



Date: October 23, 2001

TO: Board Members - Parks and Recreation
FROM: General Manager - Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: VICTORY SQUARE LIGHTING PROJECT

RECOMMENDATION

A. THAT the Board approve the design of the Victory Square Lighting Project and implementation of Phase I at a cost of \$210,000, subject to the receipt of committed funds from the “Friends of Victory Square” and funding approval from City Council as detailed in this report.

BACKGROUND

Victory Square Park is a .36 hectare park located in the block surrounded by Hastings Street, Cambie Street, Pender Street and Hamilton Street. Ringed by some of the finest buildings in the city, Victory Square acts as an important connection between the downtown, Gastown and Chinatown and is a highly visible landmark in the Downtown Eastside area. The site is significant as a historic centre of the city, being the first location of the courthouse, and the point at which the survey was taken to establish the urban grid. The park has great cultural significance as the location of the War Memorial Cenotaph and associated Remembrance Day services.

Several years ago, significant safety concerns were expressed by the community and the Vancouver Police relating to poor sight lines through the park and marginal lighting. In response, the Park Board undertook maintenance work to remove fencing and overgrown shrubs, improve signage and allocated funds for lighting improvements.

In November 2000, a group of concerned local public and private property owners and merchants (“Friends of Victory Square”) began meeting to chart ways the group could work together to enhance the park and neighbourhood for residents and visitors. Linkages were established with local community groups and City Planning and Park Board staff. The Park Board reserved the funds for safety lighting in anticipation of an enhanced partnership initiative. With funding support from the Downtown Eastside Community Development Project combined with private fundraising by the “Friends of Victory Square”, a consultant - Pechet and Robb Architects - was retained to develop a design concept.

A public consultation process was undertaken by the Park Board between June 11 - 29, 2001. The process included two open houses, preceded by a neighbourhood flyer distribution and two

notice signs within the park. Approximately 135 individuals participated in the Open Houses and 49 comment sheets were submitted. The results indicated a very positive response to the proposal. Over 75% liked some or all aspects of the lighting features. Close to 63% of respondents had no negative comments when asked what they liked the least. When people were asked what they liked or disliked about Victory Square Park today, most said that they liked the park because of its greenery, size and history and that it is a place where they can sit and rest in an otherwise busy downtown urban centre. The most notable complaint expressed about the park is the on-going drug use and trade activities that contribute to people feeling unsafe.

PROPOSED LIGHTING DESIGN

The Pechet & Robb design features significant new park lighting, information kiosks and illumination of the building facades surrounding Victory Square Park. The Friends of Victory Square believe that the park lighting component of the project should be the current focus for implementation. This approach acknowledges that the lighting of the Cenotaph and lighting throughout the park generated the highest levels of support in the public consultation. It is the view of staff and the Friends of Victory Square that the illumination of the surrounding buildings would be an appropriate future project to be funded by building owners and/or other private funding sources. This architectural lighting on the surrounding building facades and the four information kiosks were also the features which generated the least support in the public consultation.

Park Lighting Plan:

Cenotaph: The elegant proportions of the Cenotaph would be enhanced with three in-ground low-level metal halide flood lights which illuminate the steps and graze the base of the monument. Two focused flood lights located on two existing tram poles illuminate the sword and the wreath on the street side of the monument. The Tram poles are located on the sidewalk and city engineering approval is required to install these lights.

10 fourteen-foot lamp standards “at-attention” with custom helmet shaped reflectors and a focused flood light create a formal semi-circle backdrop to the Cenotaph.

General Park: 17 lamp standards “at-ease” with custom helmet shaped reflectors focus floor light create informal lighting throughout the park illuminating path ways and reducing dark shadows.

14 fixed twenty-five foot poles with colored flood lights flank either side of the large maple trees. Orange, white and blue light will be cast into the trees to evoke the essence of an eternal flame.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The total estimated costs of the lighting project are \$ 330,000. Potential sources of funding have been identified for a first phase installation totaling \$210,000. This phase reduces the number of fixtures around the cenotaph and throughout the park from a total of 27 standards to 24 standards while still retaining the intent of the original design. The significant element which is not achieved in this phase is the tree lighting which is estimated to cost \$100,000. Further contributions to the project from any source, including additional fundraising, grants and future capital funds would be allocated to augment the number of fixtures and install the tree lighting feature.

Park Board	\$ 50
Friends of Victory Square	\$ 60
City of Vancouver	<u>\$ 100</u>
TOTAL	\$ 210,000.

The Friends of Victory Square have \$60,000 committed to the project as a result of their fundraising campaign. They previously contributed the design development phase of the project at a cost of \$25,000.

Park Board contributed the costs associated with the public consultation process and technical support. \$50,000 is currently allocated within the 2001 budget.

A companion report to City Council is being submitted through the Community Services Department requesting funding approval from the City. This report is scheduled to be presented to Council Planning and Environment Committee on Nov. 8, 2001. This report outlines a request for approval of a budget not to exceed \$100,000 for the Victory Square Lighting Project to be provided from the Downtown Eastside capital funds approved in the 2001 Basic Capital Budget.

The annual operating impact is estimated at \$10,000 for hydro costs, lamp replacement, lens cleaning, painting of light poles and repairs by Park Board. This would be considered as added basic funding in the Park Board annual operating budget.

Indirect financial implications relate to the impact this project will have on the continuing renewal efforts within the Downtown Eastside. Attached is a letter from Pappas Furs encouraging others to financially support the project and indicating their intentions to undertake building improvements should the lighting project proceed. It is expected that other property owners will similarly be motivated to undertake property improvements. Property owners need to see public investment in the public infrastructure to build confidence that private infrastructure renewal makes good economic sense.

OPTIONS

Park Board reviewed the details of the design concept and developed options for consideration:

The preferred option is to proceed with Pechet & Rob park lighting plan due to the visual impact of the design and the enhanced opportunity for alternate funding sources to contribute to the project.

Other options were explored which reduced the number of lights and explored various phasing scenarios. The critical elements of overall costs and maximizing opportunities for alternative funding while achieving the goal of enhancing the general park lighting were key factors in evaluating options.

The original lighting plan utilizing the funds allocated by the Park Board to install 14 “Victorian style” light standards in the general park area continues to be an option which the Park Board will implement in the event that the funding is not achieved.

CONSTRUCTION

Work would commence as soon as funding is confirmed and would be managed by the Park Board. A four month construction period is expected.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

From its inception, the idea of a significant lighting project for Victory Square Park has generated positive response from the community. Following is a listing of some of the community groups and members of the Friends of Victory Square which have expressed support at various stages of the work:

Vancouver Community College
Marceau Evans Architects
Vancouver Police Department
Architectural Institute of British Columbia
Scottsdale Investments Ltd.
Rositch Hemphill and Associates Architects
Pappas Furs
Remembrance Day Observance Committee
Cabbage and Kinx
First Nations Employment
Vancouver Film School

Silk Road Task Force
BC Regimental Association
Heritage Vancouver
SUCCESS
Millenium Development
UBC School of Architecture
Downtown Vancouver Association
Vancouver Chinatown BIA Society

The results of the community consultations document broad support for the proposal.

PROGRAMMING

Remembrance Day - There is significant excitement in timing the launch of this lighting project to coincide with the November 11th, 2001 ceremony.

The Friends of Victory Square are interested in exploring further programming opportunities within the park on an ongoing basis. Visual attractions in the form of mobiles, public art and performances and an outdoor café, such as seen in public squares around the world, are some of the ideas generated through preliminary brainstorming sessions.

Vancouver Community College is exploring curriculum enhancement opportunities to link community service training for students with enhanced maintenance activities.

The Architectural Institute of British Columbia in co-operation with the UBC School of Architecture is planning to host an exhibit and a reception this fall for neighbours, members of the "Friends" and the media to support this project at the UBC Gallery/Studio on Hastings Street.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

Victory Square Park has been identified as needing a major park redevelopment estimated to be in the range of \$250 - 500 k. Consideration will be given to including funding for future park improvements in the proposed 2002 - 2005 Capital Plan. Issues such as pathway and retaining wall improvements, spectator viewing areas and preventative surfacing treatments which discourage rodents from burrowing and eliminate hiding spots for illicit drugs are seen as priority elements in such a redevelopment plan. Consideration has been given to future park redevelopment needs in the development of the proposed lighting plan to ensure that the installation of the lighting project is compatible with future development.

SUMMARY

The lighting proposal addresses the issue of park safety with a unique and high impact design and partnership approach between the community, private sector and public agencies. It builds on other important initiatives related to the Downtown Eastside and is a visible demonstration of the significant efforts that are being focused on this area of the city by many stakeholders which are having a positive effect.

As a signature site for the city, residents and visitors will take pride in the recognition of our heritage and give pause in remembrance to those who contributed to our quality of life through their sacrifice in WWI and II and those engaged in the continuing role of guardians of our freedom.

The project will be a catalyst for future economic development and community confidence in a healthy and sustainable neighbourhood which builds on its unique assets.

Illegal activity in the park will be reduced through increased usage by community members and increased “eyes on the park” at night. Future programming will increase the range of opportunities for park visitors.

Prepared by:
Vancouver East District
Board of Parks and Recreation