

Date: January 21, 2005



TO: Board Members – Parks and Recreation
FROM: General Manager – Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: South East False Creek Official Development Plan

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the Park Board support approval of the proposed South East False Creek Official Development Plan.

POLICY

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

BACKGROUND

On July 21, 2004, the Park Board supported amendments to the South East False Creek Policy Statement requiring a full size community centre with a non-motorised boating facility, requesting a more active water's edge and a balanced distribution of park across the site, while asking Council to confirm the park requirement of 10.7 hectares (26.4 acres), the provision of significant urban agriculture, and policies seeking the designation of the east end of False Creek as a non-motorised boating zone.

On July 26, 2004, Council amended the South East False Creek Policy Statement, amongst other changes supporting the above Park Board positions except for allowing a reduction in the required park provision by 10%, and remaining silent on the designation of a non-motorised boating zone. Subsequently, an Official Development Plan application respecting these changes was prepared.

On December 14, 2004, Council referred the proposed South East False Creek Official Development Plan (ODP) to Public Hearing, scheduled for February 1, 2005 (see web links at the end of this report).

The purpose of this report is to briefly highlight the recent changes from a park and recreation perspective.

DISCUSSION

South East False Creek has been the subject of a long planning process that strived to carefully balance many important community objectives, including the adequate provision of parks and open space. This area is now proposed to become a new residential neighbourhood for 12,500 people, covering 20 hectares (50 acres) of City-owned land and 12 hectares (30 acres) of private land.

Park Area and Distribution: The proposed ODP requires the provision of 10.46 hectares (25.8 acres) of public park. This represents a minor reduction versus the previous policy requirement. Staff consider the proposed park configuration to deliver very high recreational value given that the entire waterfront forms part of the park. The park is well distributed across the site so that sub-neighbourhoods may come together around distinct park areas, including also numerous smaller parks that have been inserted.

The park will not only be used by South East False Creek residents, but by people from the remainder of Mount Pleasant, a highly park deficient neighbourhood, and by the high numbers of pedestrians, cyclists and in-line skaters who are already enjoying other stretches of public waterfront. High expectations have been raised for the park program: pedestrian and bicycle paths, hard-surface courts, formal and informal grassy areas for sports or casual play, scenic areas for passive recreation, naturalised diverse habitat, performance area, children's playgrounds, youth activities, a community demonstration garden, stormwater management facilities, dog runs, sustainability features including edible landscaping, even space for a farmer's market. Trade-offs between some of these program ideas will likely have to be made. The Park Board is expected to take the lead in developing park programming and design in a public and transparent process at a later stage.

Community Centre and Non-Motorised Boating Facility: The proposed ODP requires a 30,000 sq. ft. facility containing a community centre and a non-motorised boating facility. While detailed space programming has not yet occurred, the expectation is that the two functions are sharing space including washrooms and change rooms, meeting rooms, even the boat storage area to maximise use of the available area and reduce operational costs. Community Centre and not-for-profit recreational boating societies could be considered programming partners. The Park Board is already engaged in several such partnerships that will serve as useful precedents.

Urban Agriculture: The implementation concept for urban agriculture in Southeast False Creek assigns critical importance to community gardening within the public park, most importantly in the community demonstration garden referenced in the proposed ODP. This demonstration garden will fulfill multiple functions, including teaching residents how they can grow food on rooftops, in containers, in tenant gardens or even on street boulevards. The garden will also be available as a school garden to the children of the nearby elementary school, and as a teaching garden for sustainability programming originating in the community centre and other places.

The notion of the community demonstration garden is consistent with the principle that public park land be used in a manner that maximizes the number of people profiting from it. The garden will serve as a catalyst for urban food growing, thus its benefits will continue to radiate out across the site and multiply.

SUMMARY

The proposed Official Development Plan is consistent with approved policies. The proposed park and recreation amenities promise to be of high quality.

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Web links:

For the Council referral report, see
<http://www.vancouver.ca/ctyclerk/cclerk/20041214/p4.htm>

For a draft of the proposed ODP By-Law, see
<http://www.vancouver.ca/commsvcs/southeast/documents/SoutheastFalseCreekODPBy-lawJan20.05.pdf>

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