



ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Report Date: August 21, 2014
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Meeting Date: September 16, 2014

TO: Vancouver City Council

FROM: General Manager of Planning and Development Services and
General Manager of Engineering Services

SUBJECT: Still Creek Enhancement - Project Funding

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council approve a capital project budget of \$70,000 be allocated from the Still Creek Greenway Enhancement Fund to undertake investigations into conceptual design work for potential future enhancement projects as well as educational and interpretive initiatives to raise awareness about the rehabilitation of the Still Creek watershed, as detailed in this report.

REPORT SUMMARY

This report seeks Council approval to allocate up to \$70,000 from the Still Creek Greenway Enhancement Fund to be used for a variety of enhancement projects including the preparation of educational materials as well as the completion of on-site interpretive signage and public art, all of which will provide information and celebrate accomplishments in the environmental rehabilitation of Still Creek. This request, if approved, would also fund conceptual design work to guide future in-stream enhancements that will further advance the long-term objectives of the Still Creek Enhancement Plan (2002) and the Still Creek Integrated Stormwater Management Plan (2006).

COUNCIL AUTHORITY/PREVIOUS DECISIONS

Council policies relevant to this matter include:

- In July, 1988 Council endorsed the concept of Still Creek being maintained as

an open water course, of pursuing its day-lighting and enhancement including incorporation of a public pathway.

- In July 2000, Council established the Still Creek Greenway Enhancement Fund with contributions from the Vancouver Film Studios associated with the lease of City-owned land within the Cornett Road right-of-way.
- In July 2002, Council adopted the *Grandview Boundary Industrial Area Rezoning and Development Policies and Guidelines* including specific guidelines to protect and enhance Still Creek. Council also adopted the Still Creek Enhancement Plan that includes action plans to guide rehabilitation works over the near- and long-terms.
- In December 2006, Council endorsed the Still Creek Integrated Stormwater Management Plan (ISMP).
- In July 2011, Council adopted the Greenest City Action Plan with *Goal 6 being Access to Nature* which calls for increased access to parks, greenways and other natural spaces and the planting of additional trees in the City. Further, *Goal 8 Clean Water*, calls for enhanced water education and returning rain to its natural habitat.
- In July 2012, Council adopted the Climate Change Adaptation Strategy which calls for actions to raise public awareness on climate change impacts including increased surface water flooding.
- In October 2012, Council approved an updated Grandview Boundary Mixed Employment (formerly "Industrial") Area *Public Benefit Strategy* which includes the long-term plan for the rehabilitation and enhancement of Still Creek.
- In April 2014, Council approved the Urban Forest Strategy which includes goals to grow our forest canopy by planting additional trees and to manage our urban forest as a vital asset.

CITY MANAGER'S/GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The General Manager of Planning and Development Services and the General Manager of Engineering Services recommend approval of the foregoing.

REPORT

Background/Context

As a result of a long history of urbanization and the fact that values with respect to the environment have changed significantly over time, Still Creek is one of the few remaining overland streams in the urbanized area of Vancouver. Much of Still Creek, which channels runoff from a large area within the Renfrew-Collingwood Community, was culverted in the 1950s.

Starting as far back as 1988, Council policy has supported the enhancement of the watershed and the daylighting of Still Creek.

Strategic Analysis

Implementation Approach

A key step in implementing this policy occurred in 2000 with the creation of the Still Creek Greenway Enhancement Fund which provided a targeted funding mechanism for enhancement works. Revenues from leasing City lands along the Still Creek watercourse go into the fund and are used, with Council’s approval, to take actions towards the goal of enhancement and rehabilitation of Still Creek. Typically, money taken from the fund leverage other external funding sources (including other levels of government and the private sector) to maximize the benefits. To date, significant progress has been made towards the City’s overall objectives for Still Creek. The current balance of the Still Creek Greenway Enhancement Fund is \$418,199.

The Still Creek Enhancement Plan (2002) laid out action plans for both the long (10 to 50 year) and the near (10 year) terms. Figures 1 and 2 illustrate the original action for the portion of Still Creek between Grandview Highway and Highway 1 with the works that have been completed to date noted in Figure 2 by the star symbols.

Figure 1: Still Creek Enhancement Plan - Long Term Action Plan

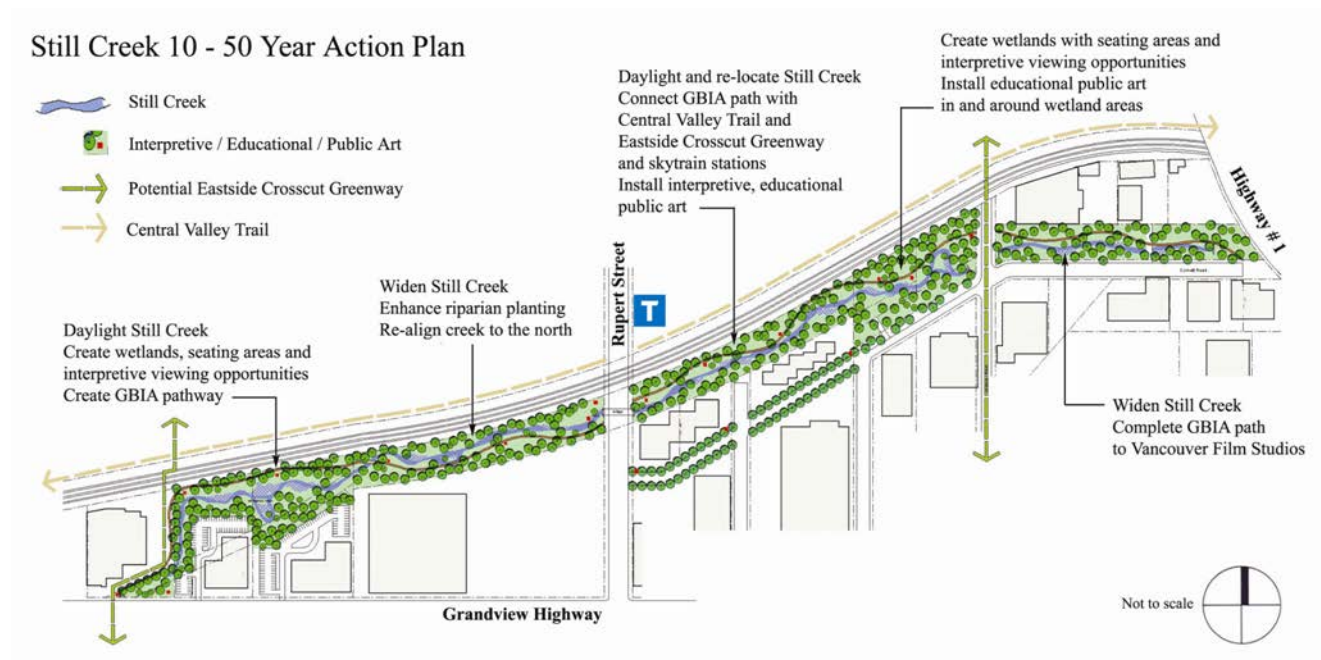
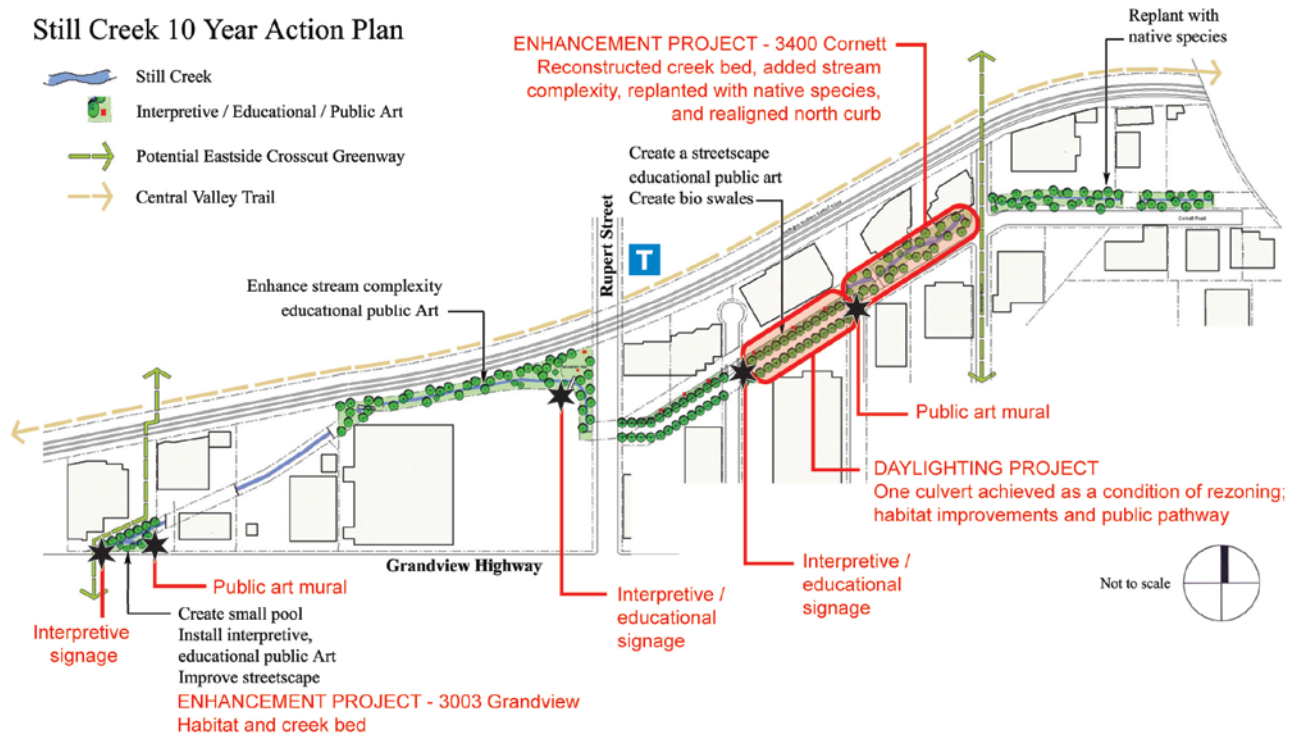


Figure 2: Still Creek Enhancement Plan - Near Term Action Plan with Completed Works



Since adoption of the Still Creek Enhancement Plan in 2002, Council has authorized a number of key improvements in the creek and watershed to advance the objectives of the plan. Individual creek enhancement projects were undertaken on specific properties and a wetland feature was constructed in Falaise Park in 2005. More recently, a 75 metre length of the creek was taken out of a culvert (that is, it was “daylighted”) as a condition of a Council-approved rezoning at 2820 Bentall Street in 2009. In 2011, another enhancement project was completed on a property at 2900 Nootka which also included a new path and a pedestrian bridge over the creek.

In addition to initiatives taken in the City of Vancouver, actions have been taken in neighbouring municipalities by other jurisdictions that have also had positive impacts on the Still Creek watershed. These included installation of a fish ladder at the downstream outlet of Burnaby Lake and, as part of the Highway 1 Gateway Program, the addition of baffles in culverts beneath Boundary Road to facilitate fish passage.

Achievements to Date

After a number of years of taking action to rehabilitate Still Creek and its watershed, a significant milestone occurred in November 2012 when, for the first time in 80 years, Chum salmon returned to spawn in the City of Vancouver in the reaches of Still Creek along the 3400 to 3600 blocks of Cornett Road. The salmon were seen spawning in the area of Still Creek where an earlier enhancement project had introduced a number of in-stream habitat features. In November 2013, the Chum salmon again returned to spawn, providing a strong

indication that the environmental enhancements undertaken in Still Creek have provided a viable habitat for fish species.

In anticipation of a significant salmon run this fall, staff are proposing to maximize the opportunity for public education and awareness about both the action plan for continued rehabilitation of Still Creek and the milestones achieved to date. The return of the salmon in Still Creek illustrates the positive results of urban stream enhancement initiatives. Communication and education continue to be essential to protect urban watersheds in the long-term.

Next Steps

Staff are currently pursuing options for subsequent enhancement projects as identified in the Still Creek Enhancement Plan. It is anticipated that these larger projects will be reported to Council for approval over the next several years as opportunities arise (major enhancement projects will likely happen only as sites come up for redevelopment and/or rezoning). An allocation of \$70,000 from the Still Creek Greenway Enhancement Fund, if approved, would assist in advancing those future opportunities by enabling preliminary investigations and conceptual designs of specific projects. To coordinate with the timing of this fall's salmon run, staff are also pursuing a number of modest initiatives to build on the efforts to increase public awareness about the rehabilitation of Still Creek and about the important role that citizens play in ensuring stream habitat health. Staff envision working collaboratively with property owners, community groups and non-profit organizations such as the Still Moon Arts Society and Evergreen to coordinate events.

Due to the nature of the Still Creek Greenway Enhancement Fund (an *Endowment fund*), Council approval is required to access the funding source. Staff are requesting that Council approve up to \$70,000 for ongoing implementation initiatives, including:

- contribution to Still Creek Greenway extension along 3000 Nootka
- investigation, analysis and conceptual design work for future wetland construction as described in the Still Creek Enhancement Plan's long term action plan
- interpretive/education signage at key habitat locations including 3400 Cornett and 3000 Grandview
- design of a public viewing platform and interpretive/education signage at 2900 Renfrew, and
- educational materials and activities to coincide with this fall's anticipated salmon return in Still Creek.

Council last approved funding for investigative design work, signage and print materials in 2007. At that time, \$28,000 was allocated.

Implications/Related Issues/Risk (if applicable)

Financial

Funding in the amount of \$70,000 will be used from the Still Creek Greenway Enhancement Fund, which has a current balance of \$418,199. Of the \$70,000 project budget approximately \$5,000 is expected to be spent in 2014. No change is required to 2014 Capital Expenditure

Budget, however, as sufficient funding is available in the existing expenditure budget to accommodate this spend.

CONCLUSION

Staff recommend that \$70,000 be allocated from the Still Creek Greenway Enhancement Fund for investigations for future design work related to the enhancement of Still Creek, as outlined in the Still Creek Enhancement Plan and the Still Creek Integrated Stormwater Management Plan. Additionally, the funding would be used for educational and interpretive initiatives to raise awareness about the rehabilitation achievements at Still Creek and the critical role that citizens play in ensuring stream habitat health.

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