



Date: September 10, 2010

TO: Board Members – Vancouver Park Board
FROM: General Manager – Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: Vancouver Historical Society - Interpretation Sign at Victory Square

RECOMMENDATION

That the Board approve the installation of an Interpretive sign relating to the history of Victory Square by the Vancouver Historical Society in Victory Square as detailed in this report.

POLICY

The wording and siting of any plaques related to the public art or memorial must be approved by the Park Board. This approval should be gained at the time of project approval.

BACKGROUND

The Vancouver Historical Society (VHS) proposes to erect an historical interpretation sign at the Cambie and Hastings Street (NE) corner of Victory Square. The sign, approximately 1 m. x .5 m, would be erected on a metal post similar to two signs that the VHS had installed in Devonian and Stanley Parks.

The target date for installation is to coincide with the November 11th Remembrance Day ceremonies; Aldrich Pears has agreed to design the sign. Costs for the manufacture and installation of the sign would be paid for by the VHS.

DISCUSSION

The proposal, presented by Bruce Watson (Vice President of VHS and Cam Cathcart (Friends of Victory Square, Head of Remembrance Day Ceremonies), is to install an historical interpretation sign on a narrow, raised, grassy section at the NE corner of Victory Square. (Cambie and Hastings) The sign would be similar in size, design and construction to the ones already installed through the VHS at Devonian Park and Hallelujah Point in Stanley Park. Its purpose, like the others, would be to point to the layers of history of that particular space. The post on which it is mounted will be shorter than the previous two VHS signs to allow people to read it from the pedestrian area.

Cost: Design, manufacture and installation cost would be covered by the VHS. Aldrich Pears, which designed the previous two VHS signs, has agreed to design the Victory Square sign. The approximate cost is \$2,700.00, including fees.

Description of Sign: A rectangular sign 1m x .5m [40" x 20"] mounted on and secured to a 7.6 cm [3"] square metal post. Wording and images have been worked out by a committee (refer Appendix 1). The wording and photographs will overlay a faded background of poppies. The text may be shortened by the designer to fit the space. For a map of the sign location – refer Appendix 2.

SUMMARY

The proposal was presented to the Planning and Environment Committee of the Board at its meeting of September 9th, 2010 and was approved in principle.

Staff recommends Board approval for the installation of an Interpretive sign relating to the history of Victory Square by the Vancouver Historical Society in Victory Square as detailed in this report.

Prepared by:
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DD/jr

Appendix 1

Victory Square Sign (revised September 1, 2010)

1860s – 1889 (Government Square)

Victory Square began as piece of dense forest kept aside as provincial property during a survey of February 1886. Ten weeks after the city's incorporation, the Great Fire of June 13, 1886 swept the area clean of logging debris.

1889-1912 (The courthouse years)

In 1889 a provincial courthouse was erected and the periphery was planted with maple trees (top photo below). The building lasted until 1912 when it was demolished for a new site on Georgia Street. In 1900 this now growing financial area began a military association when a bonfire set by Boer War celebrants damaged the freshly laid wood-block pavement at the intersection of Cambie and Hastings.

1914-1918 (“No Man’s Land”)

As Canadian casualties mounted in WWI a movement began to set the area aside as a war memorial. In May 1917 alongside an army recruiting marquee, a giant Evangelistic Tabernacle was erected (photo, bottom). It covered most of the square and was dismantled that July. During the summer of 1918, veterans raised money for war for widows and dependants by constructing a realistic front line trench, complete with sandbags and barbed wire. On March 12, 1918 the city leased the square from the BC Government for 99 years.

1918-1924 (setting up a war memorial)

Two years after the Armistice of 1918, Government Square was renamed Victory Square by the city and provincial governments and two civic organizations began raising funds for a cenotaph. Finally, in April 1924, the Cenotaph was unveiled to 25,000 people and since then has been the centre for all November 11th Remembrance Day services.

1924-present (a continuing focus)

Although no longer the centre of the city, Victory Square has since been a focus of protests, particularly during the Depression era when the unemployed rioted then camped out here. Others have followed. A 2002 major renovation included a new layout, benches, and lamp standards with helmets as shades. The “soldier” lights stand at attention around the Cenotaph and at ease throughout the park.

Buildings surrounding the square

- The Flack Block (1899) [Cambie and Hastings]
- The Dominion Building (1908-10) [Hastings]
- Province Newspaper Office and Editorial building (1908-09) [Cambie]
- News-Advertiser Building [Hamilton and Pender]
- Central School [Pender]
- Lyric Theatre (1906)

APPENDIX 2

