

Date: February 20, 2009



TO: Board Members – Vancouver Park Board
FROM: General Manager – Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: Pigeon Park Improvements - Concept Plan and Funding

RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT the Board approve the concept plan for improvements at Pigeon Park, as described in this report and shown in Appendix A.*
- B. THAT the Board approve the installation of a public toilet in Pigeon Park by the City's Engineering Services, with final arrangements to the satisfaction of the General Manager of Parks and Recreation in consultation with the General Manager of Engineering Services.*
- C. THAT the Board request that Council allocate \$187,468 from the International Village Community Amenity Contribution Reserve to fund the improvements at Pigeon Park.*

POLICY

The Board approves major changes in Vancouver parks, including concept plans for upgrading parks.

Council approves the allocation of funds received from developers such as 'payments-in-lieu' and 'community amenity contributions'.

BACKGROUND

Pigeon Park, sometimes called Pioneer Place, is a 3,000 sq ft (0.03 hectare) triangular plaza located at the corner of Hastings and Carrall Streets. It is a popular sitting and resting spot for residents living in low-income housing in the Downtown Eastside. The park was last renovated in the 1970s, and many of the park's physical elements (base surface and park furniture) are in need of being replaced or restored.

Although it is located on a busy arterial street and the park's surface is concrete, Pigeon Park has a pleasant green ambiance from spring to fall due to a nice collection of tall deciduous trees. There are six well-utilized benches in the park, as well as a drinking fountain. Immediately to the west of the park is the 'Merchants Bank' building at 1 West Hastings Street, a municipally-designated heritage building.



A number of parks in the Downtown Eastside have been renovated over the last decade, including Wendy Poole Park in 1999, Thornton Park in 2002, and Victory Square in 2002-2003. Renovations at Oppenheimer Park will start in the spring and are anticipated to be completed by the end of 2009. The Carrall Street Greenway is currently under construction – the block adjacent to Pigeon Park will be constructed this summer.

DISCUSSION

Initial Public Consultation

The process to renovate Pigeon Park started in 2004. The Environmental Youth Alliance (EYA) was hired to conduct a one-on-one consultation with park users. More than 100 residents participated. The EYA report noted the following ideas:

- An interest in benches that do not prevent people from sleeping
- An interest to increase and expand on the variety of vegetation (noted most were flowers and native plants)
- An interest to retain the existing trees
- An interest in new recreational and entertainment programming opportunities, including space that supports community artwork and existing or future community driven programs for Pigeon Park (maintenance and art projects)
- An interest to improve upon the cleanliness of Pigeon Park
- People value drinking water access in the park
- Pigeon Park is a valued place within the community by both park users and those who don't use the park
- Other independent, common ideas included, a covered shelter space, birdhouses, seating (not necessarily benches) arranged for socialization, washrooms, and historical or memorial markers.

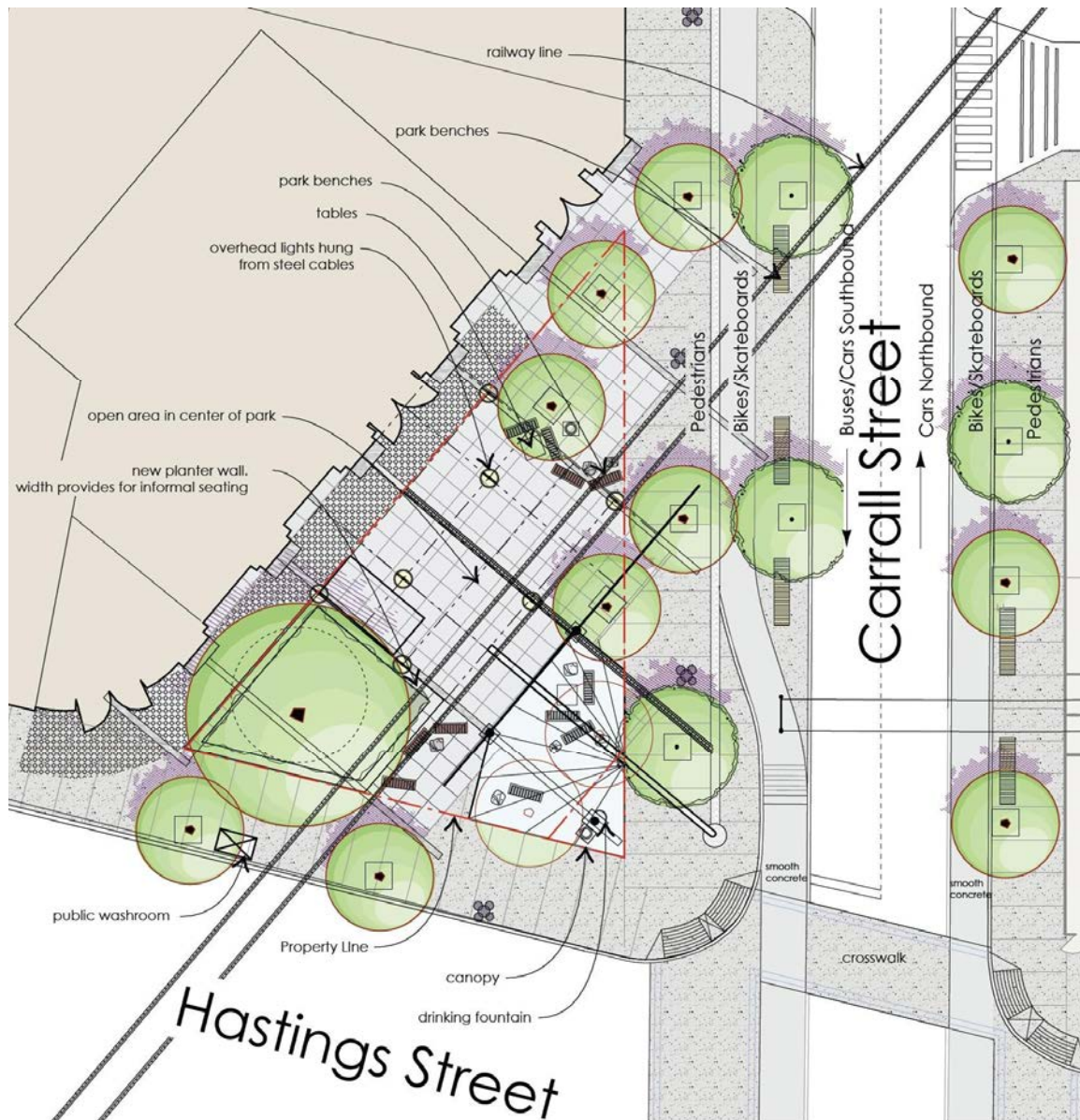
Design Principles

In 2004-2005, Park Board staff developed three principles to guide future improvements at Pigeon Park:

1. Preserve features that make the park popular with the community;
2. Replace/restore aging features in the park; and
3. Add new features to the park.

Draft 'Concept Plan'

Park Board staff prepared a draft 'concept plan' in the fall of 2005:



The draft 'concept plan' included the following elements:

- Preserve as many trees as possible
- Preserve sitting/relaxing as the primary activity
- Preserve the open area in the centre of park
- Replace base surface
- Replace benches
- Replace drinking fountain
- Add side tables next to benches
- Add public washroom
- Add a canopy (a covered area of about 400 sq ft with several benches under the canopy)
- Add overhead grid lighting system
- Add historic rail line

The draft 'concept plan' was circulated for comment in the fall of 2005, including a well attended public open house held at the "Centre A" Gallery, located on the southwest corner of Hastings and Carrall Streets. The vast majority of elements in the draft 'concept plan' were well supported, with the exception of the proposal to build a canopy in the park (about half of the public supported the idea, while the other half opposed it).

The draft 'concept plan' was presented to the Park Board's Planning Committee in February 2006.

Recommended 'Concept Plan'

Park Board staff prepared a revised 'concept plan' in February 2009, which includes the following key changes:

- The proposal to build a canopy in the park is no longer being pursued. It was not widely supported by the public, and a majority of City staff working in the Downtown Eastside were not supportive of building a canopy in Pigeon Park
- The proposed overhead grid lighting system has also been dropped because its installation requires a portion of the grid to be affixed to the 'Merchants Bank' building immediately adjacent to the park, and the timing of the renovation of this heritage building is uncertain.
- The location of the proposed public toilet has been shifted from the sidewalk on Hastings Street to the edge of Pigeon Park because the detailed analysis has revealed that the sidewalk is not wide enough to accommodate the toilet.

The revised 'concept plan' was circulated for comment to community groups and City staff. Reaction has been supportive of the 'concept plan'.

Recommendation A seeks Board approval of the 'concept plan', which is shown in Appendix A.

Public Toilet

In 2006, Council approved the installation of eight ‘automated public toilets’ in or near downtown Vancouver, including one at Pigeon Park. Council also approved at that time “that the Park Board be requested to approve installation of an Automated Public Toilet on Pigeon Park”.

The proposed toilet for Pigeon Park is for a single person and measures 1.1m (width) by 1.6m (depth). The toilet is automatically cleaned, disinfected and dried following each use. It is the same as the one that was installed on the sidewalk at Davie and Richards Streets, adjacent to Emery Barnes Park (see photo).

The Automated Public Toilet program is included in the City’s contract with CBS Decaux for “street furniture” (bus shelters, benches, garbage cans, bike racks and public toilets). Advertisements are permitted on two sides of the public toilet.

The proposed toilet at Pigeon Park would be installed and maintained at no cost to the Park Board.



Recommendation B seeks Board approval to install a public toilet at Pigeon Park, with final arrangements to the satisfaction of the General Manager of Parks and Recreation in consultation with the General Manager of Engineering Services.

Funding

In 1995, as part of a rezoning of the lands at International Village (roughly bounded by Pender, Taylor, Pacific, Dunsmuir and Beatty Streets), Council accepted a future payment of \$1.5 million (plus an inflationary increase) from the land owner to be allocated to “development of parks to serve this general area of the city”. The payment was received in 2004 and totaled \$1,715,868 (\$1.5 million plus \$215,868 as an inflationary increase). The majority of these funds have already been allocated by Council. The uncommitted balance currently stands at \$187,468. Staff estimate that implementing the recommended ‘concept plan’ for Pigeon Park can be accommodated within this funding envelope.

Recommendation C seeks Board approval to request that Council allocate \$187,468 from the International Village Community Amenity Contribution Reserve to fund the improvements at Pigeon Park. If approved by the Board, staff will follow up with a report to Council.

Timing

If the 'concept plan' is approved by the Board, staff will work on the 'design development' phase over the next two or three months, such that park renovations would occur in the summer of 2009.

This timing would match the construction timetable for the Carrall Street Greenway. The 300 block Carrall Street (Hastings to Cordova Street, adjacent to Pigeon Park) is scheduled to be constructed by the City's Engineering Services in the spring/summer of 2009. Staff believe that disruption to park users and others in the community would be minimized if the two projects were constructed simultaneously, as opposed to sequentially.

SUMMARY

Pigeon Park is an important sitting/resting spot in the Downtown Eastside. The proposed renovations would refresh and enhance the park while maintaining its role as a vital public place in this community.

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PIGEON PARK IMPROVEMENTS RECOMMENDED CONCEPT PLAN

February 20, 2009

