

Date: January 15, 2013



TO: Board Members – Vancouver Park Board
FROM: General Manager – Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: Art Phillips Park

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Board approve the renaming of Discovery Square to Art Phillips Park.

POLICY

Park Board has jurisdiction over Vancouver parks, including the right to name parks.

In March 2012, the Board directed staff “to initiate a naming process for Discovery Square that appropriately commemorates the contribution that Art Phillips has made to the quality of life in Vancouver.”

BACKGROUND

The Park Board’s park naming process, adopted in 2007, is intended for the naming of new parks. The process involves public engagement, appointing a volunteer park naming committee to generate name alternatives, and to vet and shortlist candidate names, and finally, Board selection and approval of the name.

Additionally, the Park Board’s naming guidelines specify that appropriate park names are either commemorative of a place, event or person important to the Vancouver Park Board.

In early 2012, a public discussion regarding the renaming of Discovery Square in honour of Art Phillips resulted in the aforementioned March 26, 2012 motion by the Board. The motion was carried, unanimously.

DISCUSSION

Art Phillips was Mayor of Vancouver from 1973 -76, leading a Council that envisioned a new model for Vancouver as a livable city. Some of the major planning directions and decisions Council undertook were considered quite progressive at the time, in comparison to the path other major North American cities were taking. Important milestone decisions included:

- Ending the plan for a freeway crossing the city;

- Converting the False Creek industrial area to an urban neighbourhood;
- Revitalising the historic neighbourhood of Gastown;
- Expanding public access along the waterfront;
- Bringing back residential uses to the downtown;
- Creating the City's Property Endowment Fund, the Development Permit Board, and the Heritage Registry;
- Designating a section of downtown Granville Street as a pedestrian and transit mall;
- Developing a comprehensive residential neighbourhood in Champlain Heights; and
- Expanding the civic tree planting program.

Mr. Phillips believed that the expansion of parks and recreation services was a foundation for the livability of a modern city, and in the early 1970's, City Council and the Park Board cooperated on a number of significant park land development projects, including parks in Champlain Heights, the redeveloped waterfront at Charleson Park, and the VanDusen Botanical Garden. However, Mr. Phillips has said that of all the park projects of that time, the one closest to his heart was the park now proposed to be named in his honour. He was personally involved in its creation.

Agreeing with the need for more green space in the downtown core and the opportunity provided by the sale of a small triangle of land vacated by the BowMac dealership on Burrard at Dunsmuir, Mr. Phillips personally coordinated eight surrounding land owners to make a donation towards creating a public park in this location. The \$2.5 M purchase price for the new downtown park was shared equally between the City and the donors.

Today, the park is a well utilised and tranquil green space in a densely urbanised neighbourhood. Its eastern half is home to the busy Burrard Street SkyTrain Station, its western half a leafy sanctuary for lunching office workers who enjoy its spectacular Akebono flowering cherry trees. Discovery Square is named in honour of Captain Vancouver's ship.

In 2010, the City of Vancouver awarded Mr. Phillips its highest honour, the Freedom of the City. In his presentation, Mayor Gregor Robertson noted "Art Phillips helped shape Vancouver through his vision and commitment to public service. He is a champion of livability and inclusivity. During his time in office, Art fundamentally changed the political and social direction of our city. He has made an indelible mark on Vancouver, and his leadership and achievements continue to influence and inspire the City today."

Following the Board motion of March 2012, staff consulted the City's Street Naming Group to ascertain that the proposed name posed no historical, planning, mapping or emergency service challenges. No concerns were raised.

IMPACTS

The name change will require updating of City of Vancouver maps and signage, and costs are expected to occur within existing budgets.

Appropriate changes to other maps and products are anticipated to be part of regular updating cycles.

SUMMARY

Parks in Vancouver are often named to commemorate individuals who have made significant contributions to parks and recreation in the city. Art Phillips' contributions to the city have not been recognised by a commemorative naming of a public place in Vancouver. The renaming of Discovery Square to Art Phillips Park is an appropriate commemoration of Mr. Phillips' special relationship to the development of the park and to his vision and dedication to public green space and Vancouver Parks.

Prepared by:
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