

## VICTORIA PARK: PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

At GWAC's January 2014 meeting on sharing public spaces in our neighbourhood the focus was on Victoria Park. A Park Board manager, Park Rangers, Neighbourhood Police Officer Mike Lemon and the assistant manager of Vancouver Animal Control made presentations and answered questions. The discussion at the meeting was wide ranging, including very diverse points of view which were respectfully heard by everyone attending. It's clear that there is no 'quick fix' for the problems associated with Victoria Park, but the meeting produced a number of possible solutions that were offered for consideration including:

- Improved lighting: Some residents suggested that more lighting would deter illicit activities in the park at night. Park Board staff referred to some studies showing that lighting actually makes public spaces more attractive to people wanting to use the park after the 10pm closing time. However, this possibility will be explored by Park Board staff.
- More scheduled activities: The general consensus was that creating opportunities for the public to participate in scheduled activities would be positive. Movie nights, kids' activities etc. were suggested.

Discussions at the Community Policing Centre after the meeting have focused on this and several possible events are being considered. Stay tuned...the GWAC website will let you know about these events as soon as they are scheduled.

- More people need to use park: In addition to activities mentioned above, strategies for encouraging neighbours to use Victoria Park were discussed.
- Improved pathways: Deep puddles need to be filled and the natural surfaces of the pathway needs to be better maintained.
- Reduced cost for event permits: People wanting to hold events in the park(weddings, kids events, movies etc.) are faced with large permit fees. It was suggested that lowering fees and reducing red tape would allow for more small local events ...and more people using the park.
- Park Rangers indicated patrolling in teams to observe and monitor. In the winter there are very few Park Rangers for the entire city, but Rangers present committed to spending more time in Victoria Park. A number of people mentioned that the washrooms are often filled with people just hanging out, and are not hospitable to park users wanting to use these facilities for themselves and their children. Rangers will pay attention to this problem and will lock up the washrooms earlier in the evening.
- VPD indicated need to look at creative solutions as enforcement not yielding results: Cst. Lemon discussed several strategies to promote a feeling of safety for park patrons, discourage illegal behaviours, and make sure that all members

of the community can use this public space comfortable. Many comments were made about the proximity of the Liquor Store and the apparent sales of alcohol to people who are inebriated. Cst Lemon will be conferring with Liquor Store management about these issues.

- Outreach workers from The Kettle Friendship Society indicated the need for Alcohol & Drug outreach workers who could assist the people with these problems who hang out in Victoria Park. Subsequent conversations revealed a need for a Needs Assessment for these services in the neighbourhood which would be the basis for a public request to the City, the Province and the Health Authority to provide D&A outreach workers.