

Date: January 5, 2007



TO: Board Members – Vancouver Park Board
FROM: General Manager – Parks and Recreation
**SUBJECT: China Creek South Park:
Concept Plan for Park Upgrade**

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Board approve the Concept Plan, as described in this report and illustrated in Appendix A, for upgrading China Creek South Park.

POLICY

The Board approves major changes in Vancouver parks, including concept plans for upgrading parks.

BACKGROUND

China Creek South Park is a 1.6 hectare (4.0 acre) park located in the eastern portion of Mount Pleasant, near Broadway and Clark Drive.

One of Vancouver's original streams – China Creek – passed through the park, flowing from the southeast to the northwest, giving China Creek South Park its diagonal orientation. The creek was culverted in the 1910s and the ravine was filled in the 1950s.

The park currently includes the following features:

- a large grassy area between Broadway and 10th Avenue;
- mature trees in the northwest and southeast portions of the park;
- a skateboard facility;
- a half-court of basketball; and
- Nanook daycare.

The park had a children's playground until 2004, when a major sewer was constructed through the park and required the removal of the playground.

The park's pathway system is minimal: there is one formal pathway (between 10th and 11th Avenues), the sidewalk along 10th Avenue, and an informal pathway between Broadway and 10th Avenue. The park has only a few benches (two of the benches were removed when the playground was removed).



The park is located adjacent to two busy arterial streets (Broadway and Clark Drive), and the 10th Avenue corridor (sidewalk and bike route) divides the park into two halves. The zigzag-shaped park is bordered by about a dozen residential properties. Two major sewers run underneath the park, with a sewer vent and an underground chamber located immediately south of the skateboard facility.

The park was last upgraded in the late 1970s, more than 25 years ago. A total of \$350,000 is available from the 2003-2005 (\$250,000) and 2006-2008 (\$100,000) Capital Plans for the upcoming park upgrade.

DISCUSSION

Public Process

Community consultation on the improvements to China Creek South Park began in 2005. A total of six community meetings were held between February 2005 and October 2006, with 30 to 80 people attending each meeting. A public open house was held in June 2005, attended by about 150 people.

Planning Committee

The project has been presented to the Park Board's Planning Committee three times: October 4, 2005, February 7, 2006 and December 5, 2006.

Recommended Concept Plan

The recommended concept plan for upgrading China Creek South Park will make it a better neighbourhood park for a wider range of park users. The concept plan is illustrated in Appendix A. Key features of the concept plan are detailed below.

Preserving existing valued features

There is broad community support for preserving the following existing features in the park:

- the large grassy area between Broadway and 10th Avenue; and
- the mature trees in the northwest and southeast portions of the park.



Providing a new children's playground

A new children's playground to replace the one that was removed in 2004 will be provided in a new location. The old playground used to be located in the 10th Avenue corridor, immediately south of the Nanook daycare. The new playground will be located north of 10th Avenue, near Keith Drive, an area that is far away from the two busy arterial streets and that can become a focal point for activity in the park.

Creating a focal point

A new moderately-sized plaza will be constructed adjacent to the children's playground. It will include seating areas for parents and other park visitors, and can be used for leisure activities such as taichi and for small, informal gatherings amongst neighbourhood residents. This proposed plaza would be similar in scale (1,000 to 2,000 square feet) to the plazas constructed at Sahalli Park (Fraser Street & 8th Avenue) and Kingscrest Park (Knight Street & King Edward Avenue).

Pathways

New pathways and welcoming entrances into the park will be added to make it easier and more comfortable for neighbourhood residents to get to and through their neighbourhood park. The possibility of having a perimeter path at China Creek South Park was discussed at the community meetings, but residents felt it would not be well used because much of the perimeter path would be adjacent to noisy arterial streets (Broadway and Clark Drive). The preference was to focus the pathway system on bringing park visitors into the core of the park, near the playground and plaza.

10th Avenue Bikeway

In October 2003, the City approved the 10th Avenue bikeway from Trafalgar Street to Victoria Drive. An 80 metre section of the bikeway goes through China Creek South Park. A temporary bike path was built in March 2005. Engineering and Park Board staff have agreed to construct the permanent bike path at the same time when the park will be upgraded. The bike path will be fully separated from the sidewalk along the 10th Avenue corridor to avoid conflicts between cyclists and pedestrians.

Landscape Improvements

Additional trees will be planted in various locations in the park, including adjacent to the plaza, along the 10th Avenue corridor and along Clark Drive. A linear landscape feature will be constructed along the course of the old stream, as a way to recollect China Creek. An interpretative panel about the old stream will be installed in the plaza. A community garden is planned for the park, in a location that receives adequate sunlight.

Skateboard Facility

There was significant public discussion about the future of the existing skateboard facility at China Creek South Park. The skateboard area was originally built in 1979 as Vancouver's first skatepark, with two bowls that are nicknamed "the bathtub" and "the teacup".



The Park Board added two rails in 2001, at a time when there were no other opportunities for 'street-style' skateboarding in Vancouver parks. For the last several years, skateboarders have brought in non-sanctioned wooden ramps.



The skateboard facility at China Creek South Park has offered and continues to offer children, teenagers and young adults an important recreational venue. The skateboarding community views it as a historic site, since it was the first such facility in Vancouver and, for more than 20 years, it was the only skateboarding facility in Vancouver. (There are six skateboard facilities in Vancouver today.)

The skateboard facility at China Creek South Park is located very close to residential properties (the closest home is about 25 m from the skateboard facility) and, as a result, creates noticeable impacts for people living in these homes. Specific issues raised by these residents include: noise, especially late at night; urination in the park or nearby lanes (there are no public washrooms in the park); and the accumulation of litter.

Park Board staff developed three options for consideration during the public process:

- Option 1: keep the skateboard facility where it is in China Creek South Park.
- Option 2: relocate the skateboard facility to the edge of China Creek South Park along Clark Drive.
- Option 3: relocate the skateboard facility to a more suitable park within a kilometre or two of China Creek South Park.

Option 1 is supported by the skateboarders and by some residents who live in the neighbourhood but not adjacent to the park. Option 1 is not supported by the majority of residents living very close to the park.

Option 2 was reviewed but eventually dropped as an option because it did not fully address the concerns of skateboarders or residents living very close to the park.

Option 3 is supported by the majority of residents living very close to the park, and by some residents who live in the neighbourhood but not adjacent to the park. Option 3 is not supported by the skateboarders.

On December 5, 2006, Option 1 and Option 3 were presented to the Planning Committee. The Planning Committee decided to recommend Option 1 to the Park Board subject to the following:

- the removal of the noisiest elements (wooden ramps and metal rails) from the skateboard area;
- the construction of a grassy berm south of the two skateboarding bowls to buffer noise;
- the addition of extra garbage bins near the skateboard area;
- the installation of signs near the skateboard area stating appropriate park etiquette;
- the formation of a park committee, consisting of residents, skateboarders and Park Board staff, to monitor, assess and act on operational issues in the park.

The option recommended by the Planning Committee will maintain the principal, original features of the skateboard facility: the two bowls – the “teacup” and the “bathtub” – which are highly valued by the skateboarding community. It will address some of the noise issues for residents living very close to the park by removing the noisiest elements in the skateboard area (wooden ramps and metal rails) and by building a grassy berm south of the two skateboarding bowls. The other action items recommended by the Planning Committee will assist in managing issues that negatively impact residents living very close to the park. Park Board staff will also explore additional action items, such as installing and maintaining a portable washroom in the park.

Basketball Court

There is a half-court of basketball located south of 10th Avenue, which is in need of repairs. In October 2005, the Planning Committee recommended that it be removed because: a) it is located about 30 to 40 metres away from nearby homes and causes occasional noise disturbances for these residents; b) the recreational priority in China Creek South Park is the skateboarding facility; and c) there is a full-sized basketball court available at Cedar Cottage Park, located on the east side of Clark Drive at 11th Avenue.

Nanook Daycare

The YMCA, which operates the Nanook daycare, is planning to replace, at no cost to the Park Board, the existing one-storey portable with a larger, permanent building. In May 2006, the Park Board gave permission to the YMCA to build a new one-storey building. As it stands today, the reconstruction of the Nanook Daycare will occur after the park is upgraded. The next step is for the YMCA to produce an architectural scheme, which will be presented at a public meeting to nearby residents and park users.

Sewer Vent

A sewer vent is located immediately south of the skateboard facility in the 10th Avenue Corridor. Residents and park users have complained about foul odours emanating from the vent on a periodic basis. Park Board staff will work with the managers of the sewer (Greater Vancouver Regional District) so that a filter is installed.

Next Steps

If the concept plan is approved by the Park Board, staff will work immediately on the formation of the park committee with residents, skateboarders and other park users.

Staff will work on design development drawings and tendering documents between January and April. The park upgrade work would then be performed during the summer months.

SUMMARY

China Creek South Park is in need of a major upgrade. The concept plan being recommended includes a series of actions to preserve key park features and replace aging park features. New elements will also be added to enhance this neighbourhood park to attract a wider range of park users. The skateboard facility will remain, but will be modified by removing its noisiest elements and constructing a grassy berm to buffer noise from the skateboard bowls. This option strikes a balance between the needs of the skateboarders and residents living very close to the park.

Prepared by:

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APPENDIX A: CONCEPT PLAN FOR CHINA CREEK SOUTH PARK (January 2007)

EAST BROADWAY



EAST 11th AVENUE

EAST 10th AVENUE