

Date: May 18, 2007



TO: Board Members – Vancouver Park Board
FROM: General Manager – Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: Vancouver Aquarium Expansion

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Board approve the development permit schematic design plans for the Aquarium expansion as illustrated in the attached submission.

POLICY

The Board approves all development permit submissions on Park Board property.

BACKGROUND

On November 27, 2006, the Board approved the following recommendations and related amendments:

- “A. THAT the Board approve the attached Vancouver Aquarium expansion plan subject to the mitigation and compensation measures outlined in this report.”*
- “B. THAT the Board amend the term of the current Stanley Park Aquarium Agreement to extend the license to 20 years from the earlier of the start of construction of this proposed project or on or before December 31, 2008 on the basis that no legal rights are hereby created and none shall arise until an agreement to extend has been executed to the satisfaction of the Director of Legal Services and the General Manager.”*
- “C. That the Parks Control By-law relating to captive cetaceans be taken out of the Vancouver Aquarium agreement.”*
- “D. THAT the Vancouver Aquarium pull the gift shop back into the building so it does not compete with our existing stakeholders. The area that was shown as the gift shop can be used for changing public outdoor displays under a roof or as a public plaza.”*
- “E. THAT the Vancouver Aquarium reimburse the Park Board jointly agreed to maintenance costs of the new plazas and salmon stream on an annual basis.”*
- “F. THAT the percentage of gross revenue be reviewed every five years, similar to all other Park Board stakeholders.”*

- “G. THAT the Vancouver Aquarium agree to supply one thousand individual passes at no cost to each Vancouver Park Board community centre on an annual basis, to be administered by Park Board staff to enable low income Vancouverites an opportunity to attend the Aquarium.”**
- “H. THAT item C under Mitigation and Compensation in the staff report dated November 20, 2006 regarding the 2006 Aquarium Expansion Proposal be amended to read as follows:**
- C. Beyond these new facilities, the Aquarium and the Park Board will jointly pursue enhanced safety features, including pathway lighting to the bus loop and enhanced traffic management features which will improve the bike and pedestrian connections to the Aquarium plaza, parking lot areas and to and from the park entrance.”**
- “I. THAT it is the Board’s intention that in 2015 the board review the Parks Control By-law relating to captive cetaceans.”**

Since that approval, Park Board staff have been working with the Aquarium and its consultants to develop the concept contained in the approval. Of particular interest to the Board were:

- a) the size of the entry lobby and retail outlet and the general accessibility of the latter;
- b) the design of the public viewing areas and their location;
- c) the design and location of the public washrooms and the bistro food service on the plaza;
- d) the functionality and design of the public plaza areas; and
- e) the improvements to the demonstration salmon stream and related hatchery.

DISCUSSION

Design responses to these project concerns have been developed in the following fashion.

- a) The entry lobby / retail outlet area has been reduced by 136 sq. meters. The retail outlet is only accessible to those who have passed through the admission point. Thus, there will be no sales to the general park population.
- b) Four public viewing features have been included:
 1. One combined underwater / above water window of 11.5 lineal meters for seals, roughly in the location of the existing public viewing site;
 2. One underwater and one above water window in the river otter exhibit totaling approximately 16 meters;
 3. One underwater viewing window in the salmon hatchery of 6.2 meters. The two exhibits are located off the new informal plaza west of the expansion area;
 4. One above water viewing window of 6.2 meters into the new beluga exhibit south of the existing building.

- c) The new washrooms are in a free standing building on the southeast corner of the formal plaza. The location works well in relation to pedestrian circulation and the adjacent outdoor tables. The bistro will occupy the southwest corner of the formal plaza. It will have tables on the plaza and a deck over the salmon stream seating 80 in total. There are also 80 interior seats: a take out window is included.
- d) The two plaza areas offer a strong contrast to each other – formal and informal – and provide good pedestrian linkages between Avison Way and the central park walkway as well as the Aquarium entrance, the hatchery and public viewing and the washrooms and bistro. The portrait artists will be relocated to new sites along the central park walkway as illustrated in the plan.
- e) Unfortunately, the fish bearing section of the salmon stream will not be extended, as the costs of reinforcing the stream bed to take more water volume are prohibitive. The section between the Aquarium and the stone bridge will remain decorative but with improved detail in the duck pond areas. The hatchery location on the informal plaza will provide visual logic to the “head of the stream,” but the water bodies will not be connected. At this early stage of the design there is no resolution as to how much of the hatchery equipment in the old bear grotto will be relocated to the new facility, which is more of a public showcase.

The redrafting of the legal agreement for the Aquarium lease is being pursued parallel but separate from the development permit process. The new bike connection and lighting are not part of the permit application but will be illustrated by the Aquarium consultants when they present the permit design to the Board.

CONCLUSION

The preliminary development permit plans have responded to the issues raised at the conceptual approval stage by the Board on November 27, 2006 and will create an improved design for this area of the park, which has been in a holding position for a decade awaiting confirmation of the overall changes. Staff recommend the approval of the plan.

Prepared by:

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