



Date: July 11, 2002

TO: Board Members - Parks and Recreation
FROM: General Manager - Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: Still Creek Rehabilitation and Enhancement

RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT the Board reaffirm the following objectives for Still Creek in the Grandview-Boundary Industrial Area:**
- to maintain the creek as an open watercourse and reclaim culverted portions of the creek;
 - to enhance the appearance of the creek as an amenity for the area;
 - to provide for a continuous public pathway parallel to the creek; and
 - to improve the storm water management capabilities of the creek related to water flows and water quality.
- B. THAT the Board endorse the 10 year and 50 year action plans contained in the Still Creek Rehabilitation and Enhancement Study dated March 2002 as the basis for reviewing rezoning and development permit applications, for guiding possible real estate acquisitions by the City, and for developing more detailed plans for Still Creek.**

POLICY

On July 11, 1988, the Board endorsed the following recommendations, contained in a concurrent report to Council:

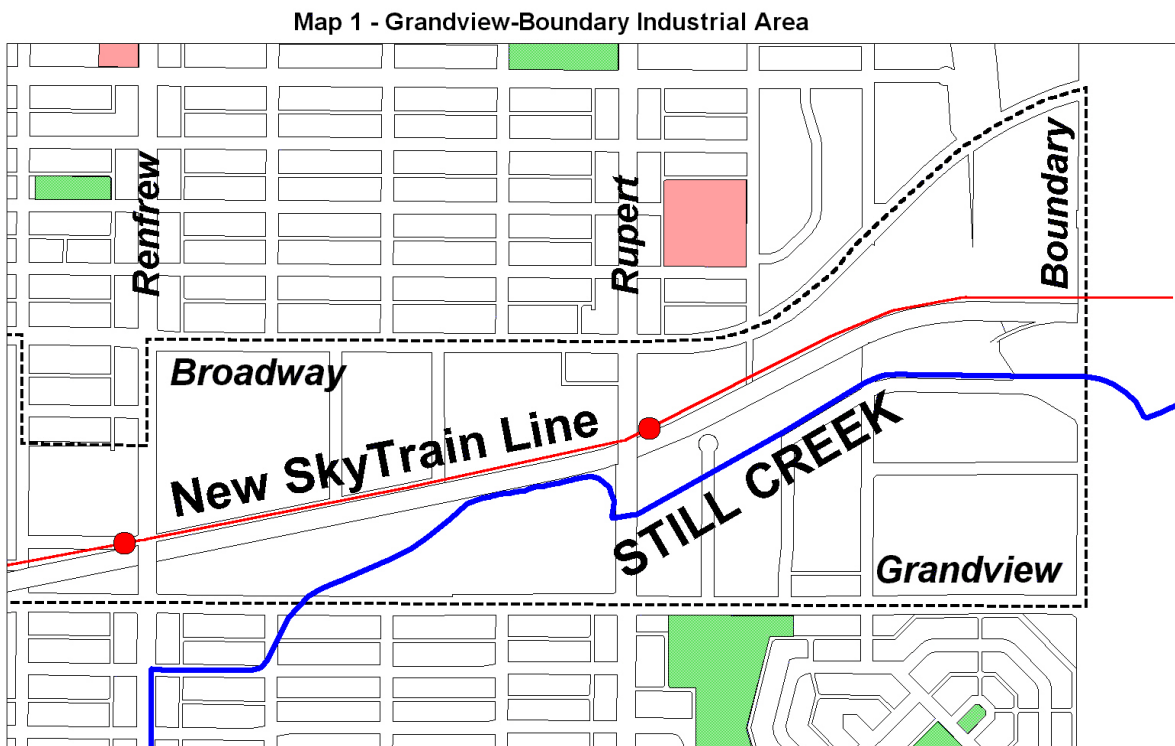
“That Council confirm its objective for Still Creek, which is to maintain the open state of the watercourse, and to seek future improvements, including the reclamation of culverted portions, to enhance the appearance of the Creek as an amenity which contributes to the image of this area, and ultimately to provide public access to a continuous pedestrian/bicycle pathway linking Burnaby Lake to the B.C. Parkway at 29th Avenue Station.”

“That the Director of Planning, in consultation with the General Manager of Parks and Recreation, develop standards for Still Creek improvement, including shoreline treatment, landscaping and pathway design, for report back to Council.”

“That the Director of Planning also continue to examine the need for future public acquisition of suitable rights-of-way across properties traversed by Still Creek, in order to ultimately secure public access along the open watercourse, and continue to report requests for culverting to City Council, with a view to City negotiation to acquire the desired right-of-way or property.”

BACKGROUND

The City of Vancouver has been working on various planning issues in the Grandview-Boundary Industrial Area since 1998 (see map 1). The work focused on the plans for the two new SkyTrain stations, new zoning for high-technology industry and “highway-oriented retail”, an area-wide land use and transportation plan, a detailed study of Still Creek (which runs east-west through the area), and methods to finance public amenities for the workers and visitors of the transformed industrial area.



On July 25th, Council will consider three staff reports on the study area, all of which have implications for the future of Still Creek. These reports are based in part on a consultant study prepared by Lees & Associates, Karen Hurley & Associates, Hudema Consulting Group and Dayton & Knight Consulting Engineers. The consultant’s report, entitled “Still Creek Rehabilitation and Enhancement Study” and dated March 2002, is an in-depth study of the creek, examining recreation, stormwater and habitat issues.

Park Board has a longstanding interest in Still Creek. In 1988, both the Board and Council approved a comprehensive set of policies and actions that aimed at protecting and enhancing Still Creek. As a result, the open watercourse on the Superstore site (3185 Grandview Highway) was protected, and a new zoning by-law which stated ‘Still Creek shall be retained and enhanced as an open watercourse’ was adopted. These positive steps were tempered by the fact that about 120 meters of Still Creek were culverted in 1989 - this occurred because the Rupert Square development (2750 Rupert Street) preceded the new zoning by-law.

Today, the status of Still Creek in the Grandview-Boundary Industrial Area is as follows: about 550 meters of the 1,400 meters (i.e. 40%) is culverted. About 325 meters of culvert are on privately-owned parcels of land, while the remaining 225 meters of culvert is under streets or the Trans-Canada Highway.

Still Creek is located within a right-of-way that is registered in favour of the Greater Vancouver Sewerage & Drainage District (GVSD). This right-of-way is about 15 meters in width (it varies slightly from this figure in a couple of locations). Given that Still Creek is about 13 meters wide from top of bank to top of bank, this only leaves about one meter on each side as a riparian zone, which is obviously not wide enough to accommodate a walking path parallel to the creek.

DISCUSSION

There are three important reasons for preserving, restoring and enhancing Still Creek in the Grandview-Boundary Industrial Area:

- it will provide an important recreational amenity: Still Creek is part of a larger recreation corridor that includes Renfrew Ravine Park, Burnaby Lake and Brunette River (a distance of 18 kilometers). This corridor is considered to have significant recreational and natural value and, as a result, was included in Greater Vancouver’s Green Zone in 1993;
- it will improve the quality of the water in Still Creek, Burnaby Lake and Brunette River, thus contributing to enhanced fish habitat and reducing the quantity of contaminants that reach the Fraser River; and
- it will provide better management of rain water during and after storms, reducing the risk of flooding in Vancouver and Burnaby.

The consultant report outlines a long-term vision for Still Creek in the Grandview-Boundary Industrial Area, with a planning horizon of 10 to 50 years (see Appendix A). ‘Significant changes to the alignment and culverted nature of Still Creek are recommended. (...) The many options provided in the 10-50 year Action Plan combine to form a long term vision for restoring Still Creek, while maximizing stormwater management, recreation and education values.’

Proposed enhancements would lead to:

- a continuous corridor for Still Creek (totally unculverted) and associated riparian zone, which would include a pedestrian path and significant vegetation, interrupted only by Rupert and Skeena Streets; the width of this corridor should ideally be 35 meters, but could be reduced to 25 meters if necessary;
- wherever feasible, relocation of Still Creek adjacent to the rail corridor so that privately-owned parcels are not located between Still Creek and the rail corridor; and
- the creation of two wetlands, which would serve as storage capacity during rain storms, provide opportunities for biofiltration and habitat for waterfowl, and become important open space nodes along the linear corridor.

The consultant also prepared a shorter-term plan, with a planning horizon of 10 years (see Appendix B), recognizing that creating a wider and relocated corridor for Still Creek will likely take several decades. The enhancements are more modest in scale, focusing on visual improvements, interpretation and education.

Based on the content of the consultant report and the three Council reports, staff recommend that the Board endorse two motions. The first relates to the objectives for Still Creek in the Grandview-Boundary Industrial Area. It is clear that the consultant study embraces and builds on the objectives approved by the Board and Council in 1988. However, the fact that they are 14 years old may lead some parties to possibly challenge these objectives. Staff therefore recommend that the Board reaffirm the following objectives for Still Creek:

- to maintain the creek as an open watercourse and reclaim culverted portions of the creek;
- to enhance the appearance of the creek as an amenity for the area;
- to provide for a continuous public pathway parallel to the creek; and
- to improve the storm water management capabilities of the creek related to water flows and water quality.

Staff also recommend that the Board endorse the 10 and 50 year action plans contained in the Still Creek Rehabilitation and Enhancement Study dated March 2002 as the basis for reviewing rezoning and development permit applications, for guiding possible real estate acquisitions by the City, and for developing more detailed plans for Still Creek.

This recommendation is timely because the industrial area, which was developed for manufacturing and warehousing in the 1950s and 1960s, is in the process of regeneration: new uses include high-technology offices, ‘highway-oriented retail’ (i.e. ‘big box retail’), and studios for film and television production. The opening of the Millennium SkyTrain Line later this year, with stations at Renfrew and Rupert, will likely accelerate the speed of regeneration in the next two decades.

CONCLUSION

Policy approved by the Board and Council in the late 1980s entrenched the notion of protecting and daylighting Still Creek. As the Grandview-Boundary industrial area is transformed in the upcoming decades, the City has a unique opportunity to provide a wonderful recreational amenity and to ensure that Still Creek is part of a larger recreational and natural corridor connecting Renfrew Ravine Park to Burnaby Lake and the Fraser River.

Prepared by:
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MD

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