



Date: August 16, 2000

TO: Board Members - Parks and Recreation
FROM: General Manager - Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: RILEY HILLCREST PARK MASTER PLAN

RECOMMENDATION

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| <p>A. THAT the Board approve the Riley Hillcrest Parks Master Plan, attached to this report, as the basis for long term development of park and recreation facilities in the area; and</p> <p>B. THAT the Board specifically approve the proposed location of the Millennium Sports Facility for the Phoenix Gymnastics Club and the Pacific Indoor Bowls Club at the intersection of Midlothian Drive and Clancy Loranger Way, as described in “Master Plan Scenario 2.”</p> |
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POLICY

The Board previously approved the joint proposal of the Phoenix Gymnastics Club and the Pacific Indoor Bowls Club to build an athletic facility (now called the Millennium Sports Facility) in the Nat Bailey Stadium Park area. At the same time the Board authorized the preparation of a Master Plan to guide future development for Hillcrest Park, Nat Bailey Stadium Park and Riley Park, and to make a final determination for the siting of the gymnastics/indoor bowls facility.

BACKGROUND

A consultant study to develop a Master Plan for Riley and Hillcrest Parks was initiated last year to address a number of emergent developments and concerns, which were itemized in the study Terms of Reference (see Report Appendix D). Of perceived urgency at the time were the following:

- siting of the Millennium Sports Facility and the Little Mountain Little League clubhouse,
- identifying expansion/renovation possibilities for the Riley Community Centre, including strategies for dealing with the ageing Percy Norman Pool,
- resolving the future of Nat Bailey Stadium, in light of the then-recent departure of the Triple A professional baseball franchise.

The consultants selected to develop the Master Plan, from amongst those responding to the proposal call, was a group headed by Urban Forum Associates.

The issues of the Nat Bailey tenancy — at least for the short term — and the siting of the Little League clubhouse were resolved before the study actually commenced. The Master Plan exercise, however, fully explored potential opportunities and constraints within the study area, and various external relationships in a broader context (for example, with the Queen Elizabeth Park Vision Plan). However the study could only reach tentative conclusions with respect to the future of Percy Norman Pool, deferring to the outcome of the recently launched Aquatic Services Review. Similarly, as the long range future of professional level baseball at Nat Bailey remains uncertain, the Master Plan makes no assumptions regarding the stadium beyond the status quo.

In the process of Master Plan development the Consultant team met with all identified stakeholders with interests in the study area, as documented in Appendix A to the Master Plan Report. Furthermore, the team involved representatives of the Riley Park Community Association as well as Park Board staff in a three-day design workshop to examine options for the expansion and renovation of the Riley Park Community Centre.

DISCUSSION

The Master Plan report is a well-organized, clear and thorough document, and includes (reproduced as “Appendix A” to this report) an Executive Summary. The Master Plan advances a number of design program elements for the study area, including pedestrian and vehicle circulation improvements, landscaping features and allowance for future expansion of the existing recreation facilities and clubs. This program would be implemented over the long range, with further design detailing at the onset of any given capital project.

The Master Plan also presents two alternate scenarios which bear on options for community centre expansion. The first scenario retains the Riley Park children’s playfield in its current location, which as a consequence restricts development of the Centre more or less to its current footprint. The second scenario proposes the relocation of the sportfield to the area between Nat Bailey Stadium and the Vancouver Racquets Club, the site tentatively proposed for the Millennium Sports Facility. In this scenario, the Millennium Sports Facility would instead be built at the intersection of Midlothian Drive and Clancy Loranger Way.

This new location is marginally farther from the nearest transit service on Main Street. It also removes the facility somewhat from an immediate proximity to the Riley Park Community Centre and the Vancouver Racquets Club, and easily achieved opportunities therefore for cross programming. However, in the opinion of staff, these drawbacks are outweighed by several points in favor of the new location. For example:

- This is the more flexible option in terms of overall study area development, in that it enables the eventual relocation of the sports field from Riley Park to resolve present conflicting uses (organized play vs. unstructured neighbourhood use). In addition, moving the sports field opens up more options with respect to possible community centre

expansion,

- The new location draws traffic flow away from nearby residential frontages, and specifically off Ontario Street, a designated Greenway,
- Construction at the new location might take advantage of grade changes to reduce the need for excavation and to admit natural light to the lower level of the facility (at the originally proposed location, the lawn bowls club would be completely below grade).
- The new site facilitates any potential programming and other cooperative relationships that the Millennium Sports proponents may wish to explore with the Little League and other Hillcrest field users, and
- The new site has superior views and is at a visually prominent location.

In addition, the Midlothian at Clancy Loranger location is either the first choice or an acceptable alternative on the part of local residents, community centre users and others surveyed during the consultation process. Of the major stakeholder groups affected by this decision, the Riley Community Centre Association is strongly in favour of the proposed location, while the Vancouver Racquets Club and the Millennium Sports Facility proponents have given qualified support, with the following issues noted:

- The Millennium Sports Facility proponents see inherent advantages in being connected with the other recreational facilities on Ontario, as well as having a shorter walking distance to the bus service on Main Street. A strongly defined and well-lit pedestrian connection along the north and south edges of the stadium, as described in the Master Plan, will help address these concerns.
- The Vancouver Racquets Club also desires a good connection between their premises and the Millennium Sport Facility. Their primary concern, however, is that adequate allowance be made for any eventual expansion of the Racquet Club. Both of the Master Plan scenarios include provision for future expansion to an equal degree.

The decision regarding the location of the Millennium Sports Facility is the most immediate application of the Master Plan. However, the Master Plan will certainly remain a useful reference for many years to come when the Board has decisions to make regarding development of Riley, Nat Bailey Stadium and Hillcrest Parks.

SUMMARY

The Master Plan outlines a cohesive and comprehensive guide for the future development of the Riley Hillcrest Park area. The Board is asked to endorse this vision and, as an initial step, to approve the proposed location of the Millennium Sports Facility at Midlothian Drive and Clancy Loranger Way.

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