



ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Report Date: March 23, 2018
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TO: Vancouver City Council

FROM: General Manager of Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability and General Manager of Engineering Services

SUBJECT: Still Creek Enhancement Project - Renfrew Street and East 14th Avenue Viewing Platform

RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT Council approve a multi-year capital project budget of \$170,000 for the construction of a viewing platform at Renfrew Street and East 14th Avenue, to be funded from the Still Creek Greenway Enhancement Fund and to be added to the 2015-2018 Capital Plan.
- B. THAT Council, subject to approval of Recommendation A, approve a 2018 Capital Expenditure Budget of \$170,000 for this project, to be offset by a corresponding reduction in the 2018 Capital Expenditure Budget for the Vehicle and Equipment Replacement and Additions Program.
- C. THAT, upon completion of the viewing platform, the Engineering Department annual operating budget be increased by \$12,000 for structural and horticultural maintenance, subject to the 2019 annual budget process.

REPORT SUMMARY

This report seeks Council approval to allocate \$170,000 from the Still Creek Greenway Enhancement Fund to design and construct an accessible viewing platform at Renfrew Street and East 14th Avenue adjacent to the sidewalk that facilitates views of a portion of Still Creek. This project will accomplish implementation actions described in the Still Creek Enhancement Plan adopted by Council in July 2002, intended to increase access to nature and raise awareness of the environmental rehabilitation of the Still Creek Watershed. If approved

by Council, construction of the viewing platform would occur in June 2018, and complete in time for the salmon run in November 2018.

COUNCIL AUTHORITY/PREVIOUS DECISIONS

Council policies relevant to this matter include:

In July 1988, Council endorsed Still Creek to be maintained as an open water course and to pursue daylighting, enhancing the Creek and providing public access to a continuous pedestrian/bicycle pathway linking Burnaby Lake to the B.C. Parkway at 29th Avenue Station.

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* with specific guidelines to protect and enhance Still Creek. Council also adopted the Still Creek Enhancement Plan that includes 10 - 50 year action plans to guide rehabilitation and enhancement of the creek.

In December 2006, Council endorsed the Integrated Stormwater Management Plan (ISMP) for the Still Creek Watershed to improve stormwater management, recreational opportunities and Creek health.

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 the City's forest canopy by planting additional trees and to manage our urban forest as a vital asset.

In August 2014, Council approved \$70,000 from the Still Creek Greenway Enhancement Fund to be used for a variety of enhancement projects which included the design of a public viewing platform and interpretive/education signage at 2900 Renfrew Street.

In October 2014 the Healthy City Strategy was adopted by Council, providing a comprehensive and integrated plan for social sustainability that complements the environmental sustainability focus of the Greenest City Action Plan.

In April 2016, Council approved the Integrated Rain Water Management and Green Infrastructure Strategy which provides a long-term green infrastructure strategy to protect and improve water quality in the waterbodies surrounding Vancouver, and strives to capture and treat 90% of Vancouver's rainfall through the implementation of green infrastructure.

In April 2016, Council approved the Biodiversity Strategy, which identifies Still Creek as a biodiversity hotspot, guiding the city's ongoing work to protect, enhance, and restore biodiversity, and to provide residents of the City of Vancouver with greater access to nature.

In October 2017, Council amended the vision and goals of Vancouver's Integrated Rainwater Management Plan and Green Infrastructure Strategy, placing greater emphasis on resilience and improvements to natural and urban ecosystems, as described in the report "Rain City Strategy - A Green Infrastructure and Urban Rainwater Management Initiative."

CITY MANAGER'S/GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The City Manager recommends approval of the foregoing.

REPORT

Background/Context

As a result of a long history of urbanization, Still Creek is one of the few remaining overland streams in the urbanized area of Vancouver. Much of Still Creek, which channels run-off from a large area within the Renfrew-Collingwood Community, was culverted in the 1950s. As far back as 1988, Council policy has supported the rehabilitation and enhancement of the watershed, including the daylighting of Still Creek and providing access to nature by improving pedestrian walkways and constructing viewing platforms.

In 2002, Council adopted the Still Creek Enhancement Plan, which laid out both short-term and long-term objectives. The long-term objectives of the Plan are to improve creek ecology, enhance recreation opportunities along the creek, improve stormwater management, and increase public awareness of Still Creek as an important environmental and recreational resource.

Strategic Analysis

Implementation Approach and Achievements

Key to implementing the Still Creek Enhancement Plan, Council established the Still Creek Greenway Enhancement Fund in 2000, providing a funding mechanism for enhancement and rehabilitation projects. Revenues from leasing City lands along the Still Creek channel are collected into this fund and are used, with Council's approval, to take actions toward the goal of enhancing and rehabilitating Still Creek. To date, substantial progress has been made in advancing the City's overall objectives for Still Creek. The current balance of the Still Creek Greenway Enhancement Fund is \$932,046.

The long-term actions (10 to 50 years) of the Still Creek Enhancement Plan include daylighting sections of Still Creek (removal of existing culverts to naturalize the creek), planting trees, revegetating creek bed and banks with native species, installing educational public art and interpretive/educational signage along the creek-side, and enhancing recreation opportunities. Since adoption of the Still Creek Enhancement Plan in 2002, Council has authorized a number of key improvements in the creek and watershed to fulfill objectives of the plan:

- Enhancement project at 3003 Grandview Highway (2005);
- Enhancement of Falaise Park, wetland feature constructed (2005);
- Enhancement project at 3400 Cornett Road (2007);
- Daylighting of approximately 75 meters of the creek and extension of 3300 Cornett Road, as part of 2820 Bentall Street rezoning (2009);
- Enhancement at 2900 Nootka, which included a new path and a pedestrian bridge over the creek (2011);
- Public Art installations at key locations; and
- Interpretive signage at strategic locations along Still Creek.

Council last approved \$70,000 from the Still Creek Greenway Enhancement Fund in 2014 to be used for a variety of enhancement projects, including investigative design work, signage, public art and preparation of education materials.

In addition to initiatives within the City of Vancouver, actions undertaken in neighbouring municipalities by other jurisdictions since 2006 have also had positive impacts on the Still Creek watershed. These include 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 underneath Boundary Road to facilitate fish passage.

A significant milestone occurred in November 2012 after a number of years taking action to rehabilitate Still Creek and its watershed. For the first time in 80 years, chum salmon returned to spawn in the City of Vancouver in Still Creek along the 3400 to 3600 blocks of Cornett Road. The salmon were seen swimming upstream and spawning in the area of Still Creek where an enhancement project introduced vital in-stream habitat features. Since 2012, chum salmon have returned to spawn in this location every November, emphasizing that the environmental enhancements undertaken in Still Creek have provided a viable habitat for fish species. However, in the fall of 2017, salmon did not return to the section of Still Creek within the City of Vancouver. Physical or environmental factors pertaining to warming oceans, the passage of the stream or the natural lifecycle of the salmon may be among the reasons why the salmon did not return last autumn. The Department of Fisheries reported record lows of steelhead, chinook, coho and pink salmon returning from the ocean to the Fraser River.

Viewing Platform

In hopes of a salmon return in fall 2018 and subsequent years, staff are proposing to continue rehabilitating Still Creek where possible, and to maximize the opportunity for public education and awareness of the action plan for enhancement of Still Creek, highlighting the milestones achieved to date. With the anticipated return of the salmon to Still Creek, there is a need for ongoing urban stream enhancement initiatives. Communication and education continue to be essential to protect urban watersheds in the long term.

Staff are now working on the fourth major enhancement project for Still Creek. An accessible viewing platform at Renfrew Street and East 14th Avenue is proposed to be constructed to facilitate views to a portion of Still Creek that is day lighted. The project will take advantage of a pedestrian route to open up the area, providing neighbours and passersby with recreational access to nature, as well as opportunities for increased public awareness and education of this valuable urban waterway. An interpretive sign will be placed on the viewing deck as part of the education component. Included in the scope of the project is the installation of a decorative lamp that will provide increased safety for users at night, deter vandalism and graffiti, and help the viewing deck maintain value over its lifespan.

Other improvements will include replacing non-native blackberries with native and non-invasive vegetation and trees. To enhance the public's understanding of Still Creek and the Still Creek Enhancement Plan, interpretive signage will be installed on the viewing platform.

Typically the City's Engineering staff would manage the construction of the work based on the approved plan. However, the Park Board is currently undertaking park renewal work in Renfrew Ravine and Renfrew Community Park. The Renfrew Street and East 14th Avenue viewing platform was included as part of the Renfrew Ravine and Renfrew Community Park renewal project tender process, as an optional item contingent on Council approval of this funding request. Park Board will manage the tender process and construction of the viewing platform, working collaboratively with Metro Vancouver and the City's Engineering and Planning departments on the approval of design plans.

Due to the nature of the Still Creek Greenway Enhancement Fund (the "*endowment fund*"), Council approval is required to access the funding source. Staff propose that \$170,000 be allocated from the Still Creek Greenway Enhancement Fund to fund the construction work. To coordinate with the timing of this fall's salmon run, construction of the viewing platform will take place between June and September, 2018.

Since the viewing platform will be constructed on the city street right-of-way (East 14th Avenue), it will be included as a structural asset, which requires annual inspection, general cleaning, and upkeep. The Engineering Department's Street Operations operating budget for annual structural maintenance should be increased by \$ 5,000 to address these needs. The Greater Vancouver Regional District provides minimal maintenance within the Creek on an occasional basis, which will not be sufficient to realize the purpose of the platform to allow viewing to the Creek. Ongoing work to maintain plantings around the platform will be required on an annual basis. The level of service should include annual pruning to maintain sightlines and seasonal invasive species control to mitigate the spread of existing invasive species from the rest of the site. The Engineering Street Activities operating budget should be increased by \$7,000 to address annual horticulture maintenance of the new plantings.

The project detailed in this report will build on the realization of the Still Creek Enhancement Plan and the ISMP. These improvements will offer the public greater access to green space and nature, and will generate momentum for future initiatives.

Implications/Related Issues/Risk

Financial

The proposed multi-year capital project budget of \$170,000 for the construction of a viewing platform at Renfrew Street and East 14th Avenue will be funded from the Still Creek Greenway Enhancement Fund, to be added to the 2015-2018 Capital Plan. A 2018 capital expenditure budget of \$170,000 will also be established for this project, to be offset by a corresponding reduction in the 2018 capital expenditure budget for the Vehicle and Equipment Replacement and Additions Program, with no net increase to the overall Citywide 2018 Capital Expenditure Budget.

The ongoing operating expenditures of \$5,000 for annual structural maintenance and of \$7,000 for annual horticultural maintenance will be funded from the 2019 annual operating budget for Engineering Street Operations and Engineering Street Activities Division, subject to 2019 annual budget process.

CONCLUSION

The General Manager of Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability and General Manager of Engineering Services are of the opinion that the construction of a viewing platform at Renfrew Street and East 14th Avenue is supportive to the Still Creek Enhancement Plan by increasing access to nature and raising awareness of the environmental rehabilitation of the Still Creek Watershed. Staff recommends approval of the multi-year capital project to construct the viewing platform and the reallocation of annual capital expenditure budget.

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