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**Efficiencies and partnerships – City’s 2011 parks projects delivered even more bang**

Halfway through the 2007-2016 Strategic Parks Plan timeline, the City of Campbell River reported on its 2011 parks successes at the Jan. 10 Council meeting.

*“From safety and infrastructure improvements to rehabilitating Sybil Andrews Cottage and Walter Morgan studio, to trails and parks and the community garden in Willow Point, all these projects were built thanks to community and funding partnerships and were designed to maximize efficiencies and return on investment for City of Campbell River taxpayers,”* says Ross Milnthorp, the City’s general manager of parks, recreation and culture.

Efficiencies in new materials and technologies help reduce long-term operating and maintenance costs. *“Improving city-wide irrigation systems and installing central control software, replacing wooden bleachers with lower-maintenance aluminum, upgrades that will reduce heating costs, partnerships that provided funding and labour were all key factors in 2011 parks projects,”* Milnthorp says.

Campbell River’s Strategic Parks Plan was adopted in 2006 after extensive public consultation, including a statistically-valid public survey. The primary focus of the Strategic Parks Plan is to improve comfort and safety in local parks by replacing old playgrounds, improving playing field quality, completing undeveloped parks and upgrading washrooms, bleachers, garbage cans, benches, picnic tables and signs.

External funding is key to delivering parks projects, says Milnthorp. Money from external sources means projects happen faster, and the related benefits (increasing numbers of tournaments, sporting visitors and job creation) are realized sooner.

*“Since the adoption of the Strategic Parks Plan, we have been able to leverage funds from a variety of federal, provincial, regional and local grant opportunities and donations from sources such as BC Hydro’s Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program and Tree Canada, essentially doubling the value of the investment with no additional cost to the community,”* he explains.

*“The Parks Department has also formed many strong community partnerships that have helped complete projects that greatly enhance quality of life for our citizens, with either no cost or only partial cost to the taxpayer. The Jubilee Connector section of the Greenways Loop is one example,”* Milnthorp adds.

The Parks Capital Project Report received by Council at the Jan. 10 meeting illustrates that complete and ongoing projects have been funded with a 49/51 per cent split between City and other sources of funding.

Partnerships with Greenways Land Trust, Minor Lacrosse, Rotary, Sybil Andrews Heritage Society and the Laughing Willow community gardeners who will look after ongoing maintenance, were essential for the many projects completed in 2011. For a complete list of Parks Projects see page 31 of the Winter/Spring 2012 Recreation Guide.

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Contact: Ross Milnthorp, General Manager Parks, Recreation & Culture 250-286-5797

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