



July 3, 2024

MEMO TO : Park Board Commissioners

FROM : Steve Jackson - General Manager, Board of Parks and Recreation

SUBJECT : **Solar Access in Parks and Public Views – Board Briefing Memo**

Dear Commissioners,

This memo provides an overview of upcoming potential changes to City guidelines on solar access in parks and public views from some parks, in anticipation of a [report back](#) on July 10 by the City's Planning Department to the [Council motion](#) passed on October 4, 2023. Park Board staff have worked with City staff in the development of the report back and are supportive of the proposed approach.

SOLAR ACCESS IN PARKS

Overview

Vancouver's northern temperate oceanic climate means extended periods of overcast skies in the fall, winter, and spring contrast by clear warm dry summers. For Vancouver, solar access contributes to Vancouver's urban vibrancy by promoting the use and enjoyment of parks, boosting pedestrian activity in commercial areas and extending the sidewalk patio season.

Sunlit spaces and places that are well designed and responsive to the weather and seasonal variations are demonstrably more utilized especially during spring/fall shoulder seasons. In Vancouver sunlight, or solar access, promotes physical activity, improving happiness, energy, and health. It supports healthy vegetation growth and dries out areas of standing water on fields, playgrounds and seating areas. This requires strategic planning of nearby development to contribute to a great urban environment.

Protection from permanent shadowing created by buildings does not preclude the need for dappled shade from trees and shading structures in parks. With climate change and increasing frequency of periods of intense heat in the summer months, this type of shade is more and more needed for human comfort.

Regulatory Framework

The protection of solar access in parks in Vancouver is regulated through multiple policies and guidelines that control building heights and massing, under the authority of the City's Director of Planning. There are currently 15 adopted shadow impact strategies, six downtown and nine in outlying areas, plus several other unofficial approaches established through site specific approvals (a list is provided in appendix A). There is no **citywide** solar access policy.

The Park Board does not have authority to regulate building heights and massing, hence its policies address the protection of parks from encroachment by development. VanPlay, Goal 2 speaks to the protection of existing parks and recreation spaces from loss, encroachment, and densification; and specifically, that "shadows from new buildings adjacent to parks can



dramatically change the nature of these green spaces and our enjoyment of them. We believe that sunshine is a fundamental building block of our parks.”

Striking a Balance

Research shows that parks and commercial retail streets in Vancouver experience peak usage between 9am and 6pm with the heaviest usage in the late afternoon. However, evaluating development proposals on this time period would significantly restrict development opportunity.

To strike a balance, the **Broadway Plan solar access criteria were established from 10am to 4pm on the equinoxes** (see Figure 1 in Appendix A). Analysis revealed that the resulting impact is to approximately 6% of the residential land up to 12 storeys, with the remaining approximately 94% of the residential land unaffected, within the plan area.

Solar Access: Coming Up at Council in July

COV staff are recommending the approval of solar access guidelines for areas **outside of the downtown**, consistent with the Broadway Plan. Park Board staff are supportive of this recommendation which will establish a single approach to evaluating shadow impacts on 80-85% of the city.

If approved, regulating solar access to a consistent standard citywide will provide clarity to developers, the public and staff in assessing development proposals thereby supporting a more certain and streamlined permitting process. This approach will continue to use the angle of the sun to establish a building height envelope that reduces subjective bias, is easy to model and is an industry-tested methodology.

COV staff are also recommending the initiation of a comprehensive review of solar access in public spaces in **downtown neighbourhoods**. Subject to Council approval, staff will report back with a solar access strategy for the downtown in 2025 as part of the new City Development Guide. This work would be done in collaboration with Park Board staff.

PUBLIC VIEWS (OR VIEW CONES)

Vancouver is known internationally as a modern, cosmopolitan city set against the spectacular backdrop of the North Shore Mountains. As people move through the city and along the seawall, the views to the mountains past the dense downtown skyline act as a reminder of the connection to nature that has become foundational to Vancouver’s cultural identity, and which is part of what attracts people to live, work and visit here. These views, along with views of some important landmark buildings, contribute to a meaningful sense of place that helps set Vancouver apart.

In 1989, City Council resolved to shape development in Vancouver’s downtown and central neighbourhoods to support economic growth and housing supply while also preserving landmark views for future generations to enjoy. In addition to other regulations governing building height, density and massing, Council adopted protected public views from various locations along the False Creek seawall and at points in outlying areas.

There are currently 38 public views each originating from one of 18 origin points. Eight of these originate in or beside a park and aim to protect views to the North Shore Mountains, the Downtown or Burrard Inlet. These views often play a significant role in providing an opportunity to connect with nature within the city and are especially important for those who are unable to go for hikes in the North Shore Mountains or travel throughout the region.



Public Views – Coming Up at Council in July

COV staff are recommending the removal and amendments to several public views with the aim to:

- balance development and growth with maintaining a livable city that celebrates connection to the surrounding landscape;
- modernize the regulatory structure; and
- improve predictability and transparency in the development process for the public, industry and staff.

Upon review, Park Board staff are supportive of the changes as recommended in the report, namely the:

- repealing of views from Choklit Park and the Laurel Landbridge Park as they have been compromised since they were created and are no longer functionally relevant;
- updating the views from Creekside Park and Queen Elizabeth Park that continue to protect views to the North Shore Mountains;
- updating the views from the seawall beside Charleson Park and Triangle Park in Olympic Village, also protecting views to the North Shore Mountains; and
- requesting that public views from Trout Lake undergo further study.

Appendix B includes a list of the public views noting whether they originate in or beside a park, and more information on those that will be repealed or updated.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'S. Jackson'.

Steve Jackson (*he/him*)

General Manager, Board of Parks and Recreation – Vancouver Parks and Recreation

Copy to: PB Leadership Team
PB Communications
Doug Shearer, Associate Director of Planning, Policy and Environment
Matt Shillito, Acting Director of Planning, COV
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Appendix A

List of policies that include solar access guidelines

- West End Plan & Bulletin
- Central Waterfront Official Development Plan
- Downtown Design Guidelines
- Downtown South and DD Character Areas
- Downtown Eastside Plan
- Victory Square Policy
- False Creek Official Development Plan
- Broadway Plan
- Joyce-Collingwood Precinct Plan
- Cambie Corridor Plan
- Marpole Community Plan
- Site-specific Policy Statements, including Arbutus Centre, Heather Lands, Little Mountain, and Langara Garden



Figure 1: Broadway Plan Solar Priority Areas around parks and public school yards

Appendix B List of Public Views Relevant to Park Board

- * Recommended change
- ** Recommended repeal

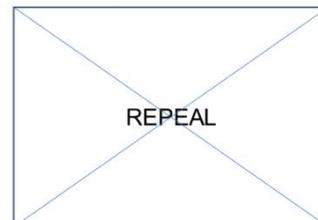
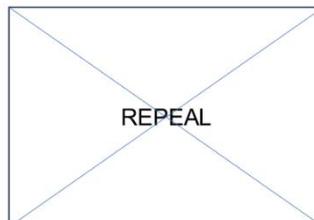
PUBLIC VIEW	ORIGIN	NOTES
2 VC B Charleson Seawall	CHARLESON SEAWALL	SEAWALL BESIDE CHARLESON PARK
3 View C - Laurel Landbridge	LAUREL LANDBRIDGE	PARK**
6 VC F Choklit Park	CHOKLIT PARK	PARK**
7 VC G Olympic Village Shipyard Pier	OV SHIPYARD PIER	SEAWALL BESIDE TRIANGLE PARK*
8 VC H Olympic Plaza	OLYMPIC PLAZA (BIRDS)	PARK
9 VC J Creekside Park	CREEKSIDE PARK	PARK*
11 VC 3 Queen Elizabeth Park	QE PARK	PARK*
18 VC 27 Trout Lake	TROUT LAKE	PARK (to be studied)

VC C Laurel Landbridge



Current

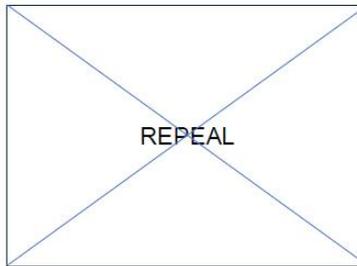
Modernized - Repeal



VC F Choklit Park



Current



Modernized - Repeal

VC G Olympic Village Shipyard Pier



Current

No change to view point



Modernized - Update

VC J Creekside Park



Current



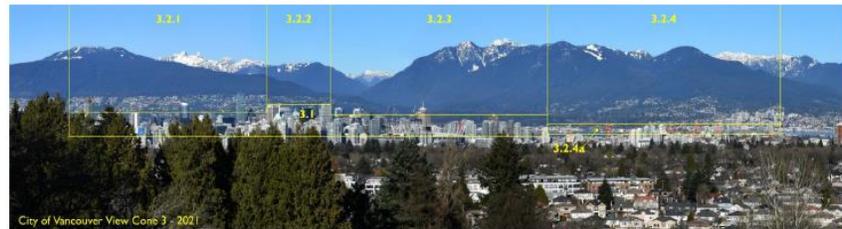
Modernized - Update



VC 3 Queen Elizabeth Park



Current



Modernized - Update

No change to view point

