



Date: July 11, 2003

TO: Board Members - Parks and Recreation
FROM: General Manager - Parks and Recreation

SUBJECT: WATERFRONT SUMMER USE INVENTORY

RECOMMENDATION

- 1. THAT the Board approve the four components of a comprehensive waterfront policy as the basis for the development of a terms of reference and funding proposal;**
- 2. THAT the Board endorse the inventory of summer uses on Vancouver's public waterfront as described in this report at a cost not to exceed \$25,000 as a first step in the waterfront planning process.**

POLICY

The Park Board has jurisdiction over Vancouver's waterfront parks.

BACKGROUND

The waterfront has been a magnet for public recreation since the early 1900s when Vancouver's favourite beach was at English Bay. Since then, public access to the water has increased steadily. Today, more than half (58%) of the City's waterfront is public; the longest continuous stretch is 23 kilometers from Portside Park to Kits Beach Park.

These public waterfront areas along Burrard Inlet, English Bay, False Creek and the Fraser River consisting of parks, beaches, walkways and seawalls have varied character, provide for many different uses and attract many different people. Common to all of these areas is the high level of public interest that has galvanized several recent public debates over specific waterfront proposals. These at times controversial discussions have generated a desire to begin to look at Vancouver's public waterfront in a more comprehensive manner, such that individual decisions are not taken on a case by case basis but are embedded in a firm and widely accepted policy context.

DISCUSSION

For any recreational visitor, the waterfront is one continuous environment that includes dry uplands, tidal and permanently submerged areas, or simply land and water. For planning purposes, however, the waterfront is an area of intense overlapping of jurisdictions, property rights, regulatory regimes, interests and sensibilities. Any comprehensive planning process for the waterfront needs to involve a long list of stakeholders, from the general public to multiple agencies at every level of government, in addition to private owners, businesses, community and non-governmental organizations, First Nations, cultural institutions and recreational clubs.

FOUR KEY COMPONENTS OF A WATERFRONT POLICY

The complexity of issues and multitude of interests require a substantial planning process that achieves a desirable depth of participation. The terms of reference for such a process are currently being developed. It can be expected that a new waterfront policy will consist of four key components, an inventory, a vision, a policy framework and an action plan:

2. An inventory that maps what exists now, physically, legally, and environmentally, as an interest or an activity, as a constraint or an opportunity.
3. A vision for the waterfront of Vancouver that recognizes the status quo, acknowledges historic and natural legacies, and embodies the hopes and dreams for the future.
4. A policy framework to guide decision-making on individual projects in harmony with the overall vision.
5. An action plan that aligns the Park Board's day-to-day operations with the policy framework, prioritizes capital projects and opens the door to external funding possibilities.

SUMMER USE INVENTORY

It is conceivable that these four components are developed incrementally over time. Meanwhile, summer is here, and with it the busiest, most intensive use. While people want to be near the water all year round, the highest number of visitors occurs in summer, and many waterfront activities happen only then. Staff therefore recommend to advance a piece of the waterfront planning process and to conduct in August an inventory of summer uses and a survey of summer users. It should be noted, though, that additional work will be required to capture the uses outside the busy season, and to also talk to those people who stay away from the crowded beaches in summer.

The proposed inventory is intended to document how our waterfront is used in summer: what are people doing, where and when are they doing it, how busy does it get, and what do these people think about the many waterfront issues? The inventory will establish with reasonable certainty what the summer use of Vancouver's public waterfront is, and what concerns, attitudes, or ideas it generates. The inventory will be reported to the Board, along with proposals for subsequent stages of the waterfront planning process. Four separate pieces of investigation are proposed:

- A survey of park users in twelve waterfront locations, seeking responses to issues that already have been identified but also inviting open contributions on any related topic. The goal is to generate 100 questionnaire responses in each location. Emphasis will be placed on including people from all walks of life engaged in a variety of activities, and on conducting the surveys on weekdays as well as weekends, from early in the morning to late at night. This survey is not expected to be statistically representative but rather to document a full array of opinions. A team of three is expected to be hired and trained for this task.
- The annual seawall counts at multiple locations that measure pedestrians, cyclists and in-line skaters. These numbers will be compared to previous years' data, allowing for an understanding of activity levels over time.
- A series of aerial photos of the most popular waterfront places on a busy day, of sufficient detail to allow some analysis of other types and intensities of activities.
- Field observations filling in detail that might escape the above methods of investigation, including written and photographed material.

The proposed survey and field work will be offered to auxiliary Park Board staff first, and to summer students second. Training, coordination and supervision will be provided by existing staff. The entire summer inventory requires a budget of \$25,000, excluding existing staff. Funding for this project is available in the Park Planning Account of the Capital Plan.

The expectation is that the summer inventory will be a cornerstone of the waterfront planning process, and will be very helpful in subsequent stages as a basis for the discussion of many issues. The summer inventory will, of course, be supplemented by a similar off-season inventory that will involve individuals and groups whose waterfront interests go beyond the summer season.

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Prepared by:

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