

Date: October 15, 2009



TO: Board Members – Vancouver Park Board
FROM: General Manager – Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: Northeast False Creek: Directions for the Future

RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT the Board receive the City Council report entitled “Northeast False Creek: Directions for the Future”, attached as Appendix A, for information.**
- B. THAT the Board support the creation of the following parks and public open space in Northeast False Creek:**
- i) Creekside Park extension;**
 - ii) An Outdoor Recreation Area primarily focused on hard-surface activities under the viaducts east of Carrall Street; and**
 - iii) A Civic Plaza capable of hosting a wide range of special events on the False Creek waterfront on the Robson or Georgia Street axis.**
- C. THAT the Board is prepared to consider proposals to reshape Creekside Park extension, based on the criteria listed in Table 1 contained in this report.**
- D. THAT the Board support the following elements in the Public Benefits Proposal for new development being considered for Northeast False Creek:**
- i) The Outdoor Recreation Area;**
 - ii) The Civic Plaza;**
 - iii) A financial contribution to upgrade existing parks and public open spaces in False Creek North; and**
 - iv) A financial contribution toward the planned renewal of the Vancouver Aquatic Centre.**

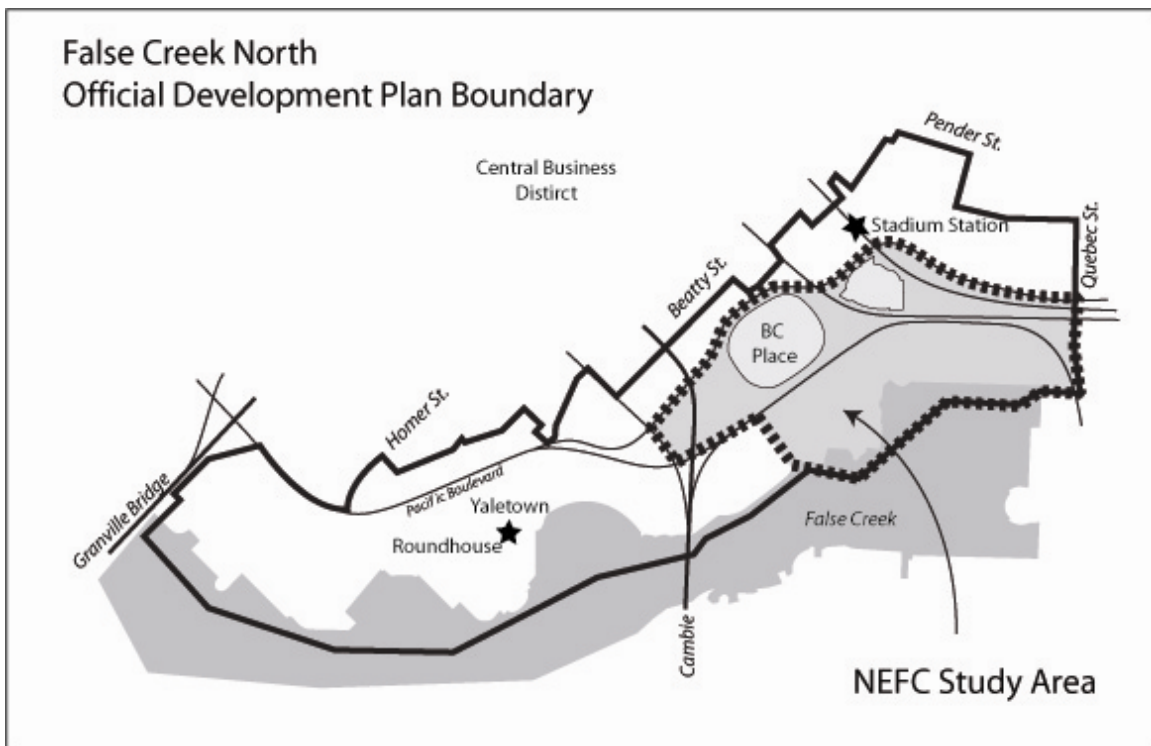
POLICY

City Council has jurisdiction in zoning and development matters (Vancouver Charter, Section 27), including determining: a) the quantity and location of parks; b) the type and size of public recreation facilities; and c) the allocation of funds received as Community Amenity Contributions. The Park Board can provide advice to City Council on these matters.

BACKGROUND

On October 22, 2009, City Council's Standing Committee on Planning and Environment will be considered a report entitled "Northeast False Creek: Directions for the Future" (attached as Appendix A), which details how the area should be redeveloped over the next 10-20 years. The document contains recommended policies related to the provision of parks, public open space and recreation facilities.

Northeast False Creek (NEFC) is located in the eastern portion of the downtown peninsula and is a sub-area of a broader area called False Creek North. NEFC includes BC Place Stadium, GM Place Arena and the Plaza of Nations, plus a number of undeveloped parcels of land. NEFC contains about 28 hectares (70 acres) of land.



In terms of land uses, City staff are recommending:

- Retaining BC Place Stadium and GM Place Arena;
- Continuing to require 1.8 million square feet of 'non-residential' uses (e.g. offices, hotels, retail stores, restaurants, entertainment uses, institutions); and
- Allowing about 4 million square feet of new residential uses, which would add about 7,200 residents to the area.

DISCUSSION

There are three main areas of interest to the Park Board that area contained in the “Directions for the Future” document:

- The type, location and size of parks and public open spaces;
- The possibility that the planned Creekside Park extension may be reshaped; and
- The Public Benefits proposal.

Type, location and size of parks and public open spaces

The “Directions for the Future” document recommends the creation of the following parks and public open spaces in NEFC:

- Creekside Park extension;
- An Outdoor Recreation Area primarily focused on hard-surface activities under the viaducts east of Carrall Street; and
- A Civic Plaza capable of hosting a wide range of special events on the False Creek waterfront at or near the foot of Robson or Georgia Street.

The Board is being asked to support this proposal (Recommendation B).

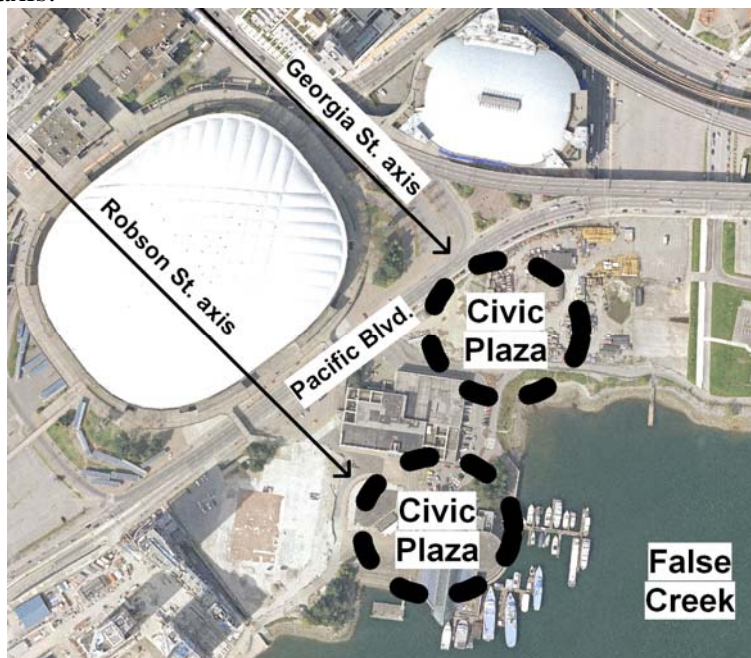
Creekside Park extension is a park that has been included in the False Creek North Official Development Plan (ODP) since 1990. The planned park is located to the north and west of existing Creekside Park, bounded by the False Creek waterfront, Carrall Street, Pacific Boulevard and Quebec Street. The ODP lists the park as 3.67 hectares (9.06 acres) in size. A ‘concept plan’ for the future park was developed in 2006.



The proposed Outdoor Recreation Area under the viaducts east of Carrall Street is an idea that was generated several years ago, based on the success of the Downtown Skateboard Plaza (opened in 2004). The concept is to convert the land currently owned by the City into an area primarily focused on hard-surface activities (e.g. basketball, roller hockey, BMX riding, etc.). The Outdoor Recreation Area could be about 0.9 hectares or 2.3 acres in size, noting that some of this area may be required for a ‘neighbourhood energy utility’ or other infrastructure.



The proposed Civic Plaza is intended to replace the existing event space at the Plaza of Nations and designed to host a wide range of special events. Ideally, the Civic Plaza would be about 0.8 hectares (2.0 acres) in size, similar in scale to the existing event space at the Plaza of Nations. Two sites have surfaced as the most desirable locations on the False Creek waterfront for the Civic Plaza: a) on the Georgia Street axis; or b) on the Robson Street axis.



The final location and size of the Civic Plaza will be established at a future date, once decisions are made about whether the Vancouver Art Gallery relocates to NEFC and whether the existing waterfront building at the Plaza of Nations (called 'Enterprise Hall') is preserved or demolished.

The "Directions for the Future" document would lead to the creation of about 2 hectares (5 acres) of new public open space. If added to the existing and planned parks in False Creek North (between Granville Bridge and Quebec Street), there would be a total of about 19 hectares (47 acres) of parks to serve a planned population of about 23,000 residents. This would lead to a 'neighbourhood park' ratio of 0.8 hectares (2.0 acres) per 1,000 residents. This is below the target of 1.1 hectares (2.75 acres) per 1,000 residents, which was approved by City Council as part of the False Creek Policy Broadsheets in 1988.

As a result, Park Board staff anticipate that the parks and public open spaces in False Creek North will become increasingly busy and, at times, crowded. This is a positive step for those who enjoyed active, vibrant parks. However, it will present a challenge for those who enjoy parks for rest, relaxation and/or respite.

Park Board staff also anticipate the busier parks will translate into higher maintenance costs, both in terms of day-to-day operation (e.g. garbage pick-up) and longer term maintenance due to the added wear and tear (e.g. repairing benches, turf, irrigation and drainage lines, etc.).

Possible reshaping of Creekside Park extension

The owner of the lands located on the False Creek waterfront between the Plaza of Nations and the existing Creekside Park (Concord Pacific) have requested to explore options that could result in the reshaping Creekside Park extension. Although no formal submission has been made by Concord Pacific, Park Board staff have prepared a list of criteria to be considered should a request be made in the future. The criteria are listed in Table 1 below. The Board is being asked to support these criteria (Recommendation C).

Today, as in the past, matters associated with Creekside Park extension have generated significant public reaction, particularly for residents living near the future park in 'City Gate' and 'International Village'. In 2004, the timeline for building Creekside Park extension was modified by City Council to match the timeline associated with the excavation, sorting and storage of contaminated soils in False Creek North, which resulted in a delay in the delivery of Creekside Park extension. At that time, the Board approved:

"THAT the Board requests that Council explore mechanisms to deliver Creekside Park extension (Parcel 9 in False Creek North) as early as possible; AND THAT the Board requests that Council consider, at the time when a rezoning application is received for Parcel 6C, a year by which Creekside Park extension must be delivered." (May 17, 2004)

TABLE 1 - Criteria to be considered to evaluate proposals that reshape Creekside Park extension

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Creekside Park extension remains the same size;• Creekside Park extension is a contiguous parcel on the waterfront that connects to the existing Creekside Park;• Creekside Park extension has a minimum depth of 70 m from the water's edge to its northern boundary;• Creekside Park extension is bordered by public roads dedicated to the City;• Creekside Park extension can accommodate a wide range of neighbourhood park uses, as well as some special events;• Creekside Park extension can accommodate the required amount of contaminated soil in such a way that it does not significantly compromise the park's functionality;• Creekside Park extension can be built in phases; and• The existing Downtown Skateboard Plaza and proposed Outdoor Recreation Area remain viable noise-generating recreation uses.

Public Benefits Proposal

As part of large development projects, it is common practice to prepare a list of public benefits to be provided that accompanies the proposed new development. The recommended public benefits associated with parks and recreation are:

- The Outdoor Recreation Area;
- The Civic Plaza;
- A financial contribution to upgrade existing parks and public open spaces in False Creek North; and
- A financial contribution toward the planned renewal of the Vancouver Aquatic Centre.

The delivery of Creekside Park extension is not included in this list because it is a requirement in the existing Official Development Plan.

The Board is being asked to support this list (Recommendation D). Changes or additions to the public benefits proposal may be required as future planning unfolds.

Other issues

There are a number of issues that have been identified but remain unresolved. One such issue is the City's and Park Board's desire to achieve a non-motorized False Creek waterbody east of Cambie Bridge. The challenge for NEFC is that there is a marina planned for the foot of Abbott Street, in addition to the existing motorized marina at the Plaza of Nations. This issue will be discussed and negotiated at a future date.

Next steps

The “Directions for the Future” document will be considered by City Council’s Standing Committee on Planning and Environment on October 22, 2009. If approved, land owners will be in a position to submit rezoning applications to the City.

There are a number of follow-up work items that will involve Park Board staff:

- establishing the detailed location, size and function of public open spaces;
- advancing work on the need, location, size, programming and design of the Civic Plaza;
- considering and evaluating the possible reshaping of the Creekside Park extension;
- preparing an implementation and funding strategy for delivering the public benefits proposal; and
- resolving the location, size and function of marinas, including provisions for dragon boaters.

The Park Board will be kept abreast of key issues as the NEFC project moves forward.

SUMMARY

The proposed development of the lands in Northeast False Creek will lead to a significant increase in population. These future residents, workers and visitors will expect additional parks and recreation facilities to serve their needs. The “Directions for the Future” document provides for a moderate increase in parks and public open spaces in NEFC, a financial contribution to upgrade existing parks and public open spaces elsewhere in False Creek North, as well as a financial contribution toward the planned renewal of the Vancouver Aquatic Centre. Finally, a list of criteria is being recommended for adoption should one or several proposals be received to reshape Creekside Park extension.

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