

Date: March 27, 2006



**TO: Board Members – Vancouver Park Board**  
**FROM: General Manager – Parks and Recreation**  
**SUBJECT: Southeast False Creek: Update on Park Design**

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## RECOMMENDATION

*THAT the Board support the concept plan for a rainwater wetland and a children's play park in Southeast False Creek.*

## POLICY

The Park Board Strategic Plan asks for the integration of sustainability concepts into the design, construction and maintenance of parks, including creation of habitat and rainwater management.

## BACKGROUND

The development of Southeast False Creek as a model sustainable neighbourhood is continuing with site preparation, planning for site services, rezoning applications for parts of the private lands, public realm planning, and design for a two acre portion of the future park (see Appendix A). The public realm, the waterfront and the park will be built by the City's Southeast False Creek and Olympic Village Project Office with cooperation from Park Board staff, Engineering staff and other City departments.

## DISCUSSION

Managing rainwater as a resource rather than a waste product is a key feature of the sustainability strategy for Southeast False Creek, and was supported in several iterations of City policy. Rainwater will be collected and conveyed to a wetland in the central park, often referred to as the hinge park, north of First Street at Columbia Street.

Key to the successful integration of sustainability concepts into parks is to design them as park features that serve multiple purposes, also including traditional park uses. The rainwater wetland, for example, will not only convey and cleanse rainwater runoff, but also provide habitat for a variety of native plants and animals, attract park visitors with its scenic properties, and allow for the interpretation of ecological processes.

The rainwater wetland is the backdrop for a proposed play space for children that will look and feel more natural than typical playgrounds. While some off-the-shelf play equipment will be provided, there will be many other opportunities for children to play

here involving natural materials: water, sand, rocks, logs, soil, plants and pebbles. The idea is to create an environment for unstructured outdoor exploration, the kind of play children used to engage in but that is becoming increasingly rare now that children can no longer be allowed to freely roam their urban neighbourhoods.

The park concept was presented to the public at open houses on March 22 and 25, 2006, together with updates on the progress of the public realm plan. Up to 200 citizens attended these open houses. Park Board staff were present and engaged with many in discussions over the proposed park concept. In addition, 44 comments sheets were filled out.

- People were positive about the general concept of the park plan for the entire precinct, in particular the public waterfront and opportunities for non-motorised boating, the new island, and the integration of community gardening. There was some support for the hardcourts under the Cambie Bridge, but also some concern over those courts and the skateboard facility because of noise at night. People also pointed out the need for public washrooms and drinking fountains, and for native plants.
- People were supportive of the play park concept, in particular praising the natural play elements, the variety and richness of play opportunities, and the overall focus on children. People expressed the desire to not have any off-leash dog area located near the children's play park.

The park design will be further developed in consideration of the public input. The rainwater wetland and children's play park will be built as part of the Olympic Village phase, to be completed and open for public use in the first half of 2007.

## **SUMMARY**

The rainwater wetland and children's play park concept for a portion of the hinge park in Southeast False Creek was presented to the public in two open houses. People were overwhelmingly in favour. Staff recommend that the Board support the concept plan.

Appendix A: <http://www.vancouver.ca/commsvcs/southeast/06mar22+25/park.pdf>

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