

Toronto Parks Renaissance Strategy

Overview, Emerging Themes and Directions

Presentation to EDC, May 4, 2006



Parks Renaissance Strategy Presentation Agenda

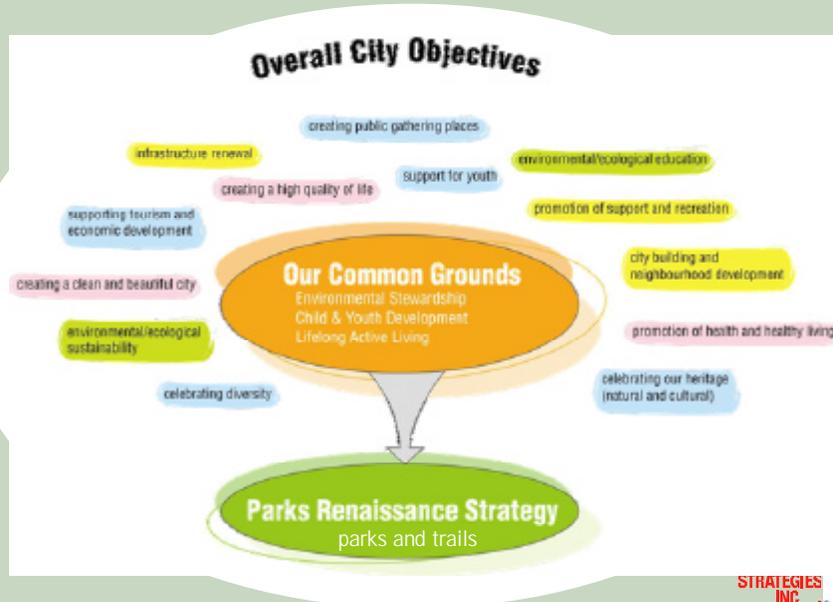
- Project Overview
- Emerging Themes and Directions



Project Overview



What is the Parks Renaissance Strategy



What is the Parks Renaissance Strategy

- A reinvestment program for City of Toronto parks & trails
- A realignment of physical assets and social/cultural needs
- A set of strategic priorities and guiding principles
- A framework for prioritizing initiatives – a checklist/ filter for annual planning, budgeting and on-going decision-making
- A set of quick-start demonstration projects



Approach and Work Program

- Information gathering and data compilation (January-May)
- Workshops with Steering Committee and interviews with Directors to gather ideas, understand issues and priorities (March-May)
- Development of initial ideas and direction for the Strategy (May)
- Geography-based consultations – North, South, East, West (May-June)
- Community-based consultations with cultural communities (May-June)
- Consultations with City staff, agencies, sports communities, youth, other groups (June-July)
- Draft of Parks Renaissance Strategy (July-August)
- Open Houses for public feedback on Draft Strategy (September)
- Final Parks Renaissance Strategy (October)
- Report to EDPC (early 2007)



Emerging Themes and Directions



Emerging Themes & Directions for the PRS

- Our City is growing and intensifying but investments in parks and trails are not keeping pace
 - ✍ Zero budget increases really mean a decline
 - ✍ New parks mean increased operating costs, more people mean increased maintenance costs
 - ✍ Maintenance of parks and facilities is falling behind
 - ✍ New funding models for maintenance and capital projects are needed – endowments, partnerships, reallocate cash-in-lieu



Emerging Themes & Directions for the PRS

- The parks and trails system is large, but little opportunity for expansion to meet the needs of a growing City
 - ✍ There are many neighbourhood parks, and a few new large waterfront parks are planned, but these are not well connected
 - ✍ Emphasis must be on expanding trails and corridors to increase green space and connections to parks and ravines
 - ✍ Partnerships and shared use agreements with School Boards, TRCA, other agencies



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Emerging Themes & Directions for the PRS

- Our parks and trails system is under stress, and the stress will be amplified by an intensifying City
 - ✍ Ecologically sensitive systems must be carefully managed
 - ✍ Balance recreational needs with carrying capacity of the system
 - ✍ Allocate activities such as hiking and biking to appropriate places
 - ✍ The PRS must focus and direct investment to priority areas



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- State of good repair must be a priority
 - ⌘ Short term goal – bring system up to an acceptable international standard of good repair
 - ⌘ Long-term goal – to be a visible, innovative, world-class system in terms of management, investment, usage, education, safety, etc.



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- A re-inventory of parks and trails and development of typologies would allow a more strategic look at the system
 - ⌘ City demographics have been changing – age, ethnicity – but the system’s adaptability has not kept pace
 - ⌘ Clear goals for different types of parks and a hard look at the allocation of amenities can help meet today’s needs



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- Management Plans are needed to help direct investment
 - ⌘ Large parks, trails, ravines, urban forest, sports fields and facilities
 - ⌘ Information systems for management of parks and trails system



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- New models for community centres can help fill the need in a cost-effective manner
 - ⌘ One size does not need to fit all
 - ⌘ Nature-based community centres can be smaller meeting places and fulfill a growing interest in the environment
 - ⌘ Many people are interested in stewardship, planting, nature education – needs promotion and programming



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- More sport facilities and active areas are needed for a growing population
 - ✍ There are many neighbourhood fields and facilities that cater to kids and young players, but a lack of regional facilities
 - ✍ There are few facilities to encourage youth and young adults to use the parks system
 - ✍ Seek opportunities for shared facility agreements with Schools



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- It is difficult to find information and navigate processes
 - ✍ There is a disconnect between the information available to the layperson and the knowledge of user groups
 - ✍ Improve signage and way-finding, interactive information systems, develop brochures, interpretive signs, better website
 - ✍ Streamline customer service – permit and registration process



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- The PRS must provide both a strategic direction for PF&R and a vision for the broader community
 - ✍ A guidebook for implementing the recommendations of Our Common Grounds (health, environment, youth leadership)
 - ✍ A process and set of criteria for decision-making
 - ✍ A tool to attract community partnerships and buy-in



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Emerging Themes & Directions for the PRS

- The PRS needs to be structured around compelling themes for the system as a whole
 - ✍ Coherence for the 7 former parts of the system
 - ✍ The role of parks in the City
 - ✍ Four pillars: play, nature, beauty, heritage



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- The PRS must outline priorities for investments in the parks and trails system based on community needs
 - ✍ Make clear the connections to City goals and objectives
 - ✍ Develop visions and priorities for each new Council term
 - ✍ Prioritize initiatives and set criteria by which to make programming and facility decisions
 - ✍ A strategy for short-term and long-term investment



Emerging Themes & Directions for the PRS

- The PRS must provide the basis for stronger linkages to other City divisions
 - ✍ Work toward common goals, coordinate related initiatives, address cross-divisional issues
 - Water – stormwater management: ponds and tree planting
 - Transportation – streets trees and use of ROWs
 - Planning – goals and requirements for new parks



Next Steps

- Consultations with stakeholders
 - communities, park user groups and sport groups, diversity and equity groups, cultural groups
- Consultations with City staff and agencies

