

Date: April 14, 2009



TO: Board Members – Vancouver Park Board
FROM: General Manager – Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: Kensington Park Skateboard Proposal

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Board approve the development of a neighbourhood oriented skateboard facility in Kensington Park, at an approximate cost of \$300,000 from the 2006 – 2008 Capital Plan allocation for “sport courts / active uses – Youth Parks (bmx, skateboard).

POLICY

On October 31, 2005 the Board approved a Skateboard Strategy for Vancouver to “assist in guiding capital investments so that skateparks are successful in the short and long term for all involved – skateboarders, other park users as well as residents living near the facilities.” The Strategy calls for the provision of additional skateparks in Vancouver, with a better distribution of this service.

BACKGROUND

On January 19, 2009 the Board directed staff to conduct a public consultation process with respect to a potential installation of a skateboard park within Kensington Park.

Staff organized a public open house at Kensington Community Centre on March 25, 2009, where participants were asked to fill out a questionnaire on the proposal (Appendix A). Supplementary opportunities to comment were provided via a dedicated page on the Park Board website, which generated further input by e-mail and by telephone.

Notification of the proposed installation and the open house was given by the following means:

- Flyer delivery to approximately 900 residences in a two block radius around the park.
- Two signs on site
- Notice in Centre brochure
- Article in the Kensington Review, a newsletter distributed through Kensington-Cedar Cottage.
- Targeted mailing to community agencies & schools in Kensington-Cedar Cottage.

- All-Media press release and paid ads in Ming Pao & Courier newspapers
- Feature box on Park Board home page.
- City of Vancouver community web page - events listings
- City of Vancouver community web page - projects & construction advisory

Eighty-two individuals attended the Open House and, after viewing the panels on display, returned a completed questionnaire. The results are summarized in Appendix B. An aggregate 63% of respondents indicated support for the project and 33% were opposed. Amongst respondents living within a five block radius of Kensington Park the ratio was 59% in support of the project and 36% opposed.

Other input on the project was received in the form of an 87-name petition against the skateboard park proposal, seven e-mail messages (3 in support and 4 opposed) and four telephone calls from persons opposed to the project.

The outcome of the public process was reported to the Park Board Planning and Environment Committee on April 9, 2009, at which time five delegations made further presentations, and a 416 name petition in favour of the proposed skatepark was presented to the Board.

The Planning and Environment Committee directed staff to proceed with a report on the Kensington skatepark proposal for consideration by the whole Board. Committee members also flagged the following issues to be addressed as the project proceeds:

- Siting and design of the skatepark to avoid conflicts with existing park uses, especially Tai Chi practice and pedestrian use of park pathways.
- Protection of the skateboard area and the park generally from traffic on Knight Street, by fencing, berms or/and tree plantings.
- Noise abatement achieved through the design and siting of the skatepark in relation to neighbouring residences.
- Development of strategies to address reported incidence of drug use and trafficking on and around the park.

DISCUSSION

This report recommends that installation of a skateboard park in Kensington Park proceed, with the final siting and design incorporating mitigation measures to address the issues raised during the consultation process, as discussed below.

The public consultation process demonstrated that the neighbourhood community is divided on whether this project should go ahead at this location. Those who support the proposal gave as their reasons that the facility will provide a positive activity for local youth, occupying their time and deterring anti-social and criminal activity such as drug and alcohol use and vandalism. Those who indicated opposition to the proposal cited

such concerns as increased anti-social and criminal activity (e.g., alcohol and drug use, graffiti), safety issues and noise.

Some of the objections raised against the proposed skateboard facility at Kensington Park would apply equally to such an installation anywhere in the city. Comparable skate parks have been built at Quilchena and Strathcona parks, and these have not generated problem behaviours or complaints from neighbours or other park users. However, some of the concerns identified through the Kensington consultation will need to be addressed in the preparation and design stage of the project.

Siting: To minimize noise and visual impacts of the facility it is proposed to site it within the area indicated in the plan Appendix C, with the exact placement subject to ground conditions and final design details. This area is most removed from residences and partially screened by conifer trees from directly across Knight Street.

Control and supervision: The skateboard facility would not be lit, and its hours of operation would be that of the park as a whole (i.e., from dawn to 10:00 pm). There are good sightlines from Knight Street downhill from the south and uphill from the north, as well as from the Community Centre parking lot. This will facilitate site monitoring by police and park rangers.

One of the siting criteria identified in the Skateboard Strategy is proximity to a Park Board building. It is particularly advantageous to have a building such as a community centre where staff are based fulltime and programming takes place into the evenings and on weekends. The Centre provides support services (phone, washroom and first aid), passive supervision and the capacity for active intervention if required.

It was observed in the public consultation that there are periods on weekends that the community centre is closed while activities are taking place on the park, and the services noted above are not accessible. Similar conditions apply at many other active parks, and in this instance affect existing programming on Kensington Park as well as the proposed skatepark. Planning staff will review the situation with District staff and determine whether scheduling adjustments over the short and long term are warranted.

The Kensington Community Centre Association has noted that their community centre is the only one in the Vancouver East District without a youth worker on staff, and advocates that such a position be established in connection with the proposed skatepark.

Access and safety: Several participants in the consultation process, both supporters and opponents, raised concerns about access and safety arrangements. Two observations are pertinent to the skatepark design:

- The sloped area of the park has a trail network which is used by pedestrians, including many seniors, for passive enjoyment of the park and to access the community centre. Skateboarding controls must be put in place to protect these paths, and designated route(s) need to be created for skateboarders to access the skatepark.

- A related issue is that of a safe crossing of Knight Street. The proposed location is adjacent to a disused crosswalk at 35th Avenue and Knight, which is an extremely dangerous location to cross Knight Street. Staff will work with the Engineering Department to plan and coordinate actions to ensure that skateboarders and other park users are directed to the controlled crossings at 33rd and 37th Avenues.

With Board approval the next steps are to contract the services of a skatepark design firm, and to engage further with the local community and interested skateboarders on facility design, including planning to address the access and safety issues identified above.

SUMMARY

The Board is asked to approve the development of a neighbourhood oriented skateboard facility in Kensington Park, which will address both the needs of skateboarders and the concerns raised in the course of community consultation on this proposed project.

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MV:mv

Kensington Skateboard Park Open House

Your opinion matters to us. Please take a few moments to complete the following questionnaire.

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>Which of the following describes your interest in this project? (check as many as apply)</p> <p>Kensington Community Centre patron <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Kensington Park user <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Neighbourhood resident <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Skateboarder <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Other _____</p> | <p>How close do you live to Kensington Park?</p> <p>I can see the park from my house <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>I live within 2 blocks of the park <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>I live within 5 blocks of the park <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>I live six or more blocks from the park <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>I live in another neighbourhood <input type="checkbox"/></p> |
| <p>How are you most likely to get to Kensington Park? (circle one)</p> <p>On foot By car By bus By bike By skateboard</p> <p>Other _____</p> | |

Based on what you have learned at this open house, which of the following best describes is your opinion about the proposed skatepark? (circle one)

Strongly supportive Somewhat supportive Neutral, no opinion Somewhat opposed Strongly opposed

What are the main reasons for your opinion? _____

If the Park Board approves this project, what is the best location in the park for this facility? (mark the spot on the map on the back of this page).

What else do you wish to tell us about this proposal? _____

I wish to be kept informed of upcoming meetings or reports regarding Kensington Park

I wish to be kept informed of upcoming meetings or reports about skateboarding in Vancouver.

If you have checked either of the above please provide us with your contact information.

Name _____

Email or Mailing Address _____

Public consultation - Questionnaire Responses

Number of questionnaires received = 82

| | |
|--|---|
| Which of the following describes your interest in this project? (check as many as apply) | How close do you live to Kensington Park? |
| Kensington Community Centre patron 39 | I can see the park from my house 14 |
| Kensington Park user 47 | I live within 2 blocks of the park 32 |
| Neighbourhood resident 67 | I live within 5 blocks of the park 15 |
| Skateboarder 22 | I live 6 or more blocks from the park 12 |
| Other 0 | I live in another neighbourhood 8 |
| | No answer 1 |
| How are you most likely to get to Kensington Park? (circle one) | |
| On foot 67 By car 13 By bus 3 By bike 10 By skateboard 11 | |
| Other none | |

Question: "Based on what you have learned at this open house, which of the following best describes is your opinion about the proposed skatepark? (circle one)"

| Response | All respondents (n=82) | | | Residents within 5 blocks (n=63) | | | < 2 blocks (n=47) |
|------------------|------------------------|---------|-------------|----------------------------------|---------|-------------|-------------------|
| | # | Percent | For/Against | # | Percent | For/Against | For/Against |
| strongly support | 43 | 50.6% | 64.6% | 28 | 44.4% | 58.7% | 55.3% |
| somewhat support | 10 | 11.8% | | 9 | 14.3% | | |
| neutral | 2 | 3.5% | 32.9% | 2 | 3.1% | 36.5% | 44.7% |
| somewhat oppose | 7 | 8.2% | | 6 | 9.5% | | |
| strongly oppose | 20 | 23.5% | | 17 | 26.9% | | |
| TOTAL | 82 | | | 63 | | | |

Reasons for Opinion - Supportive responses

| Issue raised | # of responses |
|--|----------------|
| Skateboarding actively and positively occupies youth | 25 |
| Area is underserved for skateboarding. Kensington is a good location in city for a new skatepark | 18 |
| Skatepark will deter drug activity, alcohol, crime/positive for community | 4 |
| Provides safe off-street place to skateboard | 3 |

Reasons for Opinion - Opposed responses

| Issue raised | # of responses |
|--|----------------|
| Skatepark will be a site for possible drug activity, alcohol, crime | 15 |
| Skateboarding is too noisy | 9 |
| Facility too costly. Other kinds of recreation facilities should have priority. Too few skateboarders in area to warrant such a facility | 8 |
| Park has no washroom (when Community Centre is closed) | 6 |
| Skateboarders will interfere with pedestrians & other park users | 4 |
| Too close to Knight Street – traffic presents a danger to users | 3 |
| Remaining passive part of park should remain passive | 2 |
| View is/should be centerpiece of park | 1 |

Other Comments

| Issue raised | # of responses |
|--|----------------|
| Need park supervision/ enforced hours of operation | 7 |
| Need to look at park design overall | 3 |
| Barrier from Knight needed to prevent out-of-control cars entering parks | 2 |
| Facility needs youthwork staff in Centre to provide support | 3 |
| Design well, use the slope, make it colourful to match the centre and the playground, involve skateboarders in design. | 3 |
| Make it smaller – leave space for other activities | 2 |

Proposed location (shaded in red) of skateboard facility in Kensington Park (exact siting to be confirmed after survey of ground conditions)

