

Date: December 11, 2009



TO: Board Members – Vancouver Park Board
FROM: General Manager – Parks and Recreation
**SUBJECT: Hastings Park / Pacific National Exhibition (PNE):
Recommended Master Plan Directions**

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Board receive for information this report on the recommended master plan directions for Hastings Park / Pacific National Exhibition (PNE).

POLICY

Over the last three decades, the Park Board has consistently advocated for the restoration/greening of Hastings Park. The Board most recently dealt with this policy matter in 2004, when it reaffirmed “its support for the restoration of Hastings Park into a major park serving residents in the north-east district of the city”.

BACKGROUND

Hastings Park is located in the north-east district of the city, roughly bounded by Hastings Street, Renfrew Street, McGill Street and Brideway-Cassiar Street. The site is 66 hectares (162 acres).

On January 1, 2004, the City took ownership of the Pacific National Exhibition (PNE). This meant that the Hastings Park Restoration Plan (previously approved by both Park Board and Council in 1997) needed to be updated. Later in 2004, both Park Board and Council supported a revised plan for Hastings Park, one that would include additional park space and accommodate the annual fair, an amusement park and the horse racetrack.

The revised plan from 2004 did not resolve all issues and follow up work was required. In 2007, the Park Board and Council approved the preparation of an implementation plan for Hastings Park. The project has been led by City staff, with the assistance of a consultant team. Park Board had staff representatives on the Steering Committee and the Technical Committee.

The City’s project team has recently prepared a report recommending directions for the Hastings Park / PNE master plan, attached as Appendix A. The report is scheduled to be considered by Council at its Standing Committee on Planning and Environment on December 17, 2009.

The air photograph below shows Hastings Park in 2007.



DISCUSSION

The directions included in the Council report cover a broad range of topics. Two issues are addressed in this report:

Amount of park space

Hastings Park currently has 10.7 hectares (26.5 acres) of park space, which includes the Sanctuary, the Italian Garden and Empire Fields. The revised plan approved by the Park Board and Council in 2004 included the provision of an additional 18 hectares (45 acres) of park space.

The directions currently being recommended by the City's project team would reduce this to an additional 10-14 hectares (25-35 acres) of park space. This reduction is mainly due to the proposed expansion of the amusement park (Playland), retention of the Livestock Building and maintaining current parking capacity. These two initiatives are recommended because they will support the operational needs and contribute to the economic viability of the PNE.

“A Fair in the Park”

In 2008, the terms of reference for hiring a consultant to assist with the development of a master plan for Hastings Park stated: “The City of Vancouver now has the opportunity to build on existing assets to transform Hastings Park into one of North America's great urban parks that is both green and active, and rebalances the concept to be a ‘fair within a

park' rather than its historic role as a park within the fairgrounds". These two contrasting concepts can be described in the following manner:

- "a fair in the park" places the development and operation of a public park as the centrepiece for making decisions; the footprint of the PNE fair expands during the event and shrinks once it is finished; the amusement park is well integrated into the park setting; and buildings are primarily used for community or non-profit activities.
- "a park within the fairgrounds" places the development and operation of the PNE as the centrepiece for making decisions; the fairgrounds becomes greener, although open space is not designed or used as a cohesive green space; and the hosting of commercial events typically reduces public access to the site or buildings.

The directions recommended by the City's project team would lead to additional park space (including the continuation of the north-south stream and a multi-use perimeter trail around the site) and improved connections to adjacent residential areas. The directions also include constructing a new exhibition building, expanding the amusement park, and maintaining parking capacity.

The City's project team strived to seek a balance among the competing objectives outlined in the terms of reference. From a park perspective, the overall assessment of the directions is that they come closer to "a park within the fairgrounds" approach, rather than "a fair in the park" approach.

SUMMARY

The planning of Hastings Park is reaching another milestone. The directions recently recommended by the City's project team provide additional park space and a greener fairground compared to what is currently there today. Nevertheless, they fall short of the park objectives endorsed by Council and the Park Board in 2004.

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