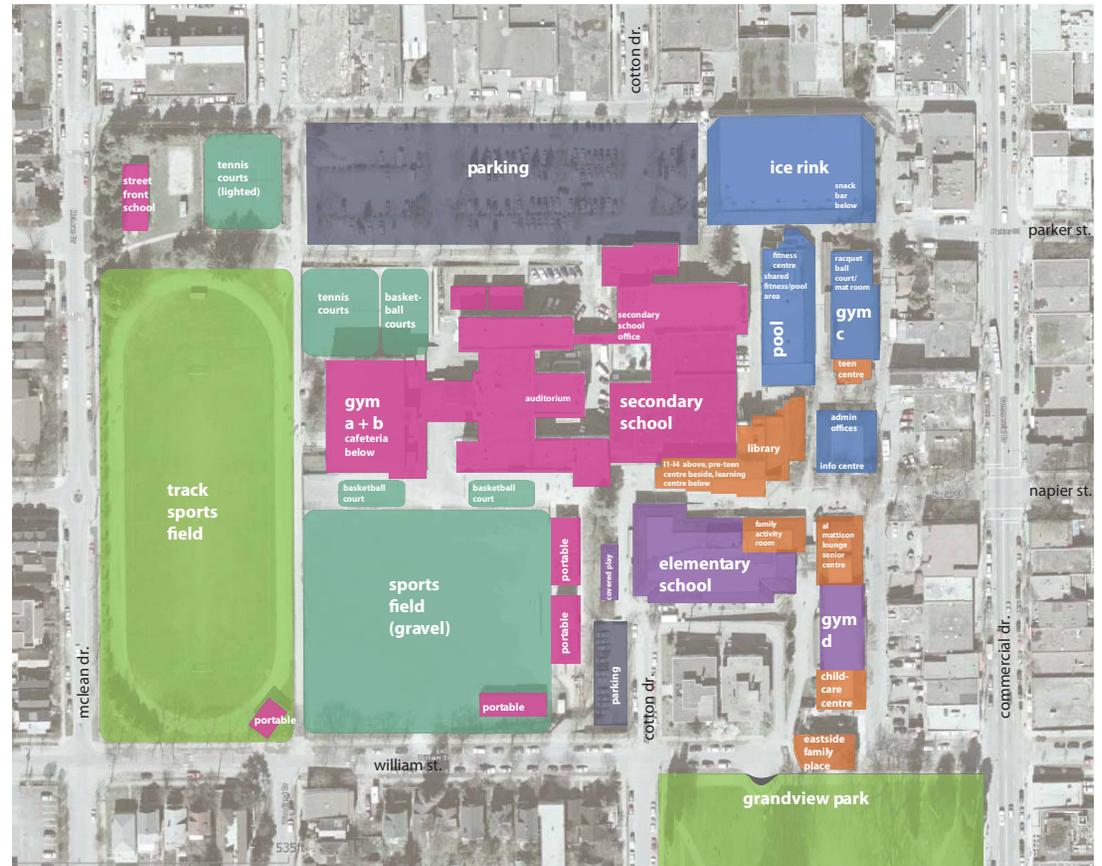




Britannia Community Services Centre

A Case for Inclusion in
the City of Vancouver's 10-Year Capital Strategy

February, 2011





This report has been compiled by the Britannia Planning & Development Committee
on behalf of
The Britannia Community Services Centre Society Board of Management
with consulting support from
Phillips Farevaag Smallemberg & Hughes Condon Marler

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Executive Summary

The Britannia Community Services Centre is a unique facility located in the heart of the Grandview-Woodland community. The Centre provides recreational programming and social services to many Vancouver residents, especially those residing in the Grandview-Woodland and Strathcona neighbourhoods. Britannia serves as an important social space in an area of Vancouver that is undergoing significant change. Through innovative programming and service delivery, the Centre fosters social inclusion, civic action, and cross-cultural communication.

Many of Britannia's facilities are now over thirty years old. New investments are needed to help ensure that the Centre continues to deliver the top quality services and programs that it is known for.

Britannia is being proactive in envisioning how the site can be renewed. This planning process intends to prepare a strategic Master Plan that will demonstrate that the Centre can redevelop in phases to achieve renewed facilities to deliver the programs the community needs as it grows over the next few decades.

This planning effort recognizes that the emerging Master Plan needs to be coordinated both with the plans of the partners on site — the Vancouver School Board, the Vancouver Public Library, and the Vancouver Park Board — and with the upcoming consultation process to update the Grandview-Woodland Local Area Plan. Further stakeholder interviews and workshops are key to this intention.

The planning process seeks to integrate with the City's new 10-Year Strategic Plan cycle, recognizing that new facilities at Britannia must fit with City-wide priorities. At this time, the replacement of the Britannia Pool is listed as a potential project within the next ten years. With this direction from the City, Britannia is strategizing the phasing of its redevelopment plans with a new pool complex as the first phase.

This document provides an overview of the role that Britannia plays in key priority areas including: family development, urban sustainability, healthy aging, arts and culture, health & wellness, and life long learning. The document further indicates how strategic investment in the site will enable further development in these priority areas. This is intended to provide Council, City staff, and our partners on site with information to support Britannia's case for a place on the list of priorities for facility redevelopment.

This is the story of the creation of a community centre, but not just any community centre. This is a community centre that is known around the world in social planning circles and at the conferences where urban planners meet to share ideas. Britannia Community Services Centre serves as a model of how recreational, educational, and social services can be provided for a community in the most effective and integrated manner.

-Davitt & Martin, (eds). 2001.

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose

The Britannia Community Services Centre (Britannia) is developing a strategic Master Plan for the 18-acre site it manages on behalf of the City of Vancouver. The Plan will provide a framework for the redevelopment of the Britannia site and will be used to secure new capital investments. Renewal of the Britannia facilities will ensure that the organization has the infrastructure and client base necessary to continue delivering quality programs and services to the diverse communities residing in Vancouver's northeast sector.

1.2 Britannia: The Unique History of a Unique Facility

Britannia has its origins in cooperative community action in the 1970s. Local citizens and various civic agencies created the organization in 1974 to coordinate and integrate a wide range of human services to meet the interests and needs of residents. This ethos of community-driven development is still alive and well in the Britannia community and has contributed significantly to the current campaign for facilities renewal. This collaborative spirit is captured in Britannia's mandate, which is to:

Develop, coordinate and support a wide range of excellent programs and services to Grandview-Woodland and Strathcona by working with community members, partners and local agencies.

Britannia is unique in comparison to other community centres in Vancouver because:

- It is located right off of "The Drive," which is the main street of the Grandview-Woodland neighbourhood.
- It hosts important and innovative community activities including Beyond the Blue Box, Stone Soup, Parade of Lost Souls, and many others.
- It is home to the oldest remaining secondary school in the City.
- It provides meeting space for community-based groups and organizations.

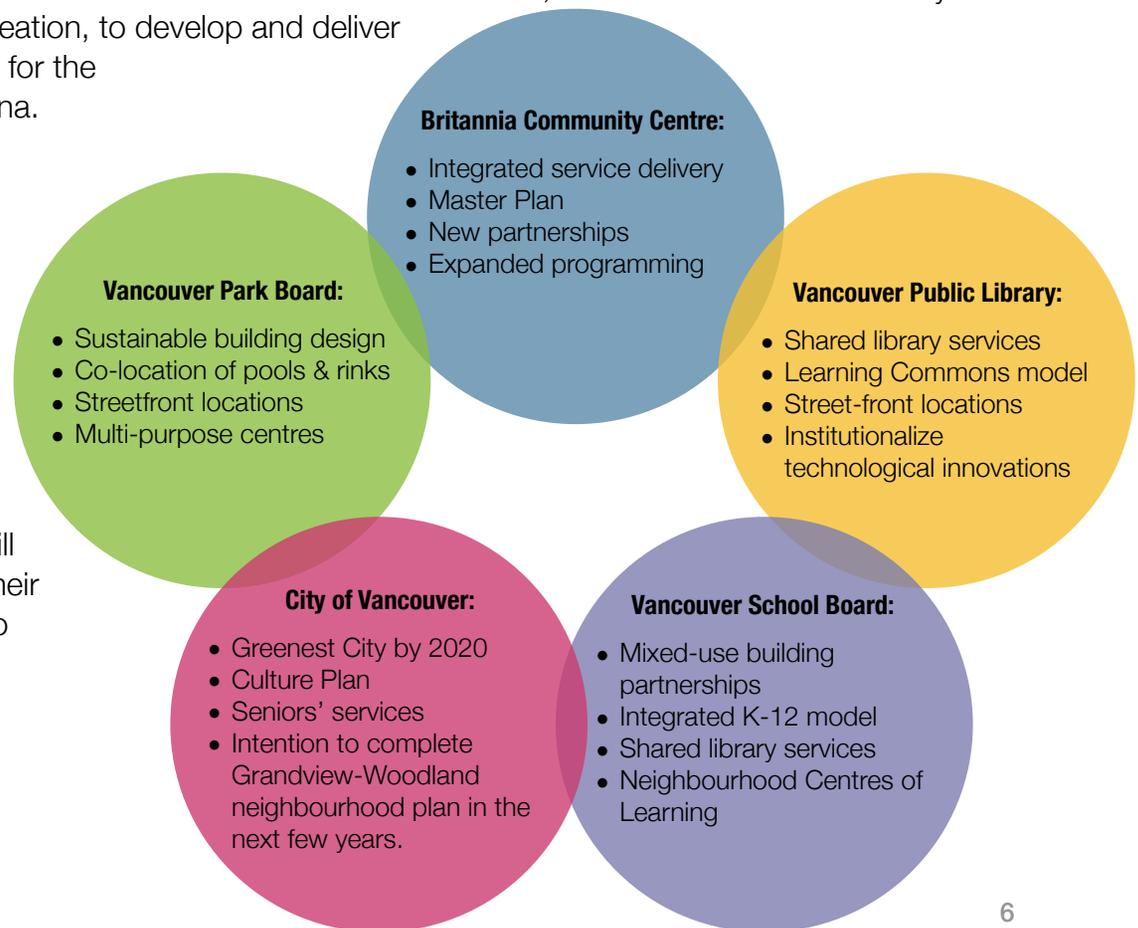
1.3 The Integrated Services Model

Britannia operates on a model of integrated-service delivery. This model allows services and facilities to be shared amongst different user groups and enables access to a wide variety of services and facilities in one centralized location. Britannia was the first community centre in Vancouver to use this model. This pioneering spirit continues to guide current planning at Britannia.

The Britannia Community Services Centre Society is the non-profit society which, through a locally elected volunteer Board of Management, is responsible for the care and custody of the Britannia facilities. The land itself is owned by the Vancouver School Board and the City of Vancouver. Additional staff and resources are provided through the Park Board and Library Board. The Society works in collaboration with personnel from the Vancouver School Board, the Vancouver Public Library Board, and the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation, to develop and deliver recreational, educational, library, and social services for the communities of Grandview-Woodland and Strathcona.

The Society plays a pivotal role in helping to ensure that site partners are able to achieve both short- and long-term goals on the Britannia site.

Planning at Britannia must be flexible in order to ensure that all partners are able to meet their needs. The current direction for planning at Britannia has been informed by the vision and priorities of each partner organization. The Britannia Community Services Centre Society is confident that the current direction for planning will maximize the potential for site partners to achieve their goals and provides a solid foundation upon which to build consensus between parties.



2. Current Conditions

2.1 Current Condition of Facilities

Many of Britannia's facilities are out of date and do not meet current needs, much less those that will arise in the future. Many of the buildings will require functional as well as architectural, structural, mechanical, and code upgrades as they continue to age.

The following concerns regarding the current condition of facilities have been identified through the consultation process:

- The *pool complex* (including change rooms) is badly *in need of repair and upgrading*. Community members have indicated that they drive to other facilities in the city to access better pool services.
- The *site is difficult to access for people with mobility challenges*. As the population of the neighbourhood ages and more people need access to mobility aids this will become a major impediment to users accessing the site.
- The *site is difficult to navigate*. Visitors often find it difficult to locate facilities and services on the site because pathways and movement corridors are often disconnected from one another.
- *Services and programs are "siloesd."* Users are not able to access the full range of services and facilities on the site because many of these functions take place in separate buildings and are not visible from movement corridors.
- The *site is not easily identifiable from Commercial Drive* or other possible points of entry. New residents in the area and others who frequent "The Drive" often don't know about Britannia because it is not easily seen.
- The facilities are *not energy efficient*. Heat loss from aging buildings and outdated energy systems do not exemplify the spirit of environmental sustainability that characterizes the neighbourhood and city more generally.

2.2 Neighbourhood Demographics

Britannia Centre is centrally located in the heart of the Grandview-Woodland neighbourhood. This neighbourhood is one of the most diverse in the city, not only in terms of land use — it has residential, commercial, and industrial uses adjacent to each other — but also in the profound diversity of “types” of families and people of a huge variety of cultural, political, racial, economic, spiritual, philosophical, and political persuasions living respectfully together.

Most of the people that use the services at Britannia live close to “The Drive” in either the Grandview-Woodland or Strathcona neighbourhoods.

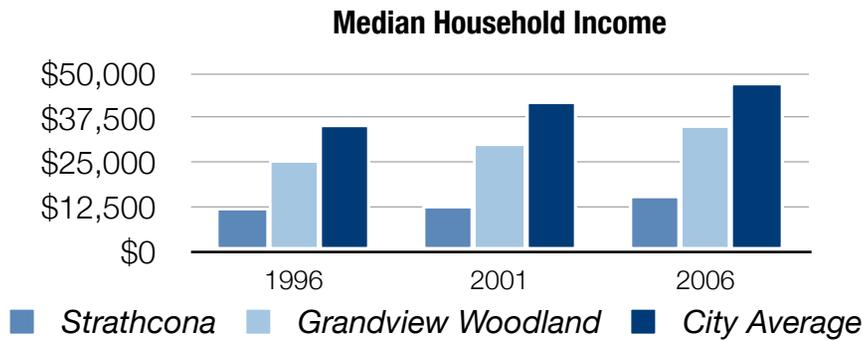
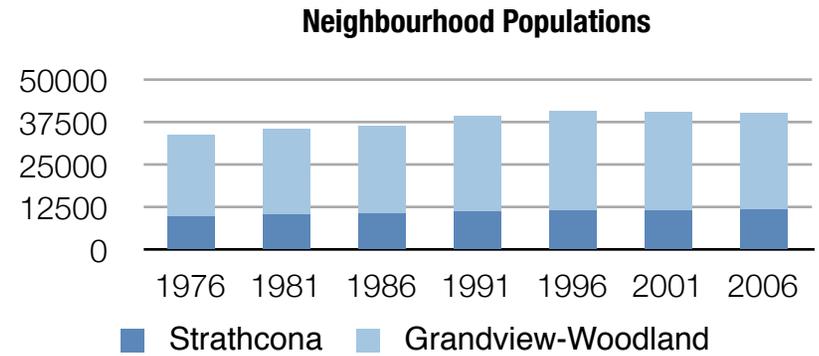


Britannia Users by Neighbourhood:

Grandview-Woodland	52% of users
Strathcona	45% of users
Other	3% of users

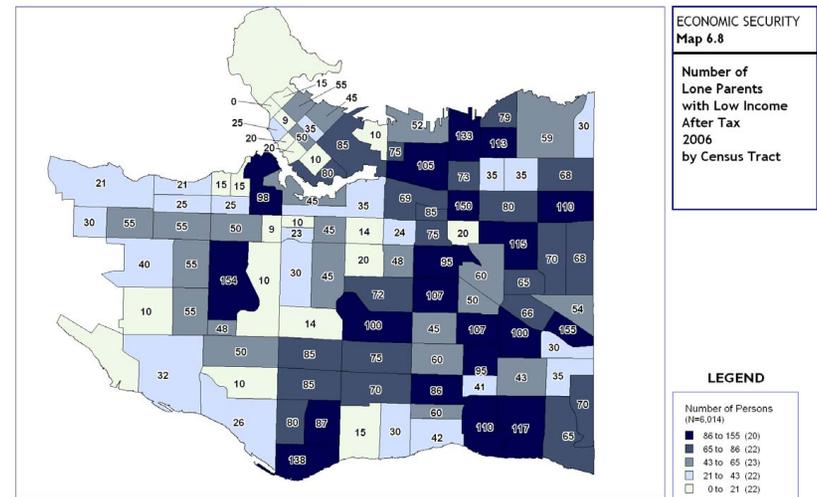
Relevant demographics for these two neighbourhoods have been compiled from the City of Vancouver Community WebPages, the City of Vancouver 2009 Social Indicators Report, and other relevant sources.

The combined population of Strathcona and Grandview-Woodland increased by nearly 7,000 residents between 1976 and 2006.



Both Grandview Woodland and Strathcona have *lower than average household income* levels.

Both Grandview-Woodland and Strathcona have significant numbers of *lone parents with low incomes*.



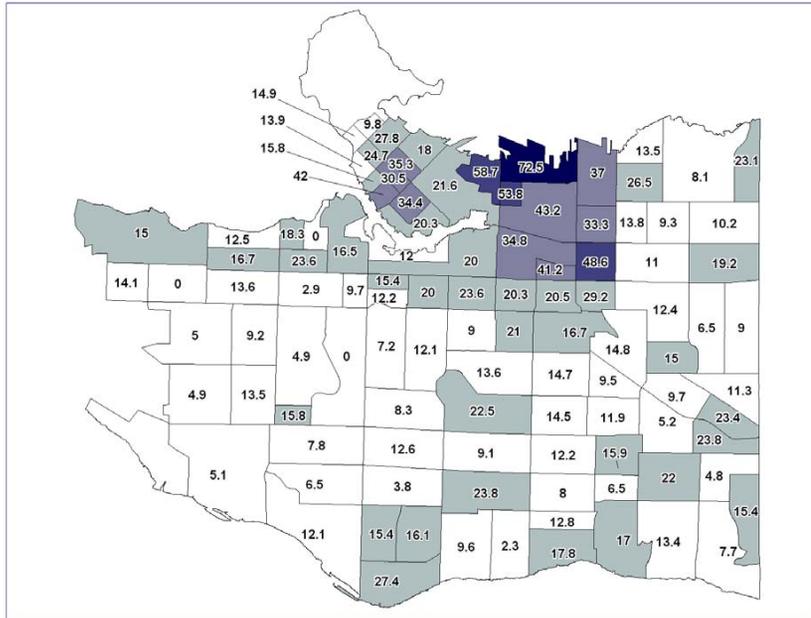
Data Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2006 [20% Data]

CTs with a high proportion of low income single parents are found throughout the city - with the highest numbers being found in parts of Kensington-Cedar Cottage, Arbutus-Ridge, Grandview-Woodlands and Marpole.

Social Indicators Report 2009

Social Development City of Vancouver

Grandview-Woodland and Strathcona have populations above City-wide averages of *low-income seniors* and *seniors who live alone* above the City-wide averages.



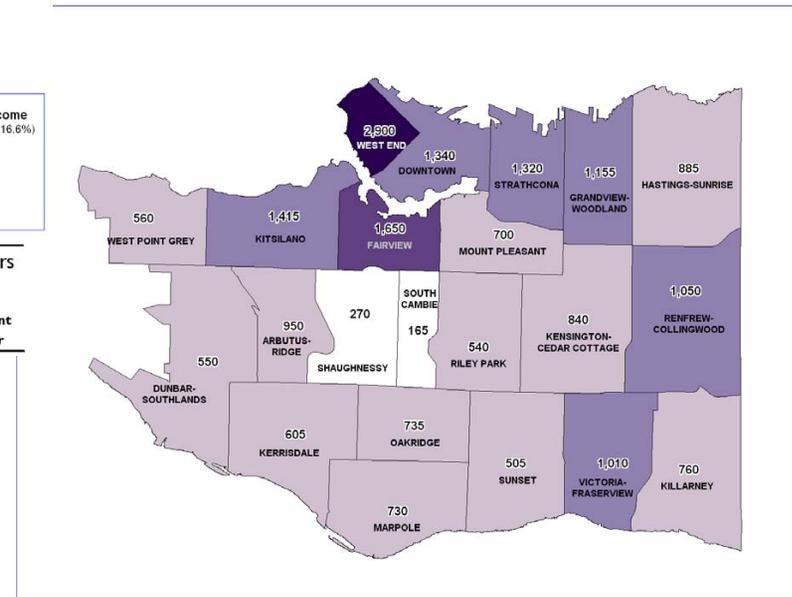
ECONOMIC SECURITY
Map 6.9
Prevalence of Seniors with Low Income After Tax 2006 by Census Tract

Data Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2006 [20% Data]

Large numbers of low income seniors are found in parts of the West End, Mount Pleasant, Strathcona and Grandview Woodlands.

LEGEND
Percentage Low Income (N=11,800) (City-Wide=16.6%)

Social Indicators Report 2009
Social Development City of Vancouver



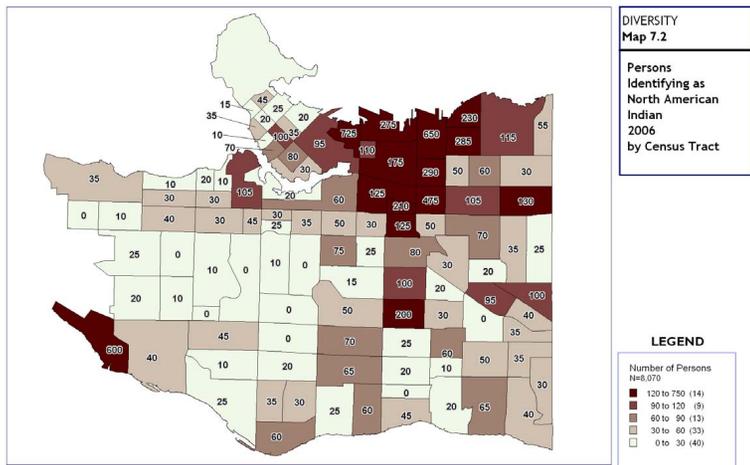
HOUSING
Map 5.8
Seniors Living Alone 2006 by Local Area

Data Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2006 [20% Data]

There are concentrations of seniors living alone throughout the city, with the highest overall numbers being found in the West End and Fairview.

LEGEND
Seniors Living Alone (N=20,635)

Social Indicators Report 2009
Social Development City of Vancouver



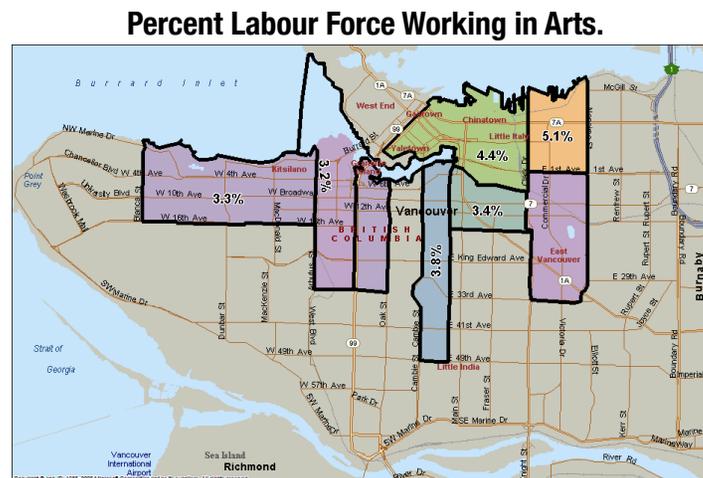
Data Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2006 (20% Data)

Over two thirds of people who report Aboriginal identity are North American Indian. While many live on the Musqueam reserve, a large percentage lives in east side neighbourhoods such as Strathcona, Mount Pleasant and Grandview Woodlands.

Social Indicators Report 2009
Social Development City of Vancouver

The Grandview-Woodland area is home to a high proportion of Vancouver's Aboriginal community.

Both Grandview-Woodland and Strathcona have high concentrations of working artists.



Based on 2006 census data. (Hill, 2010).

Non Market Housing in Grandview-Woodland

Unit Type	Unit Count
Aboriginal	292
Family	607
Seniors	613
Youth	10
Mental Health/Other	288

Grandview-Woodland has a high concentration of non-market housing geared towards diverse communities.

2.3 Britannia Programs

Currently Britannia runs a variety of *programs for children, youth, adults, and seniors*. These programs range from recreation and sports programming, through language skills, to classic and applied arts instruction.

Many users who access Britannia programs do so through *program subsidies* and would not be able to access these programs elsewhere. A variety of other mechanisms have been put in place at Britannia to increase the financial accessibility of our programs and services. These include a program which allows youth to offset fees with volunteer hours, and a flexible program structure which enables families to pay fees in more manageable increments.

The program subsidy and other mechanisms for financial accessibility are made possible through fees collected from other users. Thus, their continuation requires that Britannia attract and retain as many of full-fee-paying users as possible. Facility upgrades will greatly increase Britannia's ability to maximize the number of new and returning non-subsidized users. As the local population continues to change, there is opportunity for Britannia to *facilitate social inclusion* through these mechanisms. This in turn will enable Britannia to remain a leader in programs that foster social integration, civic action, and cross-cultural communication.



3. Future Opportunities

One of Britannia's main strengths is its ability to adapt to change and be creative in how it serves the community. This ability, together with dedication to genuine service delivery, has allowed Britannia to remain an important element of Grandview-Woodland and Strathcona for over thirty years.

Britannia's goal is to retain the incredible character of the Centre, and to provide the best facilities and services for all residents, without compromise. The following programmatic developments have been identified as key drivers for growth and change and will help ensure that Britannia continues to serve as the heart of strong, safe, and inclusive community.



3.1 Arts & Culture

The communities of Grandview-Woodland and Strathcona have evolved over the past three decades to become culturally rich neighbourhoods of choice for artists and other cultural workers. Today, many artists live and work in the community, and many others travel from all over the Lower Mainland to participate in activities taking place on “The Drive.”

Despite the concentration of artistic talent in the area, there remains a shortage of formal arts amenities and programs in the community. This means that in order for local children and adults to take classes or utilize studio space, they often must travel to the west side of the city. Arts facilities and programs at Britannia serve an important function in enabling local residents and children to experience and participate in the arts.

Given its locational assets and the demographics of the area Britannia is well positioned to become a hub for Vancouver's cultural economy and could serve as a model of creative community development for the City of Vancouver's Culture Plan.



3.2 Health & Wellness

An emphasis on health and wellness is an emerging trend in community centres. Britannia already plays an important role in health promotion through facilitating fitness activities, providing social support structures, and delivering nutritional education.

There is an opportunity for Britannia to expand its role in providing community health services and bridging the gap between health promotion, illness prevention, and treatment. By establishing an operational relationship with REACH Community Health Centre there is greater opportunity to deliver cutting-edge community health initiatives.

By co-locating REACH on the Britannia site, new opportunities for service delivery emerge. These include:

- Physiotherapy
- Physical rehabilitation
- Family development support services
- Nutritional health promotion through food security initiatives and culinary skills development
- Multi-cultural health promotion

3.3 Urban Sustainability

Britannia provides an important leadership role in promoting urban sustainability in the district. There are many initiatives currently underway on the site including the Britannia Urban Garden program coordinated through the Grandview-Woodland Food Connection and the Beyond the Blue Box recycling program. There is a strong environmental ethic within the community which has guided the development of programs and services.

Environment design and new innovative energy systems have been identified as priorities for site renewal. By integrating environmental programs with sustainable design features, new energy systems, and green technology, Britannia can serve as a model centre of urban sustainability.

3.4 Lifelong Learning

Britannia serves a community that may not have the same access to tools and resources which are readily available in other neighbourhoods. It would benefit all users to increase the emphasis on programs for all ages related to:

- Access to information (internet, books, etc.)
- Wireless technology
- ESL
- Literacy

Britannia currently provides important skills training programs for both students and community centre users. There is further opportunity for Britannia to capitalize on its proximity to light industrial areas, such as those along Venables, Clark Drive, and the False Creek Flats. Current programs could be expanded to provide skills training in new technologies, social enterprise, and sustainable design. By providing shop space and tools for use by both the Vancouver School Board and the Britannia Community Services Centre, both students and community members would have the opportunity to gain skills relevant to the emerging industries of the 21st century. Possible programs include:

- Bicycle repair
- Multi-media production
- Sustainable building design
- Food production and processing
- Native arts and traditional skills
- Trade apprenticeship programs

These programs will help facilitate the development of new generations of social entrepreneurs and technological innovators. These will further provide an opportunity for older residents to gain new skills in emerging fields in order to better position themselves to seek employment in a changing workforce.



3.4 Healthy Aging

As the population of Vancouver ages, new concerns arise around the ability of its citizens to access necessary social, recreational, and health services. In the past, seniors and older adults did not make up the same proportion of health and wellness facility users as they do today. As a result, the facilities at Britannia are inadequate to meet the needs of this growing population of users and residents.

By increasing the accessibility of Britannia's facilities new opportunities emerge for promoting healthy aging in the district. Further integration of health services will enable residents with limited mobility to access all services in one centralized location. There is further opportunity for Britannia to develop inter-generational programs for recreation and health promotion. Currently, age-specific areas are isolated on the site and new multi-purpose program spaces could be used for inter-generational activities and programs.

3.5 Family Development

Britannia provides important services to children and families including child care, recreational programming, and safe spaces for teens. Investment in the facilities for these services will help ensure that Britannia continues to provide necessary amenities for urban families. Further, by bringing together currently disparate site functions families will be able to access all their required services in one welcoming, accessible, and modern facility.

Britannia has created innovative services and supports for families in the Grandview-Woodland and Strathcona neighbourhoods. New opportunities for innovative service delivery for youth, children, and families have been identified, and include the need for multi-generational programming, new programs for street-involved youth, and inter-cultural family services.

4. Britannia Master Plan Process To Date

4.1 The Britannia Planning & Development Committee

The Britannia Planning & Development Committee has been empowered by the Britannia Board of Management to oversee the Master Planning process. The committee is made up of representatives from the Britannia Board of Management, partner organizations, and members of the wider community. Meetings are held every second Thursday in the Britannia Information Centre meeting room and are open to the public. Participation from community members is encouraged and supported.



4.2 Partner Consultations

The consulting firms of Phillips Farevaag Smallemberg and Hughes Condon Marler have been contracted to help facilitate the consultations with partner organizations. Partner organizations have had the opportunity to contribute to the development of the Master Plan through participation on the Planning & Development Committee, targeted workshops, and on-going individual meetings and updates. The Britannia Planning & Development Committee is dedicated to ensuring that redevelopment of the site is done in a manner consistent with the needs and priorities of all partners.

A first round of partner consultations focused on sharing information about current facilities and future renewal plans among all the partners. A second round in the next few months will engage the partners in reviewing and refining potential site plan scenarios.

4.3 Community Consultations

Over the past year and a half, the Planning & Development Committee has gathered community input through a variety of means including a design charrette, multiple surveys, and through consultation at a variety of community events. The Committee is dedicated to involving those who use and enjoy Britannia's services and facilities in the planning for redevelopment of Britannia's 18-acre complex.

4.4 Vision and Principles

The Planning & Development Committee has established a Vision for the Britannia Community Services Centre (Appendix I) that has been endorsed by the Board of Management. The Committee has further crafted a Statement of Principles (Appendix II) to help guide the creation of the Master Plan. These 23 principles cover a wide range of topics including heritage retention, sustainable design, and landscape features.



4.5 Site Concept Scenarios

The current focus of the strategic Master Plan process is the preparation of a series of potential site concepts that will be discussed with the Planning & Development Committee and site partners over the next months. These scenarios are all based on a space program that combines work done by Britannia over the past few years to identify community program needs and precedents of recent Park Board facility renewal projects.

One series of scenarios explores site concepts that do not require any changes to school, library, or outdoor recreation facilities on the 18-acre site. These scenarios demonstrate that Britannia's facilities can be renewed in phases, with a new pool as the first phase, with the potential to achieve a modern integrated multi-purpose centre with engaging social spaces and City-mandated sustainable building performance.

Other series of scenarios achieve improved integration of new facilities with urban design and circulation objectives for the site by assuming that school and library redevelopment occurs in a coordinated way and/or that additional site area is acquired to permit the Centre to have a street-fronting presence on Commercial Drive or Venables Street.

It is expected that the number of scenarios will be reduced and refined through partner and community consultation to provide Britannia Centre and the City with a strategic approach to phased redevelopment, starting with a new pool complex at Britannia within the next decade.

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Appendix I: Britannia Planning & Development Committee Vision Statement

The Britannia Community Services Centre is the heart of the community, serving as an integrated hub of education, arts, culture, recreation, wellness, and sustainability.

Britannia's strength lies in its innovative public sector partnerships. These give life to unparalleled opportunities for collaborative decision-making, programming, and service delivery, and the flexibility to continually meet the evolving needs of the community.

Britannia is accessible and welcoming; drawing users whose diversity is matched by the diversity of programs offered by the centre.

The Britannia Centre respects and celebrates its social and physical context, fostering a sense of stewardship towards the people and setting that are the source of its richness.

Appendix II: Britannia Planning & Development Committee Statement of Principles

1. Site planning of the Britannia Community Services Centre should support a non-profit managed and operated, publicly owned and funded facility.
2. The overriding consideration in the development of the Britannia site over time should be the critical role of the Britannia facilities in supporting and promoting Britannia's Vision, Mission, and Principles. Site planning should also align with the Master Planning Vision Statement.
3. Site planning should give primacy to programming needs of Britannia and its site partners.
4. Site planning should be well coordinated with the Grandview-Woodland and Strathcona communities, the City of Vancouver, and other site partners through effective lines of communication with officials and members of the community.
5. Site planning should take into consideration the unique social and cultural needs of local residents.
6. Britannia is a "destination" community centre, drawing users from all over the city. It also serves as the hub of the Grandview-Woodland and Strathcona communities. The Britannia site should reflect and embody our commitment to be community-oriented, accessible, and welcoming to all.
7. Site planning and facility development should recognize values shared by members of the Britannia Community regarding historic preservation and community character. The heritage of the Grandview-Woodland and Strathcona neighbourhoods should be explicitly considered in decisions concerning future development.
 - The 1908/1911 secondary school building remains the historic heart of the site and should be preserved.
8. With Britannia elementary and secondary community schools, the Britannia branch of the Vancouver Public Library, and educational programming through Britannia Centre, site planning should emphasize Britannia's tradition as a neighbourhood learning centre.
9. There will be several entrances to the site. All entrances should reflect recognizable Britannia design elements.
10. All entrances should create a strong initial impression of a green and inviting village that serves as a hub of arts, health, culture, recreation, and education.
11. The site should be (and must feel to be) relatively safe and secure for all people using it throughout the day and night.
12. Way-finding should be straightforward. Maps, exterior and interior signage should be consistent in design, clear, and helpful to members of the community and visitors.
13. Users of the site should easily be able to form a mental image of the site.

14. The design and future development of the site should take the natural topography and elevation of the site into consideration and turn the unique and challenging aspects of this site into design features that enhance the environment as well as create amenities for the public.
 15. Site planning should encourage appropriate connection between Britannia and the surrounding neighborhood, particularly in the design of the edges (particularly the symbiosis between Britannia and Grandview Park) and entrances to the site.
 16. The ecological impact of all site projects, including parking lots, sidewalks, renovations and new construction should be explicitly considered in the planning process.
 - Reducing energy use in existing and new buildings
 - Facilitating walking, cycling and the use of public transit; reducing reliance on cars
 - Balancing traditional use and evolving needs through a process that ensures the equitable distribution of space across programs and services.
 17. There should be both a central indoor meeting place — a community “living room” — and a central outdoor meeting place or plaza.
 18. View corridors, particularly of downtown and of The Lions, should be protected and celebrated as an amenity. (Views must be kept in mind when placing trees.)
 19. Landscaping plans and the development of outdoor spaces on site should stimulate social interaction and community centre programming and should consider and incorporate:
 - View corridors, particularly of downtown and of The Lions, should be protected and celebrated as an amenity. (Views must be kept in mind when placing trees.)
 - Walkways and bike paths, some aligned with the former street grid, should go through and around the site. These should be lined with active uses and windows, and should be well lit and, where appropriate, covered;
 - Pathways should create a sense of connectivity and ease of circulation;
 - Green spaces with an abundance of native plants and trees;
 - Places for the community to grow food;
 - Adequate parking for employees and visitors;
 - State-of-the-art storm-water management.
 20. Planning should incorporate current industry standards for environmental preservation and energy conservation and for accessibility. These should be explicitly considered as construction and renovation projects are developed.
- Programmatic considerations that are important in Britannia site Master Planning include:

21. Clustering related programming spaces together — recreational, health, educational, and arts facilities and programs. Integrating activities at Britannia with the residential life in the surrounding community. Balancing traditional uses and evolving needs through a process that ensures the equitable distribution of space across programs and services.
22. Land and buildings on the site should remain publicly owned. Development of the site should be community-supported and built with a combination of public funds and private donations.
23. New uses on the site may be considered if they increase the long-term resiliency of the site, enhance the current functions of the facilities, and/or increase the social, economic, and environmental performance of Britannia, the neighbourhood, and the city.