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# VANCOUVER SPORT FIELD STRATEGY BACKGROUND

## ABOUT THE SPORT FIELD STRATEGY

The Vancouver Sport Field Strategy has been undertaken to:

- Better understand the current state of sport fields in Vancouver.
- Establish priorities and focus areas for both infrastructure (*the sport fields themselves*) and management (*how the Park Board maintains, operates and/or facilitates access to fields*).
- Maximize good use of limited resources.
- Guide sport field development, management and maintenance decision making for the next 10+ years.

## PHASE 2 ENGAGEMENT

In this current phase of engagement, **we want your feedback on:**

- The draft strategy foundations which include:
  - » guiding principles
  - » key directions
- Draft site selection criteria which will be used to identify and prioritize potential upgraded or new sport field sites.

There will be a third phase of engagement in the summer of 2023. This final phase of engagement will gather feedback on the Strategy's implementation plan which will identify potential priority projects. Feedback will also be gathered on more detailed recommendations.

## WHERE ARE WE IN THE SPORT FIELD STRATEGY PROCESS?



We acknowledge that the sport fields and other facilities we discuss in this project are built on the unceded territories and homelands of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.



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# VANCOUVER SPORT FIELD STRATEGY BACKGROUND

## (CONTINUED)

### SPORT FIELD LOCATIONS IN VANCOUVER

#### LEGEND

- Parks
- ◆ Baseball Diamond (D)
- Rectangular Field (R)

0 750 1,500 3,000 m

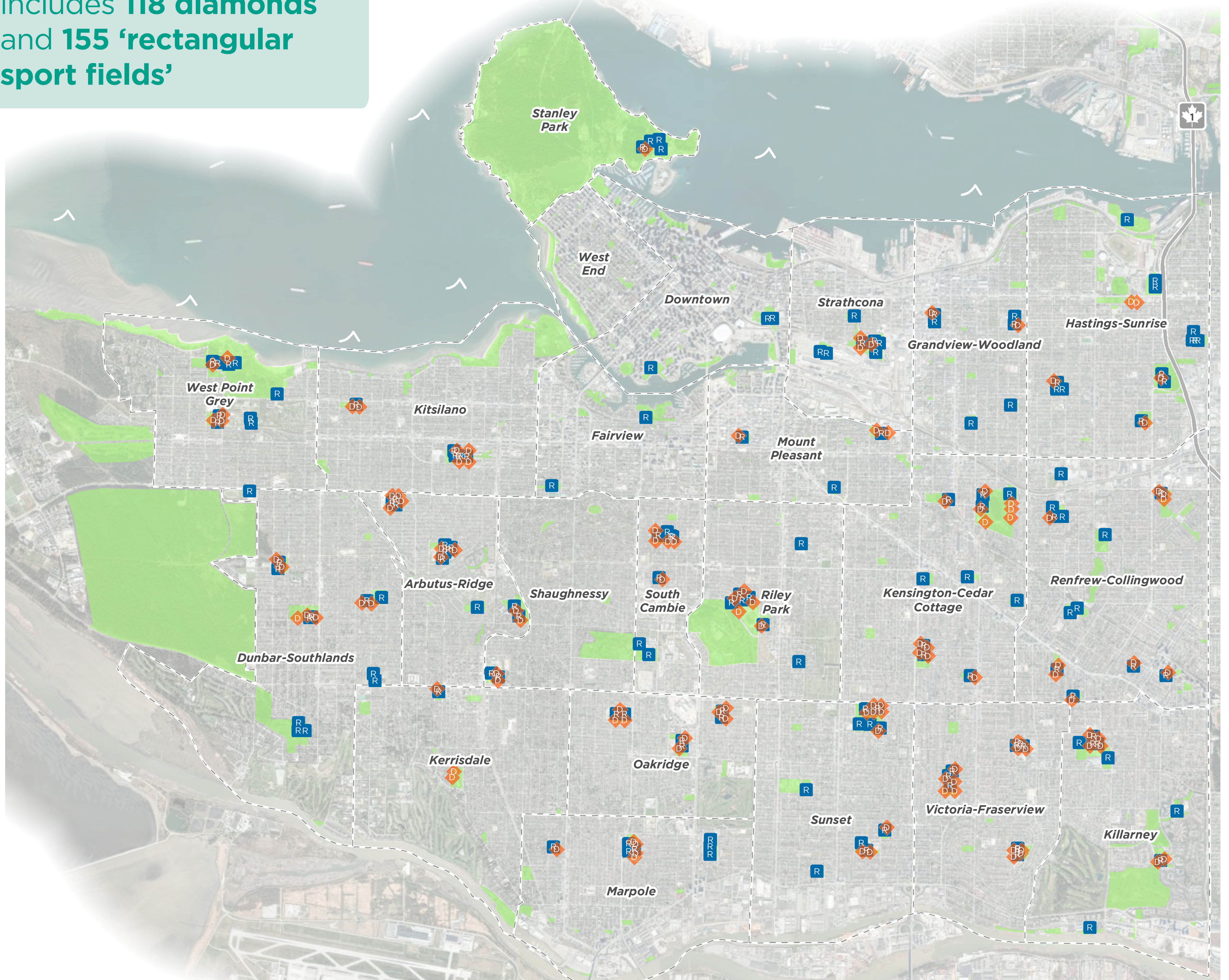


#### DID YOU KNOW?

The Park Board manages **272 bookable sport field sites**. This includes **118 diamonds** and **155 'rectangular sport fields'**

#### Sport Field Strategy

Sport fields are defined as open surface areas (natural grass, synthetic grass, or gravel) used for organized or unorganized sport activities and play.





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# SPORT FIELD STRATEGY ENGAGEMENT

## PHASE 1 ENGAGEMENT

Phase 1 engagement helped us understand the factors that drive sport field use and participation in Vancouver - including local trends (e.g., what sports are becoming more or less popular), potential barriers to access and priorities. The detailed findings can be found in the [What We Heard](#) report.

### KEY PRIORITIES FROM RESIDENTS AND USER GROUPS:

- **Amenity upgrades and enhancements are a priority** for both residents and user groups. The amenities, and their condition, are important factors when residents and user groups decide which fields to use.
- User groups and residents across the city identified the **need for both basic neighbourhood level fields and major “hub” facilities.**
- A majority of residents **and** approximately half of user groups indicated that **synthetic turf fields should be prioritized** for future investment.
- Residents value opportunities for **casual (“spontaneous”) play** and want quality sports field surfaces available for these activities close to where they live.



Keeping sport fields affordable (45%), enabling more use throughout the year (34%), and improving the quality of existing fields (34%) were identified as the top priorities by quantitative survey respondents. The need for fields that can be used for a diverse range of activities throughout the year was also a top priority in the User Group Questionnaire.



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# SPORT FIELD STRATEGY

## ENGAGEMENT

### (CONTINUED)

### ADDITIONAL KEY TRENDS AND CONSIDERATIONS

- Ensuring fields are **accessible for both traditional and emerging uses** is important and needs to be considered in capital planning and ongoing operations (e.g., allocation of field space and time).
- While the pandemic has been disruptive and presented challenges, **most groups expect their numbers to grow** in the coming years.
- **Activity preferences and trends are varied** across the city and are influenced by a number of factors, including the capacity of organizations delivering the program(s), the availability of suitable sport fields, and demographics.
- Residents across the city feel strongly that **equity and access, especially for youth, should be prioritized when planning sport field investment.**

The quantitative survey found that 46% of children/youth and 40% of adults participate in casual/spontaneous soccer (not as part of a team or program). By comparison, 29% of children/youth and 11% of adults participate in organized soccer.

\*Equity and access refers to the belief that everyone deserves the right to access sport fields.





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## DEVELOPING THE SPORT FIELD STRATEGY

The Sport Field Strategy is developed using information gathered through community engagement and through other research and analysis.





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# ENVIRONMENTAL AND HUMAN HEALTH RESEARCH

The project included a literature review of the environmental and human health impacts of synthetic and natural field surface options. This ensures the strategy is informed by the most up-to-date health and environmental data. Here are some key findings from the research:

## ENVIRONMENT

- Synthetic turf generates microplastics (tiny plastic particles) that can migrate. However, the **migration of these microplastics can be significantly mitigated** through capture systems and maintenance best practices.
- **Both synthetic turf and natural grass sport fields are net producers of greenhouse gases.** The majority of emissions from synthetic turf are related to production and disposal. The majority of natural surface field emissions are from maintenance and upkeep (e.g. mowing, fertilizing, etc.).
- Natural grass surfaces require a significant amount of water for irrigation. Both **natural grass and synthetic turf fields require stormwater management measures** to meet Vancouver's runoff quantity and quality requirements. These measures help prevent microplastics, fertilizers, and other potentially harmful liquids from entering the stormwater system.
- While **synthetic turf fields provide no biodiversity** value, natural grass sports fields are a highly maintained mono-culture providing poor biodiversity relative to other planted landscapes.



Natural surface fields require between 1.4 and 2.7 million gallons of water per year. Synthetic turf fields only require water for special circumstances (e.g. cleaning or cooling) and dedicated uses (e.g. water based field hockey pitches).





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## ENVIRONMENTAL AND HUMAN HEALTH RESEARCH (CONTINUED)

### HUMAN HEALTH

- Well maintained and properly constructed natural grass and synthetic turf fields both provide safe surfaces for sport. There is **no conclusive research to support that one surface is safer** than the other.
- Vancouver Coastal Health's position on synthetic turf is that "serious health risks, including cancer, are not increased from playing on synthetic turf fields with crumb rubber infill" and "there is **no public health reason for discontinuing** the use of synthetic turf."

To date, no peer reviewed clinical study has concluded synthetic turf fields cause an increase in negative human health impacts.

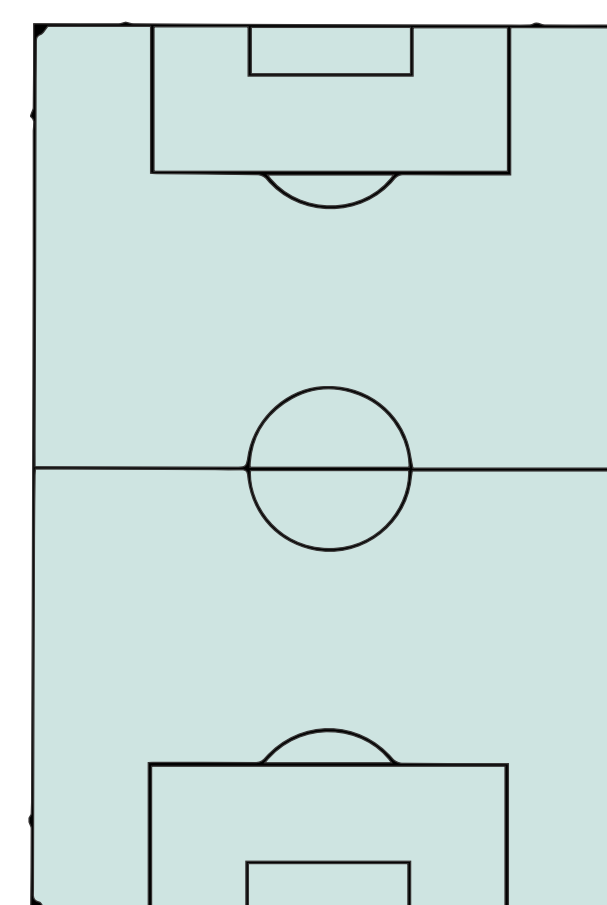
### FIELD USAGE

- A synthetic turf field can accommodate approximately four times the usage of a natural surface field**, as there is no need to limit use in order to preserve field quality. This presents an opportunity to reduce the footprint taken up by sport fields and provide more space for other park uses.

\* To view key references our team used when building our environmental and human health literature review, please see the FAQ section on our [Shape Your City](#) page.

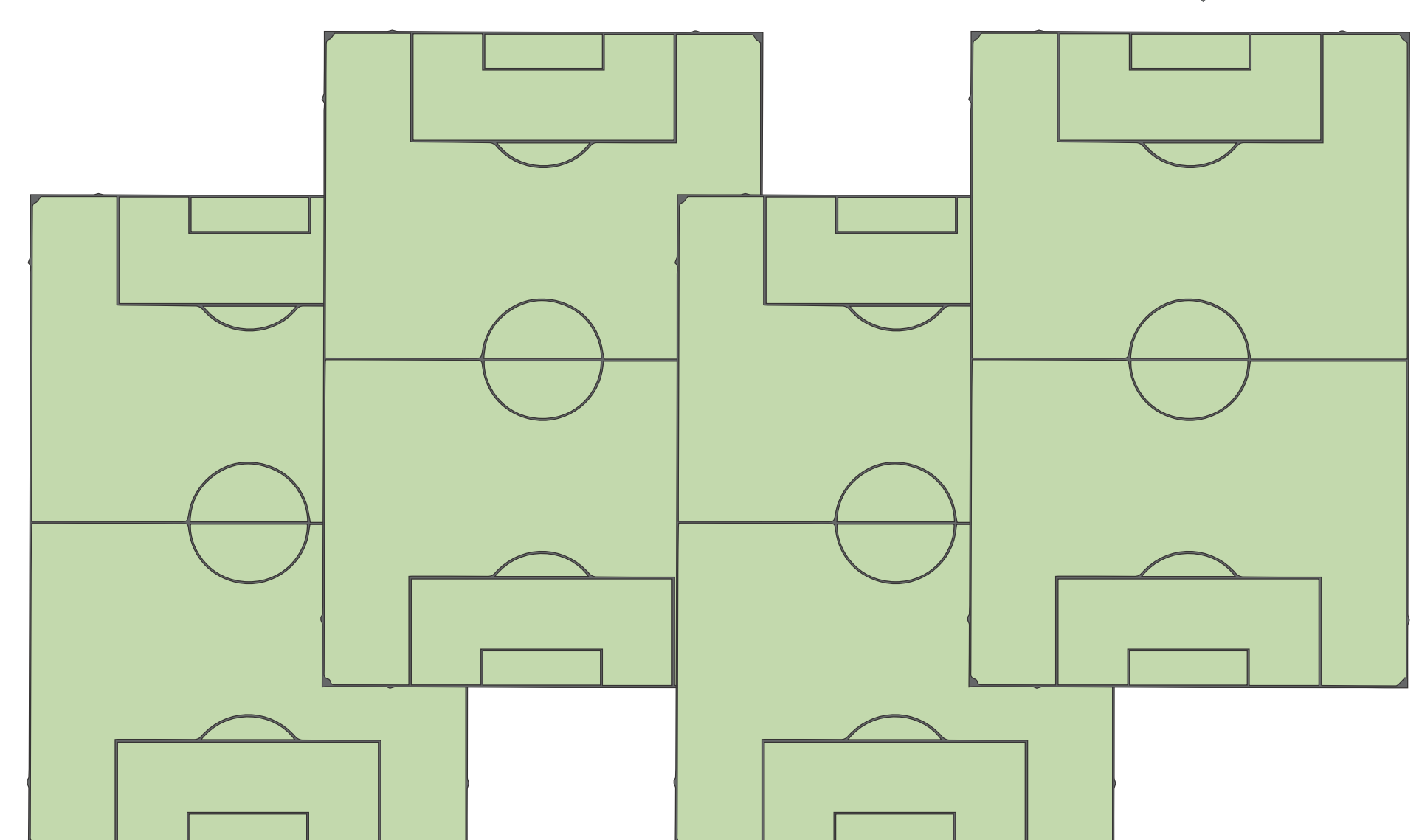
### 1 SYNTHETIC TURF = 4 GRASS FIELDS IN BOOKABLE HOURS OF PLAY

Synthetic Turf



1 = 4

Natural Grass





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# “CURRENT STATE” RESEARCH

This report provides a detailed analysis of Vancouver’s sport field inventory, including service levels and condition assessments, a review of trends, user fees, leading practices and benchmarks. This graphic illustrates the various components of the report.



Key findings from the research and analysis:

- **The way that Vancouver’s sport fields are currently classified is inconsistent.** Fields within each class should be similar in terms of their size, their purpose, and the amenities (like washrooms, lights, etc.) that are available.
- **Cost recovery varies significantly** across the different classification of fields. Some field classes / types recover all or most of their associated costs through user fees, while others only recover a very small portion.
- **There are large differences in how the fields are booked.** A relatively small number of fields are booked for the majority of hours while others have relatively few bookings.
- A **large number of Vancouver’s sport fields can be adapted** and used for emerging and non-traditional sport field activities in addition to their current uses.

There are six Class A fields that are booked over their annual capacity and 21 fields that booked less than a quarter of their annual capacity.



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## “CURRENT STATE” RESEARCH (CONTINUED)

- Sport field **supply varies across neighbourhoods**. In general, areas of the city that are densely populated have a lower provision of fields than do lower density areas of the city.
- The **synthetic turf fields are well used**, and there is unmet demand at peak times.
- **Fees are generally consistent** with those charged by other regional providers of sport fields.
- Available trends data indicates (and supports the local engagement findings) that **there are increasing demands for space for spontaneous/unstructured sport field activities**.
- Most **field surfaces were rated as being in good condition** at the time of year that assessments were undertaken (fall/winter). However, field conditions vary significantly throughout the year. Opportunities to improve, replace or remove amenities like fencing, backstops and rarely used permanent goal posts were identified through the assessments.

While sport field distribution varies across the city, the majority of residents have access to fields within a walking distance of their house. Sport fields are located across 79 parks, approximately a third of the parks in the system.

The 12 synthetic turf fields in the Park Board inventory have more bookable hours annually than the 122 Class A and B grass fields combined. Class A and B grass fields have a limited number of bookable hours due to limitations put in place to preserve turf quality.





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# SPORT FIELD STRATEGY STRUCTURE

The Sport Field Strategy is organized into three strategic layers. Draft guiding principles and directions and some preliminary actions have been developed and we are asking for your feedback on them during this current phase of engagement. The guiding principles and directions will inform more detailed actions, which will be reviewed during the phase 3 strategy review later this year.



## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Value-based foundations that will guide sport field investment and service delivery.



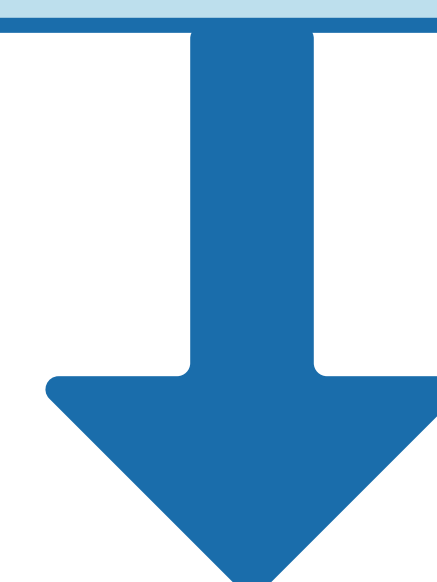
## DIRECTIONS

Key strategic focus areas and priorities over the next 10+ years. These directions are organized under each of the guiding principles.



## ACTIONS

Specific tactics and initiatives that will help implement the directions.



## IMPLEMENTATION

Identification of sites and resourcing associated with the directions and actions.

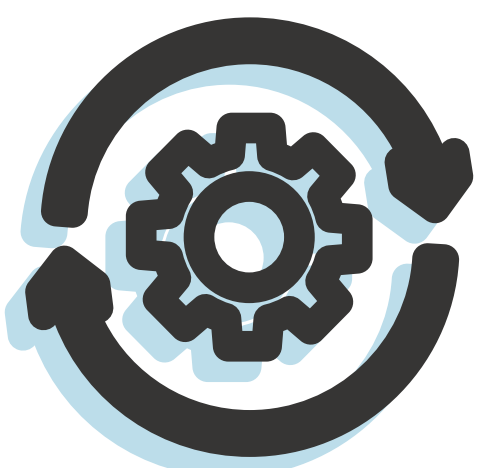


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## DRAFT GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The draft guiding principles are summarized below. The principles are important elements of the strategy's foundation. They are value statements that are used to guide sport field investment and service delivery.

### GUIDING PRINCIPLE #1



#### **Optimally manage the system of sport fields.**

Sport field infrastructure in Vancouver is managed as an integrated, efficient system that makes optimal use of limited land resources to provide maximum public benefit.

### GUIDING PRINCIPLE #2



#### **Provide great sport field experiences for all.**

All residents in Vancouver should have the opportunity to access and benefit from the public investment in sport fields. The Park Board recognizes that some residents face barriers to accessing sport field opportunities and is working to eliminate these barriers and ensure all residents have access to an array of sport field activities and spaces.

### GUIDING PRINCIPLE #3



#### **Effectively plan for the future and make the best value of capital resources.**

Sport field infrastructure planning is data driven and prioritized based on aligning available land and financial resources with those projects and initiatives that provide the highest benefits value to residents. Future capital planning also recognizes that innovation, partnerships and collaboration will be key to future planning and resource optimization.

### GUIDING PRINCIPLE #4



#### **Leverage the broader benefits of sport fields.**

Sport field infrastructure helps support community gathering and event hosting that complements other recreation and civic infrastructure.



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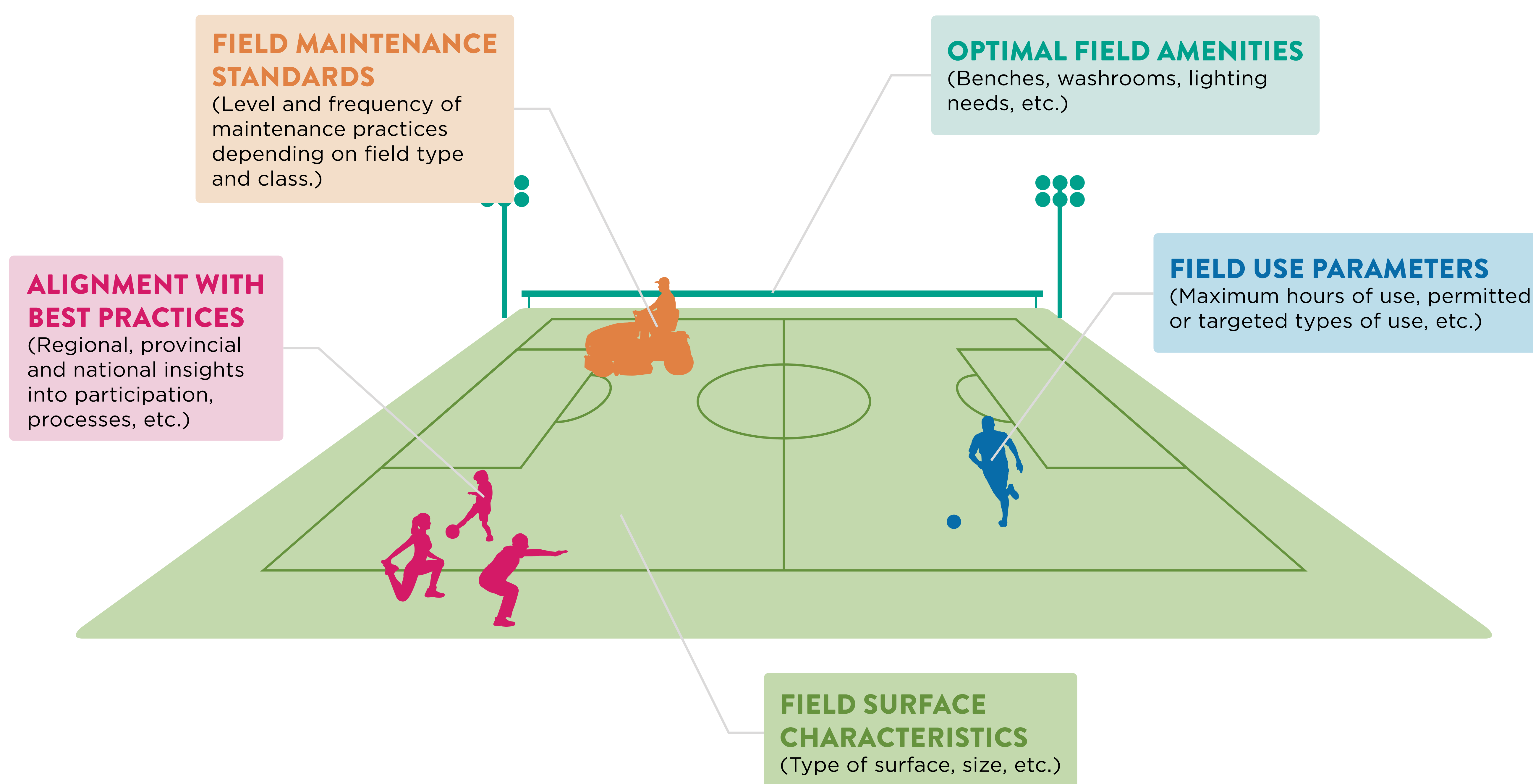
## DRAFT DIRECTIONS

The draft strategy directions are summarized below. These are overarching approaches that will guide future sport field planning, resource allocation, and service delivery.

### 1. DIRECTION: IMPLEMENT A RENEWED SPORT FIELD CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM.

- The proposed system aligns with best practice guidance from Sports Turf Canada and Sport for Life Long-Term Development and includes all the field types in Vancouver (e.g., ball diamonds, natural grass rectangular fields, synthetic turf, gravel).
- The renewed system re-organizes the fields into classes that more accurately reflect field types, service levels and allowed levels of use.
- The system will include sport field operations and maintenance standards for each class.

### KEY ASPECTS OF THE NEW FIELD CLASSIFICATION





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# DRAFT DIRECTIONS

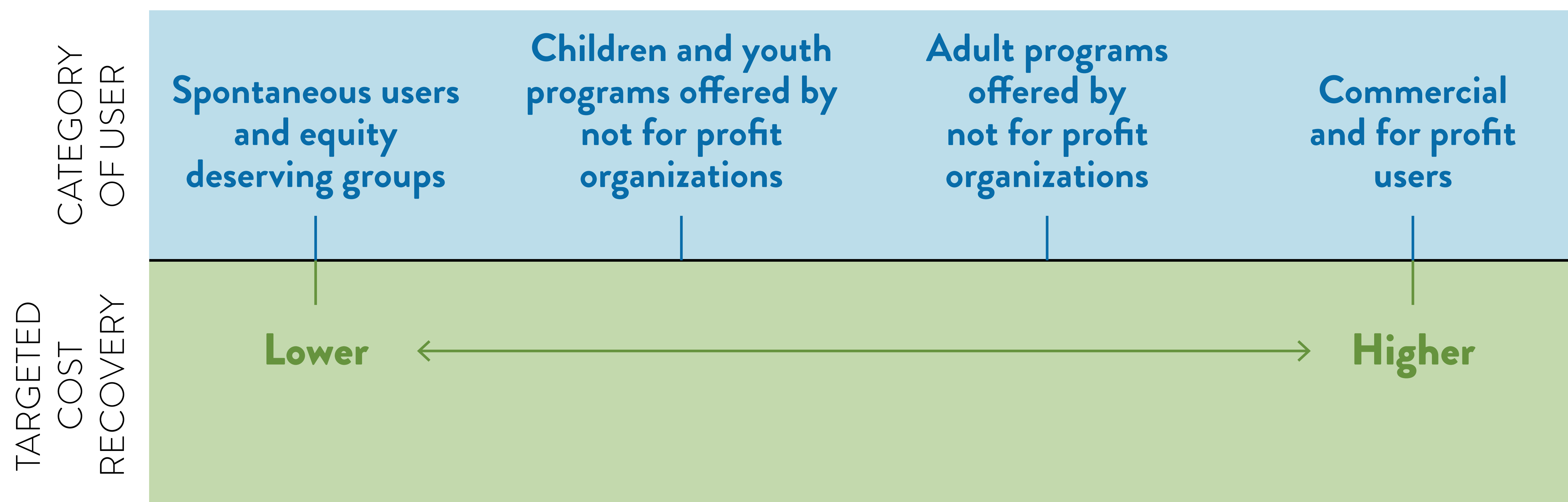
## (CONTINUED)

### 2. DIRECTION: SEEK OPPORTUNITIES TO APPLY A REVENUE GENERATING STRATEGY LENS.

Key actions:

- Develop a more structured and clear approach to setting user fees through the development of a new recreation user fee policy.
  - » Work towards aligning user fees with overall costs. Shifting to this model will help create better alignment and transparency with the setting of fees.
  - » Ensure that systems are in place to identify, welcome, and support equity deserving user groups that face financial barriers to sport field access and program participation.

Example: Cost recovery & fee considerations by user group categories



### 3. DIRECTION: IMPLEMENT AN EQUITY MODEL FOR ALLOCATION, BOOKING, AND PERMITTING OF FIELDS.

Key aspects of the recommended approach:

- Focus on aligning the right users with the right fields at the right times.
- Align with Sport for Life and Long-Term Development (LTD).
- Clear regulation and enforcement guidelines for sport fields throughout the city to ensure that they are being accessed by the appropriate users.
- Importance of working with user groups to ensure clarity and understanding on any changes to allocation approaches or policy.



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# DRAFT DIRECTIONS

## (CONTINUED)

### 4. DIRECTION: FACILITATE SPONTANEOUS USE OF SPORTS FIELDS AND BALL DIAMONDS FOR RESIDENTS.

#### Key actions:

- Identify, encourage and facilitate “spontaneous use only” fields across the city.
- Enhance promotions and marketing efforts to encourage spontaneous use of available fields.
- Ensure adequate allocation to spontaneous and casual use as part of the new allocations approach.

### 5. DIRECTION: FOCUS AVAILABLE CAPITAL RESOURCES ON FIELD QUALITY AND ADDING FUNCTIONAL CAPACITY.

#### Key actions:

- Creation of site development standards in alignment with the renewed sport field classification system.
- Identification of capital investment priorities for existing fields (e.g., amenity and surface improvements or replacements) based on the new sport field classification system and site assessment data.
- The development and refinement of the site selection criteria (see Board 16).

***A prioritized list of short-term site-specific field projects will be included in an implementation plan to be presented in Phase 3 engagement.***

### 6. DIRECTION: RENEW AND INCREASE SUPPLY OF SYNTHETIC TURF.

#### Key actions:

- Renew the existing synthetic turf inventory.
- Increase the supply of synthetic turf to make optimal use of available land resources.



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## DRAFT DIRECTIONS (CONTINUED)

### **7. DIRECTION: WORK WITH LOCAL NATIONS AND THE URBAN INDIGENOUS POPULATION TO INCREASE THE WAYS IN WHICH THE SPORT FIELD INVENTORY REFLECTS INDIGENOUS CULTURE AND SPORTS.**

#### Key actions:

- Work with local First Nations partners on an ongoing basis to identify projects and initiatives (including supporting the growth of lacrosse infrastructure and sport development).
- Increase First Nations visibility through sport field facility design and naming.

### **8. DIRECTION: ENHANCE COLLABORATION WITH KEY LOCAL AND REGIONAL PARTNERS IN THE PLANNING, DELIVERY AND MAINTENANCE OF SPORTS FIELDS.**

#### Key actions:

- Plan sport fields using a regional lens.
- Create a Vancouver Park Board/Vancouver School Board sport field working group with a commitment to meet regularly to address the planning, design, permitting, joint use, cost recovery, etc. of adjacent Park Board and school sport facility sites.
- Work collaboratively with the Vancouver Field Sport Federation on field planning and development.

### **9. DIRECTION: CONTINUE TO LEVERAGE SPORT HOSTING OPPORTUNITIES.**

#### Key actions:

- Ensure that sport hosting opportunities provide an appropriate return on investment considering both revenue generation and community benefit.
- As a host city for the 2026 FIFA World Cup, numerous opportunities will exist to leverage this event for the long-term benefits of the sport field community. These opportunities will include some infrastructure and amenity upgrades as well as promoting soccer at all levels. The strategy will provide guidance on how to maximize the city's World Cup experience and legacy.



## 16

# SITE SELECTION CRITERIA

We have developed draft site selection criteria. Once refined, the criteria will be used to identify and prioritize potential sites for capital plan funding, such as:

- Renewal of field surfaces, including retrofit (e.g. existing natural surface to synthetic turf).
- Future new sport field “hub” sites as centres for increased activity.

The draft criteria are presented below along with considerations to explain each.

## Overall screening criteria: site test fit

*For a proposed project to be viable it must physically fit on the site (e.g. regulation field with amenities).*

## System-wide criteria

*In alignment with the guiding principles, sport fields in the city need to work well as part of a broader system.*

- *Supported by policy and planning*
  - » *Do other Park Board and City plans and policies support the potential project?*
  - » *Examples: Track and Field Strategy, City Council-approved neighbourhood plan*
- *Geographic distribution and gaps*
  - » *Does the project help address an identified geographic gap?*
- *Equity gaps and considerations*
  - » *Is the project location well suited to serve equity denied groups?*



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# SITE SELECTION CRITERIA

## (CONTINUED)

### Site-specific criteria

*The following criteria help further analyze the suitability of a specific site*

- *Pre-development condition*
  - » *Does the physical condition of the site support a new or upgraded field?*
  - » *Is it a “typical” site, or does the site condition add cost or complexity to the project?*
  - » *Examples: geotechnical, topography, impacts to trees or water bodies*
- *Existing complementary infrastructure*
  - » *Is the project supported by existing amenities or programming? Examples: adjacent community centre, access to washroom*
- *Impacts on existing uses or programs.*
  - » *Examples: is the project converting an existing shared rectangular/ball diamond site to only a rectangular field? Does it require removal or significant modification to another existing park use? Is there displacement of another type of sport field or park use?*
- *Transportation access*
  - » *Is the site easily accessible by all modes of transportation?*



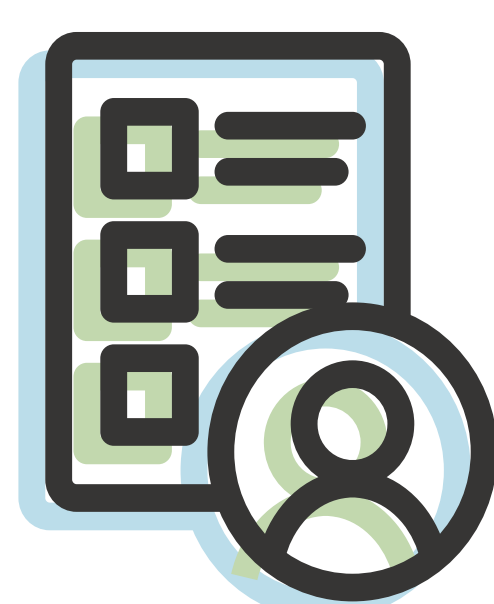


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# NOW WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Let us know what you think of the draft guiding principles and strategic directions for the Sport Field Strategy.



**TAKE THE SURVEY.**  
[CLICK HERE](#)



**SIGN UP TO BE NOTIFIED OF  
UPCOMING EVENTS AND  
ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES.**  
[CLICK HERE](#)

