



Date: May 28, 2004

TO: Board Members - Parks and Recreation
FROM: General Manager - Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: The Future of Hastings Park and the PNE

RECOMMENDATION

A. THAT the Board:

- 1. reaffirm its support for the restoration of Hastings Park into a major park serving residents in the north-east district of the city.*
- 2. endorse Approach 3 as the basis for more detailed planning for Hastings Park, as long as:
 - a) the stream and park connection to New Brighton Park are located between the racetrack oval and the horse barns, generally as shown in the 1997 Hastings Park Restoration Plan; and*
 - b) Hastings Community Centre is relocated on site in an existing building.**
- 3. request that Council appoint a staff project team, with co-leads from City and Park Board, to develop detailed design, phasing and funding plans.*
- 4. request that Council place portions of restored park land at Hastings Park under the “custody, care and management” of the Park Board, as permitted under Section 488.3 of the Vancouver Charter.*

POLICY

In 1990, Council approved a general concept for Hastings Park, including that: a) the site be restored to dominant park use, with abundant green space and trees; b) the PNE remain as a tenant for the annual fair only; and c) the racetrack operators be required to make substantive improvements to the racing operation and to the neighbourliness of the facility.

In 1992, Park Board approved the “Park Board Management Plan”, which included the following policy: “advocate the restoration of the existing P.N.E. site (Hastings Park) as a major park serving a variety of community and city wide needs”.

In 1997, both the Park Board and Council approved the “Hastings Park Restoration Plan”, a long-term plan for the “greening” of Hastings Park which included the horse racetrack but not the annual fair or an amusement park.

BACKGROUND

In 1995, City Council asked the Park Board to prepare a long-term plan for the “greening” of Hastings Park that would include the horse racetrack but not the Pacific National Exhibition (PNE). The PNE, a Provincial Crown corporation, decided to search for a new home in 1994. Council permitted the PNE to stay at Hastings Park while the park plan was being prepared.

After two years of community consultation, both Park Board and Council approved the Hastings Park Restoration Plan in 1997 (see Appendix A). The main components of the plan are:

- S** to create a large, natural area in the centre of the park which includes a pond and a wetland in the lowlands (“the Sanctuary”) and a meadow on the highland (“Windermere Hill”);
- S** to daylight the stream that once ran through the site and to create a good pedestrian connection between Hastings Park and New Brighton Park;
- S** to locate active park uses and parking at the edges of the park;
- S** to better integrate the park with the residential areas surrounding the park; and
- S** to better integrate the horse racetrack within the park.



Between 1998 and 2001, Council and Park Board approved the restoration of three areas: the “Sanctuary”, the “Italian Garden” and “Empire Fields”. Council extended the PNE’s short-term lease so that the PNE could continue its operations during this period. The photo shows the site as it is today.

In 2001, the Province announced that it would not support any future relocation of the PNE. In March 2003, the Province entered into an agreement with the City for the transfer of the PNE to the City effective January 1, 2004.

Between January and May 2004, the City initiated a process to review: a) the future of the PNE at Hastings Park; and b) review the impacts of the possible introduction of slot machines at the horse racetrack. This process involved public consultation and technical review. Four basic approaches to land use planning and site management were prepared and analyzed.

On April 5, 2004, the Board approved the following motion with regards to the options being generated:

“WHEREAS the current process of shaping the future of Hastings Park and of the PNE is premised on ‘building on and complementing’ the Hastings Park Restoration Plan, which was supported by the community and unanimously approved by both Park Board and City Council in 1997;

WHEREAS the Park Board supports an Annual Fair in Hastings Park;

WHEREAS an Annual Fair, if properly designed and managed, can occur without sacrificing the principles contained in the Hastings Park Restoration Plan; and

WHEREAS alternatives for the park are being presently developed and evaluated by a consultant team within an extremely restricted timeframe.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Park Board encourage the development of variations, which create a sustainable, accessible, and vibrant public park that:

- (a) Clearly connect the restored park areas (Italian Gardens, Sanctuary and Empire Fields) so as to encourage visitors to explore and use the park
- (b) Restore Windermere Hill and create the stream/pedestrian corridor to New Brighton Park
- (c) Create an inviting edge and welcoming entrances to the park that reach out into the community in all directions

- (d) Accommodate an exciting annual fair through:
- the potential use of existing buildings and facilities on site including the racetrack grandstand and barns
 - the development of a temporary Midway on a north/south axis with the existing Roller Coaster as its southern anchor
 - the development of a wide promenade along the Miller Drive alignment suitable to accommodate a range of Fair activities.”

The four approaches, their technical review and results of the public consultation are found in an Administrative Report to Council dated May 6, 2004 and entitled “Hastings Park / PNE - Four Approaches for the Future”.

On May 18, 2004, Council approved the following motion: “THAT Council postpone its consideration and decision on the Administrative Report *Hastings Park / PNE - Four Approaches for the Future* dated May 6, 2004 pending the hearing of speakers at the Special Council meeting on June 1, 2004.”

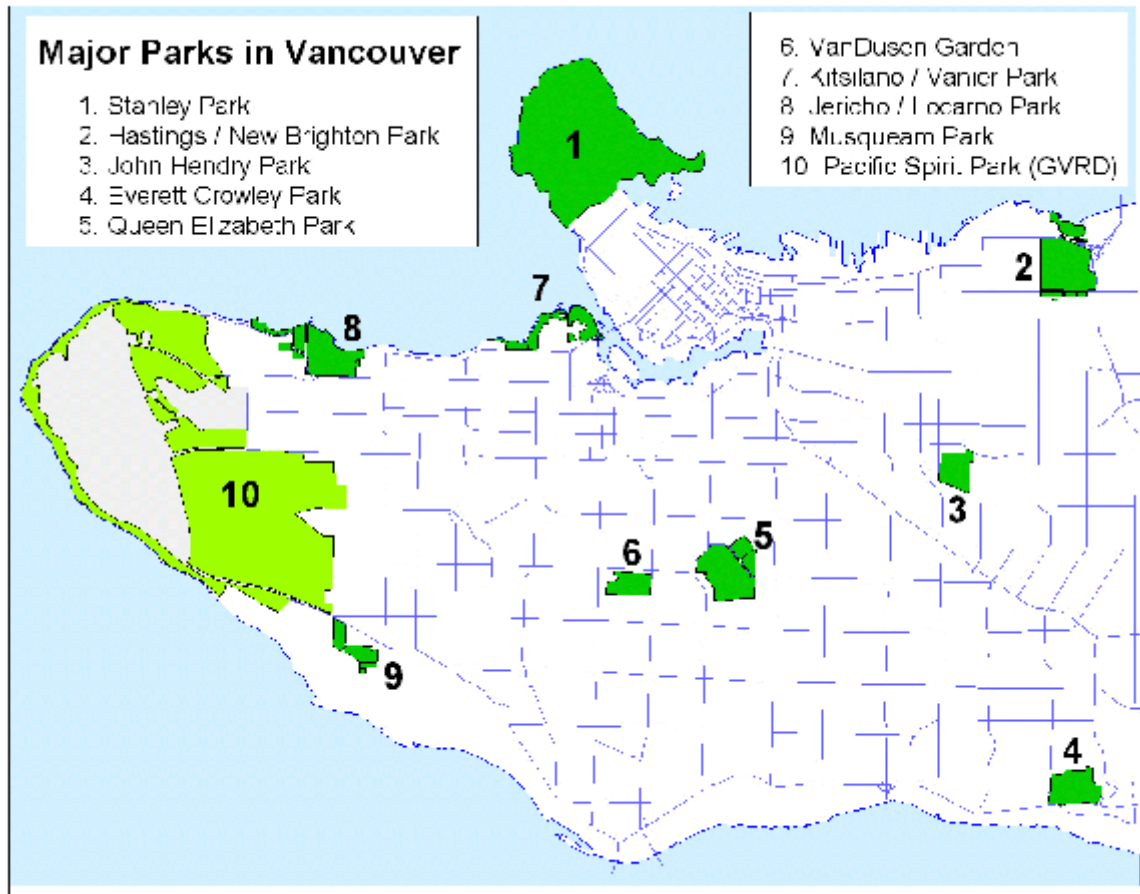
DISCUSSION

There is a need to reshape the future of Hastings Park. The PNE is not relocating to a new site, as was anticipated in the mid-1990s when the Restoration Plan was prepared and approved. The annual fair and Playland are the PNE’s most popular activities and well supported by the public. Yet the public, including those living in the Hastings-Sunrise and Grandview-Woodland neighbourhoods, expect Hastings Park to be a green park. These two public objectives were highlighted in the City’s recent telephone survey. This report will explore options that allow both public objectives to be achieved: to accommodate the annual fair and Playland, and to create a major park in the city’s north-east district.

Hastings Park as a Major Park in the North-East District of the City

Major parks play an important role in shaping a neighbourhood’s and a city’s liveability. For several decades, there has been a desire to provide a major park in the north-east district of the city. Currently, the largest park in the area north of Broadway and east of Clark Drive is Rupert Park (11 hectares). The restoration of Hastings Park can lead to the creation of 30 to 35 hectares of park, which is about half of the 65 hectare site (the other half is taken up by uses such as the horse racetrack, the Pacific Coliseum and Playland).

Other districts in the city have access to major parks such as Stanley Park, Queen Elizabeth Park, VanDusen Garden, Jericho-Locarno Beach Parks, Kitsilano-Vanier Parks, John Hendry Park, Musqueam Park and Everett Crowley Park. The map below shows the distribution of major parks in the city of Vancouver.



In addition to becoming a major park in the city's north-east district, the newly created park space at Hastings Park will assist in achieving two other important public objectives. The first is helping to redress the imbalance that currently exists in the delivery of park space between the city's three main geographical areas (see table below).

	Total amount of park space (2001)	Population (2001)	Park ratio (2001) per 1,000 residents
Downtown	433 hectares	70,000	6.2 hectares
West Side	468 hectares	203,000	2.3 hectares
East Side	382 hectares	274,000	1.4 hectares
City of Vancouver	1,283 hectares	547,000	2.3 hectares

The second public objective is how the restoration of Hastings Park fits into the City's "Financing Growth" strategy. Approved by Council in 2003, the strategy aims to provide basic municipal services to a growing population. Financing Growth looked forward to 2021 at a time when Vancouver's population may approach 635,000, about 85,000 more residents than in 2001.

It was foreseen that a key element in the delivery of additional park space was the restoration of Hastings Park. In the event that less park space is created at Hastings Park, two choices are possible: a) accepting a lower level of service for park provision; or b) seeking opportunities to acquire the park land elsewhere, noting that every hectare of park land cost \$4-5 million to acquire and develop in industrial areas and \$10 million in residential areas.

Review of the Four Approaches (see Appendix B)

There are two critical questions that inform which approach should be selected for more detailed planning:

- what is an appropriate balance between park uses and commercial/entertainment uses?
- how do the commercial/entertainment uses integrate into the park setting?

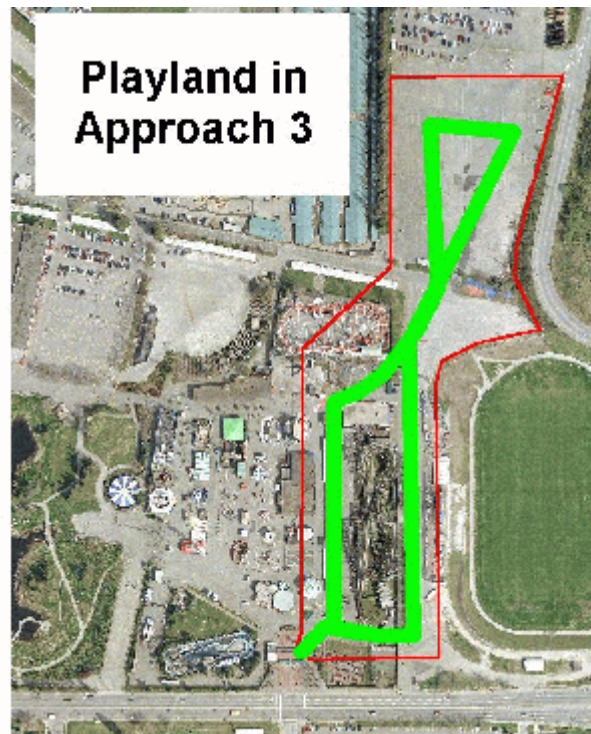
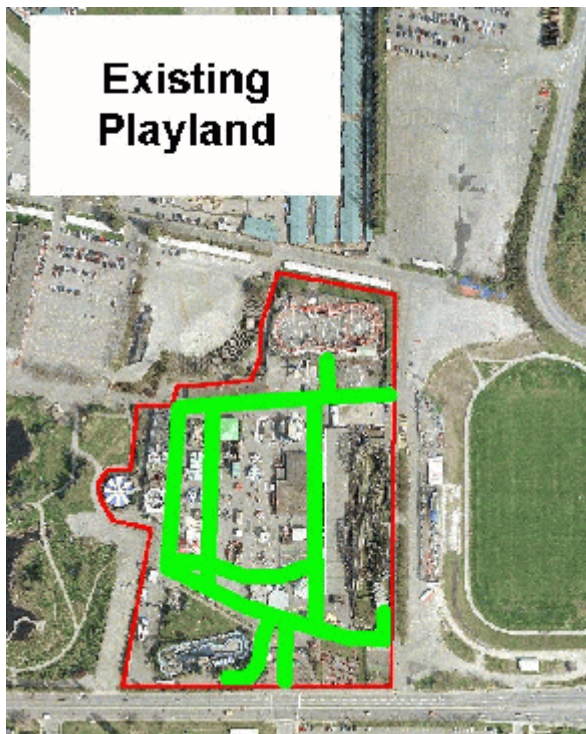
Currently, Hastings Park accommodates the following commercial/entertainment uses:

- a) the horse racetrack;
- b) large sports and entertainment events in the Pacific Coliseum;
- c) the annual fair;
- d) the amusement park (Playland); and
- e) small to mid-sized commercial events in other buildings on site.

There is no doubt that many successful large urban parks have a diverse set of uses and activities. The 1997 Hastings Park Restoration Plan retained both the horse racetrack and the Pacific Coliseum. These two uses are present in all four approaches and should be endorsed once again.

Hosting a city-wide special event is common to many of Vancouver’s major parks: the Celebration of Light in English Bay Beach and Kitsilano Beach Parks, the Folk Music Festival in Jericho Park, the Illuminares lantern festival in John Hendry Park, the Children’s Festival and Bard on the Beach in Vanier Park, the Garden Show in VanDusen Garden, and a host of walks, runs and events in Stanley Park. Accommodating an annual fair within a restored Hastings Park can be consistent with this tradition, as long as it does not lead to a situation where large areas of the park are paved over or significant sections of the site are off-limits to the public after the fair has been hosted. Although it varies in scale, an annual fair is included in all four approaches, with the annual fair described in Approach 3 being similar in scale to the current annual fair.

The existing amusement park, Playland, covers 6 hectares of land at Hastings Park, or just under 10% of the site. Approaches 1 and 2 include a smaller amusement park during the annual fair. Approaches 3 and 4 include a permanent amusement park (about 5 hectares in Approach 3, and about 6 hectares in Approach 4). In both Approaches 3 and 4, the amusement park is reshaped in order to allow for the creation of the westerly half of “Windermere Hill”, a large meadow located at the foot of Windermere Street with wonderful views overlooking the park and of the North Shore mountains. The diagram below compares the existing Playland with the one in Approach 3, showing the boundary of the amusement park and its main circulation paths within.



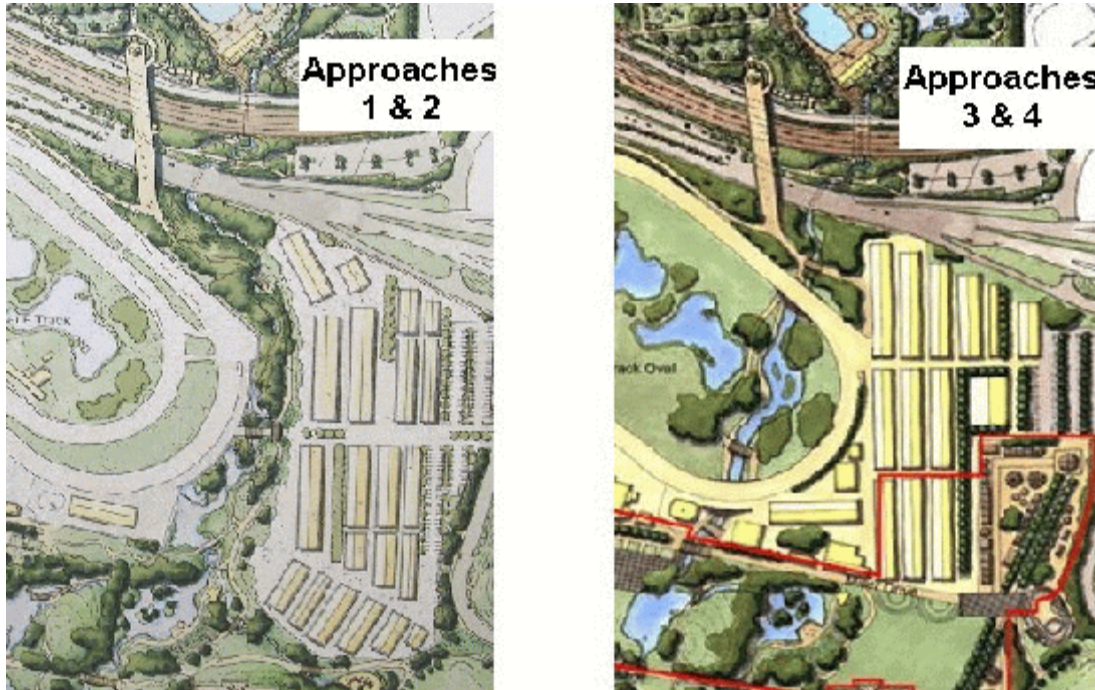
A difference between Approaches 3 and 4 is the fact that the smaller rides in Approach 3 would be dismantled at the end of every season and placed in storage until the next spring. Although this effort carries with it additional operational costs, it is in line with how parks are generally managed elsewhere in Vancouver - e.g. the tents for the Children's Festival and Bard on the Beach in Vanier Park, although present for most of the summer, are taken down each year. This practice is based on the principle of making the park accessible to the public once the short-term or seasonal event is concluded. If the Board wishes to endorse an option which includes a permanent amusement park, staff recommend that Approach 3 be supported.

There are four major buildings located in the south-west corner of Hastings Park, near Hastings and Renfrew Streets: the Forum, the Garden Auditorium, Rollerland and the Agrodome. Only one of these buildings has had a long tradition of having public access and hosting community events: the Agrodome, which is home to Hastings Minor Hockey League and the Vancouver Figure Skating Club. The Garden Auditorium has been home to a community-based non-profit agency, Cirkids, which offers circus training to children, since January 2003. The Forum and Rollerland are mainly used for commercial events, with little or no public access except during the annual fair.

Approach 3 offers a reasonable balance between commercial uses and community uses. In addition to the Pacific Coliseum, Rollerland would be used for commercial purposes. The three remaining buildings would be used for community purposes: community ice rink in the Agrodome, a community use (e.g. Cirkids) in the Garden Auditorium, and a relocated Hastings Community Centre in the Forum.

The notion of relocating Hastings Community Centre (built in 1956 and expanded in 1986) from its Hastings & Lillooet location to the Forum has been discussed since the Park Board's Community Centre Renewal Plan was adopted in 2002. The concept that has been developed to date is to locate the community centre in the northern portion of the Forum, adjacent to the existing skateboard bowl and youth area. It would be a two-storey structure with approximately 40,000 square feet in total. The southern portion of the Forum (about 40,000 square feet) could be used either as an ice rink or a large gymnasium for basketball, volleyball, badminton and other court sports. This southern portion of the building could be used as exhibition space during the annual fair. Other buildings on site could also be explored for community centre use.

In terms of park restoration, all four approaches expand the "Sanctuary", create "Windermere Hill" and build the stream/park connection to New Brighton Park, although the size and quality of these spaces are better achieved in Approaches 1 and 2 when compared to Approaches 3 and 4. The main reason for this is because stream/park connection to New Brighton Park is poorly located in Approaches 3 and 4, i.e. through the racetrack oval. While it can be argued that opening up the racetrack oval to public use is beneficial, it does not address the key drawback of this option: park users wanting to go from Hastings Park to New Brighton Park must walk through two tunnels under the racing track (once to get into the racing oval and once to get out), with each tunnel about 25 to 30 metres long.



The intent behind this park connection is to make it easier, not more difficult, for nearby residents to get to the East Side's only waterfront park. Approaches 3 and 4 are supportable from a park point of view only if the stream/park connection to New Brighton Park is located where it is shown in the 1997 Restoration Plan, i.e. between the racetrack oval and the horse barns. In the Restoration Plan (and in Approaches 1 and 2), park users would walk along a 10 metre long bridge in the location where horses are escorted between the barns and the racing oval.

In choosing which approach to endorse, providing a reasonable balance between park uses and commercial uses is needed. Neither Approaches 1 or 2 include a permanent amusement park, whereas Approaches 3 and 4 do include one. The key difference between Approaches 3 and 4 has to do with intensity of commercial uses: the annual fair and the amusement park are larger in Approach 4, and all buildings except the Agrodome are focused on commercial activities. Approach 3 includes an annual fair and an amusement park that are approximately in line with existing activities on site, yet offer the opportunity to open up more of the buildings for community use.

In terms of capital costs, Approach 3 is estimated to cost \$120 million, though this would be reduced to \$115 million if stream/park connection to New Brighton Park is built as shown in the Restoration Plan. Approach 4 would cost an additional \$15 million when compared to Approach 3. As a comparison, completing the park based on the Restoration Plan is estimated to be \$57 million. This financial investment at Hastings Park would be spread over a 15-20 year period. Funding sources could include the Capital Plan, lease payments by the horse racetrack, and reinvestment of the site's operating surplus.

In terms of the operating budget, Approach 3 is estimated to yield a surplus of about \$1 million per year. Approach 4 is estimated to yield an annual surplus of \$3.75 million because of additional commercial activities on site. While Approach 4 yields a larger operating surplus, it is at the expense of other public objectives: greater neighbourhood impacts in terms of traffic and parking, and less community access to the buildings. These two objectives were the rated as the most important factors by Hastings-Sunrise residents in the random telephone survey. (These results are in contrast to the top rated factors by city of Vancouver residents, which were the annual fair and job opportunities.)

Ultimately, Approach 3 provides a better balance between park uses and commercial uses, and between community needs and city-wide needs. It is an option that creates a significant green space while providing for an annual fair and an amusement park that are in similar scale to the current operations. Moreover, Approach 3 is expected to generate a modest annual surplus, and will cost \$15 million less than Approach 4.

Staff therefore recommend that the Board endorse Approach 3 as the basis for more detailed planning for Hastings Park, as long as: a) the stream and park connection to New Brighton Park are located between the racetrack oval and the horse barns, generally as shown in the 1997 Hastings Park Restoration Plan; and b) Hastings Community Centre is relocated on site in an existing building.

Park Board as an Equal Partner in Future Planning and Management Decisions

The next phase of work is of great importance. It involves detailed site layout plans, which will necessitate phasing and funding strategies. Park Board can offer design knowledge and expertise based on our experience of preparing the Restoration Plan and constructing the three restored park areas at Hastings Park, and designing and developing numerous other parks throughout the city.

Park Board has been and will continue to be a major funding partner at Hastings Park. Park Board has invested \$13 million to construct the “Sanctuary”, the “Italian Garden” and the “Empire Fields”. The Board’s current Capital Plan allocates \$5 million toward future restoration phases at Hastings Park.

During the planning and recent construction phases (1995-2001), Park Board also developed strong community links with key stakeholders on site and in the neighbourhood. Our reaching out to the Italian-Canadian community as part of the creation of the Italian Garden is a good example of a successful partnership between government and community.

For these reasons, it is recommended that the Board request that Council appoint a staff project team, with co-leads from City and Park Board, to develop detailed design, phasing and funding plans.

“Custody, Care and Management” of Restored Park Land at Hastings Park

Three areas at Hastings Park, accounting for nearly 11 hectares, have been restored since 1998: the “Sanctuary”, the “Italian Garden” and the “Empire Fields”. Upcoming phases of work will yield additional park areas: the extension to the Sanctuary, “Windermere Hill” and, eventually, the stream/park connection to New Brighton Park. How these restored park areas are managed over time is of great importance.

If the restored park areas are managed by the Park Board, it will give an important message to all: public access to the site, a sore point for the community over the years, will be guaranteed and not be restricted by the decisions of a tenant on the site. Special events in the restored park area will be managed in a manner similar to other parks, i.e. permission must be granted by the Board.

Park Board also has the labour skills and expertise to manage the restored park areas. In fact, because of the special requirements for maintaining sport fields, the “Empire Fields” were removed from the PNE’s lease area several years ago, with maintenance responsibility turned over to the Park Board.

The Vancouver Charter (section 488) offers three choices for the status of park land:

- “permanent public park”;
- “temporary public park”; or
- land under the “custody, care and management” of the Park Board.

Both “permanent public park” and “temporary public park” refer to “exclusive jurisdiction and control” by the Park Board, whereas the extent of the “custody, care and management” is determined by Council. Section 488.3 states: “The Board shall have the custody, care and management to the extent prescribed by Council of such other areas belonging to or held by the City as Council may from time to time determine.”

Given Council may not wish to grant “exclusive jurisdiction and control” of restored park areas to the Park Board at this time, it is recommended that the Board request that Council place portions of restored park land at Hastings Park under the “custody, care and management” of the Park Board to the extent prescribed by Council, as permitted under Section 488.3 of the Vancouver Charter.

The model proposed for “custody, care and management” of Hastings Park is similar to the arrangements for Vanier Park. The City manages and maintains the buildings and premises around the Vancouver Museum, Pacific Space Centre, Music Conservatory and City Archives, while the Park Board manages and maintains the park areas including the marina and the hosting of special events like Bard on the Beach and the Children’s Festival.

Staff note that if “custody, care and management” of the restored park areas is granted to the Park Board, a labour relations protocol will need to be developed since maintenance of two of the restored park areas is currently performed by PNE employees.

CONCLUSION

Hastings Park is at a crossroad. After decades of community demands for a greener and more accessible site, the Park Board and City Council approved a plan to restore the site in 1997 and implemented three phases since that time. The Board and Council are now faced with the difficult choice of whether and how to accommodate an annual fair and an amusement park at Hastings Park. This report recommends that a modified Approach 3 is a reasonable balance between park uses and commercial uses, between community needs and city-wide needs. This report also recommends that steps be taken to treat Hastings Park in a manner that is similar to other parks in Vancouver, especially as it relates to decision-making and site management.

Prepared by:
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Appendix A - Hastings Park Restoration Plan (1997)



Appendix B - Approach 1



Approach #1

Appendix B - Approach 2



Approach #2

Appendix B - Approach 3



Approach #3

Appendix B - Approach 4



Approach #4