

Marketing the City's Destination Parks

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| To: | Parks and Environment Committee |
| From: | Brenda Librecz, General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation |
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SUMMARY

This report provides information on current and future marketing initiatives for the City's Destination Parks. Destination Parks have one or more significant attractions, settings or features that would make it appealing and worthwhile visiting on its own. Tourist-oriented promotional material usually lists these parks. Only a small percentage of Toronto parks – out of a total of 1,470 – are Destination Parks. Appendix A lists frequently promoted City parks.

At present, the City's Parks Forestry and Recreation Division (PFR) has no comprehensive marketing plan for the City's Destination Parks. PFR currently prints a limited number of brochures, some annually and some on an irregular basis, for a few key tourist Destination Parks such as Toronto Island, Allan Gardens, golf courses and the Toronto Music Garden. The Fun Guide, PFR's definitive listing of seasonal recreation programs, contains incidental and limited promotional information on Destination Parks.

Other organizations and agencies, such as the City's Tourism Unit and Tourism Toronto, and private travel web sites relay and dispense limited Destination Park information as part of their own initiatives, responsibilities and web design content.

Two ambitious projects currently under development will enhance marketing of Destination Parks. First, PFR's Park Treasures Project will categorize outstanding park features such as flora, fauna, earth science, historical, cultural, natural phenomenon, and sensory experiences. This information will become part of a proposed innovative and interactive website marketed to residents and tourists alike. Second, the City's Tourism Unit is presently spearheading the Premier Ranked Tourist Destination Project. This project summarizes information about all of Toronto's tourist attractions in order to inform an assessment of Toronto's strengths and weaknesses as a tourist destination. The audit includes parks.

Financial Impact

There is no financial impact with the adoption of this report.

DECISION HISTORY

The Parks and Environment Committee, at its April 10, 2007 meeting, requested the General Manager, PFR, in consultation with the General Manager, Economic, Development, Culture and Tourism (EDCT) and Tourism Toronto, to report back to the September 14, 2007 meeting on marketing the City's Destination Parks.

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2007/pe/decisions/2007-04-10-pe03-dd.pdf>

COMMENTS

The following outlines how Destination Parks, and non-Destination Parks, are currently marketed by PFR and other public/private agencies and organizations. Even though no comprehensive and definitive marketing plan promotes all of the City's Destination Parks, considerable marketing and promotion does occur for a few select parks through the following variety of means.

City of Toronto – Corporate Communications

1. The “Visiting Toronto” portal of the City of Toronto's website (www.toronto.ca) links to the “Parks and Gardens” page. That page contains an incomplete alphabetical listing of parks, most of which are pre-amalgamation Metro Parks. The page lists about 100 of Toronto's approximately 1,470 parks, including descriptive and contact information. Only a few of the parks listed would be considered “destinations.”
http://www.toronto.ca/parks/parks_gardens/index.htm
2. This same website links to a page describing Toronto's destination gardens and conservatories.
http://www.toronto.ca/parks/parks_gardens/garden_index.htm
3. Access Toronto staff are knowledgeable about Destination Parks. Staff dispense park information and brochures from information counters in the civic centres. They also provide park-related information over the phone and in-person.

Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division

1. The *Fun Guide*, produced twice a year, includes a definitive listing of seasonal recreation programs as well as incidental and limited information on a few Destination Parks.
http://www.toronto.ca/parks/torontofun/2007-8/Scarborough/Scar_Parks.pdf
About 500,000 copies of the *Fun Guide* are distributed annually across the City.
2. The following Destination Parks and programs have their own brochures, i.e. “Lure Brochures,” which are printed either annually or on an irregular basis as demand and funds permit: Toronto Island, Toronto Music Garden, Franklin Children's Garden, Toronto Gardens and Conservatories, Discovery Walks, Allan

Gardens, Christmas Shows at Allan Gardens and Centennial Park Conservatories, Toronto Parks and Trails Map, and High Park.

3. The Division's five golf-courses (e.g. Dentonia, Don Valley, Humber Valley, Scarlett, and Tam O'Shanter) are popular attractions, with both residents and tourists, generating approximately \$1.3 million profit annually. Golfing opportunities are currently marketed in brochures, golf-related directories and magazines, other local magazines, as well as paid advertisements and media coverage in local newspapers. Golf course marketing information is available on-line. (<http://www.toronto.ca/parks/golf/>)
4. Glen Rouge Campground, in Rouge Park, is marketed in the following two RV industry magazines: "Trailer Life" and "Woodall's."

Toronto Tourism Unit

The City's Tourism Unit, within the Economic Development, Culture and Tourism Division, has several current initiatives that successfully contribute to the ongoing marketing of Destination Parks.

1. INFOTOGO (<http://www.toronto.ca/visitors/infotogo.htm>) provides key information (park and non-park) to visitors. The program consists of a number of ventures. One of these is a pedestrian way-finding system consisting of 25 innovative information kiosks strategically located throughout the City, predominantly in downtown areas. The kiosks include area maps and, for a \$2 fee, dispense pocket-sized take-away maps that list key tourist sites of interest including a few Destination Parks. The Tourism Unit intends to increase the number of kiosks over the next five years, as part of the implementation of the City's Coordinated Street Furniture program.
2. INFOTOGO also includes a mobile tourist information vehicle that travels to various locations and events. Knowledgeable staff members give out tourist information, including park-related information.
3. TAP into TO! The Toronto Ambassador Program: (<http://www.toronto.ca/tapto/index.htm>)

A volunteer Toronto resident gives tourists free tours of their favourite Toronto neighbourhoods and activities. If requested, ambassadors can provide customized tours of Destination Parks. Visitors using this service are given a "Toronto Parks and Trails Map," a "Toronto Cycling Map" – both of which include limited park information – and the "Toronto Island" brochure.
4. The Tourism Division has produced a map for hotel concierges to distribute to visitors staying in Toronto hotels. The map highlights a few Destination Parks, such as Allan Gardens, the Music Garden and Toronto Island.

Tourism Toronto

Tourism Toronto is a membership-based independent organization whose mandate is to promote Toronto world-wide as a tourist and convention destination. They, too, have marketing initiatives that promote a limited selection of Destination Parks.

(<http://www.torontotourism.com/visitor>)

1. Tourism Toronto produces the “Official Toronto Visitor Guide” twice a year (<http://www.torontotourism.com/VisitorGuide/>) which includes a “Culture + Recreation” section where the most commonly promoted Destination Parks, with contact information, are included. This guide is available in a print edition as well as on the web. In addition to those frequently promoted parks, this guide includes information on the following less frequently promoted parks: Trinity Square Labyrinth, Cumber Skateboard Park, Todmorden Mills Heritage Museum and Arts Centre.
2. Tourism Toronto also produces “Unexpected Toronto,” a convention information package that includes a limited number of park attractions such as those listed above under the “Visitor Guide.”

Green Tourism Association

Green Tourism is a membership based non-profit organization whose mandate is to lead tourism in Toronto towards a sustainable and ecologically sound future, promoting and supporting local economies, and fostering an appreciation of and respect for diverse cultural and natural heritage. (www.tourgreen.ca) Green Tourism’s “Tour Green Map of Toronto” profiles most park locations onto a map and highlights 33 parks with text and contact information.

Cross-promotions / Partnerships

Toronto Island Park is the number-one tourist Destination Park, attracting about 1,225,000 visitors each year. The promotional efforts of the Toronto Island Ferry (which PFR operates), Centreville Amusement Park, the Toronto Island Marina Yacht Club and many high-profile island events and festivals enhance the marketing of this Destination Park.

Private Travel Websites

Several privately-owned travel websites include limited Park Destination information and information on accommodations, restaurants and events. These websites include Trip Advisor (www.tripadvisor.com), Worldweb.com (www.toronto.worldweb.com) and Toronto.com (www.toronto.com).

Other

The following is a limited sampling on other ways Destination Parks are marketed.

1. The “My Toronto City Guide” in Bell Canada’s Yellow Pages highlights approximately 30 park destinations, including golf courses, and lists contact information.
2. Michelin Travel produces the “Cognoscenti – Savvy Travel Made Simple” map. It keys a limited number of parks onto the map and offers detailed information on a few Destination Parks.
3. The wide variety of events taking place in City parks heightens public awareness about many Destination and non-Destination Parks. About 20 annual park events attract thousands of attendees and increase awareness of parks. Examples include “Harry’s Spring Run” in High Park, “Toronto Ribfest” in Centennial Park, “Afrofest” in Queen’s Park, “Caribana” in Lakeshore parks and “Word On The Street” in Queen’s Park.
4. The Government of Ontario’s Ontario Travel office does not market Toronto’s Destination Parks.
www.ontariotravel.net

Future marketing of Destination Parks

These ongoing initiatives will greatly enhance the future marketing of Toronto’s Destination Parks.

Park Treasures Project

This PFR project will develop an inventory of “the best of the best” of what can be experienced by visiting certain parks at certain times of the year. The project is soliciting input from PFR and other City staff, stakeholders, interest groups and the general public. See Attachment 2 and <http://www.toronto.ca/parks/treasures.htm> for the project’s current promotional efforts.

The project will categorize input under such headings as: life science, earth science, historic, cultural and natural phenomena. The project will use the information it gathers in future marketing, promotional, educational and interpretive initiatives to increase residents’ and tourists’ awareness of our City’s special and unique park treasures. In particular, the City will make this information available on a proposed innovative and interactive website that will be marketed to tourists and residents alike.

Premier-Ranked Tourist Destination Project

Toronto Tourism is spearheading this project to assess Toronto’s strengths and weaknesses as a tourist destination. This will lead to an Action Plan of short- and long-term tactics to increase tourism in the future. The project is industry-led and follows a methodology developed by the Ontario Ministry of Tourism to help destinations better define their competitive positions. The assessment includes an audit of the City’s parks and recreation assets. (www.toronto.ca/tourismstudy).

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – List of frequently promoted Destination Parks
Attachment 2 – Park Treasures Promotional Flyer

Attachment 1 – List of frequently promoted Destination Parks

MOST frequently promoted Destination Parks:

Allan Gardens and Conservatory
Centennial Park and Conservatory
Cloud Gardens
Discovery Walks
Edwards Garden
Franklin Garden
Golf Courses: Dentonia, Don Valley, Humber Valley, Scarlett, Tam O’Shanter
High Park and Colborne Lodge
James Gardens
Riverdale Farm and Park
Rosetta McClain Gardens
Rouge Park
Thomson Memorial Park
Todmorden Mills Park
Toronto Botanical Garden
Toronto Island Park including Centreville Amusement Park
Music Garden

LESS frequently promoted Destination Parks:

Alexander Muir Park
Bluffers Park
Don Valley Brickworks
Eglinton Park
Guildwood Park
Humber Arboretum
Humber Bay Butterfly Habitat
Kew Gardens Park
Nathan Philips Square
St. James Gardens
Toronto Sculpture Garden
Trinity Square including the Labyrinth
Yonge Dundas Square

Attachment 2 – Park Treasures Promotional Flyer



Looking for Park Treasures!

Do you have favourite Toronto parks for experiencing natural, cultural and historic treasures? If so, Toronto Parks, Forestry & Recreation welcomes your input in identifying special and unique wonders and sensory experiences found within Toronto's public parks, gardens and ravines. The intent is to develop an inventory of "the best of the best" of what one can experience by visiting certain parks at certain times of the year. Your input is welcome in all of the categories below including any other categories you think are of interest. (Note: Do not feel limited to the examples listed below.)

Life Science: What are the best park locations to experience: mature forests? outstanding specimen trees? meadows? migrating butterflies and song birds? resident bird colonies? horticultural displays? Etc.

Earth Science: What are the best park locations to experience: exposed bedrock? cliffs? glacial formations and features? wetlands? waterfalls? rapids? Etc.

Historic: What are the best park locations to experience: aboriginal sites? Early European settlements? Etc.

Cultural: What are the best park locations to experience: monuments? sculptures? impressive built forms? Etc.

Natural Phenomena: What are the best park locations to experience: sunsets? crashing waves? migrating fish? spring thaw river ice jams? panoramic views?

The information gathered will be useful in future promotional, educational and interpretive initiatives to increase the public's awareness of our city's special and unique park treasures. As well, the information will increase community engagement and stewardship of our parks.

You are welcome to provide your input by August 31, 2007 in the following ways:

- E-mail: parktreasures@toronto.ca
- Phone: 416-392-7264
- Mail: Park Treasures, Toronto Parks, Forestry & Recreation, 8 West, City Hall, 100 Queen Street West, Toronto M5H 2N2

Note: Please include specific location details such as park name, closest intersection and for large parks, specific locations within the park. Please include your contact information as well for any follow-up.

Thank you for sharing with us your favourite park experiences and treasures.

