

July 9, 1999

**SUBJECT: DR. SUN YAT-SEN CLASSICAL CHINESE GARDEN -
PAGODA PROPOSAL AND EXPANSION PLANS**

RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT the Board accept in principle the donation of a seven storey pagoda to be built in the Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Park and operated by the Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Garden Society of Vancouver subject to the following conditions:**
- 1) That all design, financial and legal requirements be to the satisfaction of the General Manager and Director of Legal Services.**
 - 2) That the Board authorize the preparation of a Memorandum of Understanding (M.O.U.) governing the development and operation of this facility.**
- B. THAT the Board give approval in principle to the Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Garden Society to expand the Classical Garden in front of the present gift shop for the purpose of an education/presentation hall, public washrooms, a volunteer lounge and a larger gift shop.**
- C. THAT the Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Society carry out appropriate public consultation on both of these initiatives.**

BACKGROUND

The Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden is the first authentic classical Chinese garden built outside China. It was built in 1985 and 1986 on City owned land using 52 craftsmen from Suzhou, China. The cost of the Garden was \$6 million and was funded through all levels of government as well as private donations.

The Garden currently receives 100,000 visitors a year and is among the top ten tourist attractions in Vancouver. It is also a cultural link between the Chinese and non-Chinese communities both within and outside Vancouver. Active programming at the Garden includes volunteer led tours, musical performances, art exhibits, horticultural displays, poetry readings, lectures and the celebration of Chinese festivals.

The Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Garden Society of Vancouver is a non-profit society with a mandate to operate the Garden. It currently has a membership of about 450 who each year elect a Board of Trustees to oversee the affairs of the Garden.

DISCUSSION

The Board leases the Garden to the Society for a nominal \$1 per year. The current lease expires on July 31, 2001 and there is a stipulation in the agreement that one year prior to the expiry of the term the parties should open discussions concerning the terms of a new agreement.

The relationship between the Board and the Society has always been cordial with the Society having virtually a free hand in managing the Garden, except for repairs, maintenance and horticulture. Initially the Garden paid for all its expenses, but due to financial difficulties experienced in the late 1980's an agreement was made in 1991 whereby the Board would assist in some maintenance costs. The value of these costs is approximately \$67,500 per year and has continued from that date, although at the time it was anticipated that this would be a two year requirement.

The Society is also faced at this time with a restoration program, projected to cost \$700,000, for the deteriorating garden roofs. This is the result of the failure of traditional construction methods, due mainly to the high amount of rainfall in Vancouver. The restoration program will be funded through a commitment of the Board, a Federal/Provincial infrastructure grant and the Society and will take place this fall. The roof will be rebuilt using concrete instead of paper pulp and plaster.

The following is an outline of the two proposals that require the Board's approval in principle before further design, planning and fundraising can proceed:

1. The Pagoda

An anonymous donor has proposed to donate the entire construction cost to build a seven storey pagoda in the public park adjacent to the Classical Garden. It would be modeled after a long-standing original in Chuan Zhou, Fujian Province in China.

It is believed the pagoda, with an estimated cost of \$1.25 million would be a desirable addition to the park, Chinatown and Vancouver in general. The original park plan envisaged a tea house in this location, but funding shortages resulted in its deletion. The architect, Mr Joe Wai, is proposing to build the pagoda with reinforced concrete and steel decking and fibreglass panels for the walls and eaves. In devising the design much attention will be paid to maintenance concerns from staff and the fact that any new building in our parks requires ongoing care and attention.

It is believed that a Memorandum of Understanding on the maintenance of the pagoda is required so that both the Board and the Society are clear on their responsibilities in the future. The donor is also concerned that the structure be adequately maintained and further discussions will take place on a satisfactory M.O.U.

The Society is willing to manage the operation and admissions to the pagoda, which will have an observation deck on the top floor. Again, further discussions will take place on this issue, but it is feasible that admission tickets could be sold as part of the Classical Garden entry fee from the existing cashiers in the Garden.

2. Classical Gardens Expansion

The Society has sent a business case for a proposed expansion to the Classical Gardens included as Appendix 'A'. They are requesting approval to build and use the land in front of the present gift shop on Carrall Street. The expansion would be approximately 3800 sq. ft, one storey and integrated with the existing buildings as identified in Appendix 'A'. The expansion includes the following:

Education/Presentation Hall

This multi-purpose, enclosed facility would house education programs, exhibitions and be available for the rental of function space. With such a centre, programming could be expanded so that the community could enjoy the Garden throughout the year.

Interior Courtyard

This courtyard will be open outdoor space between the new Education Centre and the Classical Garden.

Volunteer Resource/Rest Area

Currently volunteers share space with Gardens staff in a crowded ticket office. This area is often congested and not conducive to learning and preparing for tours.

Visitor Washrooms

The Gardens lack public washrooms and the nearest ones are in the Chinese Cultural Centre. They are inconveniently located and in recent years the Centre have been charging the Society a fairly high rental fee for their use.

Expanded Gift Shop

The small size of the Gift Shop hinders the potential of increased sales. With additional space the shop can carry inventory not presently represented but in high demand. The new shop will allow for improved displays and will accommodate a better traffic flow.

In order to commence a fundraising campaign the society requests approval in principle by the Board for the expanded areas.

SUMMARY

The Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Society is bringing forward two exciting proposals at this time that will enhance the existing park and Classical Garden.

The pagoda proposal is the result of a very generous donation to the citizens of Vancouver. It is believed that outstanding concerns about ongoing maintenance can be resolved successfully through a Memorandum of Understanding between the Board and Garden Society.

The Classical Gardens expansion is an assortment of improvements that have been long discussed by the trustees of the Gardens. It has the potential of creating an ongoing revenue base - largely through rentals - which will assist in covering the Garden operating costs. A successful fundraising campaign is now needed in order to carry out the projects outlined in this report.

As planning goes forward on these additions staff and the Society will work out an overall maintenance funding agreement which will be brought to the Board early next year.

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Attachment