

Date: January 13, 2015



TO: Park Board Chair and Commissioners
FROM: General Manager - Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: Concept Plan for a New Park at 17th Avenue and Yukon Street

RECOMMENDATION

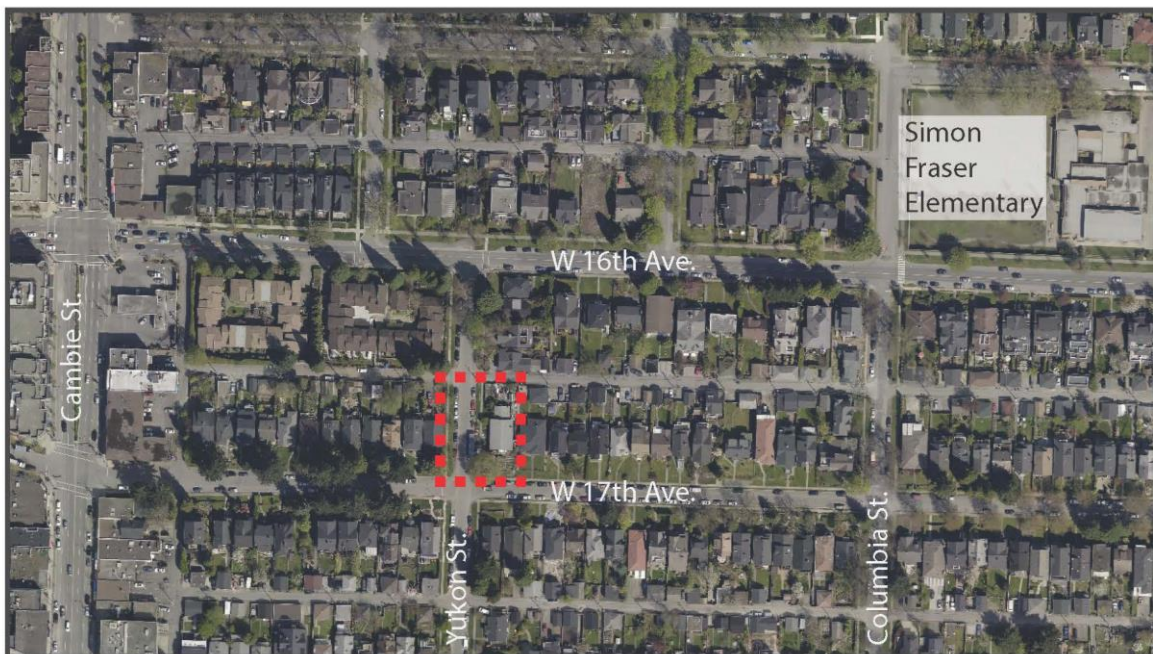
THAT the Board approve the concept plan (in Appendix) for a new neighbourhood park at 17th Avenue and Yukon Street; and

FURTHER THAT staff develop an Agreement for the proposed change of use and operation of the 3200 block of Yukon Street to the satisfaction of the General Managers of the Park Board and the Engineering Services Department, subject to approval by Council of the change in use of the street.

POLICY

The Board approves major changes in Vancouver parks including the design and development of parks.

BACKGROUND



The new park under discussion is located at the northeast junction of W 17th Avenue and Yukon Street in the Mount Pleasant Community. The park includes the adjacent 3200 block of

Yukon Street as shown in the image above, and is 0.15 hectare (ha) in size, including the 0.08 ha portion of the Yukon Street Right-Of-Way (ROW). This street is the jurisdiction of the City of Vancouver's Engineering Services Department.

The park is situated in a single-family residential neighbourhood and bordered by a vehicular lane on the north, single family residential homes on the east and west, and 17th Ave on the southern boundary. Mount Pleasant Park and Simon Fraser Elementary School are proximate to the northeast, and the Cambie Street retail corridor is one block to the west. The popular Yukon Bikeway also runs north-south on Yukon Street.

The original residential lot was acquired by the City of Vancouver in the spring of 2013. Mount Pleasant is deficient in park space within walking distance for residents, so when the parcel became available for sale it was acquired for park purposes with the intention of filling a gap in the citywide matrix of parks and open spaces.

After land acquisition, the house located on the property was demolished in the summer of 2013 and since that time staff led this in-house park design process in collaboration with the Engineering Department. The following is a timeline of the park development process to date:

- Fall 2013: Topographic survey, research and planning
- Winter 2014: Preliminary design and preparation for public engagement
- April 26, 2014: Open House #1
- Fall 2014: Design refinement and collaboration with operations staff
- December 10, 2014: Open House #2
- January 19, 2015: Board Presentation

This report describes this process in detail.

DISCUSSION

The Park Board design team has worked inter-departmentally to ensure that the concept plan is mindful of community and stakeholder needs. To achieve this, the Park Board has conducted background research of strategic documents and precedent park designs and prepared options and ideas for presentation at the open houses to glean meaningful community insights and preferences.

The proposed park plan capitalizes on an opportunity to double the size of the park by including the adjacent portion of Yukon Street. The road will be closed to vehicular traffic and converted to park space while still maintaining the bike route, but keep its legal status as a street ROW. The new park space will be maintained by the Park Board, and the paved bike route will be maintained by the Engineering Department. Staff will work closely with the Engineering Department and define jurisdictional areas for construction and operations through an inter-department Agreement to be prepared to the satisfaction of the Park Board and Engineering General Managers. The traffic calming provided by the conversion of the street to park space will make walking and cycling on Yukon St safer, more comfortable and

more convenient for people of all ages and abilities, a key goal of the City's Transportation 2040 plan.

The open house events in this design process have been critical to ensure a dynamic public space plan to best serve community needs.

The events were advertised in multiple forums including large posters on the fences surrounding the site, flyers distributed throughout the neighbourhood proximate to the park (2-block radius), advertising in the Vancouver Courier, the City of Vancouver Park Board website, and an email invite to all public stakeholders on the project contact list (this list was updated after each open house with additional email addresses as provided by attendees).

Participants at the open house events were provided with a survey to fill out in-person or on-line. The graphic displays from each open house were also placed on the Park Board project page with a link to the on-line surveys.

A nearby property rezoning at 357-391 W King Edward Ave, located south of the site at the northeast corner of Yukon St and King Edward Avenue, informed our community engagement process and design. Traffic calming and pedestrian/cycling safety enhancements along Yukon Street have been requested by local residents through this related engagement process.

The community engagement process for this project consisted of two open houses led by staff, the first being on April 26, 2014 and the second on December 10, 2014.

Park Board staff proposed 3 alternate park concept plans and various traffic calming and pedestrian/cycling enhancements to enhance proposed design possibilities at the first open house on Saturday, April 26, 2014. In order to demonstrate the possibility of closing Yukon Street to vehicular traffic, Park Board coordinated a temporary street closure from 10am-2pm during the hours of the open house. The open house took place within the street and happened to be along the route of the Vancouver Cherry Blossom Festival's annual Bike the Blossoms event. Park Board staff also proctored a community children's mural painting project on site and HUB Vancouver operated a temporary bike repair station.

The open house focused on seeking feedback on the 3 design concepts and various park programming possibilities.

A survey was conducted during the open house and online from April 26 through May 12, during which time 174 surveys were completed. The respondents expressed a preference for park elements such as: grass berms, natural play features, pollinator gardens, abundant seating, a bike repair station, a trellis along the alley, passive lawns areas, walking paths, and planted curb bulges.

The results also supported an array of traffic calming initiatives including closing the street to vehicular traffic, speed humps, removing parking adjacent to the park, and installing curb bulges at intersections.

Park Board staff used the key preferences gleaned from the first open house to inform a preferred design concept that was shared at the second open house on December 10, 2014. All of the requested park features are included in the final concept plan.

This open house was held from 4pm - 7pm at Simon Fraser Elementary School. The open house presented the results of the first open house and demonstrated how the preferred design had been adapted to reflect the community input. The public were presented with a survey at the open house during the open house and the survey remained open online for feedback from December 10 through January 3.

Park Board received 51 responses to the survey and there was an overwhelming majority of support for both the park design and the closure of Yukon Street to vehicular traffic. The following show the results of the key questions presented in the survey:

- 87% of respondents supported the design of the new park;
- 83% of respondents are likely to use the new park space;
- 82% of respondents believe the park will improve the livability of the community;
- 90% of respondents support closing this portion of Yukon Street to vehicles to increase the size of the park and improve cycling conditions along the Yukon Bikeway;
- 55% of respondents believe the new park will encourage them to walk more often;
- 55% of respondents believe the new park will encourage them to cycle more often;

The results of the second open house demonstrate general community approval of the design concept. Additionally, fences will be provided on both the eastern and western boundaries of the park to satisfy the requests of adjacent neighbours. Through the public open house process the final concept plan, as illustrated in the Appendix, was well received.

FUNDING AND SCHEDULE

Park Board staff aim to competitively procure the services of consultants and contractors to prepare detailed design and construction documents and build the new park as soon as possible. Funding is confirmed in the 2015 capital budget and construction is targeted to begin in the summer of 2015. Council approval for change of use of the street will be the subject of a report at the next meeting of Council in early February 2015.

The estimated construction budget for the project is \$350,000. Additional funding will be available from the Vancouver Engineering Department to support reconfiguration of Yukon Street adjacent to the park.

SUMMARY

Park Board's commitment to ensure the design of the future park is linked to the Park Board's Strategic Plan and the City of Vancouver Greenest City 2020 initiative has led to a park concept plan that will be successful by all measures.

The design incorporates the three facets of sustainability (social, ecological, and economic) and will stand the test of time as a community amenity into the future. The following points summarize the aspects of the design that are mindful of the Park Board's Strategic Plan:

- Parks and Recreation for All: The park design will focus on promoting active living and strive to ensure activities and accessibility for all ages and abilities. Specific elements include playground features, benches, a community hub and all ages and abilities accessibility.

- Leader in Greening: The Park will include the addition of 12 new trees, a street to green space conversion, and horticultural plantings that focus on enhancing pollinator habitats.
- Excellence in Resource Management: The Park will maintain the existing large maple on site, utilize salvaged boulders from a nearby construction site, and prolong the life of nearby storm water infrastructure by increasing the permeability of the site. The park will also be constructed to ensure high durability and low maintenance.
- Engaging People: The Park Development process has reached out to community members through two separate open house events and engaged specific groups such as HUB Vancouver, Project Green Block and The Vancouver Public Space Network. The design is supported by City of Vancouver Engineering.

The following points summarize the aspects of the design that are mindful of the Greenest City 2020 initiative:

- Green Transportation: The Park encourages residents to walk and cycle more and enhances the user experience of the Yukon Bikeway, making it safer and more comfortable for people of all ages and abilities.
- Access to Nature: The Park ensures that more city residents live within a 5-minute walk to a park and includes 12 new trees, furthering the goal of planting 150,000 new trees by 2020.
- Clean Air: Tree planting in the park will increase canopy cover and the uptake of carbon dioxide and other air-borne pollutants. This initiative also promotes active transportation and hence decreases the number of vehicles on the streets.

The traffic calming of Yukon Street offered by this neighbourhood park is consistent with the long-term goals approved in the City's Transportation 2040 plan to make walking and cycling in Vancouver safe, convenient and comfortable for people of all ages and abilities.

The final design concept will serve the needs of the community. The design has been mindful of community input and creates a memorable park space to further enhance the livability of the City of Vancouver. If the Board approves, staff will advance the preferred concept plan through detailed design and construction, and open this new park to the public in late 2015.

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Appendix - Public Open House #2 - Preferred Design Option



Plan View of New Park



Bird's Eye View facing northeast



Bird's Eye View facing northwest



View facing north



View facing south