



Date: July 15, 2004

TO: Board Members - Parks and Recreation
FROM: General Manager - Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: Southeast False Creek - Choices and Directions

RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT the Board recommend to Council approval of an amendment to the Southeast False Creek (SEFC) Policy Statement requiring a full-size community centre including a community boating facility for non-motorized boating [see B2 (b) in the Appendix A to the attached Council Report];*
- B. THAT the Board recommend to Council confirmation of the existing policy that requires a public park of 26.4 acres in SEFC [B4 (a)];*
- C. THAT the Board recommend to Council approval of an amendment to the SEFC Policy Statement seeking a more active water's edge [B6 (b)];*
- D. THAT the Board recommend to Council confirmation of existing policy seeking the provision of significant urban agriculture in SEFC (D2); and*
- E. THAT the Board recommend to Council approval of Recommendation J. in the Council Report seeking in part a balanced distribution of park across the site.*

POLICY

The Park Board provides advice to Council on park and recreation issues in major planning projects.

BACKGROUND

Council is scheduled to receive the attached Council Report on choices and directions for the planning of SEFC. The Council Report seeks direction on issues raised by the public, stakeholders, advisory groups and Councillors in their review of the revised official development plan application received in February 2004.

DISCUSSION

This Board Report provides further illustration of those issues most central to the mandate of the Park Board. The more detailed discussion of the various items, the arguments for or against proposed alternatives, and the financial implications are contained in the Council Report and not duplicated here. This Board Report therefore needs to be read in conjunction with the Council Report. The four issues most important to the delivery of parks and recreation opportunities are:

1. Size and type of community facility (B2, Appendix A, pages 4 and 5 of 32);
2. Amount of park (B4, Appendix A, pages 8 and 9 of 32);
3. More active water's edge (B6, Appendix A, pages 11 and 12 of 27); and
4. Urban agriculture (D2, Appendix A, page 29 of 29).

1. Size and Type of community facility (B2, Appendix A, pages 4 and 5 of 32)

On average, Vancouver has one community centre per 25,000 residents. Numerically speaking, the projected SEFC population of 15,000 people does not meet this criterion, therefore the initial plan [B2 (a)] was to serve the SEFC residents in part through the new Mount Pleasant Community Centre, and in part with a small satellite facility in SEFC. This plan has had critics throughout the SEFC planning process, based on the premise that a complete neighbourhood requires a full-service community centre at a central location within easy walking distance. The alternative choice [B2 (b)] now offered combines a full-service community centre with a community boating facility that supports, facilitates, promotes and expands recreational non-motorized boating in False Creek, as public interest in kayaks, dragon boats, and other non-motorized water craft is expected to continue to grow.

This community centre/boating facility concept has not been fully developed, but the Park Board has sufficient experience partnering with not-for-profit boating societies to begin the development of realistic concepts.

While the capital investment required for this combination of community centre/boating facility is significantly higher than for the original service model, the improvement in service and community benefits may justify such expenditure.

In the context of the discussions on a potential program for the community centre, the provision of an indoor pool and/or an ice rink has been suggested. The Vancouver Park Board's long term strategies for the provision of pools and rinks do not support SEFC as a desirable location for either. It is instead proposed that the community boating facility be considered as a contribution in lieu of providing pool or rink.

Park Board staff recommend to support the alternative choice consisting of larger full-service community centre and community boating facility [B2 (b)].

2. Amount of Park (B4, Appendix A, pages 8 and 9 of 32)

Council, when approving the SEFC Policy Statement, endorsed creating a public park along the water of 26.4 acres, more than half the City-owned land. At the time, this amount of park land was in excess of meeting the park standard for the projected SEFC population, however, this is no longer the case as the population estimate has almost doubled.

In so many ways, ample provision of greenspace is a fundamental component of any sustainable neighbourhood concept; and the public has supported the large park throughout the public process, but some voices have wondered if a slightly smaller park would still be acceptable in Southeast False Creek, allowing for additional development (and thereby additional revenue to pay for community amenities).

Staff note that reducing the size of the future park will be problematic as there is already stiff competition for space amongst different proposed park, from the more traditional park uses of passive/active recreation, community gathering and natural habitat to newer park uses related to the sustainability of the neighbourhood, including features like extensive surface management of stormwater or urban agriculture projects.

Council is given a choice in the report between upholding the existing policy seeking a park of 26.4 acres [B4 (a)], or amending the policy to reduce the amount of park by 5% [B4 (b)] or 10% [B4 (c)].

Park Board staff recommend that the existing policy be maintained and a park of 26.4 acres be provided [B4 (a)].

3. More active water's edge (B6, Appendix A, pages 12 and 13 of 32)

Throughout the SEFC planning process, one objective has been to develop a neighbourhood that engages with the water, including

- a natural shoreline that provides diverse habitat;
- an urban design that takes advantage of and embraces its waterfront;
- a park design that creates a variety of settings for people along the water;
- active water uses supported by and launched from the SEFC site;
- floating public docks, passenger ferry stops; and
- continuation of the City's waterfront pathway system.

Park Board staff recommend support of a lively waterfront [B6 (b)].

4. Significant urban agriculture (D2, Appendix A, page 29 of 32)

This item is not offered as a choice, but Council is asked to confirm an existing policy requiring significant urban agriculture. The public park in SEFC will become a key catalyst for the proliferation of urban agriculture projects on public and private lands, thus lending the park a unique sense of place that is intimately intertwined with the activities

of a sustainable neighbourhood.

Park Board staff recommend confirming the policy requiring significant urban agriculture (D2).

5. Distribution of park across the site (included in Recommendation J. in the attached Council Report)

A number of directions for revisions to the proposed Southeast False Creek Official Development Plan and its Illustrative Plan are bundled in Recommendation J, including the reconfiguration of park to achieve a more balanced distribution of park between east and west halves of the site, including smaller parks in the east neighbourhood providing that they do not dissipate usable park space.

The current site plan features the majority of the proposed park in the northwest portion of the site on the waterfront. From a park programming and design perspective, a more balanced park distribution is desirable as it puts recreational resources closer to people's homes, noting that the overall park system ought to continue to focus on the waterfront and not become too fragmented. Staff trust that the park and recreation objectives can be met in a variety of site plan alternatives, and that a more balanced distribution will serve the neighbourhood better.

Park Board staff recommend adopting Recommendation J in the attached Council Report.

SUMMARY

The attached Council Report seeks Council's direction on a number of planning issues regarding the proposed development of SEFC, including issues that directly impact the provision of park and recreation services. Staff recommend that a full-size community centre with a community boating facility be provided, that the size of the park be maintained at 26.4 acres, that a lively waterfront be created, that significant urban agriculture be provided, and that plan revisions include a more balanced park distribution across the site.

Attachment: <http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/ctyclerk/cclerk/20040720/rr2.pdf>

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