

## Highlights of 3<sup>rd</sup> Draft of the Strategic Plan

### **Missions, Visions, Values, Roles:**

#### The Vision

In 2002, City Council declared its vision for Toronto: caring, friendly, clean, green, sustainable, creative, aimed to succeed in a global economy through investment in the quality of life.<sup>1</sup>

**Quality of life starts with health, but for most of us, it is really about savouring beauty in all its forms--especially natural ones.** What is more spectacular than a majestic maple tree in full leaf, or a chapel architecture of living green connecting road to neighborhood and neighborhood to park? Parks and Recreation's vision is that **Toronto will incorporate new neighborhoods along our broad thoroughfares, extending our urban forest until a continuous greenscape envelopes communities across the lakefront, and north to the Oak Ridges moraine.** The majority of **Torontonians will live active lives from their earliest days to their sunset years,** connecting through Toronto's varied recreational facilities, its parks and pathways. Parks and Recreation's vision is that **Toronto will become known as the City Within a Park.**

#### Our Mission

**Parks and Recreation will bring all of Toronto's diverse communities together on our common grounds.** We will provide diverse leisure and recreational opportunities that welcome everyone. Our parks, playing fields and recreation centers, our trails, forests, meadows, marshes, ravines, will be beautiful, clean, safe, and accessible, meeting all communities' needs. **We will be the lead advocates for life in motion.**

#### Our Values

Parks and Recreation values: **Inclusion; Respect; Diversity; Creativity; Well-being, Effectiveness, Transparency.**

Our programs and services will be accessible. We will accommodate special needs, promote equity for all regardless of age, culture, ethnicity, language, gender or sexual orientation. We will create the kind of social climate in which everyone can flourish. We will measure our progress using quality, satisfaction and community development as benchmarks. We will use all available means to inform residents about programs and services and respond to needs and concerns in an open, forthright and timely manner.

#### Our Roles:

Parks and Recreation staff will be:

**Advocates:** we will speak out on behalf of communities without voices. We will advocate to all the vital importance of active living from birth to death.

**Helpers :** our programs will reach out to communities and assist in the formation of partnerships to solve problems.

**Hospitable:** we will seek out those who might not know about what we have to offer and overcome all barriers to provide residents with positive recreational experiences.

**Partners :** we will encourage the active involvement of volunteers to deliver programs, protect the environment, and help govern our facilities. We will work with community groups, businesses, officials, unions, school boards, public agencies, non governmental organizations and individuals.

**Entrepreneurs :** we will secure necessary resources from all available sources including other levels of government, foundations, the private sector.

**Stewards :** we will develop programs that integrate environmental, social, economic and fiscal considerations to create value for future generations. We will manage the assets we have inherited so that they may be passed on in better shape to our descendents.

**Trailblazers :** we will expand leadership training programs for staff and residents, acknowledge our innovators, and take our place again at the leading edge of municipal parks and recreation services in Canada.

## **Recommendations:**

1. Untamed areas need management and care:

We should implement a **5-year restoration and preservation program for our untamed and environmentally sensitive lands**. This program should include: erosion protection through plantings of native trees, shrubs, flowers and grasses; elimination of unsafe pathways by converting them to sustainable natural trails for hiking and mountain biking; control of destructive invasive species.

We should establish an **Eco-Fan Club** to engage and educate the public. This should include: interpretive tours; outreach to schools and community groups; promotion of volunteerism in the protection of untamed areas; support for special events like clean-up days, Trees Across Toronto, all related to protection of unique aspects of Toronto's ecosystem.

We must **re-design our under street architecture** to make room for the millions of tons of soil and water necessary to support double the number of trees.

We recommend that **Council approve a target of 40% tree canopy cover of Toronto by 2010.**

We should **increase our annual tree planting by** of trees per year.

We should **pioneer a Parks and Forestry Apprenticeship Program and a Youth Interpretive program**. We should hire 25 students per year to educate our youth on a career in forestry and to raise awareness of the vital importance of trees and parks.

**We should improve nature with technology.** With the use of hand held technology, our staff can keep track of the urban forest and citizens requests for help.

We should **reduce the forestry maintenance backlog to three to six months**.

**We must find a new way to finance our needs that goes beyond the existing tax base.** St. Louis, Missouri, has created an innovative way to ask its residents to volunteer financial help. They call it a **round up system**. Citizens indicate on their water or tax bill that they will round up their payments by a few cents, or even a dollar, for use in the provision of more trees. Such a program would **permit Toronto residents to contribute directly to a program of urban forest renewal, helping Parks and Recreation achieve one of its primary strategic goals— environmental stewardship.**

2. We should **promote the protection of public parks as everyone’s front yard**.

Parks and Recreation should be the lead advocate of green action in the city, not followers.

We should **be creative about encroachment and convert a problem into an opportunity--** through the expansion of community gardens.

We should implement a **five year Park Renaissance Program** :Components should include:

- **Turf Improvement**: cutting grass eight more times per year; seeding, spreading topsoil and fertilizer, aeration ; and integrated pest management in every park.
- **Our Uncommon Gardens** : renovating existing floral beds, enhancing City Hall and other significant municipal buildings’ displays, reinventing our feature gardens, adding new beds over five years.
- **Heal the Eyesores**: fix the broken windows, benches, field houses, picnic tables, benches, playgrounds and pathways.
- **Pick It Up**: continued installation of new environmentally friendly garbage cans for waste collection and recycling, with resources to empty them.

We should develop a **World Parks** program to celebrate Toronto’ cultural diversity through the redesign of our parks-- a five year plan to remake eight parks per year with multicultural themes.

We should prepare a **Parks Master Plan for spring 2005** to guide the renaissance of our parks and trails across the city.

We should institute a **Trailblazers Program**, including interpretive and directional signage and appropriate lighting for the pleasure and safety of trail and park users.

We should create a **Park Ranger Program**. This would involve two rangers per ward who promote Toronto's green assets--a defining aspect of the city for tourists and residents.

We should start a **Life Gardens** program to promote gardening as healthy activity which brings forth bounty and beautifies the city. Components should include: year round Children's Gardens and support for community gardens across Toronto.

We should create a **ParksArt** program with Culture Division to use artful horticulture in parks as part of the Public Art program.

### 3. **Life Under Glass:**

We should **use our crises as opportunities to reinvent our parks**--to make them more evocative, more particular, less derivative. **We have great landscape designers and design students in the Creative City: we should give them the opportunity to shine.**

We should create a plant science internship and apprentice program in association with plant science courses at our major universities and colleges. Students in post secondary programs could get practical experience in our greenhouses and parks.

We should initiate a professional gardener certificate program through our community gardens and greenhouses. This should be aimed at disadvantaged youth.

### 4. **Recreation and Sports**

We recommend **Council set aside at least \$10 million a year for maintenance** of existing buildings. We need to make our centres clean and welcoming again. Our buildings are showing their age.

Parks and Recreation should prepare a **Sport Plan** in partnership with the Toronto Sport Council for spring 2005. This will identify regional facilities and field requirement priorities to **support our athletes**, amateur and professional.

### 5. **Youth**

We should start a **Youth Program**, with youth for youth. Components should include:

- **Council should implement the Youth Regional Plans** developed by Parks and Recreation that would increase youth programming city-wide by 20%.<sup>ii</sup>
- Youth **Leadership Training** programs should **start at age 12**.
- **Parks and Recreation should lower its hiring age from 16 to 14** for some positions, provided youth have completed the Leadership Training program.
- **Community Advisory Boards** should include a **minimum of two youths**.
- Create a **Youth Ambassador** program to reach out to new immigrants. Youth should be hired as translators and advisors to explain our programs to newcomers and invite them to use them.
- All youth programs should be developed **with Youth For Youth**, and all existing youth programs should be refreshed.

We should divert space and make times available specifically for youth programs in all our recreation Centres, renting extra facilities in communities with large populations of youth and few recreation facilities.

We should provide drop in day programs for homeless youth.

We should provide a youth lounge in each of our Centres.

We should provide a youth stand alone centre in each district.

We should provide a media centre in each district.

We should fund youth councils in all 46 Priority Centres

We should provide day time programming for youth out of school.

We should develop programs specifically for females

We should create a youth advocate program, provide employment readiness programs, crisis management training, staff development training.

## **6. Initiate, Education, Advocate:**

Parks and Recreation **must provide equitable access to programs for people with disabilities.**

Parks and Recreation should develop a **capital plan to retrofit** facilities for use by people with disabilities.

Parks and Recreation should actively promote the programs, services and benefits of recreation.  
**Building public awareness requires more effort than publishing a Fun Guide.**

**Parks and Recreation should be the physical education instructor for the whole city.** We need to lead and advocate for lifelong activity, especially in our parks and trails. .

Parks and Recreation should lead the way to integration of our new communities by offering all programs free. **Council should direct Parks and Recreation to report by spring, 2005, on options for free programs for children and youth.**

## **7. Benchmarks**

Parks and Recreation **budgets should be calculated with due regard to costs avoided**, both now and in the future, in other departments and by other levels of government.

Parks and Recreation's **annual budget should relate directly to the size of the assets maintained, and the numbers of Torontonians served.** A measure of our success should be that both numbers grow in lockstep with the city's population growth.

**The City of Toronto should not have to fund the increase entirely from its own resources.**

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<sup>i</sup> Please cite this statement.

<sup>ii</sup> Please refer to Youth Report 2002. (cite property)