

Date: February 27th, 2008



TO: Board Members – Vancouver Park Board
FROM: General Manager – Parks and Recreation
**SUBJECT: Oppenheimer Park and Field House Upgrade:
Concept Plan Approval**

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Board approve the concept plan for the proposed upgrade of Oppenheimer Park and Field House as described in this report and illustrated in Appendix 1.

POLICY

The Board approves new park designs.

BACKGROUND

Oppenheimer Park, named for Vancouver's second Mayor, David Oppenheimer, was officially opened in 1898. Occupying a city block, this .98 hectare park is located in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside neighbourhood at the corner of Powell and Jackson Streets. The park is intensely used and its existing park's features include many shaded seating areas, a children's playground, shuffleboard, basketball courts, field house, softball pitch and open grassy areas.

The Oppenheimer Park Redevelopment Committee contacted the City of Vancouver and Park Board during the Capital Planning process of 2005 requesting Oppenheimer Park be considered for redevelopment in the 2006-2008 Capital Plan. The Oppenheimer Park Redevelopment Committee currently consists of members of the local community, area residents, representatives from the Powell Street Festival, Aboriginal Elders Council, Watari, Japanese Language School, Strathcona BIA, Vancouver Buddhist Temple, and the Salvation Army, as well as staff from the Carnegie Community Centre, the Life Skills Centre, and Community Services, Planning Department.

The 2006-2008 Park Board Capital Plan provides \$700,000 for the park upgrade and \$670,000 for the field house upgrade. The combined funding for the project is \$1,370,000 including consultants' fees, construction costs and contingencies. There is a possibility that some funding may be added from a Community Amenity Contribution, and this would be reported to the Board at a later date.

DISCUSSION

In June 2007 the landscape architecture consulting firm, Space2place, was hired to work with the Oppenheimer Park Redevelopment Committee, park board staff, and area residents to develop a concept plan for park and field house improvements within the existing construction budget.

Residents and community representatives had the opportunity to participate in the development of the recommended concept plan during two workshops, a public open house, and numerous Park Redevelopment Committee meetings as well as the Board's Committee meeting on February 18th, 2008.

As there are a number of community (Carnegie Centre) and City (Engineering and Planning Department) initiatives currently taking place throughout the DTES Oppenheimer neighbourhood, at key points in the process the consultant presented the work to a staff technical team for information and commentary. The technical team consists of staff from Park Board, Engineering and Community Services. In addition, the City's CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) Coordinator has participated in meetings and discussions during the concept plan development and will continue to be consulted through subsequent stages of the project.

At the February 25th, 2008 meeting of the Vancouver Heritage Commission (VHC) the Commission supported this project including the removal of the baseball diamond, and approaches to commemorate the significance of the Asahi legacy, labour movement history and other items of cultural importance. The VHC has requested that an interactive interpretive commemorative plan be developed for the Park and that the plan be brought back to the VHC for review.

Through this extensive community process it was determined that a new field house could better fulfill its function as the 'heart of the park' in a new location that would allow for improved connections between the interior spaces of the building and the outdoor park environment and activities. The recommended concept plan is illustrated in Appendix I and includes: relocating the field house, children's' play area, and basketball court - enhancing the relationship between each use; upgrading the drainage and irrigation systems; the addition of picnic tables and seating areas; improving pedestrian circulation within the park and around the field house, and replacing several declining cherry trees with an equal number of significantly sized replacement cherry trees.

The implementation of the plan is subject to phasing and/or securing additional funding to deal with cost escalation. The possible Community Amenity Contribution and the upcoming 2009-11 Capital Plan are the most likely sources of funding.

On February 18, 2008, the Board's Committee heard a presentation of the plan and recommended it be brought forward for approval by the Board as a whole.

SUMMARY

The recommended concept plan for Oppenheimer Park and Field House is well supported by the community and city departments and addresses the community's desire to increase the opportunities for the use and enjoyment of the park by area residents. The improvements include relocating and building a new field house, children's play area and basketball court; additional seating areas; upgrades to the irrigation system, drainage and pathways; and commemorating features highlighting the cultural and historical significance of Oppenheimer Park.

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Attachment: Appendix I