

PRICE TAGS

How Green Are We?

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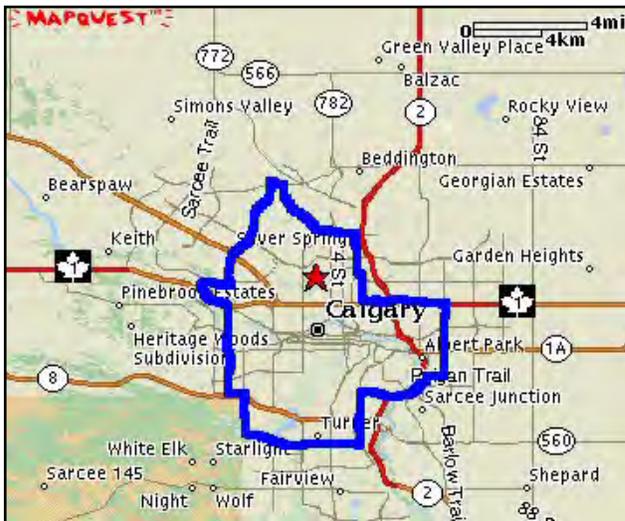
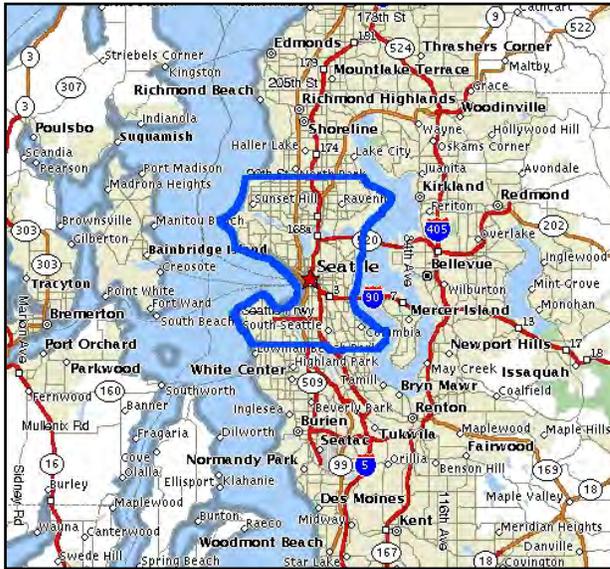
As part of our work here at the Park Board, I did the following comparison of Vancouver, Calgary, Seattle, Portland and San Francisco with regards to park provision.

The difficulty with comparisons of open space is that some cities like Vancouver are relatively small and don't include much suburbia when compared to others such as Calgary. I decided to level the playing field with the following method:

I took the City of Vancouver (including UEL/UBC as a unit) and compared it to a similar-sized area for Calgary, Seattle, Portland and San Francisco. Here are the geographic areas I used:

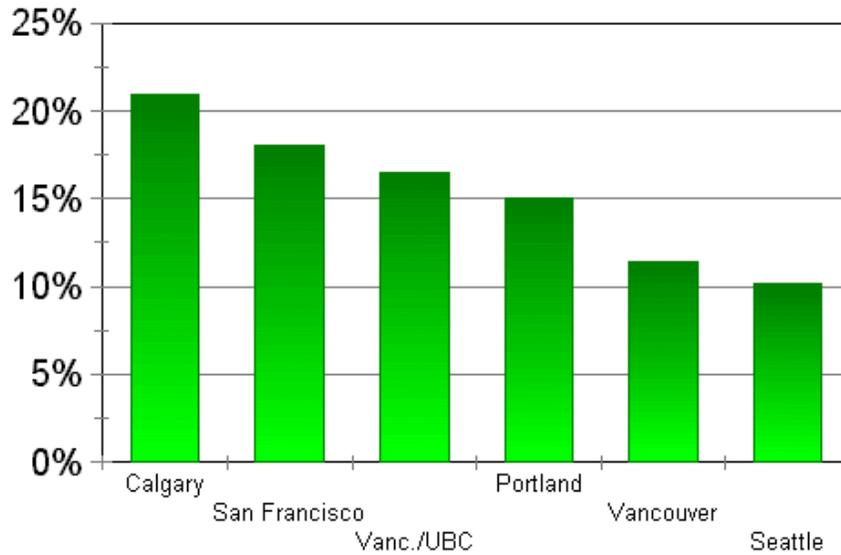
City of Vancouver	113 sq.km
- City of Vancouver plus UBC/UEL	127 sq.km
Central portion of the City of Calgary	132 sq.km
Central portion of the City of Seattle	133 sq.km
Central portion of the City of Portland	129 sq.km
City of San Francisco	121 sq.km

The variance in areas is due to the varying sizes of the census tracts.

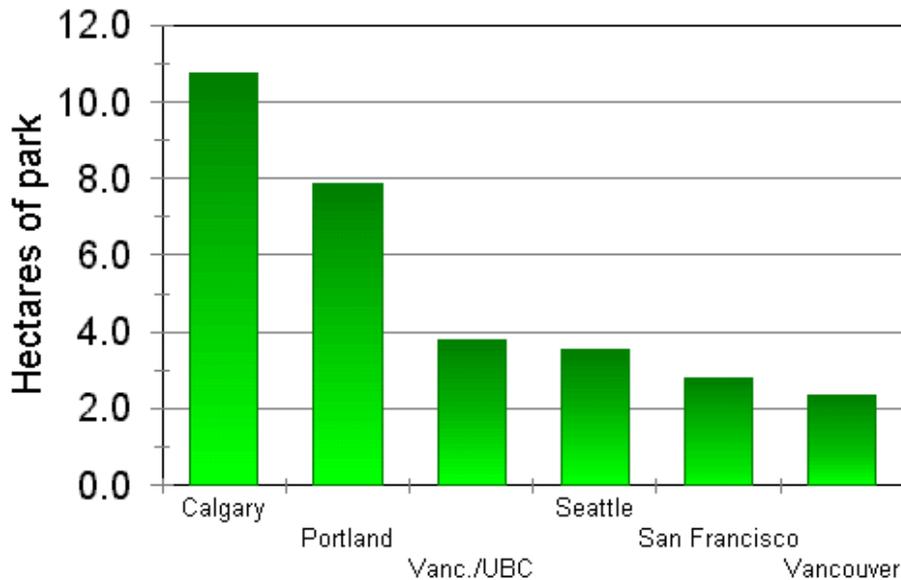


I then counted the amount of parks in these cities (or portions thereof) and came up with the following two charts:

% of Land Devoted to Parks
Comparisons to City of Vancouver



Park Ratio per 1,000 Residents
Comparisons to City of Vancouver



Both charts show that the City of Vancouver lags behind these other cities. Including UBC and Pacific Spirit Park improves our performance but doesn't make us shine.

Why is it then that we think we are so green? I think part of the answer lies in the North Shore. Compared to most metro areas in North America, we have an abundance of green space very close to the central city (within 10 to 15 km of the CBD). This is not the case in many other jurisdictions because the topography near metro areas is often flat (river valleys) or rolling hills, which means that these areas often undergo urban development.

Our mountainous terrain on the north shore, Bowen Island and north of Pitt Meadows/Maple Ridge makes it generally unattractive for urban development, allowing it to stay green.



In Greater Vancouver, we have just under 52,000 hectares (520 sq.km.) of parks - nearly five times the size of the City of Vancouver. (And I haven't included the watersheds that are off-limits to the public). This means that nearly 80% of all our parks in Greater Vancouver are on the North Shore, Bowen Island and north of Pitt Meadows/Maple Ridge.

Is it possible that residents/planners/politicians in the City of Vancouver see the city as very green, when in fact it is the region that is very green?