



Date: October 24, 2005

TO: Board Members - Parks and Recreation
FROM: General Manager - Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: Skateboard Strategy for Vancouver

RECOMMENDATION

- A) *THAT the Board approve the Skateboard Strategy for Vancouver, attached as Appendix A.*
- B) *THAT the identification and selection of candidate sites for new skateboard facilities and the setting of skateboarding priorities for the 2006-2008 Capital Plan be referred to the public for consultation.*

POLICY

The Vancouver Charter states in Section 489.1(b) that “the Board shall have power to provide for accommodation for sports and games, and spectators thereof, and setting aside and reserving portions of the parks for specified kinds of sports and games”.

The Parks Control By-law states in Section 7(e) that “no person shall use a skateboard, roller skates, ice skates or any similar device except in areas designated or permitted for such activities”.

On June 27, 2005, the Board approved the Strategic Plan for 2005-2010, which included the following actions: “seek varied and balanced programming in parks and recreation facilities” and “increase the number of opportunities available for more active living”.

In 1995, Council and the Park Board approved the Civic Youth Strategy, which included a policy that all civic departments and boards work towards: a) ensuring that youth have “a place” in the city; b) ensuring a strong youth voice in decision-making; c) promoting youth as a resource to the City; and d) strengthening the support base for youth in the City.

BACKGROUND

Skateboarding is a popular recreational activity for youth and young adults in Vancouver. At present, there are six skateboard facilities in Vancouver parks (see map below for location), with five skateparks added in the last five years:

- China Creek South Park (built in the late 1970s);
- Hastings Park (built in 2001);
- Strathcona Park (built in 2003);
- Coopers' Park (built in 2003);
- Downtown Skateboard Plaza (built in 2004); and
- Quilchena Park (built in 2005).



On October 3rd, 2005, the Board approved an allocation of \$375,000 for “youth parks” (which includes skateboarding) as part of the 2006-2008 Capital Plan.

DISCUSSION

Objectives

The existing skateboard facilities were all approved and built on a case-by-case basis, in the absence of a longer-term strategy, although the two facilities built most recently (the Downtown Skateboard Plaza and the skatepark at Quilchena Park) were rigorously reviewed prior to their approval, involving the application of locational criteria to assess the suitability of the proposed site and its comparison to other possible alternative locations.

In recent years, staff have received requests for the inclusion of skateboard facilities at a variety of parks that are planned for renewal or in new parks. Earlier this year, the Vancouver SkatePark Coalition submitted a total of seventeen proposals for new skateboard facilities as part of the 2006-2008 Capital Plan.

The presence of a longer-term strategy will assist the Park Board in a number of ways:

- a) it will acknowledge skateboarding as an important recreational activity that needs a proactive approach;
- b) it will provide a framework for guiding capital investments in skateboarding facilities by identifying overall priorities; and
- c) it will set out locational criteria which will be used to identify and assess candidate sites for new skateboard facilities.

Skateboard Strategy

The following are the key elements contained in the Skateboard Strategy for Vancouver (see Appendix A for the full strategy):

- a) providing additional skateparks in Vancouver;
- b) providing a better geographic distribution of skateparks in Vancouver;
- c) providing variety in the skateboarding system:
 - a. some destination facilities; some local serving facilities;
 - b. some aimed at entry level skateboarding; some aimed at advanced skateboarding;
 - c. some offering “bowls”; some offering “street style”;
- d) locating new skateboard facilities in parks or portions of parks that meet as many of the following criteria as possible:
 - o the proposed skateboard facility should be located where some support services are available nearby (e.g. public washrooms, drinking fountain, youth worker, first aid);
 - o the proposed skateboard facility should be located where noise can be minimized for nearby residents;
 - o the proposed skateboard facility should be located where it is visible from a Park Board building or from a nearby street;
 - o the proposed skateboard facility should not displace other established park uses or a group of park users; and
 - o the proposed skateboard facility should not be significantly out of character with the park.
- e) exploring options to provide an indoor skateboarding facility in Vancouver;
- f) exploring opportunities to purchase additional mobile skateboard equipment that can be used seasonally and at special events;
- g) exploring opportunities for increased skateboard programming at community centres; and
- h) exploring partnership opportunities with other civic agencies including Engineering Services and the Vancouver School Board.

Public Process to Date

In this round, staff aimed to get feedback from the skateboarding community on the overall elements of the strategy, the locational criteria for new skateparks, and priority investments. The first component of the public process was conducted at the annual skateboarding event called “Slam City Jam” held at BC Place Stadium in August. A total of 60 questionnaires were filled in. The second component was conducted in October and included an on-line questionnaire (465 questionnaires filled in) and questionnaires handed out at the Downtown Skateboard Plaza and the Hastings Park skatepark (83 questionnaires filled in). Key findings from the 608 questionnaires are:

- overwhelming support for:
 - o more skateparks in Vancouver (99%);
 - o a better distribution of skateparks in Vancouver (88%);
 - o a skatepark system that includes variety in skill level (91%), design of facilities (95%), and size of facilities (89%);
- strong support for the proposed locational criteria for new skateparks:
 - o near support services (92%);
 - o minimize noise for nearby residents (77%);
 - o visible from a Park Board building or from a nearby street (54%);
 - o not displace established park uses (79%);
 - o not be significantly out of character with the park (55%);
- split opinion about whether the highest priority is to provide more outdoor skateparks (41%) or to provide one indoor skatepark (43%) (note: 10% said both were high priorities).

Next Steps

If the Skateboard Strategy is approved by the Board, staff will proceed with a public process that will: a) identify and select candidate sites for new skateboard facilities; and b) the setting of skateboard priorities for the upcoming 2006-2008 Capital Plan. This process will involve skateboarders and non-skateboarders alike, and will be modeled on the process that was used in the identification, selection and prioritization of sites for synthetic turf playing fields in 2003-2004, which occurred after the Playing Field Renewal Strategy was approved in 2002.

Park Board staff are currently working on a number of specific skateboarding initiatives: a) the preparation of a concept plan for improvements at China Creek South Park; b) the one-year review of the Downtown Skateboard Plaza; and c) the preparation of a plan for “Leeside” at Hastings & Cassiar.

Park Board staff have identified the following issues which will be folded in into upcoming work programs: a) a review of major maintenance practices and protocols as they pertain to skateparks; and b) the preparation of a strategy addressing other youth activities such as BMX riding.

SUMMARY

Skateboarding continues to be a popular recreational activity for many youth and young adults in Vancouver. A skateboard strategy will assist in guiding capital investments so that skateparks are successful in the short and long term for all involved – skateboarders, other park users as well as residents living near the facilities.

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