyframes for safety in the park in the evening.</p> <p>More lights illuminate the truss structure of the bridge and create a visually compelling feature in the evenings.</p>
8	Stormwater Channel	Rainwater is collected from the site and is funnelled into a stormwater channel in the laneway located on the east side of the park. The water is filtered and cleaned by the aquatic plants in the channel before entering the storm system.

3. The Park Naming

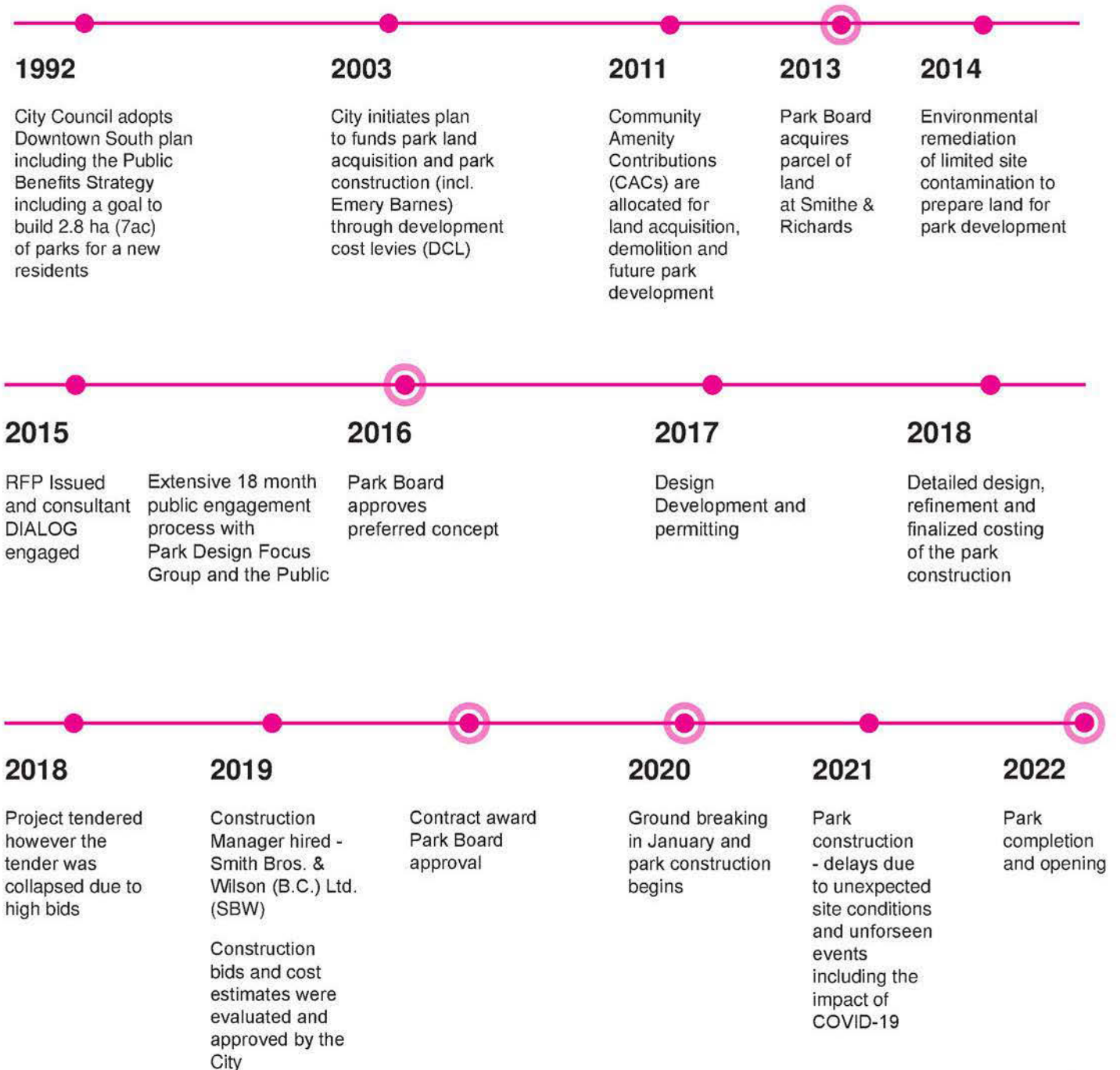
In 2017, the Park Board's Park Naming Policy Update process was paused in recognition that consultation process with Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh (MST) Nations had not been undertaken. To address this policy and process gap, staff approached MST staff about their interest in engaging in a collaborative naming process for the new park at Smithe and Richards as a means to pilot a new consultation and naming process that would ultimately inform the update to the Park Naming Policy. Park Board staff have been collaborating with staff representatives from MST offices since September 2020 to name the park. A name has been determined for the park and will be revealed at an official naming ceremony in Spring 2022.

4. Public Art Banners on Skyframes

One of the early outcomes of the MST Park Naming Process was a request to see the gift of a name met in reciprocity through cultural programming, including public art. To that end, staff have been working with community partners and the MST Park Naming Committee to develop a temporary public art installation by local Indigenous artists for the park opening. The intent is to develop a rotating public art program for MST artists that utilizes the skyframe infrastructure to display local Indigenous art.

5. Complete Project Timeline

DOWNTOWN PARK AT SMITHE & RICHARDS



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1	When is the park anticipated to open?	The park is anticipated to open Spring 2022.
2	Will there be an opening ceremony or celebration?	A park opening celebration and ceremony to unveil the name of the park is planned for late Spring 2022.
3	Has a café vendor been secured and when will this be announced publically?	Kafka's coffee has been selected as the café vendor. This will be publically announced next year, closer to the opening of the park.
4	Why is there no grass?	<p>There is no grass at this park due to limited space and the proximity to Emery Barns Park which offers large grass fields. The planting in the park is raised to protect the planting and increase soil volume.</p> <p>Additionally, grass suffers seasonally from drought in the summer and marsh in the winter. For such a small area, with heavy footfall, this park must be resilient and stand up to intense use.</p>
5	Will the park have programming?	The programming for the park is being developed with our Recreation department and in coordination with the Downtown Vancouver Business Improvement Association (DVBIA).
6	What safety and security measures have been considered for the park?	<p>The park has integrated various safety and security measures into the design. The bridge provides a form of passive surveillance and "eyes on the park" from above. Other design interventions include lighting located throughout the park.</p> <p>The café vendor and patrons will activate the space during operating hours and there will be various programmed events to animate the space.</p> <p>In addition, the Park Board operations teams will be on site daily for care and maintenance and the park will be included in corporate security's typically rounds of downtown.</p>
7	What are the operating costs anticipated for the park?	The budgeted operating cost for the park is \$500,000 per year, which includes everything from daily paper pick-up and horticultural management to security and washroom cleaning/restocking.

8	<p>What are the key factors driving the cost of the park?</p>	<p>The construction budget is driven by a number of factors:</p> <p>The park is designed to be very robust with high quality materials chosen to withstand the wear and tear of thousands of anticipated visits or footfalls a day. The park at Smithe and Richards will work 5-10x harder than other parks outside downtown, given the significant population it will serve combined with the park's small footprint.</p> <p>Acquisition of land in the downtown core is rare and challenging, resulting in a limited footprint for this park in comparison to parks outside downtown. To maximize the available space on the site, the park utilizes vertical spaces by building above and below ground level. The park features amphitheatre seating, skyframes, the bridge, tall play equipment, an underground water storage tank, utility rooms, and raised planters to provide increased soil volumes for plants and large trees.</p> <p>In addition to the park space, the budget includes the construction of several significant structures.</p> <p>These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A compact but complex park building which includes a café retail space, two accessible washrooms and a green roof. • Underground storage space accessed off Smithe Street that houses equipment to support the recirculating water features, storage space to support operations and recreation programming and a sizeable mechanical and electrical space below ground. • The bridge, designed to withstand seismic events and adds square footage to the park. • The playground, featuring 3 custom towers reaching 3 stories tall, is expected to be a popular destination play space.
9	<p>What has affected the timeline in constructing this park?</p>	<p>The park began construction in January 2020, one month before the global pandemic. The pandemic has slowed construction considerably by limiting the numbers of workers on site, increased labour shortages, supply chain issues and material delays.</p> <p>In addition, unexpected site conditions were uncovered, including the discovery of significant amounts of old and challenging infrastructure (including two old leaking oil tanks requiring remediation), several remnant building foundations and retaining walls, and considerable amounts of former building debris.</p> <p>Other challenges include carefully working around the existing trees on site, site servicing and utility work, and coordination with several concurrent City-led projects to improve the street infrastructure and public realm around the park.</p>