



January 17, 2019

TO: Park Board Chair and Commissioners
FROM: General Manager – Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: Air Force Garden of Remembrance - Relocation Plan

RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT the Vancouver Park Board approve the relocation of the Air Force Garden of Remembrance in Stanley Park to Queen Elizabeth Park; and
- B. THAT the Vancouver Park Board direct staff to work with the Battle of Britain Memorial Fund to develop options for a new garden plan in Queen Elizabeth Park, as outlined in this report.

POLICY / PREVIOUS DECISIONS

The Park Board has exclusive jurisdiction and control over the use of Vancouver parks, which includes all structures, activities, and improvements within those parks.

In March 1997, the [Board approved](#) the [Review Guidelines for the Donation of Public Art or Memorials](#). These guidelines are designed to ensure that high quality artwork and memorials of significance to a broad cross section of Vancouver residents can be added to Vancouver's public spaces; and that community input is included in the considerations for the siting of the works. The core principle of these policies is shared decision-making. The Park Board approves the use of park land and reviews the technical analysis and public consultation. The City's Public Art Committee is consulted regarding the aesthetic and artistic merit of proposed artworks and site contextualization.

In December 2003, the Board reconfirmed its commitment to the arts by adopting the renewed [Park Board Arts Policy](#). This policy supports the provision of a vibrant public realm and the experience of public art and cultural events in parks.

[The Stanley Park Forest Management Plan](#), approved on June 15, 2009, includes relevant Goals and Management Emphasis Areas. It recommends goals to manage Stanley Park's trees and forests in such a way that wildlife species and their habitats are protected or enhanced.

On January 11, 2011, the Park Board approved the [Ecological Action Plan](#), which recommended five key actions to improve the ecological integrity of Stanley Park. One of those actions was to improve fragmentation of habitat.

On April 16, 2018, the Park Board endorsed the [Reconciliation Mission, Vision, and Values](#) to guide and support the implementation of the [eleven Reconciliation Strategies](#) and related goals adopted on January 11, 2016. The fifth strategy provides the following direction: *"E - Review the donation of monuments, memorials, and public art processes and policies to ensure integration of Indigenous history, heritage values, and memory practices."*

BACKGROUND

The Air Force Garden of Remembrance is a memorial garden located in Stanley Park just west of the transit bus loop and just north of the Stanley Park Pavilion (refer to Figure 1.0 below for a map of its location). The Garden was built in 1952 to commemorate pilots who fought in the Battle of Britain in 1940 and is co-funded by the Battle of Britain Memorial Fund (BBMF) and the Park Board and is maintained by Park Board operations staff.

A total of 22 plaques mounted on individual rocks are spread throughout the garden to commemorate a variety of Air Forces and Military Bands. The 1,200 square metre garden consists of a looping gravel trail, lined with placed rocks and plaques set underneath a forest of large, mature trees and surrounded by a combination of native and ornamental planting. The garden also features a small rock-lined pool in the centre of the garden, along with a wishing well, a flag pole and a welcome sign.

To commemorate the airmen who fought in World War II and the Battle of Britain, the BBMF holds an annual Battle of Britain Memorial Ceremony at the garden every September and invites veterans and their families to hold moments of silence and hear speeches by BBMF Board members, Air Force veterans and other special guests. If a new plaque is being installed, this is also the unveiling ceremony of the plaque.

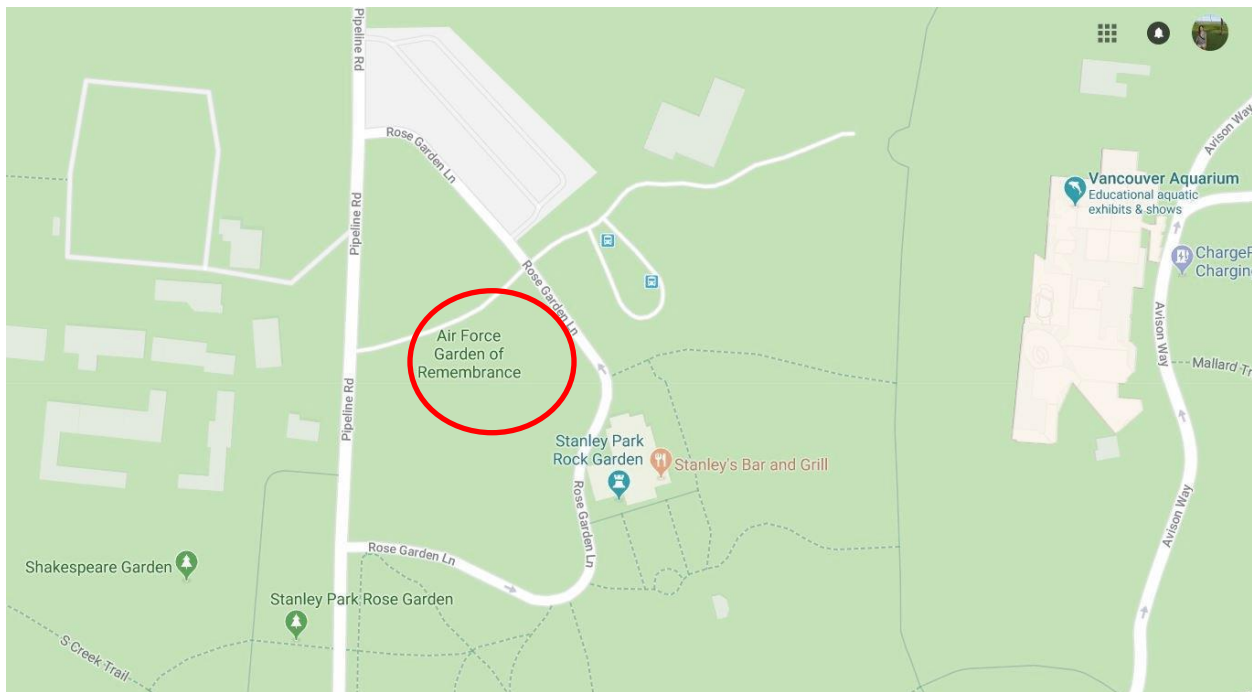


Figure 1.0 - Map showing the location of the Air Force Garden in Stanley Park

Over the past 5 years, more frequent and more regular requests have been made by the BBMF to add plaques to the Air Force Garden. With the increased demand for space for additional plaques, the garden is quickly outgrowing its current location. BBMF have also raised concerns about the layout and infrastructure of the garden and other design characteristics that limit its use for both visitation and for the annual ceremonies and have expressed an interest for modifications.

Concerns raised include enhancing visibility, providing greater accessibility, improving functionality during events, enhancing tranquility and reducing noise within the garden space. Staff discussed these concerns on site with a BBMF representative in June of 2018, where it became apparent that the issues raised are not able to be remedied with the garden in its current location, for the following reasons:

Accessibility Issues

The gravel path was created long ago when only a few plaques were anticipated to be installed. Now that the garden has expanded considerably, accessibility for visitors with mobility challenges has become an issue both on trails into the garden and throughout its different sections.

Aging veterans, who wish to visit the garden but face increasing mobility issues, find it difficult to navigate the steeper terrain, rock steps, or tree root-filled trails. In 2016, the BBMF requested that the Park Board install a handrail next to the entrance stair off of Rose Garden Lane to help people get up the stairs to access the garden. The BBMF has since noted that it would be more ideal to have a ramp in the appropriate location to provide access up into the garden, especially for those veterans accessing the garden during the annual commemoration event in September of each year.

The undulating terrain of the looping path is mainly due to large, multiple tree roots crossing the paths in many directions. Upon reviewing the path in detail with staff, it was clear that any modifications such as widening or paving work, will directly impact roots of surrounding, mature cedar trees. This would have a severe impact to this mature forest canopy and therefore further limits the opportunity for improvement to the overall accessibility of the trails (refer to Figures 2.0 and 3.0 below).



Figure 2.0 (left) - View of the main entrance to the garden off of Rose Garden Lane. A handrail was installed in 2016. However, Rose Garden Lane (foreground) is not an adequate space to step onto and poses a risk for conflicts with vehicles. Figure 3.0 (right) – View of the tricky terrain of the interior trails up against large existing cedar trees.

Noise & Disruption of Tranquility

Due to the garden's location immediately adjacent to two well-travelled roads, the garden suffers from excessive noise. With its location next to the bus loop, disturbance from nearby transportation functions has become an issue. Loading and unloading functions, stopping and

hydraulic lowering systems create a substantial amount of noise and can be heard from any point within the garden impacting the garden's ability as a memorial to offer tranquility and reflection (refer to Figure 4.0 below). The garden is also immediately west of Rose Garden Lane and is used by tour buses driving past the garden on a regular basis, including the West Coast Sightseeing Tour bus which stops on a regular basis immediately next to the garden, and turns off and on their engines.



Figure 4.0 - Image of Rose Garden Lane looking north with the garden hidden to the left (west) and the bus loop to the right (east)

Lack of Visibility

The garden is set back from Rose Garden Lane without any formal or prominent walkway or entrance connecting it to the rest of the park. Due to this, the garden is difficult to notice for the average person walking by. The only nearby foot traffic is from the odd pedestrian walking by to get to find the Stanley Park Pavilion from the train parking lot. As a result, the Air Force Garden does not get as many visitors as would be expected for a Stanley Park feature, and many do not even know the garden exists (refer to Figures 5.0 and 6.0 below).

Functionality

Event setup in the Garden is constrained in its current location. Road closures are required to host ceremonies requiring permitting from the Park Board and the shutting down of Rose Garden Lane, disrupting traffic and tour bus activity. Ideally the garden would have been designed in an area that had a certain amount of staging or surrounding plaza-type space to accommodate these commemorative events.



Figure 5.0 (left) – View of the lack of visibility of the garden entrance. Figure 6.0 (right) – View of a secondary entrance to the garden, not visible from the street.

DISCUSSION

In order to address the multiple needs noted above, it has become clear that the memorial garden would benefit from a new, location more compatible with its function. This new space would accommodate the required landscape treatment, built form and functionality that the current space cannot provide. It was also observed that Stanley Park, with its sensitive ecosystem and forest canopy, is not the most appropriate place for this type of feature.

As the Stanley Park Comprehensive Plan unfolds, the sensitivity of Park's ecosystem is being recognized as a central theme for Vancouver residents. Expanding gardens with paving and features is not in alignment with Stanley Park's stewardship efforts and overall direction to support a healthy, thriving west coast forest environment. The relocation of the existing garden provides an opportunity to continue the important and necessary work of invasive species removal, forest management, wildlife habitat protection and enhancement and soil restoration efforts so desperately needed in Stanley Park.

Appropriateness of Stanley Park for memorials has also been considered in recent work by the Park Board, as part of the Reconciliation Strategy. In April of 2018, the Vancouver Park Board adopted the Reconciliation Mission, Vision and Values. Staff embarked on a Colonial Audit to learn how the Park Board's activities - through internal organizational structures, external practices and policies and the planning of places - have harmed, and continue to harm indigenous people.

Upon the work being done through the Colonial Audit and the Stanley Park Comprehensive Plan, it has been determined there is a significant amount of history of Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh First Nation's presence in Stanley Park that is widely unknown to the average visitor. The history's apparent invisibility is largely because it has been erased from the land. Continuing to add plaques commemorating non-indigenous people that are deeply rooted in colonial traditions contributes to the erasure and on-going harm of the people from this land.

Until we are able to fully understand the history of Stanley Park and the many different ways the Park Board has imposed its power and presence over the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-

Waututh people, it is very important to review any new additions to the park and how they might contribute to a specific narrative. Reconciliation does not preclude commemoration, however, in the meantime and in light of ecosystem sensitivity and the pending Stanley Park Comprehensive Plan, looking at options of more appropriate places would greatly support Reconciliation goals as well.

Planning for a New Location

A new location will allow the design of a memorial garden for the Air Force that supports both the current and future needs of the BBMF, the veterans of the Air Force and all visitors. A highly visible and accessible memorial is needed to allow visitors to adequately learn about the history of the Battle of Britain, enjoy the garden, celebrate and commemorate at annual events and reflect on the dedication of the Air Force.

It could be planned to adequately exemplify the characteristics that make a memorial special, offering tranquility (and noise reduction), visibility and accessibility, and adequate, programmable space for events. There has also been an interest from BBMF to enhance the garden with memorial features that commemorate women and indigenous pilots who fought in the Air Force in World War II, which could be more thoughtfully integrated in a new location.

Upon review of potential options for new locations, relocating to an existing park would provide an opportunity for the garden to be enhanced almost immediately. And relocating to a park that has more visibility, higher foot traffic and is prominent within the City will further enhance the specialness that this memorial needs. The idea of relocating to Queen Elizabeth Park emerged when looking at the overall character, legacy and current status of the Park's upcoming masterplan.

Queen Elizabeth Park is the highest point in Vancouver, and provides a significant opportunity for the Air Force Garden of Remembrance to be "closest to the sky". Park Board staff will be initiating a master planning process for Queen Elizabeth Park in 2019. The Garden relocation can be aligned with the masterplan, to determine the best possible outcomes for the Garden that fits within the greater park as a whole.

Working with the BBMF

Since June of 2018, the Park Board has conducted a series of meetings with a representative of the BBMF to discuss issues raised around the garden layout and design, our reconciliation work and the potential for new locations. The concept of potentially relocating the garden to Queen Elizabeth Park has been proposed to the BBMF for their comment, and their Board unanimously endorsed the idea, and approved the idea of relocation in September of 2018.

Next Steps

Upon Board Approval to proceed, a memorial relocation project will be initiated with Park Development staff and the BBMF Board to site a location subject to a full public consultation process and Park Board Approvals. Next steps include creating a scope and timeline for the project, site investigations, confirmation of potential siting options with Park Development staff, and funding options. Staff will include alignment of a new location for the Garden within the planning process and scope outlined for the Queen Elizabeth Park Master plan to be completed by Q2 in 2019, and will continue to update the Board at key milestones.

SUMMARY

The Air Force Garden of Remembrance is an important memorial that commemorates members of the Air Force that risked and sacrificed their lives for their countries. Creating a new memorial in a location enables the opportunity to celebrate, educate and commemorate these individuals so that we never forget their sacrifice, courage and bravery. This new site provides an opportunity to create a more accessible, visible and tranquil space that shows our respect and meets the needs and goals of the Battle of Britain Memorial Fund. Queen Elizabeth Park provides options for locating an Air Force Garden that stands strong, visible and proud. This relocation supports the restoration efforts of Stanley Park's sensitive forest ecology, gives time for visioning for the Stanley Park Comprehensive Plan and enables the creation of a more thoughtful and organized approach to memorialization in Stanley Park in light of reconciliation priorities.

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