



September 21, 2015

**TO:** Park Board Chair and Commissioners  
**FROM:** General Manager - Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation  
**SUBJECT:** "Home and Away" Public Art Installation - Empire Fields

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## RECOMMENDATION

**THAT**, following a successful public engagement process, Vancouver Park Board approve the installation of the functional artwork "Home and Away" at Empire Fields/Plateau Park, with all arrangements to the satisfaction of the General Manager.

## POLICY

The Vancouver Park Board's Arts Policy states:

*The Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation confirms its mandate in the arts and recognizes the arts as an essential element in a vital, creative and balanced city... [and]... The Board provides a vibrant public realm and supports the experience of public art and cultural events in parks.*

*The City Public Art Policy aims to incorporate public artwork in all civic buildings, infrastructure, and public open space, in collaboration with civic departments and other stakeholders.*

## BACKGROUND

On May 25, 2015, Park and City staff presented a report recommending the installation of "Home and Away", a public artwork designed in close collaboration with the Empire Fields/Plateau Park design team. The artwork celebrates historic and future activities at the Park, and provides additional (elevated) seating for a minimum 150 people.

In response to the staff presentation, Park Board Commissioners raised questions about the cost, funding source, placement, colour, and degree of public knowledge about the work, and after discussion resolved as follows:

*THAT approval of the installation of the sculpture "Home and Away" be deferred to a future Park Board meeting, September 2015 onward, after the July public engagement opportunity at Empire Fields/Plateau Park.*

Staff action in response to the Board resolution is described in the Discussion section below. The following background is a synopsis, for convenience, of background on the art process at Hastings Park provided in the staff report presented on May 25, 2015.

In December 2010, City Council adopted the Hastings Park/PNE Master Plan, which sets forth the vision for a renewed Hastings Park and PNE. The Plan guides capital investments aligned with the vision of the site as a multi-purpose destination for economic development, culture, entertainment, and gathering space for the local community and residents across the region.

Empire Fields/Plateau Park redevelopment received priority funding in the 2012-14 Capital Plan. In February 2012, the Hastings Park/PNE Master Planning team (then a part of the City's Cultural Services department) worked with Phillips Farevaag Smallemberg Landscape Architects and City Public Art staff to include a professional artist on the design team for the Park site. The intent was to ensure a collaborative design process that would result in an integrated art piece within the park design.

Artists from Lead Pencil Studio were duly selected through a standard public art process and began working with the design team in April 2012. The team took inspiration from play features, way-finding, and seating. The artwork developed in response to these ideas is a "slice" of play architecture that references historic structures like the colossal ski run in the 1950s, and the bleachers at Empire Stadium. The artwork provides elevated seating for viewing activities on the field and may include a playful slide exit back into the park.

After a comprehensive technical review with the design team, a location was confirmed. The artists were scheduled to undertake the detailed design of the work in spring of 2015. The City Public Art Program has allocated up to \$450,000 for the artwork from the previous and current Capital Plans.

## **DISCUSSION**

Guided by the Board discussion and resolution of May 25, 2015, staff took immediate steps to expedite public engagement processes that provided the public with information on the artwork and opportunities to comment. A synopsis of the public process follows.

### **Public Process Before May 25, 2015:**

- Hastings Park Master Planning process identifies public desire for the inclusion of public art;
- Artists, selected in collaboration with the Park design team, participate with stakeholder and advisory groups during the conceptual development of park design;
- Artwork is developed in response to the artists' investigation into monumental historic structures on site, and to the need for additional seating;
- Artwork undergoes extensive concept development and site placement review with the design team;
- Public Art Committee, on March 9, 2015, reiterates unanimous support for the work, having earlier voiced enthusiasm for the evolving concept at meetings in June 2012 and June 2014.

### **Public engagement since May 25, 2015**

- Developed a designated website for information: [www.vancouver.ca/home-and-away](http://www.vancouver.ca/home-and-away);
- Blog posts in OurCityOurArt - the active archive of public art at the City;

- Information on the artwork at the July 18<sup>th</sup> Official Opening of Empire Fields/Plateau Park (Sports Day) promoted through City and Park communication outlets:
  - 100 posters at Library Square and branches;
  - 1000 invitation cards distributed to community centres and libraries;
  - City public art listserve and cultural media list (1354 subscribers);
  - Facebook (583 views) and Twitter announcements “#HastingsParkArt”;
- July 16<sup>th</sup> artwork presentation and artist talk at Library Square; 35 people engaged in discussion of the artists’ process and artwork; participants were interested and comments were supportive.

### **Empire Fields/Plateau Park Official Opening (Sports Day)**

The Empire Fields Official Opening (Sports Day) provided the most extensive opportunity for the public to learn more about the artwork. Park Special Events staff estimate that 4000 people attended the overall event, and public art staff discussed the artwork with an estimated 200 people.

Engagement steps specific to the artwork are as follows:

- Opportunities to see the artwork model specially commissioned for the Sports Day were promoted through Park and City media outlets;
- Large signs on site advertised the presence of the artwork model, which was attended by the artists and public art staff;
- A model of the entire Hastings Park site showed the artwork location and scale relative to adjacent structures (e.g., the roller coaster);
- Information sheets on the artwork were provided, placing the cost of “Home and Away” in context with the cost of other artworks and facilities;
- An estimated 200 people stopped by the “Home and Away” and Hastings Park models to see the artwork and discuss it with the artists and staff:
  - Estimated 7-9% stated concerns around the cost, potential negative social activities, view impacts and maintenance costs;
  - Estimated 91-93% were curious and either had no comment or expressed support;

Staff replied to concerns as follows:

- The cost is consistent with the size and function of the structure and is fully funded by Capital Plan funds designated for art in the public realm;
- The technical review indicated nothing about the artwork promotes illegal activity any more than any other Park facility or structure; it will be monitored just as other facilities are monitored;
- Playland will expand to the back and west of the artwork, and Playland structures will fill in the view behind the artwork; “Home and Away” is a single element in a very

large open space, and the artwork itself provides great views over the entire Park and areas beyond;

- “Home and Away” will be maintained to the standards of other park structures and exceptional costs will be covered by the Public Art Maintenance Reserve.

## SUMMARY

Given the support for “Home and Away” indicated by the Hastings Park design team, the Public Art Committee, attendees at the artist talk, and attendees at the July 18<sup>th</sup> Sports Day, public art staff reiterate their recommendation that the artwork be installed as proposed.

The artwork has followed the typical process for public art, and staff have addressed the requirement of public information. As intended, the artwork was conceived in close collaboration with the design team to meet the public’s stated desire for artwork integrated into the Park. It is a contemporary, open structure that references a proud history of Park structures and activities, providing additional seating and views almost equal to those available on adjacent Playland rides. It meets Park and City goals for the incorporation of artworks into civic infrastructure and open spaces.

This proposal meets the Board’s goals for public art in parks and is fully funded by the City of Vancouver Public Art Program. “Home and Away” was inspired by a significant piece of Vancouver’s sport and recreation history, and will be a striking and engaging addition to the diverse active recreation features at Empire Fields and Plateau Park. Staff recommend that the Board accept the art proposal with all arrangements to the satisfaction of the General Manager.

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Appendix 1 - Proposed Artwork  
Appendix 2 - Proposed Site maps

## APPENDIX 1: Proposed Sculpture Installation for Empire Fields/ Plateau Park

### *HOME AND AWAY*

Artist: Lead Pencil Studio



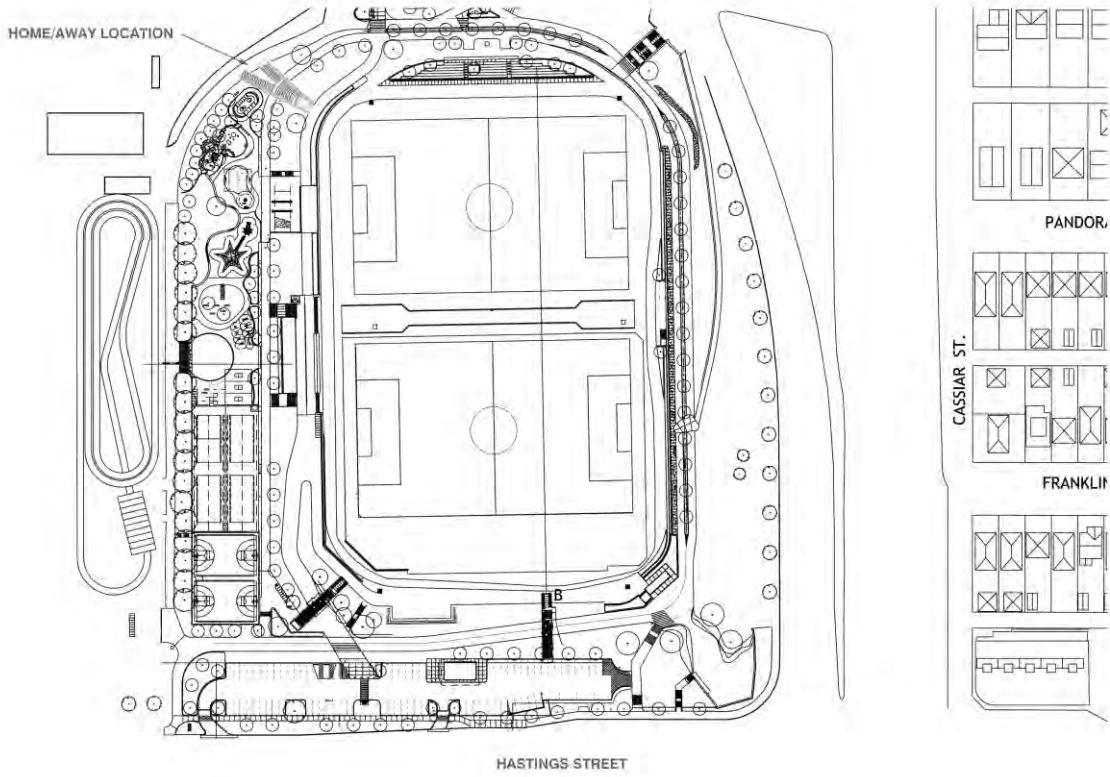
*Home and Away* is a colourful “slice” of architecture that reflects the historic structures for which Hastings Park is known - a magnificent constructed ski run that once graced the site in the 1950s, Empire Stadium (1954-1993), and the locally famous early twentieth century wooden rollercoaster that is still the highlight of Playland. The artwork will be located at the NW corner of the park against the background of the Playland expansion.



- Artists participated on the park design team and in public consultations
- Artwork in response to the desire for seating and play architecture
- Seating for 150+ people with excellent views of the fields
- May include a playful slide exit
- 14.6m high x 29.6m long; PNE rollercoaster 23m high x 115m long
- Funded by the City of Vancouver Public Art Program which commissions artworks for public places around the city
- Fabrication in 2015 for installation in 2016



### APPENDIX 2: Proposed Sculpture Site at Empire Fields/ Plateau Park



### Location detail:

