



June 4, 2019

**TO:** Park Board Chair and Commissioners  
**FROM:** General Manager – Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation  
**SUBJECT:** Gordon Park & David Thompson Secondary School Proposed Land Exchange

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## RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT the Vancouver Park Board authorize staff to initiate land exchange negotiations with the Vancouver School Board for an equal area of the David Thompson Secondary School site in exchange for the north portion of Gordon Park, which would be subject to the following conditions:
- i. provision of suitable alternate Vancouver School Board fields to accommodate displaced Gordon Park users during construction of the new school and park improvements;
  - ii. resolution of the East 53<sup>rd</sup> Avenue road allowance with the City of Vancouver Engineering Department; and
  - iii. reinstatement of, and enhancements to, Gordon Park; and
- B. FURTHER THAT all arrangements negotiated in relation to this proposed land exchange, including changes to areas designated as permanent park, will be subject to subsequent Park Board and City Council approval, and no legal rights or obligations will be created by Park Board adoption of Recommendation A above.

## REPORT SUMMARY

On May 29, 2019, the Vancouver Board of Education approved a potential land exchange with the Vancouver Park Board at the Gordon Park and David Thompson Secondary School sites. This proposed land exchange would facilitate the construction of a new school at the north end of Gordon Park as part of the Province's Seismic Mitigation Program. For the exchange to go forward, it would be subject to an agreement being reached between the Vancouver School Board and the Park Board, as well as a resolution with the City of Vancouver for the road allowance within the potential new boundaries of the park.

This report seeks Park Board approval for staff to initiate a land negotiation process with the School Board and City of Vancouver. The proposed land exchange would allow student attendance to continue at the existing school during the construction period, and the use of fields at other school sites would be provided to accommodate park uses displaced as a result. It is expected that the exchange would also result in a net benefit to Gordon Park (e.g. improved playfields, field irrigation improvements, etc.).

## BOARD AUTHORITY / PREVIOUS DECISIONS

As per the Vancouver Charter, the Park Board has exclusive jurisdiction and control over park land use in the City of Vancouver, including any structures, programs and activities, fees, and improvements that occur within designated parks.

At an In Camera Park Board meeting held on October 24, 2016, the Board directed staff to “proceed with public engagement, in partnership with the Vancouver School Board, for a proposed land exchange between Gordon Park and the David Thompson Secondary School site”. The Board recommendation also indicated that this In Camera decision could be released once public engagement commenced.

## BACKGROUND

Gordon Park is designated a permanent park, bounded by East 49<sup>th</sup> Avenue to the north, Argyle Street to the west and Commercial Street to the east. On its south edge, there is the 53<sup>rd</sup> Avenue road allowance that has been closed to traffic for park use and is maintained by the Park Board (except for the area occupied by a portion of the shared tennis/basketball courts that are maintained by the School Board). South of the 53<sup>rd</sup> Avenue road allowance is the David Thompson Secondary School property. The park currently contains four adult-sized softball fields, one adult baseball field, one adult soccer field, two adult rugby fields, and hosts 18 different leagues. Thompson School students are primary users of the soccer fields. The park also contains a field house, a playground, and the shared tennis/basketball courts. The park is not irrigated and has minimal drainage; the rugby and soccer fields are, therefore, considered ‘B’ grade fields due to their condition. Figure 1 below shows the existing site.



Figure 1: Gordon Park / David Thompson Secondary School – Existing Sites

Thompson School is located at 1755 E 55<sup>th</sup> Ave at Commercial Street. The Vancouver School Board (VSB) is undergoing a comprehensive seismic upgrading program to make schools safer. The school has been identified as an ‘H1’, high-risk school building in the Province’s Seismic Mitigation Program. On May 29, 2019, the Vancouver Board of Education (VBE) approved a staff recommendation on a land exchange of equal area, subject to an agreement between the VSB and Park Board, to construct a new school at the north end of Gordon Park (see VSB Memorandum in Appendix A for details and site plans). A land exchange would allow student

attendance to continue at the existing school during the construction (see Figure 2 below). VSB would provide the use of their fields at other sites to accommodate park uses displaced during construction of the new school.



Figure 2: Gordon Park / David Thompson Secondary School – Proposed Land Exchange

## DISCUSSION

### VSB Engagement

Park Board staff attended a VSB-run public information session at the David Thompson school gymnasium from 4:00pm to 7:00pm on February 28, 2019. Information boards were displayed showing information on the potential land exchange option. This engagement included an online survey, as well as an on-paper form available at the event (See Appendix B for full VSB survey summary). The engagement materials were reviewed by Park Board staff, whose comments were incorporated prior to the information session.

The engagement options presented were as follows:

1. Upgrade the existing school within the same building structure.
2. Replace portions of the school on existing site.
3. Replace the school on the existing site.
4. Exchange of equal parcels of land between Thompson School site and Gordon Park to build a replacement school in Gordon Park.

Key engagement results were as follows:

- 609 survey forms were completed as of April 15, 2019 (67 on paper and 542 online);
- 58 people signed-in at the public information session;
- 86% of respondents supported option 4, a potential exchange of equal parcels of land;
- 49% of respondents found the information session helpful.

Based on engagement results, VSB staff recommended that their Board approve Option 4: an equal land exchange, subject to an agreement between the VSB and Park Board.



## CONSIDERATIONS

### Gordon Park Impact and Improvement

If a land exchange agreement occurs, there would be no interruption or reduction in Park Board sports field use. VSB would incur the costs related to providing interim alternate fields, upgraded to Park Board standards to accommodate field uses displaced by construction. Maintenance responsibility of the interim fields would be subject to negotiation with VSB. John Oliver Secondary and Tupper Secondary have been identified as potential interim fields. The 'middle field' of Gordon Park would remain open and accessible (see Figure 3 below).



Figure 3: Gordon Park / David Thompson Secondary School – Construction Period

Once the new school is completed and the former school is deconstructed, the former school site would be remediated and reinstated as park at VSB's expense, with the principle of a net benefit (improvement to park amenities) in park services in Gordon Park (see Figure 4). The renewed Gordon Park would be determined through a Park Board led master plan process, including public engagement funded by the VSB. The VSB would also be responsible for the full construction costs of the new park design. Parks and recreation services in the park would be protected and enhanced with no loss of park amenity area. The design and implementation of the renewal of Gordon Park would be a condition of the land exchange.



Figure 4: Gordon Park / David Thompson Secondary School – New Park Configuration

### **East 53<sup>rd</sup> Avenue Road Allowance**

With the proposed land exchange, the existing road allowance would potentially bisect the reconfigured park (see Appendix A for VSB plans), as opposed to its present position at the southern edge of the park. Currently there is no infrastructure at grade or below the ground within this road allowance. If, however, the City's Engineering Services group were to plan for any type of infrastructure with the road allowance, it could potentially have an impact on the park. Therefore, in order for a land exchange to occur, it will be necessary for Park Board to negotiate with City Engineering Services to ensure that the land within the road allowance will not negatively affect the proposed park once reconfiguration occurs. Park Board and Engineering staff are currently in discussion to find a solution.

### **NEXT STEPS**

Pending direction from the Park Board to proceed, staff will initiate negotiations for a land exchange and park renewal agreement, including park amenity improvements, with the Vancouver School Board. The negotiation process would include the following steps:

- Park Board staff will work with VSB staff to identify and confirm alternate school sites for park use during construction;
- VSB will seek Park Board staff approval to access Gordon Park for studies and tests;
- VSB will report back to the Park Board staff on the feasibility of a land exchange based on tests, and develop a process for future approvals;
- Park Board and Engineering Services will negotiate a resolution to the road allowance within the newly configured park boundaries;
- A formal land exchange agreement between VPB and VSB will be produced, which will include conditions for reinstatement and enhancement of the Park;
- Staff will return to the Park Board and City Council (as per Section 190 of the Vancouver Charter) for final decision on the land exchange agreement;
- Pending Park Board approval, staff will begin to execute the agreement and negotiate a Memo of Understanding with the VSB; and
- Park Board & Council would need to revoke the permanent park designation for the portion of Gordon Park that would be transferred to VSB with a 2/3 vote in the affirmative (per the Vancouver Charter); designating the former school site as Permanent Park would require a Council majority vote.

Once a land exchange agreement is executed, the park renewal master planning/design process would begin. This would be guided by the Park Board's public engagement process and could occur concurrently with the VSB's construction process. Following is the preliminary design and construction timeline:

- 1 year for VSB New School Design feasibility studies;
- 2 years for VSB new school design and permitting;
- 2-3 years for VSB new school design construction;
- Concurrent park master plan process;
- Deconstruction;
- Park construction.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the potential park benefits that would be realized and the mitigated disruption to park uses, staff recommend that the Vancouver Park Board authorize the initiation of negotiations with the Vancouver School Board for the exchange of the north portion of Gordon Park with an equal portion of the David Thompson Secondary School site. This land exchange would be subject to the conditions and details outlined in this report, including identifying a resolution with City Engineering for road allowances that would impact the new park area, and seeking future Park Board and Council approval for changes to park designation.

General Manager's Office  
Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation  
Vancouver, BC

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Planning, Policy & Environment

DS/JM/clc



DATE: May 15, 2019

TO: Facilities Planning Committee

FROM: Jim Meschino, Director of Facilities

RE: David Thompson Secondary Potential Land Exchange Option – Public Consultation

#### REFERENCE TO STRATEGIC PLAN:

**Goal 4: Provide effective leadership, governance and stewardship**

**Objectives:**

- Implement the recommendations of the Long-Range Facility Plan.
- Effectively utilize school district resources and facilities.

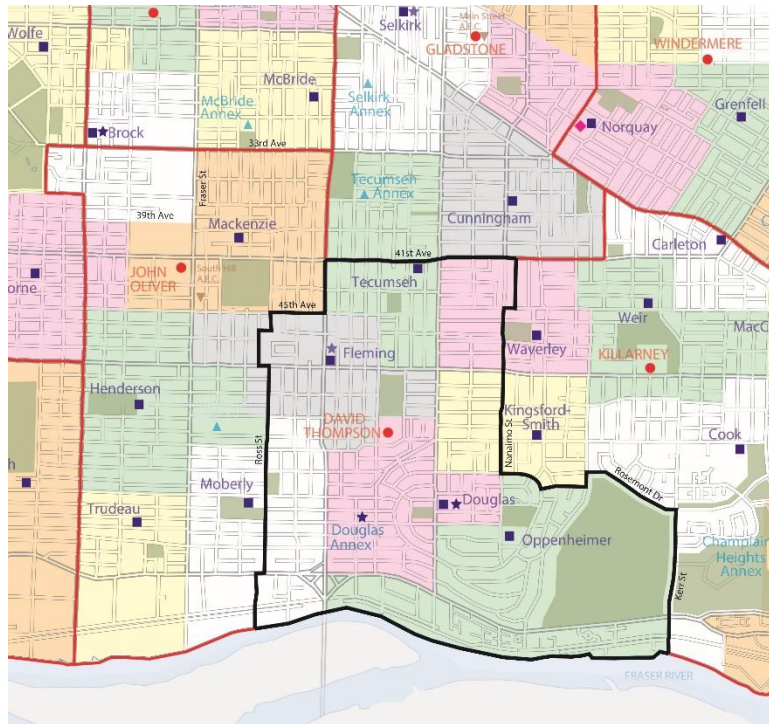
#### INTRODUCTION:

This report contains a recommendation.

#### BACKGROUND:

David Thompson Secondary is included in the Seismic Mitigation Program (SMP) as a H1, High risk school. Some work has been done on the Project Definition Report (PDR) to determine which seismic mitigation strategy will be used to increase the structural safety of the school. One option could involve the exchange of land between the current school and the north portion of Gordon Park which has frontage along 49<sup>th</sup> Avenue east, Argyle Street, and Commercial Street.





This report summarizes the methods and results of a public information session and consultation which aimed to gather community input on the possibility of a land exchange between the Vancouver School Board (VSB) and the Vancouver Park Board (VPB) if a replacement school was found to be the best value option in the PDR process.

## DISCUSSION:

David Thompson Secondary school has served the school community well since 1957. However, the facility has a very high amount of deferred maintenance in addition to its high-seismic risk. As per the Ministry of Education's approval processes, the VSB started a feasibility study and identified that an option of exchanging land between David Thompson and Gordon Park has several educational and financial benefits.

### Existing Site: David Thompson (DT) Secondary School and Gordon Park





Options considered as part of the feasibility study are:

1. Upgrade the existing school within the same building structure
2. Replace portions of the school on existing site
3. Replace the school on the existing site
4. Exchange of equal parcels of land between David Thompson and Gordon Park to build a replacement school on the existing Gordon Park site.

Options 1 to 3 will require students and staff to relocate to temporary accommodations until the project is completed. Option 4 has the least amount of disruption for students and teachers. The middle section of Gordon Park will be accessible for the surrounding neighborhoods and general park users during construction.

To continue the feasibility study on the land exchange option, VSB hosted a public information session on February 28, 2019 and undertook a survey which was open until April 15, 2019. The objective was to determine if there is school community and public support to consider the land exchange option. A potential final state is shown below, as a concept only. Both the Vancouver Park Board and VPB would have to agree on the details of the land exchange and the VPB would lead the design and engagement process for the new park if the exchange is approved.

## Potential Final State (total area of Gordon Park remains the same)



## CONSULTATION

On February 28, 2019, a public information session was held at the David Thompson Gymnasium between 4:00pm and 7:00pm. Information boards were displayed, which gave information about the potential land exchange option. VSB and VPB staff were in attendance to answer questions and gather feedback. A survey was made available online, as well as in paper form at the event. The results of that survey are discussed below.

- There were 609 completed feedback forms; 67 completed on paper, and 542 completed online as of April 15, 2019.
- 58 people signed in at the public information session.

86% of the survey respondents supported the option of the potential land exchange and 49% of them found that the information session was helpful.

The five comments received most often through the feedback were:

1. A new school on the current Gordon Park site is the optimal choice: 64%

2. A new school is the safest option: 45%
3. Renovating / upgrading parts of the existing school is better: 13%
4. Locate the school closer to transit: 12%
5. The new school site is too close to busy streets (i.e. become busier during rush hour, unsafe drop off/pick up): 12%

During the information session, some home owners near Gordon Park expressed disagreement with the potential land exchange due to the anticipated view-line and scenery changes from their properties, as well as traffic impacts resulting from the location of school parking on-site.

A full summary of the survey is included in the appendix.

## CONCLUSION:

- According to the public consultation, the public showed strong support for the potential land exchange between David Thompson Secondary school and Gordon Park. A new school is the safest option for the school community and building a new school while retaining the current students at the existing buildings is the least disruptive option for their education.
- During construction, the “Middle field” in Gordon Park would remain open and be accessible.
- Gordon Park Field users could be accommodated on District fields during the construction period. The VSB and VPB will work with alternate field sites in the vicinity of Gordon Park, such as John Oliver Secondary School and Tupper Secondary School, to accommodate Gordon Park’s user groups during construction. The alternate field sites would be upgraded to same standards that are currently provided at Gordon Park.

Benefits of choosing the new school vs. a seismic upgrade option include:

New School	Seismic Upgrade
The existing school remains in operation	Current school size remains
More accessible to transit stops	Entire Gordon park remains in operation
No more ongoing deferred maintenance	No land exchange required
New and seismically safe school facilities	
Potential for new and improved park facilities	
21 <sup>st</sup> century learning design	

## RECOMMENDATION(S):

**THAT** the Vancouver Board of Education (VBE) approve a land exchange with the Vancouver Park Board (VPB) at Gordon Park/Thompson Secondary school subject to a replacement school being the best value funded option, and subject to the execution of a land exchange agreement between the VBE and VPB

Attachments:

1. Survey summary

APPENDIX B

David Thompson Public Information Session

February 28, 2019 4:00pm - 7:00pm

David Thompson Gymnasium

attendees encouraged to fill out feedback form via iPad

Feedback collected from February 28, 2019 until April 19, 2019.

Please indicate any of the following applies to you:	Paper	Online	Total
Parent of child attending the school	6	101	107
Parent of a child interested in attending the school	0	61	61
student currently attending the school	17	97	114
student interested in attending the school	0	11	11
local resident ( do not have children attending)	22	73	95
VSB staff member	11	27	38
local business owner	0	1	1
Park User	18		
other, please specify	6	17	23
Total	80	388	468

One option to achieve a seismically safe school is constructing a replacement school through a land exchange of David Thompson Secondary School and Gordon Park. The Park Board has requested that the School District seek public input on the land exchange option. Please check one option in response to the following statement: <b>I support the idea of a potential land exchange between the Vancouver School District and the Vancouver Park Board.</b>	Paper	Online	Total	%
Agree	46	471	517	86%
Disagree	20	65	85	14%
Total	66	536	602	100%

Please check one of the following: The information provided at this public information session was helpful	Paper	Online	Total	%
Agree	30	163	193	49%
Somewhat Agree	20	67	87	22%
Somewhat Disagree	2	12	14	4%
Disagree	9	10	19	5%
Not Applicable	0	81	81	21%
Total	61	333	394	100%

Comment	Paper	Online	Total
A new school on the current Gordon park site is the optimal choice	0	64	64
A new school is the safest option	0	45	45
Renovating / upgrading parts of the existing school is better	0	13	13
Locate the school closer to transit	0	12	12
The new school site is too close to busy streets (i.e. become busier during rush hour, unsafe drop off/pick up)	0	12	12
Unclear schedule for project completion	0	8	8
Replacement school on the same site	0	6	6
More thorough traffic study is necessary (i.e. impact on 49th Ave.)	0	6	6
Request to notify larger neighbourhooood earlier	0	5	5
Keep the cafeteria program & provide adequate cafeteria space in the new school	0	5	5
Provide more transparent cost calculations for all options	0	4	4
Maintain/add more facilities for diverse age groups in the new Gordon Park	0	4	4
Locate the park away from busy roads	0	4	4
Avoid moving students into portables at swing sites	0	4	4
Preserve the Pin Oak trees surrounding the park	0	4	4
Add a community centre to the new school	0	4	4
Add a pool in the new school	0	4	4
Add daycare facilities either run by VSB or rented to other organizations	0	3	3
Move sports fields users to other sites to keep students in the existing school building	0	3	3
Include safe and designated pick up/drop off area (i.e. through road between the school and park)	0	3	3
Limit the disruption of the construction process (i.e. no construction during school hours, safety, noise control)	0	3	3
Add a track at the new school	0	3	3
Move students to swing site during construction	0	2	2
Include playing fields in the new school site	0	2	2
Keep all existing skill training labs in the new school	0	2	2
Replace the old playground on Gordon Park	0	2	2
Keep an auditorium and two gyms in the new school	0	2	2
Add better lockers and larger washrooms	0	2	2
Add turf fields to the new school	0	2	2
Keep community garden program	0	2	2
Build large enough school to include all students	0	2	2
The entire seismic upgrade program is a waste of money	0	1	1
Build playgrounds for younger students at the new school	0	1	1
Add elevators to the new school	0	1	1
Improve lighting at the school site for safety	0	1	1
Build larger classrooms at the school	0	1	1
Preserve student artwork on the wall	0	1	1
Younger students' opinions should be heard	0	1	1
Move community garden to keep sports field on the site	0	1	1
Add French programs	0	1	1
Affordable electric car charging stations	0	1	1
Anticipate more students from the densification of the neighborhoods	0	1	1
Don't change catchment area	0	1	1
Make the hallways wider in the new school	0	1	1
Provide more windows on the new school	0	1	1
Add staff parking in the new school	0	1	1
Provide a solution to asbestos in the current building	0	1	1
Total	0	253	253