

Date: May 11, 1999

SUBJECT: Queen Elizabeth Park - Long Range Vision

RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT the Board receive attached consultant report *Long Range Vision For Queen Elizabeth Park*, and adopt its recommendations in principle.
- B. THAT the Board consider including funding for the implementation of Phase 2 recommendations as detailed in this report in the proposed 2000 - 2002 Capital Plan.

BACKGROUND

Status of GVRD Water Reservoir

Queen Elizabeth Park is the home of the Little Mountain Reservoir, owned and operated by the Greater Vancouver Regional District. The reservoir sits on a GVRD-owned parcel of land wholly surrounded by the Park Board-owned park. The reservoir is contained by a well-treed earthen berm.

The GVRD's Water Supply Division has advised the Park Board that the reservoir requires seismic upgrading. The reservoir, including berms and roof structures, is expected to suffer severe damage in a moderate earthquake, thereby threatening the City's drinking water supply.

The scope of the required construction activity remains to be determined. Potentially, the construction may include a re-building of the reservoir including reservoir deck, reservoir walls, surrounding berm, and revisions to inlet/outlet water supply pipelines, affecting an area of nine acres or more in the centre of the park.

Design and construction of the required improvements have not been firmly scheduled, but one scenario currently studied would provide for design of the reservoir and public process in the year 2000. Reservoir re-construction would likely follow during the rainy season of 2001/02. Park restoration would then continue through 2002.

The impact of the construction activity on the park will potentially be significant. The Park Board will need to cooperate with the GVRD in keeping all negative impacts minimal, and in determining use, design and construction standards for all park areas that need to be restored after the reservoir re-construction, including the reservoir deck.

Currently, the reservoir deck holds pay parking as well as defunct water features and partially covered walkways. The deck surface is in poor general condition. Nonetheless, the deck is well-

used by sightseers and tai chi groups.

Need for Long Range Vision

The planned reservoir re-construction creates the need to arrive at a long range vision so that the subsequent park restoration reaffirms what people now like about Queen Elizabeth Park. Of course, it also offers an opportunity to potentially remedy some existing problems. In early summer 1998, the Park Board hired John Talbot and Associates as consultants to facilitate a community consensus on the future of the park. The consultants were asked to conduct an extensive public process taking a broad look at the entire park and addressing many issues that have previously been identified as problematic.

The consultants' final report titled *Long Range Vision For Queen Elizabeth Park* is attached.

This report asks the Board to receive the *Long Range Vision* as the framework for decision-making on the design and programming of a new reservoir roof deck and other park areas, to approve the report's recommendations in principle, and to allocate adequate funding in the proposed 2000 - 2002 Capital Plan for the implementation of phase 2 recommendations as detailed in the body of this report.

DISCUSSION

Public Process

The attached report is the result of an extensive public process involving park visitors, stakeholders, residents, and Park Board staff. More than 800 people were consulted over a six-months period from June to November, 1998, either in public meetings and workshops, in face-to-face interviews or via drop-off surveys.

The overwhelming general response was that people are happy with the park, find it beautiful and care deeply about it, and are satisfied with the current balance of active and passive areas. A survey answered by 284 Vancouver residents and 130 visitors from out of town showed a great similarity in preferences.

Residents largely come in order to go for a walk (51%), they rate the gardens and flowers as the best feature of the park (48%), and the views second (27%). Their main complaint focuses on idling buses (11%). Visitors come for the flowers and gardens (48%), and rate them the best feature (65%), before city views (30%). Their primary reason for dissatisfaction is pay parking (14%). A companion report providing more detail on the survey results and the input received at public workshops has been deposited with the Park Board Clerk for public viewing.

Highlights of the Report

Notwithstanding the overall satisfaction, the public sentiment also found room for improvement, largely in better maintaining, restoring and enhancing the existing positive features of the park.

The public's concerns resulted in close to fifty detailed recommendations contained in the report, and summarised in Appendix A. The major ideas for improvement target distinct park areas:

Reservoir,	envisioned as a beautifully landscaped area with water features, a covered pavilion, exercise zones and much-reduced car parking.
Pathways,	intended to form a loop pathway linking all garden areas as well as reaching out to the surrounding neighbourhoods.
Lower park,	expected to receive further enhancements to the natural areas yielding better water quality in the pond, expanded wetland, and more natural grassy areas.
Lookout,	in need of a view management plan to restore and maintain the major views.
Bus parking,	identified as unsatisfactory and requiring evaluation of alternative locations in the park.
Rose garden,	replaced with a more exciting garden with varied plantings including roses, and a gazebo or other scenic feature for wedding pictures.
Conservatory,	seen with an enlarged gift shop and as a centre for more educational activities including expanded interpretive and general visitor services.

In summary, the public envisions a future for Queen Elizabeth Park that is very similar to the present, only enhanced and improved. There was no appetite for new developments but instead a call to better manage the existing assets, and to protect the park from too much traffic and commercialisation.

Outstanding Issues

■ PRESERVING THE VIEWS

Queen Elizabeth Park includes the highest elevation in Vancouver, and has therefore a long history as a popular place to enjoy the views of Downtown, the North Shore Mountains and Mount Baker. The views are either the most or second-most important reason for people to visit Queen Elizabeth Park, not just for tourists but also for local residents. Not surprisingly, 76% of the 284 residents who completed the survey form were therefore in favour of preserving the major views, and suggested carefully pruning, topping or removing trees as ways to achieve that.

In three public meetings, participants were also in favour of view management. The opposing view that no trees should be pruned, topped or cut in order to preserve views was also strong in these meetings, and at times more vocal.

Staff feel that a compromise is achievable that balances view preservation with minimal intervention. While the consultant report asks for a view management plan, staff are of the opinion that more information is needed up front, that a catalogue of options for the preservation of major view corridors needs to be developed first. It is therefore recommended that staff

investigate the potential options for view preservation, and report back on the attendant impacts and suggested mitigative opportunities.

■ BUS PARKING

The inadequacy of bus parking in Queen Elizabeth Park has long been a public concern, due to public safety issues, noise and pollution, traffic congestion and visual clutter. There was general agreement amongst workshop participants that bus parking should be relocated to another location. The consultant report identifies the need for a study of alternative bus parking locations in or near the park.

Staff agree with the need to address the issue, but recommend that the study be deferred until more clarity exists regarding the logistics of the reservoir re-construction. Since the existing park road system may or may not be adequate for construction traffic accessing the site, it is conceivable that the installation of temporary construction access routes may be necessary. As an unintended side effect, such temporary access might expand the range of options regarding alternative bus parking locations in the park. Staff therefore recommend to not address the issue of bus parking at this stage but await further clarity on the details of the planned construction activities.

■ FUTURE USE OF CONSERVATORY

The public's vision for the conservatory included expanded interpretive programs and general visitor services in connection with an expanded gift shop offering a wider array of products. Staff feel that such suggestions should be placed in the context of a wider discussion regarding the future of the conservatory given that its popularity has waned over the years. Staff have concerns over the amount of subsidy required for the conservatory, and see therefore the need to re-evaluate the Park Board's mandate regarding this institution.

Accordingly, staff recommend that a future use study of the conservatory be conducted to develop a range of options as a basis for discussion.

Implementation

Phase 1 - Immediate Action

The *Long Range Vision for Queen Elizabeth Park* contains many detailed recommendations intended to improve and enhance the park independent of the reservoir re-construction, items that in part can be achieved with existing funding, and that can be implemented immediately. They include items such as continued maintenance of the reservoir deck, increasing control over commercial activities and installing recycling receptacles at the sports court. Other recommended actions are already proceeding, such as inventorying the arboretum and planning for its further expansion, developing interpretive pamphlets, and enhancing the natural areas of the lower park. These recommendations are called Phase 1. Appendix A lists all recommendations, and details in what phase they are to be implemented.

Phase 2 - Year 2000 or later

Most of the actions recommended in the *Long Range Vision for Queen Elizabeth Park* require funding that exceeds current budgets, and are therefore intended to be funded in the 2000/2002 Capital Plan, to be approved by the voters later this year. Phase 2 contains five major work items:

1. A park restoration plan applying the *Long Range Vision* to the design of the park aspects of the re-configured reservoir, including producing a base map with major plant inventory, and a signage and way-finding plan. The park restoration plan focuses on the reservoir area and immediate surroundings including the rose garden, but also includes the park's entire pedestrian pathway system and bus parking. The plan is closely linked to the GVRD's planning, design and public process, and has to coincide time-wise. If the GVRD delays the reservoir project, then the park restoration plan should be delayed as well.
2. A future use study for the Bloedel Conservatory.
3. A naturalisation plan to develop further enhancements to the natural areas in the lower park, along with designing and implementing an interpretive program.
4. A new washroom to be built in the lower park near the picnic area.
5. Park improvements that will be defined in the naturalisation plan or the restoration plan, they may include additional plantings for the arboretum, building of new pedestrian paths, or addressing water quality issues and habitat enhancements.

Implementation Costs

The funding requests in this report do not include the cost of park restoration. The proposed funding is limited to park planning and design work that coincides with the GVRD's reservoir project, and to actions recommended in the *Long Range Vision* that are independent of the reservoir project.

Park restoration plan, base map, plant inventory, signage and way-finding plan.	\$160,000
Conservatory future use study.	\$20,000
Naturalisation plan with interpretive program.	\$60,000
New washroom near picnic area.	\$100,000
Park improvements.	\$160,000
Total:	\$500,000

Of the \$500,000 requested, \$160,000 are needed to accompany the GVRD planning and design

process for the reservoir, while \$340,000 are intended to begin investing into the future of the park as developed in the *Long Range Vision*.

Cost of Park Restoration

The cost of park restoration after the GVRD has re-constructed the Little Mountain Reservoir cannot be estimated at this time pending more detailed information regarding the scope and specifics of the reservoir project. In addition, GVRD and the Park Board have not yet negotiated a cost-sharing formula for park restoration costs.

In principle, the GVRD should be expected to restore the construction site to park, and to carry all related expenses as part of the project. Commensurate with the public's expectation for this highly prominent location, the GVRD should fund restoration of reservoir, berm, access routes, pipeline corridors, and any other affected areas, to an extent customary in any infrastructure work that takes place in a high-quality public setting. Whatever the GVRD destroys, removes, alters or otherwise adversely impacts they should be expected to make good according to quality standards agreed to by the Park Board, including mediating for the potential loss of any major vegetation and any impact on wildlife habitat, and mitigating for the temporary loss of public enjoyment of the park.

However, the Park Board may desire a degree of park development beyond what the GVRD can reasonably be expected to fund. Those costs cannot be estimated at this time because they are contingent upon the Park Board's park restoration plan as well as the scope and specifics of the GVRD's reservoir project. Planning of reservoir re-construction and park restoration will have to proceed in close cooperation between GVRD and Park Board. Once more detailed notions have been developed, estimates for the projected work can be obtained and cost sharing between the agencies can be negotiated.

SUMMARY

The Board is asked to receive the attached consultant report titled *Long Range Vision for Queen Elizabeth Park*, to approve its recommendations in principle, and to consider including funding for the implementation of phase 2 in the proposed 2000 - 2002 Capital Plan.

Prepared by:
Planning and Operations
Board of Parks & Recreation
Vancouver, BC
TCD

#	RECOMMENDATION	IMPLEMENTATION PHASE
1.	UPPER RESERVOIR	
a)	Continued maintenance of reservoir deck.	Ongoing.
b)	Design and programming study for reservoir deck.	Phase 2, restoration plan.
c)	Improve directional signage and lighting.	Phase 2, restoration plan and signage plan.
d)	Transition plan to minimize disruption for exercise groups and parking.	Phase 2, restoration plan.
e)	Retain maximum vegetation, replace all removed trees.	Phase 2, restoration plan.
f)	Assign programming responsibility for reservoir deck.	Phase 1.
g)	Regulate commercial activities, no un-licensed vending.	Phase 1.
2.	PLAZA	
	Conservatory	
a)	New or enhanced exhibits at Conservatory.	Deferred, pending future use study in Phase 2.
b)	Develop educational display and study area at Conservatory.	Deferred, pending future use study in Phase 2.
c)	Develop ties to Botanical Gardens and Aquarium.	Phase 1.
d)	Enlarge gift shop and entrance way.	Deferred, pending future use study in Phase 2.
e)	Provide educational materials re. park and Conservatory.	Deferred, pending future use study in Phase 2.
f)	Sell stamps at expanded gift shop, provide post box.	Deferred, pending future use study in Phase 2.
g)	Coordinate general park visitor services at gift shop.	Deferred, pending future use study in Phase 2.
h)	Develop marketing program for Conservatory.	Deferred, pending future use study in Phase 2.
	Lookout	
i)	Install directional map and info board.	Phase 2, signage plan.
j)	Improve landscaping, more benches, better paving at lookout.	Phase 2, restoration plan.

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k)	Regulate all commercial activities tightly, no un-licensed vending.	Phase 1.
	Food Services	
l)	More affordable and varied food at coffee shop, or develop alternative food outlet.	Phase 1.
m)	Have take-out window at coffee shop.	Phase 1.
n)	Improve directional signage to coffee shop and restaurant.	Phase 1.
3.	GARDENS	
a)	Develop garden for the visually impaired.	Phase 2, restoration plan.
b)	Establish volunteer group to provide visitor services.	Phase 1 and 2.
c)	Improve plant interpretation, more signage.	Phase 2, signage plan.
d)	Re-design Rose Garden.	Phase 2, restoration plan.
4.	LOWER PARK AREA	
a)	Continue arboretum.	Ongoing.
b)	Prepare sustainable vegetation management plan.	Phase 2, naturalisation plan.
c)	Enhance forest, retain underbrush.	Phase 1 and 2, naturalisation plan.
d)	Consider creating more natural grassy areas.	Phase 1 and 2, naturalisation plan.
e)	Improve water quality in ponds.	Phase 2, naturalisation plan.
f)	Consider creating or expanding wetlands.	Phase 2, naturalisation plan.
g)	Consider installing washroom near picnic grounds.	Phase 2.
5.	SPORT FACILITIES	
a)	New facilities only within existing land base for sports.	No new facilities are planned..
b)	Mini-golf course only if it fits into park and is well landscaped.	Not currently planned.
c)	Improve usage of lawn bowling facility.	Phase 1.

#	RECOMMENDATION	IMPLEMENTATION PHASE
d)	Improve washroom signage, refurbish washroom.	Phase 1 or 2 depending on cost.
e)	Install recycling receptacles at sports court and elsewhere.	Phase 1.
6.	CIRCULATION	
6.1	Pedestrian	
a)	Improved pathways to neighbourhood.	Phase 2, restoration plan.
b)	Directional information for accessible pathways.	Phase 2, signage plan.
c)	Loop pathway connecting gardens.	Phase 2, restoration plan.
6.2	Tour Buses	
a)	Evaluate alternative bus parking and routing options.	Phase 2, restoration plan.
6.3	Other	
a)	No increase in parking or pavement.	Ongoing.
b)	Keep cyclists on paved roads.	Ongoing.
c)	Consider additional comments.	Ongoing.
7.	VIEWS	
a)	Prepare view management plan.	Deferred, pending review of options.
b)	Public process on view management plan.	Deferred, pending review of options.
8.	Management and Implementation	
a)	Allocate adequate resources.	See Board Report.
b)	Develop action plan for next 1 to 2 years.	See Board Report.
c)	Prepare accurate base map.	Phase 2, restoration plan.