



Date: August 20, 2003

TO: Board Members - Parks and Recreation
FROM: General Manager - Parks and Recreation

SUBJECT: Donation of Public Art in Coal Harbour Park

RECOMMENDATION

That the Board give final approval for the installation of the public art selected according to the established public art processes and donated by Grosvenor, on the bullnose in the northeast corner of Harbour Green Park, Coal Harbour.

POLICY

Park Board Arts Policy: Goal #4

“To make the arts an essential component of Park Board policies, planning, operations, parks and facilities.”

Park Board Arts Policy: Recommendation 4.5

“Find ways to increase the resources available for the arts in development of facilities and parks.”

The City of Vancouver’s Acceptance Guidelines for Long Term Gifts of Public Art: developed by the City of Vancouver’s Art in Public Places Committee (now the Civic Public Art Committee) and adopted by the Park Board in 1988.

(The Guidelines were updated in June 2001.)

“The purpose of these guidelines is to ensure that only art work of the highest quality is added to the existing strengths of Vancouver’s public spaces and evolving cityscape.”

BACKGROUND

The Civic Public Art Committee advises the City of Vancouver on artist selection processes and on public art matters generally.

Grosvenor is an international property group. The Company wishes to donate a substantial piece of public art to the City of Vancouver in celebration of its 50th anniversary in North America.

In March, 2003, Grosvenor approached the City's Office of Cultural Affairs with the offer and on March 12th Park Board staff met with Grosvenor and City staff to begin discussions on the process for the donation.

Grosvenor was asked to consider three potential public art sites within the general Coal Harbour area. They selected the bullnose plaza at the N.E. corner of Harbour Green Park. This plaza had been designed purposely to hold public art.

On April 14th 2003 the Civic Public Art Committee approved the process for the selection of artwork for this donation.

A non-binding Letter of Agreement between the City of Vancouver and Grosvenor for the Donation of Public Artwork was signed. This agreement details the process for the selection of the public artwork (Appendix 1.) Item 3 of the agreement details the need for two Park Board approvals.

At the May 12th 2003, Park Board meeting, a report on the progress of the donation and details of the public art selection process was presented. The first approval was unanimously passed.

"That the Board give conditional approval for the use of the bullnose in the northeast corner of Harbour Green Park Coal Harbour as a site for public art donated by Grosvenor, with final approval by the Board following the completion of the established public art selection process."

The established public art selection process is now complete.

All costs of the selection process were borne by Grosvenor.

DISCUSSION

The processes established for selecting an artwork for this site were followed rigorously and directed by an experienced art consultant hired by the donor. The 'Public Art Call' (Appendix 2) included considerations provided by Park Board staff. The selection panel was composed of art professionals, a resident of the Coal Harbour neighbourhood and a representative from Grosvenor. Final selection was based on detailed proposals and maquettes submitted by the three short-listed artists.

The artist selected to produce the artwork, Liz Magor, has an international reputation, is a resident of Vancouver and has already successfully completed a public artwork for the city. A major retrospective of her work was recently mounted at the Vancouver Art Gallery.

The proposed artwork references the history, at the same time as it alludes to the future of the site (Appendix 3.) All considerations developed for the site by Park Board staff were addressed in the proposal. Preliminary technical reviews and maintenance projections were all to the satisfaction of Park Board and City staff.

Community consultation included resident representation on the selection panel, signage on site announcing the proposed installation of a donated artwork at that location, a preview evening for the community and standard 2 week response periods to these notifications.

Signage was posted on the railing on site at the beginning of the last week of May 2003. It informed passersby, both community members and the wider public, of the proposed donation of a work of public art for that site. It also indicated a preview of the work would be scheduled at Coal Harbour Community Centre. Comments were to be directed to Susan Gordon whose phone, fax, email and mailing address were all listed. The sign elicited no response from the public.

The community preview was held on August 7, 2003. Neighbourhood notification of the “Preview of Public Artwork” open house included posters at the public art site, at the community centre and delivered to buildings adjacent to the site. Wherever possible pamphlets were available alongside the posters. Managers of the surrounding buildings were given pamphlets for distribution to the residents. This notification was completed on August 1st, 2003.

Twenty-five adults (and several children) attended the preview, the majority of whom were interested in considering the written and visual materials provided and discussing the work with the consultant, staff and artist. Members of the West End Community Centre Association (Coal Harbour Community Centre falls under their umbrella) also attended. Overall verbal response was positive and appreciative of the opportunity to learn about the work. Comments ranged from appreciation of the historical allusions in the work to fascination with the actual physical quality of the work as represented by the sample section of wall provided by the artist. Negative comments included concerns about views being impeded, dislike of the design and its inappropriateness, and a caution that any lights must be installed in such a manner that even on dark, foggy evenings, boats approaching the docks could become confused about navigation.

Nine written comments were submitted at the preview, three were enthusiastic, six were negative. Pamphlets and comment sheets were also available for people to take away. One pamphlet was returned later with negative comments. Six email responses were also received, (one respondent had also written a response at the preview), four did not include their addresses, (two of whom specifically indicated they did not live in the neighbourhood), all were negative, citing similar reasons as above (Appendix 4.)

In response to a request from a member of the public, Grovesnor's public art consultant has prepared a descriptive panel about the work for the Coal Harbour Community Centre lobby. An information session about the public art program and current and future public artworks for Coal Harbour will be presented by the City's Public Art Manager on September 3rd (upon his return from holidays). Notification of the information session will be sent to all respondents as well as distributed in the same ways the preview was announced.

In summary, the response to locating public art on this site was neutral; the neighbourhood representative on the selection panel was pleased with results of the selection process; and 18 individuals responded neutrally or positively while 12 responded negatively to the selected artwork. The outcome of the community consultation processes is therefore 'neutral to positive'.

This donation is one of the most significant to be offered to the city and provides an exciting opportunity to enhance this currently vacant public space. Grosvenor has complied with all of the requirements made by the Park Board and City and borne all of the attendant additional costs on top of the \$500,000 they already committed for the commission, and the minimum 10% maintenance fee. This process and outcome will be a demonstration to the philanthropic community of the possibilities of working with the City of Vancouver for the benefit of the city's residents. Future donors will review Grosvenor's experience in order to assist them with their own decision-making.

This proposal has come to the Board with a very tight time line. Grosvenor would like to have the final approval in place by early September in order for their donation to be announced in October during their 50th anniversary celebration.

SUMMARY

The public art selection process approved by the Public Art Committee and in accordance with the Acceptance Guidelines for Long Term Gifts of Public Art has been successfully completed for the bullnose in the northeast corner of Harbour Green Park Coal Harbour. All costs of the process have been borne by Grosvenor as part of their donation to the city.

The artist selected to produce the artwork, Liz Magor, has an international reputation, is a resident of Vancouver and has already successfully completed a public artwork for the city. The selected artwork references the history of the site as well as alluding to the future, and meets all preliminary requirements of Park Board and City staff.

The community consultation revealed a majority 'neutral to positive' response. (A representative from the neighbourhood participated in the selection process and was positive about the outcome. Response to any public art being located on the site was neutral and individual response to the artist's proposal was mixed.)

This very generous gift of a significant piece of public art, is one which will provide a lasting legacy for the people of Vancouver. It will also demonstrate to the philanthropic community, the benefits of working with the Public Art Program to select a work of particular relevance to the people of the city, should they wish to make a similar donation.

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