

Engagement Summary Report: Step 3

Richards and Smithe Downtown Park

DIALOG

City of Vancouver
Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation

May 20, 2016



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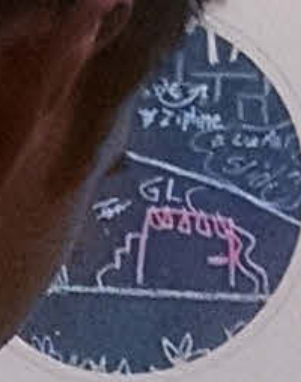
APPENDIX

A1. Public Open House Panels.....

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1 ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

During the Community Ideas Fair in June 2015, we asked people of all ages to draw on a chalkboard and share what they would like to see at the future park. Here is what they drew...



Zip Line



Water Feature Safe for Children



Spider Web



People Using/Making things with their Hands



Native Plants



Swings



"But the City is not just a park, it's a city."

PRINCIPLES GUIDING THE

Four key principles were developed that have shaped the development of the park. The principles are based on:

- early community input;
- other park precedents and ideas from the design team, which
- the Vancouver Park Board's vision to connect people in Vancouver
- unique site characteristics and other contextual, technical, and

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1.1 Project Background

The future park at Smithe and Richards Streets will be a public place that is owned, used, paid for, and enjoyed by the community. As such, a meaningful and robust public engagement process is an important aspect of the process.

The purpose of the public engagement is to host a two-way dialogue with the public –including both broad and diverse stakeholders – on the design of the future park in order to:

- inform the public about existing conditions and context, diverse perspectives and users, and precedents for park spaces, programs, and art integration; and
- obtain input from the public on priorities, issues, and aspirations to meaningfully influence the design of the park.

This engagement process is laid out on the following page, and includes three steps: 1) Visioning; 2) Concept Options Review; and 3) Final Concept Review. This report provides an overview of engagement activities and outcomes of Step 3.

1.2 Step 3 Activities

Step 3 engagement activities built on a Public Ideas Fair, a Public Open House, two online questionnaires, and two stakeholder meetings in Steps 1 and 2 of the engagement process. Step 3 engagement activities included:

Park Design Focus Group Meeting #3 – April 6, 2016

This meeting brought together members of the Park Design Focus Group (PDFG) for the third time, to review and offer input on the preferred concept. PDFG members represent diverse stakeholder groups in the neighbourhood, ranging from residents and business owners, to youth and artists (refer to page 9). The session included a presentation and facilitated discussion.

Public Open House – April 19, 2016

This was the third major public event that sought input from the broad community. The open house was a drop-in event, held near the future park site at ArtStarts, from 5 until 9pm. The preferred concept was presented on illustrated panels and a 3D model. Participants were directed to the online questionnaire to provide more detailed input, and hard copies were also available at the event.

Online Questionnaire – April 18-May 3 2016

The materials presented at the Public Open House were posted on the “Talk Vancouver” webpage, which included an online questionnaire in which participants could provide detailed input on the preferred concept.

Snapshot of the Engagement Process

	Step 1 Visioning June - July 2015		Step 2 Concept Options Review October - November 2015		Step 3 Final Concept Review April - May 2016	
Major Public Event	Public Ideas Fair		Open House: Concept Options		Open House: Preferred Concept	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interactive information panels Scheduled workshops Sketch-it-yourself booth + other activities 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interactive panels presenting concepts Scheduled workshops and possibly other activities 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interactive panels presenting concept 	
Online	Talk Vancouver Survey #1		Talk Vancouver Survey #2		Talk Vancouver Survey #3	
Stakeholder Meetings	PDFG Mtg 1		PDFG Mtg 2		PDFG Mtg 3	

2

WHAT WE HEARD



2.1 Overall Themes

The themes that emerged across the broad engagement activities and focused stakeholder discussion included the following:

HIGH LEVELS OF PARTICIPATION

Overall, the engagement process was a tremendous success. A large number of people were engaged – well over 1000 citizens – which reflects high levels of participation compared to other steps in the process and in local parks planning processes more generally. Further, input represents diverse age groups and both downtown residents and residents living elsewhere in Vancouver.

BROAD SUPPORT

There is very strong support for the preferred concept, with the greatest number of respondents indicating that they “really like” it. Overall, 77% of respondents “really like” or “like” the preferred concept, and 55% see themselves visiting the park at least once a month.

Ideas for improvements focused on proposed aspects of the elevated walkway, water feature, and coffee/food kiosk (however well over half of respondents indicated that they would purchase food or coffee from the kiosk if it is built). The PDFG also had a number of comments about improving the proposed skyframes.

Other ideas more generally included more green/grassy areas, simpler design, more acoustic barriers to noise, and more seating and the possibility of washrooms.

2.2 Park Design Focus Group Meeting #3

PARTICIPATION

Representation from the following stakeholder groups and project team were in attendance:

- Vancouver Police Department
- Artists in Schools
- Nearby Strata
- Downtown Vancouver BIA
- City of Vancouver Planning Department
- Vancouver Park Board
- DIALOG (consulting team)

INPUT SUMMARY

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the Preferred Concept before it was taken out for broader public engagement. Discussion included the following themes:

- **Opportunities for lingering on the elevated walkway** – Questions were raised about the width of the walkway and whether there would be opportunities for sitting, lingering, and other activities rather than just passing through. The example of the high line was provided. The design team indicated that although the high line holds some comparison to this elevated walkway experience, the proportion and width of the elevated walkway relates to the context and scale of the park spaces below. It strikes a balance between offering moments to linger on the walkway, while also minimizing the shadow cast upon the spaces below.
- **Sunshine and hard/soft surfaces** – Observations were made that the sunniest parts of the park are where there is the most hard surfaces. There were questions about whether there would be opportunities to lay down in the sunshine. The design team responded that indeed there would be.
- **Weather protection** – Questions were raised about weather protection and covered areas, to allow for opportunities to spend time in the park while it is raining. The VPD indicated that permanently covered areas attract unwelcomed night time activity. The design team indicated that retractable awnings at the coffee/food kiosk would allow for some day time weather protection.
- **Back lane connections** – Questions were raised about the hard edge along the back lane, and whether there could be more than one entrance from the back lane to encourage permeability.
- **Pets** – There was general support for the focus on people-friendly spaces, rather than creating a space suitable for an off-leash dog park.
- **Skyframes** – Comments were made about these elements seeming “hard” in appearance, within the context of an already very urban/concrete context given the adjacent buildings. There was an interest in reducing their number and/or softening their appearance, and focusing more on green elements in the park that would act as a refuge/retreat from the noise and bustle of the city. The design team indicated that their purpose is to make the space dynamic, artful, and changing over time.
- **“Busy” Quality** – Comments were made that “there are a lot of things happening in a tight space” – that there were lots of design elements and programs planned for a relatively small park.
- **Colour** – Comments were made about the desire for colour (e.g. blooming trees) on the site.
- **Engagement** – For broader public engagement activities, the following recommendations were provided:
 - Creating a model would be useful
 - Providing more background information such as the historic context for the Skyframes would be valuable
 - Showing existing and proposed trees would better convey how green the park is planned to be

2.3 Open House and Online Questionnaire: Preferred Concept

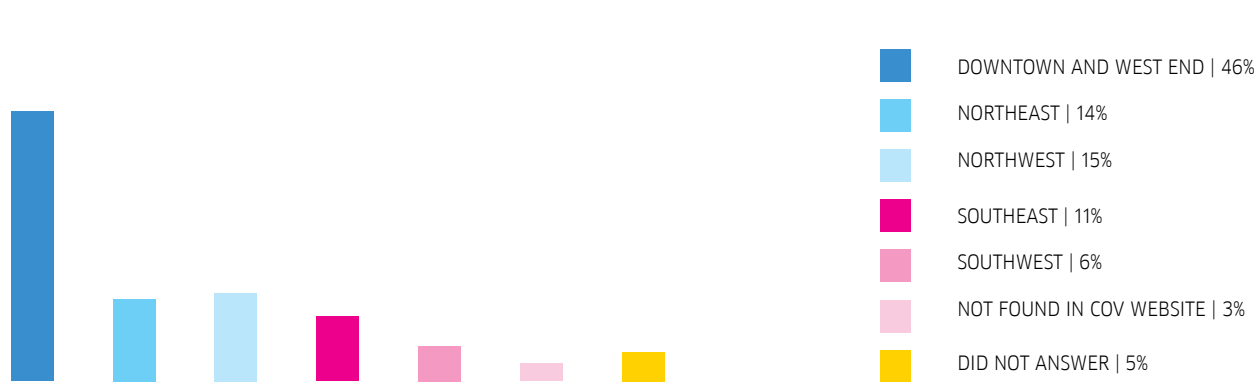
PARTICIPATION

Approximately **200** people attended the open house, and **1031** people completed the online questionnaire.

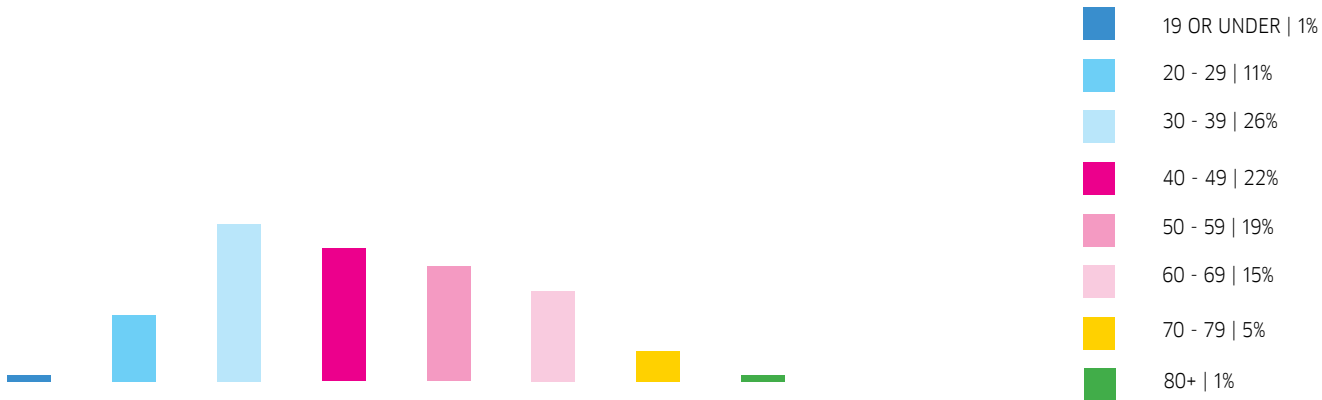
The questionnaire was advertized at the Public Open House, through an open invitation via the project page and City of Vancouver website, and via an email invitation sent to Talk Vancouver panel members.

Although the greatest proportion of respondents lived in areas near the park, there was representation from across Vancouver, which supports the notion that the proposed park will be a city-wide destination. The majority of respondents were middle-aged, between the ages of 30 and 59 years old.

DEMOGRAPHICS | RESIDENTIAL ZONE



DEMOGRAPHICS | AGE



INPUT SUMMARY

Overall, there is very strong support for the preferred concept, with more than three-quarters of respondents indicating that they either “really like” or “like” it. General comments provided by respondents were often positive, praising the design for its creativity.

When asked about elements they disliked about the design, commonly identified features included: the look and feel of the elevated walkway; the appropriateness and environmentally-friendliness of the water feature; and the appropriateness of a food kiosk. When asked about desirable elements currently not included in the design, some common mentions included: a simpler design; more open grassy space; more acoustic barriers to manage street noise; additional seating; and the provision of public washrooms.

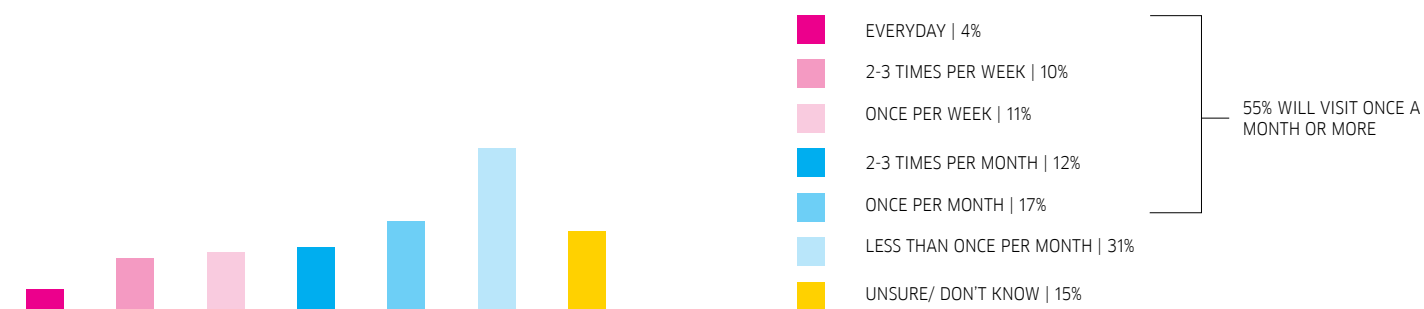
PERCEPTIONS OF PREFERRED DESIGN



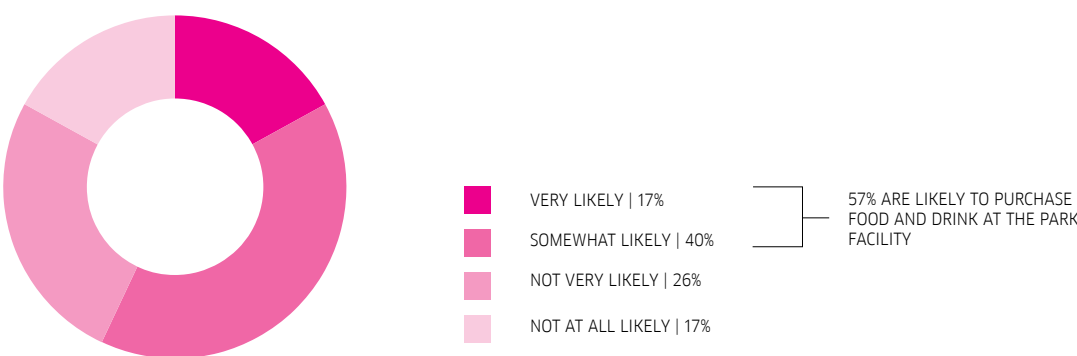
Over half of respondents indicated that they would use the park once a month or more, and similar numbers reported that they would purchase food or beverages from the proposed kiosk facility.

A detailed summary is included in the Appendix to this report.

FREQUENCY OF FUTURE PARK USE



LIKELIHOOD OF PURCHASING FOOD OR BEVERAGES FROM PARK FACILITY



A photograph of a person lying on a table, possibly a medical or forensic examination. The person is wearing a light-colored garment. A large, bold, pink text 'appendix' is overlaid across the center of the image. In the background, there are some medical or forensic equipment, including a green bag and a white cloth. On the right side, there is a small inset image showing a sketch of a person's face.

appendix

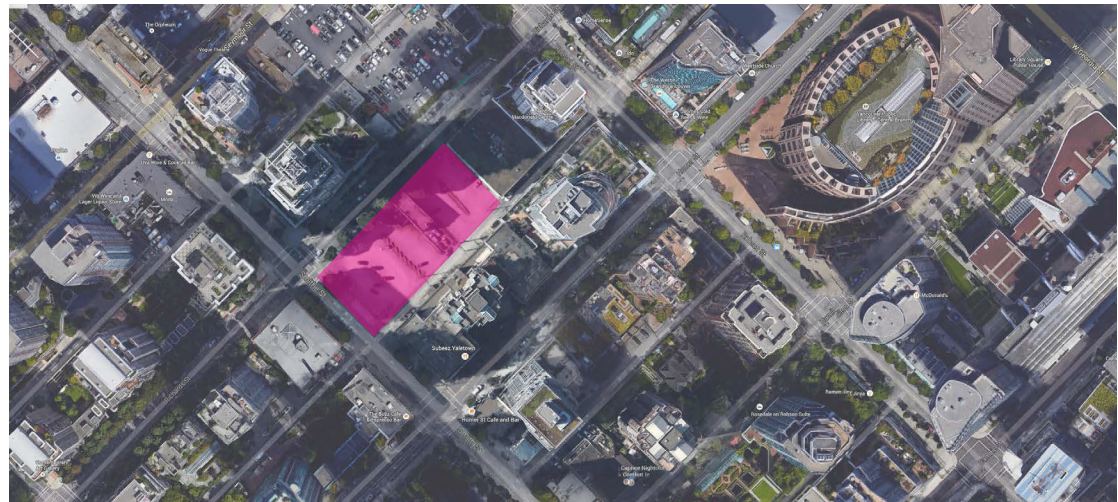
A1. Public Open House Panels

WELCOME

to the Public Open House for the future park at Smithe and Richards

We are transforming a PARKING LOT into a PARK...

The Site



The Vancouver Park Board is undertaking an exciting design process that will create a new park at the intersection of Smithe and Richards Streets by 2017. We've undertaken extensive engagement with the community throughout the process, and today we are presenting the final Preferred Concept.

We want to hear your input on the preferred concept!

Based on community input received on four conceptual park design options in the fall of 2015, we have created a Preferred Concept. Today we want to hear your input before the preferred concept is presented to the Vancouver Park Board for approval. Please fill out an online questionnaire!

How will the park fit into the bigger picture?

The new park will help meet the Vancouver Park Board's vision to connect people in Vancouver to green space, active living, and community.

Stay involved!

Online Questionnaire: vancouver.ca/SmitheRichards

@ParkBoard #SmitheRichards SmitheRichards@vancouver.ca

[facebook.com/ParkBoard](https://www.facebook.com/ParkBoard) #SmitheRichards 3-1-1

New Park at Smithe and Richards



Elements of the Vancouver Park Board's Strategic Plan



THE PROCESS

Your Input in the Process

Thank you for attending today's open house! We value your time and contributions to this process.

The community input we receive today will help to make any final revisions to the Preferred Concept before it is presented to the Vancouver Park Board for adoption. We are also gathering input through an online questionnaire and our stakeholder discussions with a formed Park Design Focus Group.

PDFG* (Park Design Focus Group)

The Park Design Focus Group is a selected group of individuals and representatives who reside, work or have involvement within an organization in proximity to the new Park site.

Throughout the Park design process a number of meetings have been scheduled with PDFG to allow the Park design team to share ideas and considerations and listen to valuable insights and experiences for their local knowledge of the site and surrounding area.

Making Decisions

The Preferred Concept was developed with the following inputs:



New Park at Smithe and Richards

The Process

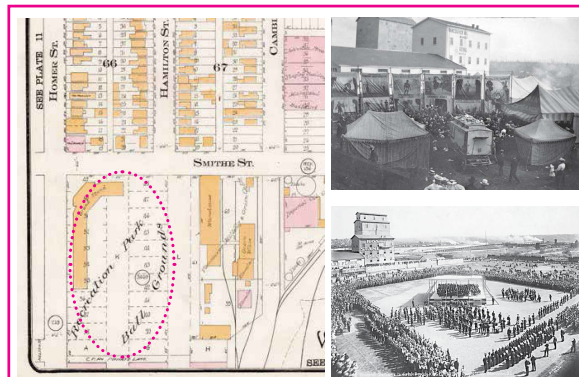
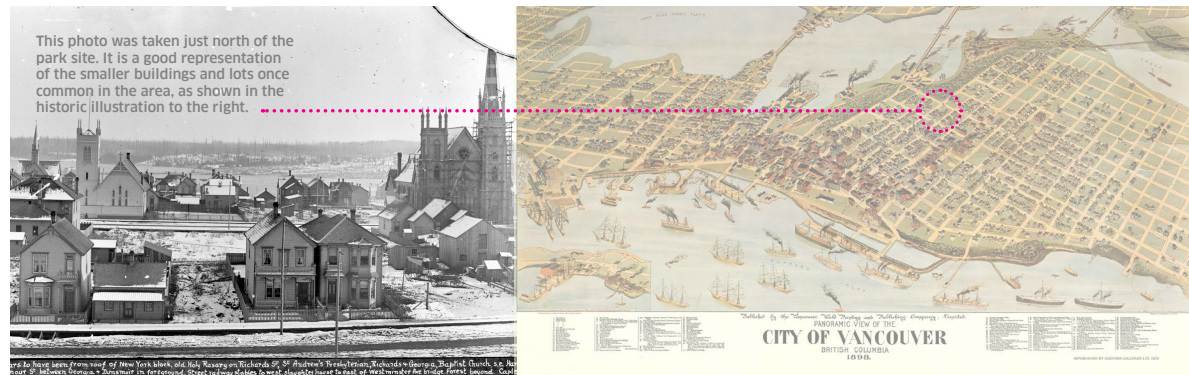


PARK COMPLETED LATE 2017

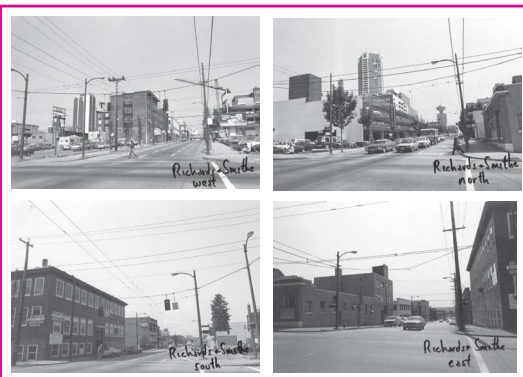


THE SITE

Looking back...



These photos and map are from around 1900. They depict the location and types of events that took place at Recreation Park. Located at the corner of Smithe and Homer Streets, this park was just a stone's throw from the future park location.



Intersection of Smithe and Richards (1970s)



Demolition of the building at the south part of the site at Smithe Street (early 2000s)

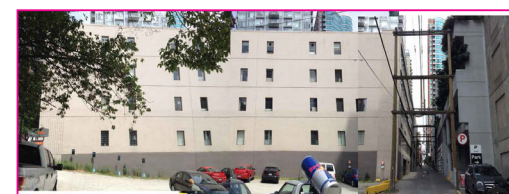
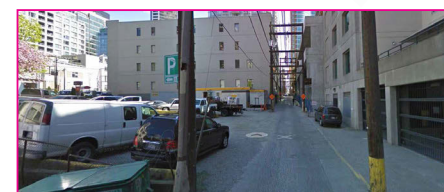
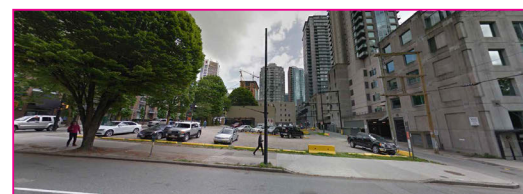
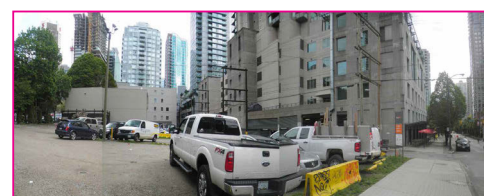
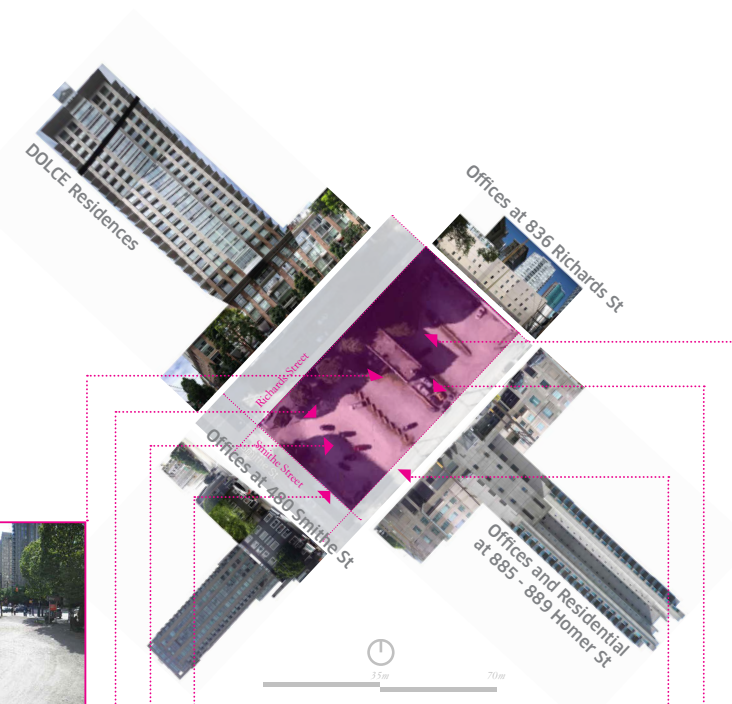
New Park at Smithe and Richards



THE SITE

Today...

The site is a parking lot surrounded by condo towers and retail units at street level. A service lane, which is a prominent characteristic of the site, runs along the eastern edge.



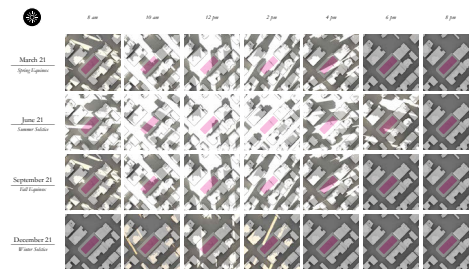
New Park at Smithe and Richards



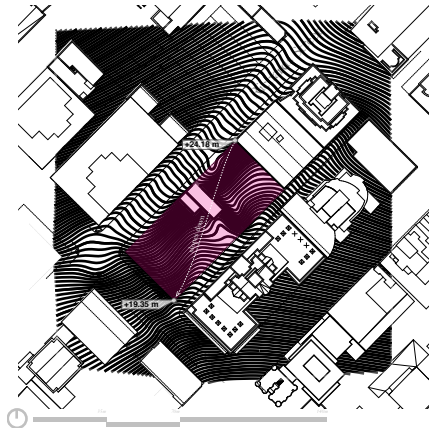
THE SITE

Characteristics

Solar Access: The site has sunny spots that move across the space throughout the day, with the exception of winter months.



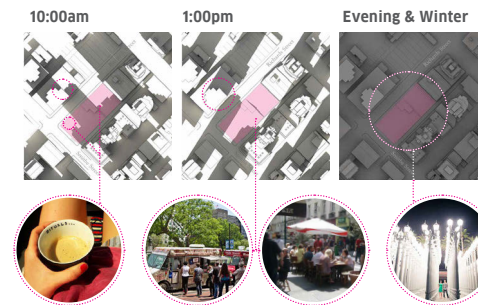
Slope: The site slopes significantly from Richards down toward the alley at Smithe.



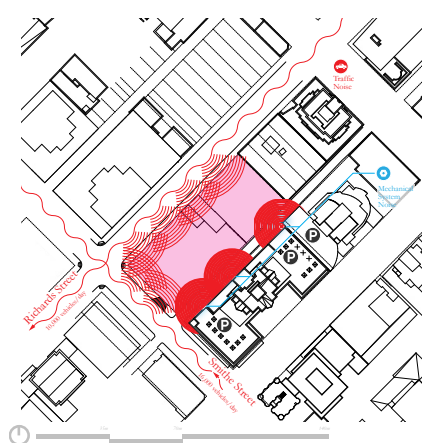
Vehicular Circulation and Traffic: Thousands of vehicles pass by the site via Smithe and Richards Streets.



New Park at Smithe and Richards



Noise: There is considerable traffic noise on the site.



Vegetation: There are 12 mature trees on the site, primarily along Richards Street.



DIALOG VANCOUVER
NATURE PARKS
AND RECREATION

WHAT WE HEARD

INPUT FROM PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE #1

Hundreds of residents attended the first public event and participated in the online questionnaire to share their priorities and ideas for the future park. The top themes relating to park qualities are:



GREEN

Participants would value green spaces and lush landscaping including tree canopy, biodiversity, and use of indigenous plant species in the future park.



PLAY

Participants would value opportunities for play, including for young children. Examples provided include interactive art, physical play, performance spaces, and other ideas.



SCALE AND COMFORT

Participants like the idea of a comfortable park scale and opportunities for lingering (e.g. seating).



FOOD AND ENGAGING EDGES

Participants like the idea of being able to purchase a coffee or food in the park, and they favour other activities and design elements that serve to draw passersby into the park.



PROGRAM

Participants support the idea of having a range of organized activities take place to activate the park space.

New Park at Smithe and Richards

DIALOG VANCOUVER
NATURE PARKS
AND RECREATION

WHAT WE HEARD

INPUT FROM PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE #2

Hundreds of residents provided input on four concept options at the open house and through the online questionnaire.

WHAT PEOPLE LIKED ABOUT EACH

CONCEPT 1 - CONNECTIONS



40%
of questionnaire
participants like
this best

Participants liked:

- connections with the back lane
- secret garden (i.e. smaller green space near Richards)
- large open green area

Participants didn't like:

- food trucks/vehicles in the park

CONCEPT 3 - HERE AND NOW



20%
of questionnaire
participants like
this best

Participants liked:

- captured and celebrated rain water
- elevated pathway with views (PDFG)

Participants didn't like:

- wall along the laneway

New Park at Smithe and Richards

CONCEPT 2 - BACK DECK



20%
of questionnaire
participants like
this best

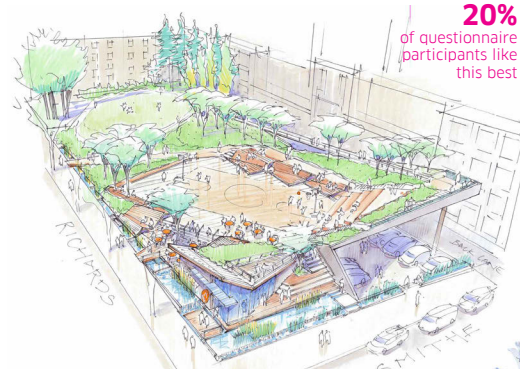
Participants liked:

- activity terraces
- water feature
- coffee kiosk and other food-related destinations (PDFG)

Participants didn't like:

- less green near Smithe (i.e. compared to Concept 1)

CONCEPT 4 - CONSTRUCTED



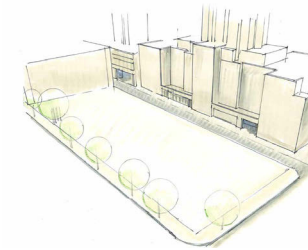
20%
of questionnaire
participants like
this best

Participants liked and disliked:

- an equal number of participants liked and disliked the hidden/underground bike or car parking

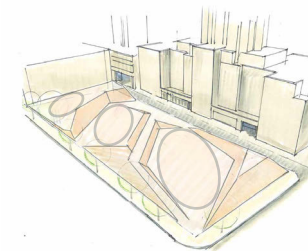


PUTTING IT TOGETHER



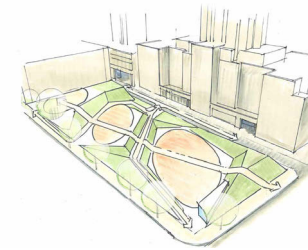
existing site

- Empty site, with a **5 meter slope** from the north to the south (Smithe Street)
- Existing **trees** are maintained



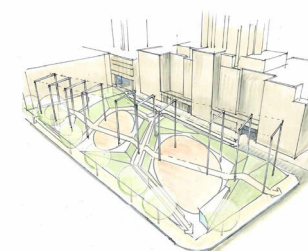
terraced landform

- Creation of **usable flat areas** due to the sloped site
- Berms and earthworks **create definition** for the site, and **buffer noise** from buildings and traffic



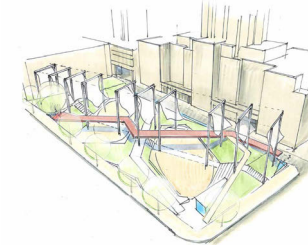
green and connected

- Plenty of **lush greenery**, with plantings making up **over half of the site**
- Plantings strategically situated in raised areas – away from foot traffic and pet waste – to promote a **durability**
- Three **distinctive terraces** create spaces for diverse park activities
- A path connects the top (north) to the bottom (south), creating a new, **direct route** from Richards to Smithe
- Meandering, universally accessible pathways link all the areas in the proposed **'barrier-free'** park design



scale and transformation

- "Skyframes" are tall slender structures that create a more **intimate and comfortable human scale** against tall neighbouring buildings
- They can be curated with **diverse types of art**, as well as suspended lighting and more, that can change over time
- Skyframes hold contextual and **historic reference points**, placed on earlier residential lines and by marching southward as a gateway to the historic site of former "Recreation Park" on Homer and Smithe
- Skyframes are intended to help the Park stay **current, interesting, and memorable**, regularly transforming the space and creating a **unique sense of place** that puts this Downtown park on city and international maps



identity and program

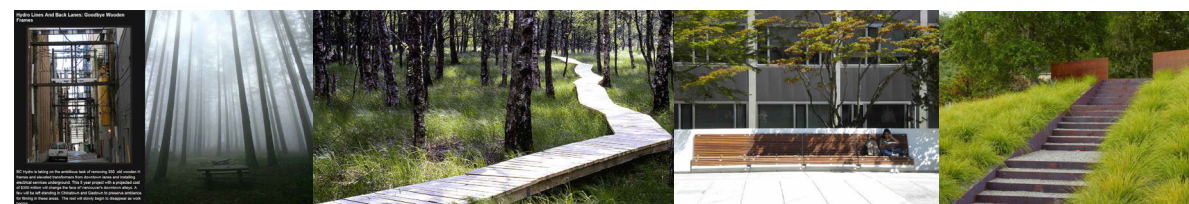
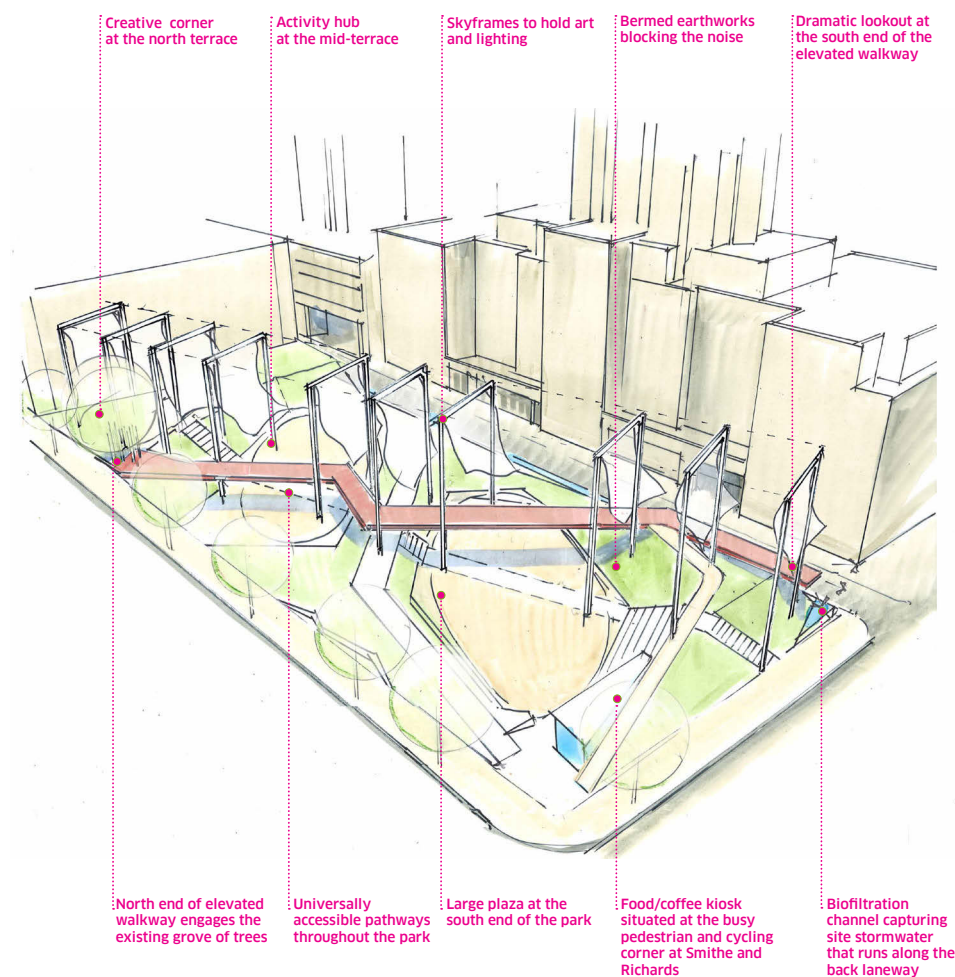
- An **elevated walkway** creates a bold feature that weaves through the park, providing a unique and barrier-free journey across the entire park
- The elevated walkway acts as a **playful armature**, from which swings, hammocks, and slides can be hung
- With downward views, it encourages **"eyes on the park"** and **sense of safety**
- It ends in a cantilevered lookout over Smithe Street, which creates a **strong visual impression** for people traveling along that street, announcing the park and creating a **gateway experience**

New Park at Smithe and Richards



BUILDING THE CONCEPT

The following are the building blocks of the Preferred Concept, which combine the preferred elements of the four concepts.



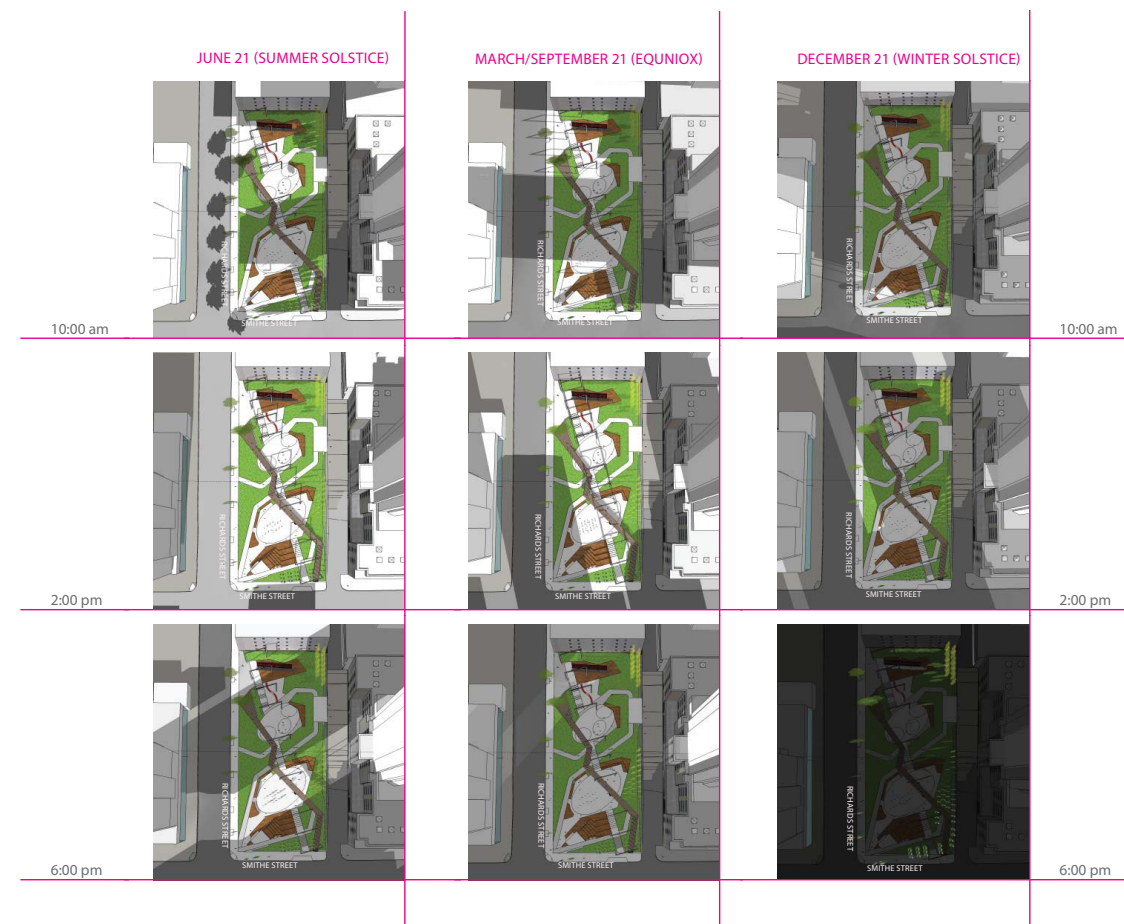
New Park at Smithe and Richards



SUNSHINE IN THE PARK

Sun and shade will vary in the park throughout the day and year. There will be patches of sunshine mid-morning all year, and in early evening in the summer. The site will be covered in plenty of sunshine at mid-day, except in winter.

These are the sun and shade characteristics in the park in June, September, December, and March.



New Park at Smithe and Richards



CONCEPT INGREDIENTS



Creative Corner

- This is **quiet space** is at the high point of the park, with views and shade dappled seating
- It would feature a **community long table** for meals, reading, and more
- It could also include **art exhibits** and other activities



Lush and Biodiverse Naturescapes

- There are lots of diverse, native trees and other plants, creating a **lush, green landscape**
- These are in areas protected from primary activity areas, creating durability for this busy downtown area
- They offer **informal seating edges** along pathways



Back Lane and Rain Water

- A **bio-filtration channel** near the back lane collects, conveys, and cleans rainwater before it enters the storm system and ultimately False Creek
- It also creates a **beautiful green amenity** that links that park and laneway with a shared edge



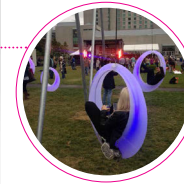
Active Play Area

- In the centre of the park, this terrace has good **visual and physical connections** to the rest of the park
- It would have custom play equipment and offer **active play experiences for children of all ages**



Playful Water Feature

- This central water feature is located in the largest open space in the park
- When on, it can **activate this space** on a daily basis
- When off, it can make space for **other activities**



Programmable Space / Peoples' Plaza

- The lowest and largest terrace benefits from the **most direct sunshine**
- Beyond the playful waterjets, this hard surfaced area is designed to accommodate **diverse activities**, ranging from table tennis to makers fairs
- Whimsical **hammocks and swings** will be suspended from the elevated walkway above



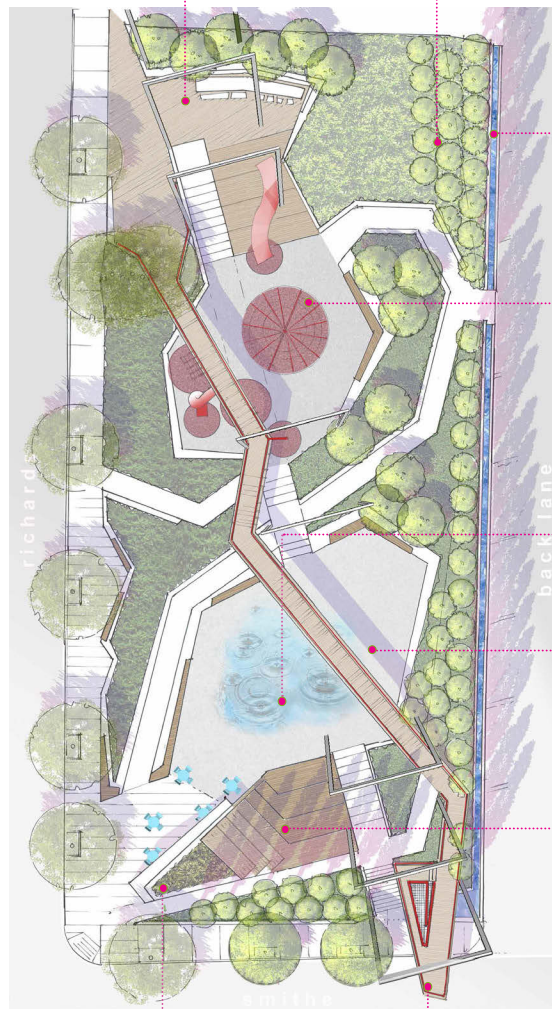
Sunny Seating Terraces

- This terraced seating areas is integrated into the **coffee kiosk roof** and overlooks the park
- These offer **great views** of life in the park, while doubling as an **amphitheater** during events
- A similar terraced seating area is situated near the Creative Corner in the north



Elevated Journey and Views

- An **elevated, barrier-free walkway** provides a short cut through the site
- It offers many raised vantage points above the park, providing views and **supporting safety** through "eyes on the park"
- This unique structure creates a **"wow" moment** for passersby on Smithe Street, creating a strong sense of arrival in the Downtown from the east



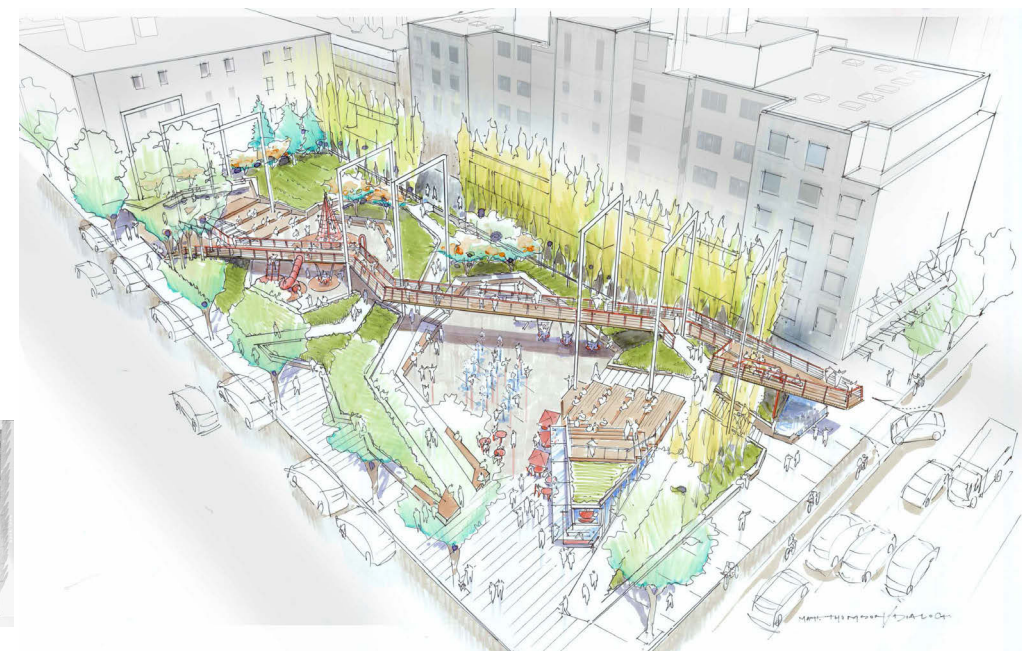
Coffee and/or Food

- A small coffee and/or food kiosk at the corner will **invite passersby** into the park
- It will create people-activity, creating both **social experiences** and a **sense of safety**

New Park at Smithe and Richards



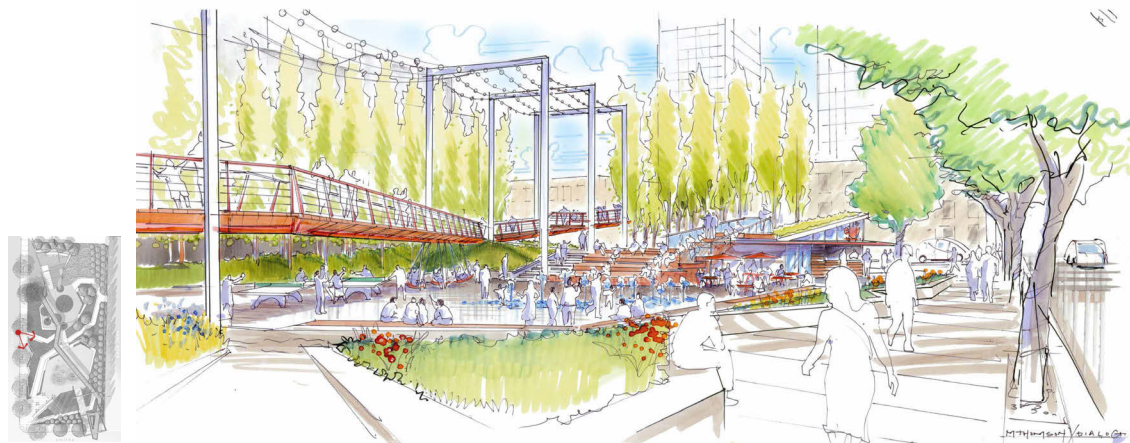
LOOK AND FEEL



New Park at Smithe and Richards



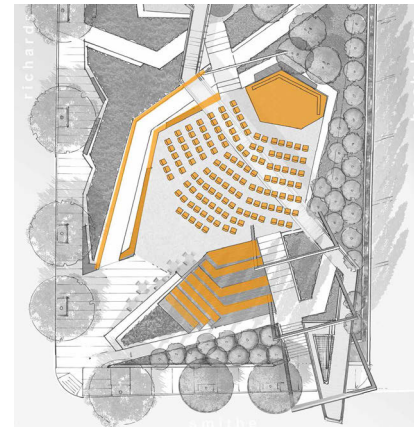
LOOK AND FEEL



New Park at Smithe and Richards



POTENTIAL PROGRAMS



Staged Events

- The lower plaza space would be designed to **easily and quickly adapt** to accommodate small staged events, such as acoustic music, theatre or poetry readings
- The types of potential staged events would have to take into consideration the relatively small size of space and be **respectful of nearby residential buildings**
- The elevated walkway would allow for **maintained pedestrian circulation** through the park, and would also provide **views onto the event below** and enable **event lighting** to be attached to the underside of the walkway structure

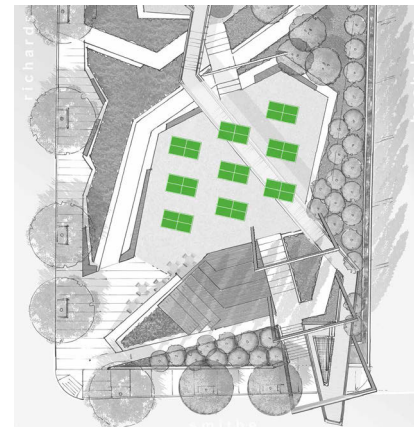
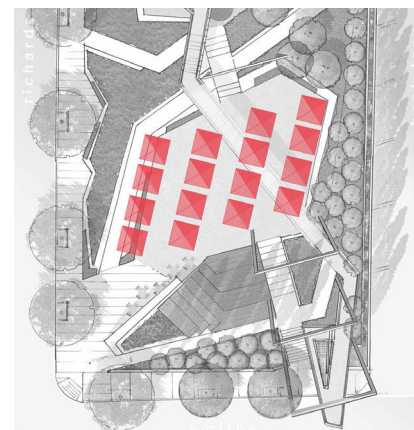


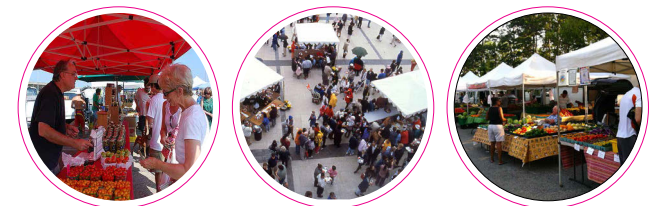
Table Tennis Tournaments

- One or two outdoor **ping pong tables** could be located in the park to informally engage park users on a daily basis
- Storage for folding tables and table tennis equipment could be integrated into the coffee/food kiosk, enabling **organized events or multiple players** to participate



Makers Fairs & Farmers Markets

- The central location of the park and its close proximity to residential buildings also create a prime location for **small seasonal enterprises** to situate temporary stalls on certain weekends or evenings



New Park at Smithe and Richards



WHAT'S NEXT?

Using Your Input

Thank you for attending today's open house! We value your time and contributions to this process. Please fill out a questionnaire to share your input.

The community input we receive will be incorporated into revisions to the Preferred Concept before it is presented to the Vancouver Park Board for approval. We are also gathering input through stakeholder discussions.

Other inputs that will influence decision-making include:



Stay Involved!



Online Questionnaire:
vancouver.ca/SmitheRichards



@ParkBoard #SmitheRichards



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The Process



New Park at Smithe and Richards

DIALOG



