



Date: June 30, 2015

TO: Park Board Chair and Commissioners  
FROM: General Manager - Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation  
SUBJECT: Love Locks Concept Plan

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## RECOMMENDATION

A. THAT the Vancouver Park Board approve retaining a local artist through a competitive procurement process to create a custom and structurally safe love lock sculpture for Vancouver Parks.

B. THAT the Vancouver Park Board approve the recommended short list of proposed park locations for a 'Love Lock' installation for public consideration as English Bay Beach, Kitsilano Beach and Queen Elizabeth Park; and

FURTHER THAT the proposed locations be taken through a public engagement process as described within this report, and that staff report the results of the engagement process back to the Board at an upcoming Board meeting.

## POLICY

The Park Board approves major changes in parks.

## BACKGROUND

On July 21, 2014 the Park Board Commissioners directed staff to suggest possible locations for a permanent, structurally safe home for love locks on Park Board property and to report back to the Board. The Commissioners also required that once staff have reported back on possible locations for a permanent, structurally safe home for love locks on Park Board property, that staff engage the public in a consultation process to determine the preferred, most favorable, and most feasible location to serve as a permanent home for love locks. This report responds to the direction.

An abundance of information is available about love locks, or love padlocks, proliferating in countries worldwide since approximately the year 2000, and a possible history dating to World War I. Love locks are padlocks that sweethearts affix to a fence; bridge or gate on public lands and throw away the key, to symbolize their everlasting love. Love locks have appeared in Vancouver on the Burrard Street Bridge and on chain link fences east of the Plaza of Nations on the False Creek seawall, but are removed by the City's Engineering Department due to safety concerns.

The Board motion of 2014 and the on-going appearance of love locks in Vancouver is an opportunity to designate a park destination for Vancouver's love locks.

Staff investigated both the risks and opportunities associated with love locks, and propose a Vancouver Parks custom approach. Staff also explored a number of possible park locations for love locks, bearing in mind international examples like Paris's Pont des Arts and New York's Brooklyn Bridge. The risks, opportunities, and possible locations are described within this report.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Risks:**

Internationally, municipalities face challenges in the happenstance accumulation of locks on aging and historically or architecturally significant infrastructure. It is reported that a parapet railing on the Pont des Arts in Paris collapsed as a result of the weight of a mass of love locks in 2014, for example. While the weight of a single lock is insignificant, the accumulation of thousands of locks creates a substantive weight that can damage infrastructure and pose a public safety risk.

As a result of the extensive amassing of a million locks reportedly weighing 45 metric tonnes on the Pont des Arts, Parisian officials required locks be removed in June 2015. In April 2015 the City of New York Department of Transportation removed 450 padlocks, about 75 pounds in weight, from the Brooklyn Bridge's pedestrian walkway due to safety concerns for the drivers below. Both removals generated international news stories.

Another risk factor to consider is that there can be mixed public sentiment about love locks; anti-love lock groups exist in other jurisdictions. Historic bridges and scenic locations are not always appropriate and selecting a suitable location is essential. Also, throwing away the key after placing a lock at a high vantage point such as a bridge over a waterway or roadway, can present a hazard to anyone below.

### **Love Lock Sculptures:**

Staff reviewed the risks and also considered successes from elsewhere. Municipalities are installing metal structures that are aesthetically pleasing and that are structurally safe upon which love locks can be affixed.

In 2014, Toronto's Distillery District installed a custom structure that calls out the word LOVE in bold capital letters with a heart, made from steel and local reclaimed lumber, in keeping with this location's historic and industrial character. In Seoul, South Korea and in Moscow, Russia, tree form love lock sculptures have been built successfully. Appendix A includes photos of these examples.

Staff recommend a similar approach to Toronto, Seoul, and Moscow. A local designer or artist can be retained through a competitive procurement process to design, fabricate and install the sculpture for Vancouver Parks in the location once approved.

### **Locations:**

Bearing in mind those renowned international locations are major pedestrian bridges over large waterways or destination look out points, staff considered the following park locations:

1. **Prospect Point, Stanley Park:** This lookout over the Lion's Gate Bridge has scenic views of North and West Vancouver and is a heavily visited scenic spot, especially for those travelling by car or chartered tour buses.
2. **English Bay Beach:** This accessible waterfront offers panoramic views of the busy harbour and sunsets. It is a popular place for tourist and locals alike, and is accessible by foot, bicycle or public transit.
3. **Queen Elizabeth Park Lookout Plaza:** the lookout plaza offers panoramic views of the City of Vancouver, the North Shore, Burnaby, and points further east. It is accessible by vehicle, foot, and bicycle or tour bus.
4. **Jericho Beach:** This wooden pier is a popular destination for viewing the ocean, mountains and downtown Vancouver, and fishing and crabbing. The pier is aging and under review for replacement due to its condition and rising sea levels.
5. **Kitsilano Beach Park Plaza:** The plaza west of the pool offers a scenic lookout over the Burrard Inlet and the North Shore. It is also located on pedestrian, cycling and transit routes.

Staff recommends that the popular tourist locations that are the most accessible for people of all ages and abilities and that are accessible by transit be shortlisted for the next step in this process (public engagement). English Bay Beach, Kitsilano Beach and Queen Elizabeth Park Plaza are therefore recommended, and a map that illustrates the locations is attached to this Report in Appendix B.

A public engagement process including social media, information signs at the proposed installation sites and web based on-line survey can occur in the summer of 2015. The results of this survey shall help determine final location for a love lock installation for Board consideration of adoption in a follow up report.

#### **Link to the Strategic Plan:**

This proposal links to the Park Board Strategic Framework: through a communications and engagement process it will provide a new and vibrant arts and culture experience.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

The Board motion of 2014 and the on-going appearance of love locks in Vancouver presents an opportunity for the Park Board to create a permanent, structurally safe home for love locks in a park setting. To overcome risks, the best opportunity for love locks is to fabricate a custom sculpture built by a local artist or designer. The recommended location for the installation will be determined in a public engagement process this summer; the results of which will be reported back to the Board this fall.

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Love Lock Sculptures - Examples



Love Lock Sculpture, Distillery District, Toronto

*Photo: fineartamerica.com*



Love Lock Tree Sculptures, North Seoul Tower, South Korea *Photo: 10mosttoday.com*



Love Lock Tree Sculpture, Vodotvodny Canal Bridge, Moscow, Russia  
*Photo: 10mosttoday.com*

Map - Possible Park Locations for Love Locks in Parks

