

Date: December 7, 2009



TO: Board Members – Vancouver Park Board
FROM: General Manager – Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: Mount Pleasant Park

RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT the Board receives this report on the outcome of the public consultation program for information.*
- B. THAT the Board direct staff to develop a plan for Mount Pleasant Park that allows for the future development of an outdoor pool and change rooms at such time as funds for this component become available.*
- C. THAT the Board authorizes the decommissioning of the existing building and pool.*

POLICY

The Board approves the development of parks.

BACKGROUND

There has been a lengthy history in regards to the future of Mount Pleasant Park, the former Community Centre building, the outdoor pool and the new Mount Pleasant Child Development Centre. Appendix A contains a summary and the history from 1999 to 2009.

Between late August 2009 and present, an extensive public consultation program has been undertaken, and the purpose of this report is to present the results and the next steps in the project.

Since the consultation program commenced, construction of the new Simon Fraser Child Development Centre has started and construction is expected to be completed in April/May of 2010.

The old Mount Pleasant Community Centre closed on October 25, 2009 and programs and services at the new Mount Pleasant Centre are expected to start in December 2009.

The former Community Centre building is in poor condition, and the long term retention would involve significant capital investment to address the many structural, mechanical and fire code deficiencies. It is these very conditions that were one of the significant factors leading to the Board and Council to decide in 2001 to build a replacement facility at #1 Kingsway.

In the summer, a formal proposal was received for the continued use of the building by a group from the arts community who wish to turn the existing building into a set of artist studios and possibly rehearsal space. At that time, the group proposed a very limited capital investment. At the December 10, 2009 Planning and Environment Committee meeting, the group proposed a different proposal requiring a multi-million dollar investment. The Committee was advised that the group has less than \$30,000 in hand.

DISCUSSION

Program

The consultation program included the following components:

- Newsletter #1 August 2009 Distributed to 15,000 households
- Newsletter #2 October 2009 Distributed to 15,000 households
- Mustel Group conducts two focus groups and three Online Bulletin boards (OBB)
- Mustel Group develops a web based survey (752 responses received)
- Five (5) public submissions heard at the Board's Planning and Environment Committee of December 10, 2009
- Input solicited on Park Board comment line and mailbox (32 letters and 14 phone calls received)
- Survey notification was through two signs in the park, information at the old Community Centre and in two Mount Pleasant newsletters.

The public feedback received was based on three illustrative concepts, which were published in the second newsletter. The three concepts are attached as Appendix B, they represent three options.

1. Green Space
2. New Pool, New Change Rooms
3. Retain building

Results

The two focus groups involved immediate neighbours and stakeholders. A total of 49 people were involved. An Online Bulletin Board is an internet based version of the focus group model. Instead of attending a meeting, the facilitator and the participant exchange information on the internet over a 3-4 day period. OBB participants were selected by the consulting firm from a data base of individuals interested in participating in focus groups and online bulletin boards.

The findings of the Focus Group/OBB groups were as follows:

- Respondents felt green space is especially important in park deficient neighbourhoods such as Mount Pleasant.
- Stakeholders and immediate neighbours of Mount Pleasant Park feel the community centre and pool were important hubs in the neighbourhood, and the move of the centre to Kingsway is a blow to the area.
- The pool is an important part of the neighbourhood and its loss is an additional blow.
- The majority of respondents favoured a park design option that included the pool.
- Timing and funding were not deterrents for respondents preferring the pool option.
- Hillcrest outdoor pool is considered insufficient for older children and teens.
- A strong majority of respondents prefer the idea of a 'new pool with new change rooms' – over two-thirds as their first choice and approaching 9-in-10 as their first or second choice (88%).

QUESTION:

- Which option do you prefer most?
 - 68% Option 2: New Pool, New Change Rooms
 - 19% Option 1: Green Space
 - 10% Option 3: Retrain Building
 - 3% No preference/None
- Which option do you prefer second most?
 - 35% Option 1: Green Space
 - 29% Option 3: Retain Building
 - 20% Option 2: New Pool, New Change Rooms
 - 16% No preference/None

Ratings used to test the appeal of each option confirm that the new pool option is the most positively received by respondents.

QUESTION:

- To what extent do you like or dislike this illustration for Mount Pleasant Park?
Scale: Extremely positive, somewhat positive, neutral, somewhat negative, extremely negative.
 - New pool, new change rooms: 79% positive, 12% negative, 9% neutral
 - Green space option: 38% positive, 40% negative, 22% neutral
 - Retain building option: 26% positive, 51% negative, 24% neutral

Comments made by survey responders further emphasize demand for a pool at Mount Pleasant Park.

Next Steps

The survey provides a clear indication of community preference for the design and development of Mount Pleasant to allow for the future development of a pool and change room. There is \$1,000,000 of funding for the development of the park. A new pool and change rooms would cost around \$5,000,000 and these funds are not included in the capital plan. This amount of funding would have to be included in a future capital plan.

It is however, possible to design and develop Mount Pleasant Park in such a way as to allow for a pool and change room to be constructed at a later date. Until that time the space would simply function as an informal grass play area. It is recommended that park design and development proceed on the basis of leaving sufficient space for construction of an outdoor pool and change rooms to be built at a later date when capital funds are available.

The design process for the park would involve further consultation with the community on the program elements and the design features. Should the Board approve the recommendations in this report the park design process would commence in the early part of 2010.

The recently completed consultative program has also identified strong support for a park without the building, in part as an acknowledgement that Mount Pleasant is a highly park deficient area.

In light of the existing building condition, the provision of a new community centre and outdoor pool, and the broad community support for not retaining the existing building, it is recommended that the building and pool be decommissioned.

After hearing from five delegations, the Board's Planning and Environment Committee of December 10, 2009 endorsed these directions.

SUMMARY

This report summarizes the findings of a consultative program and recommends the design and development of a park plan that allows for an outdoor pool to be constructed some time in the future. Decommissioning of the existing building is also recommended

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