



Date: April 5, 2011

TO: Board Members – Vancouver Park Board
FROM: General Manager – Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: Vancouver Aquarium Development Permit Revision

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Board approve the revised Development Permit design plans for the Aquarium expansion project as illustrated in the attached submission.

POLICY

The Board approves all Development Permit submissions on Park Board property.

BACKGROUND

On November 27, 2006 the Board approved the Vancouver Aquarium expansion plan subject to identified mitigation and compensation measures and the amendment of the term of the Stanley Park Aquarium Agreement to extend the license by 20 years.

On May 28, 2007 the Board approved the development permit schematic design plans for the Aquarium expansion. Due to the reduced access to capital funding the Vancouver Aquarium is proposing a revision to the development permit schematic design plans approved on May 28, 2007 to reduce the size of the expansion by 1,161 m² (12,500 ft²) and to increase green space by 1,415 m² (15,230 ft²) from the original DP. This revised option was presented to the Planning and Environment Committee on March 3, 2011 and was supported unanimously

DISCUSSION

Excerpt from 'Recommendation' letter dated May 18, 2007 between Parks and Recreation and the Vancouver Park Board.

“Of particular interest to the Board were:”

- a) The size of the entry lobby and retail outlet and the general accessibility of the latter
- b) The design of the public viewing areas and their locations

- c) The design and location of the public washrooms and the bistro food service on the plaza
- d) The functionality and design of the public plaza areas
- e) The improvements to the demonstration salmon stream and related hatchery

Updated responses from Aquarium Team based on the revised design:

- a) The Aquarium entry and ticketing are now accessed from the outside and the front entry is accessed through an open space containing information, programming and food services

In this configuration, the gift shop, which is the major exit for Aquarium visitors, is accessible to the Public from the outside without purchasing entrance into the Aquarium as is currently the case.

- b) The expansion and revitalization plan, as presented now, provides for free public education and interpretation elements and enhancements at a number of locations on the perimeter of the Aquarium footprint, which are described in more detail later in this report. The interpretive elements will be located along the exterior edge of the Aquarium and will include modest shelter-type structures, full of interpretive and informational materials that portray both the Aquarium's Mission and the interests of the Park. All locations provide a public connection between the Park and the Aquarium. The design and materials of these structures will be sympathetic to the vocabulary of the Park. We anticipate the use of timber construction, high durability materials and finishes, and "green" landscaped roofs. All will be managed and maintained by the Aquarium and where appropriate be secured at night.

The public viewing areas are:

The Bill Reid – Lord of the Undersea World (existing, to be relocated)

Commissioned by the Vancouver Aquarium in 1984 this wonderful 5.5 meter (18 foot) bronze statue of a killer whale will grace the public arrivals plaza providing both a destination landmark and an opportunity to marvel at one of Vancouver's most memorable sculptures.

Arrival Water Feature (new)

A large 5-meter wide floor-to ceiling tank will be located in the front wall of the Aquarium buildings, adjacent to the new Aquarium entry. This feature will provide a unique view of the aquatic world and introduction to water, the medium of life, and symbolize the Vancouver Aquarium's mission. Intended as a public, interactive art piece, it will engage and involve visitors in active water movements, ever changing visual symbolism and the overall cultural context of water in the marine environment, and will be accompanied by interpretive materials on water.

Water Wall Experience (new)

The Aquarium open space will be separated from the Park by a 100ft water wall experience. South facing this element, animated by water will speak to the importance of water. The feature will be fed by rain water will have both natural and architectural features. This experience will only be viewable from the Park. The path and stair from the Park food service to the Aquarium will allow Park patrons the opportunity to walk the length of this feature and will be accompanied by interpretive materials on water.

Salmon Hatchery (new)

The demonstration Hatchery building is now located to the north and west, at the origin of the salmon stream / moat. It includes a new salmon hatchery consisting of two connected buildings located within the B.C. Wild Coast exhibit area at the north end of the Aquarium, accessible by the public on one side and by Aquarium visitors on the other. The hatchery buildings straddle the existing stream and wetlands at the north end of the Stream.

This exhibit shelter will contain underwater views into a Salmon exhibit, Salmon hatchery trays and holding tanks, and interpretive material relative to the process of raising Salmon, the management and biology of the Stanley Park Salmon Stream, and providing a focal point and communications tool for salmon conservation strategy and management of B.C. Salmon. It will be planned to allow for programs and demonstrations during the Salmon release and return periods. The shelter will be closable at night.

Salmon Stream (existing, expanded and enhanced)

The existing moat on the west side of the Aquarium will be established as a small stream and wetlands connecting at the south end to the existing BC Hydro salmon stream in Stanley Park. This new run will allow the complete story of salmon from the new hatchery at the North of the Aquarium to the stream mouth in Coal Harbour.

Seal and Sea Lion Pools Public Viewing (existing, to be enhanced)

This viewing site is located to the west in a shelter along the path that parallels the moat. It is accessed via a renovation of the existing stone bridge. As above, the public area is located within an open shelter structure and it provides above water viewing into two new multi-species Seal and/or Sea Lion Pools within the Aquarium. These pools will hold Harbour Seals, Northern Fur Seals, or Steller Sea Lions, in different combinations at various times. Views encompass diving, surface swimming, haul out and resting behavior, and the care and management of these interesting animals. Interpretive graphics will define the biology and natural history of the seal species and, more importantly, outline the Aquariums activities in research and conservation of these charismatic animals. The shelter will be closable at night.

Arctic Issues Interpretive Centre (new)

Located in a viewing shelter along the Salmon Stream to the west of the Aquarium, this exhibit provides graphic and interactive public exhibits about a range of Arctic

related topics - issues related to Arctic Canada Research and tied to current Arctic climate concerns including ice coverage and other similar issues.

c) 1. Bistro (relocated)

The Bistro for Park visitors utilizes the changing topography of the Park at the Aquarium expansion. The Bistro is in the south west corner of the Aquarium building, will share kitchen equipment with the Aquarium and will be run by the Aquarium. The Bistro has no admission charge and is accessible to all Park users. The total combination of indoor and outdoor seating will be similar to the number included as part of the original development permit.

2. Washrooms

The washrooms are sized as per the current Development Permit (6 female, 5 male, 1 universal) and are located adjacent to the Bistro. The washrooms also include a universal family room. The washrooms are accessible to all Park users.

- d) The revised design of the building and exhibits has reduced the footprint of the expansion and allowed for a rethink of the extent of the plaza spaces and a major reduction in the disturbance into the forested area to the south and west of the Aquarium.

Three open spaces are provided, responding to different programmatic needs and space requirements – an Interior open space, an Exterior arrivals plaza, and Bistro plaza. The Interior open space is associated with the Aquarium and located within the paid zone to provide outdoor programming space for Aquarium use. A water feature separates the interior space from the exterior plazas and ties in with the Aquarium use and its BC setting. The Arrivals plaza space provides a front door for the Aquarium and an entry experience for both Aquarium and Park users. The Bill Reid sculpture figures prominently in this plaza space. Finally, a Bistro plaza space at the south west end of the Aquarium provides outdoor dining space for the Bistro and patrons in the Park and a landing and transition point between the more natural Stanley Park landscape and the Aquarium area.

The Salmon Fish Hatchery Exhibit has moved from the south end of the outdoor exhibit space to the north end, so that access and paving to this area is no longer required. The upper deck from the earlier expansion plan has also been removed. These changes allow for removal of some existing paving and restoration of the forested area to a much more natural state. The only paving in this area will now be the path and bridge needed to provide access between the Bus Loop and spine path and the Aquarium area. Other existing paths and bridges in this area as well as the Duck pond will be preserved.

The Aquarium is still committed to the preservation of trees and the replacement at a 2:1 ratio for those trees that do need to be removed to accommodate the building expansion. It is expected that the same number of trees will be removed in the revised design, primarily from the area at the front of the Aquarium building and including some ornamental species in the existing paved area. Consistent with the approved DP, these will be replaced at a ratio of 2:1 with a mix of native Cedars, Firs and Spruces.

- e) The fish bearing section of the stream will remain as per the original Development Permit.

KEY CHANGES

- New Canada's Arctic relocated to current BC Coast location
- New BC Coast relocated to current Arctic Canada location
- New linking pools between BC and Arctic exhibits to provide more flexible habitats
- Redesigned front entry with open space to provide much need breathing room, Aquarium food service with Park Bistro at grade below, gift shop and entry canopy
- Aquarium footprint reduced by 1,161 m² (12,500 ft²) from the original DP
- Green space increased by 1,415 m² (15,230 ft²) from the original DP due to a reduction of the footprint and a reduction in hard landscaping
- Reoriented arrivals plaza with more contextual approach to Park landscape

Funding Challenges and Reduced Scope

The Vancouver Aquarium Revitalization + Expansion project originally began in 2006. At that time two levels of Government had each pledged to contribute 1/3 of the anticipated budget, leaving the Vancouver Aquarium responsible for the remaining one third.

Since that time both levels of government have reevaluated their financial situations and determined that they are unable to contribute as generously as they had previously hoped. As a result, the Vancouver Aquarium has scaled down the scope of work on the project, focusing on areas that require the most attention.

The Aquarium Team will continue to work with Park Board staff to finalize further details of the building and landscape design.

CONCLUSION

Financial Terms

With the revision of the Bistro from being a freestanding food service outlet to be leased by the Park Board to an integrated foodservice operation operated by the Vancouver Aquarium, the current financial terms in the License Agreement with the Aquarium will be modified to reflect these changes. Upon the completion of the expansion, the Aquarium will remit a fixed annual fee to the Park Board to offset lost revenues associated with the lost lease revenue as follows:

- Year 1 to 5	\$150,000
- Year 6 to 10	\$175,000
- Year 11 to 15	\$200,000
- Year 16 to 20	\$225,000

In addition, the current License Agreement will be amended with respect to the rate of license fees paid on Gross Revenues from retail sales to regular daytime Aquarium visitors. The license fee on gross revenue up to and including \$2,500,000 will remain at the current rate of 4%. For gross revenue in excess of \$2,500,000, a revised rate of 6% will apply.

The revised development permit plans are consistent with those approved in November 2006 and May 2007 and will create an improved design for this area of the park, which has been in a holding position for a decade awaiting confirmation of the overall changes. Staff recommend the approval of the plan.

Prepared by:
Stanley District
Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation
Vancouver, BC

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