



Corporate Report

NO: R264

COUNCIL DATE: December 15,

2003

REGULAR

TO: Mayor & Council DATE: December 10,
2003

FROM: City Manager FILE: 6140-30/F

SUBJECT: Fraser Heights Youth Park Location Study Findings

RECOMMENDATION

That Council direct staff to proceed with detailed design and construction of the Youth Park Project at the south end of Fraser Heights Park site based on the results of the Fraser Heights Youth Park Location Study.

INTENT

The purpose of this report is to describe the Fraser Heights Youth Park Location Study and its findings to Council.

BACKGROUND

Early in 2003 Fraser Heights residents and the Fraser Heights Community Association formally requested a youth park to City Council as they feel geographically isolated (especially during rush hour) from the Guildford or Fleetwood facilities. Funding was approved for the initiative.

DISCUSSION

In February 2003 the Planning Research and Design Section hired van der Zalm and Associates, a group of planners, landscape architects, and skateboard park designers, to assist staff with the study. The Project Team includes: the consultants, a group of Fraser Heights youth, the Manager, and the Park Design Technician of the Planning Research and Design Section, the Guildford CRO Youth Coordinator and the North Section Community Development Coordinator. The Youth Coordinator formed a diverse group of youth participants, including young women and men from the Fraser Heights Secondary School. An RCMP Community Liaison Officer was invited to participate in the planning process and gave feedback throughout.

A number of lunchtime and after school meetings were held at the Fraser Heights Secondary School with the youth team over the past 10 months; their input and involvement is vital to the project. There are five project phases:

- **Phase 1 – Analysis:** Preliminary community analysis, youth workshop, and review.
- **Phase 2 – Options:** Determine potential sites, test site potentials, prepare Open House materials, meet with youth, and conduct Public Open House #1
- **Phase 3 – Refinement:** Review Open House Results, determine preferred option(s), and host a second Open House.
- **Phase 4 – Community Dialogue:** Meet with community members and affected residents to discuss key considerations.
- **Phase 5 – Reporting:** Prepare a summary of findings and make presentations to Commission and Council.

Phase 1 – Analysis

The consulting team compiled background maps and prepared a preliminary community analysis in advance of the youth workshop. The first workshop session was on March 20, 2003 at the school. At this interactive session, the youth participated in a cognitive mapping exercise and reviewed and discussed potential youth park sites in Fraser Heights. After the workshop the consultants reviewed feedback and moved into Phase 2.

Phase 2 – Options

This second phase is analytical in nature. The team reviewed site options deducted from the workshop and tested the development potential of each site. The goal was to determine 5-7 potential locations to bring to an Open House for public feedback. Preparation for the first Open House was made with staff input.

In April the team prepared for the Open House. The youth hosted the first Open House on April 8, 2003 in the library at Fraser Heights Secondary School and the staff and the consultants assisted them in communicating information about the potential sites to the public in attendance.

Potential Youth Park Locations:

Six potential locations for the Fraser Heights Youth Park were shown at the Open House, as follows:

- **Site 1** - Fraser Heights Park (south of parking lots on 160 Street)
- **Site 2** - Fraser Heights Secondary School (north side of playing field on 160 Street)
- **Site 3** - Erma Stephenson Park (109 Avenue)
- **Site 4** - JR Douglas Park (110 Avenue)
- **Site 5** - Fraser View Park (112 Avenue)
- **Site 6** - Fraser Heights Park (west of tennis courts on 108 Avenue)

These locations are all suitable for development of a youth park for reasons of proximity to supporting amenities, relationship to the secondary school and commercial centre, safety, size and surveillance.

More than 40 residents attended the Open House, and 30 comment sheets were returned by the end of the following week. Representatives from the Fraser Heights Community Association also attended. The results of the comments received are:

- 72% *prefer the Fraser Heights Park Site south end of park on 160 Street*
- 13% prefer the Fraser Heights Secondary School Site on 160 Street
- 11% prefer the Fraser Heights School/Park Site on 108 Ave (near tennis courts)
- 0% prefer Fraser View Park on 112 Ave
- 2% prefer JR Douglas Park
- 2% prefer Erma Stephenson Park

More than 90% of residents prefer the Fraser Heights Park Site overall. Based on these results, the south end of the park on 160th street is the site preferred by a majority of residents for the Fraser Heights Youth Park.

Phase 3 – Refinement

Commission approved the preferred site and the next step in the process was to take a closer look at the development potential of the site and seek additional public feedback at a second Open House.

The consultants met with staff and youth and prepared to host the second Open House in June. Again the youth acted as hosts, created a youth culture display, and participated fully in the public process.

At the second Open House at the same location on June 3, 2003, information about the proposed location was made available to participants. The Youth Team manned the display panels and the youth culture station; staff and consultants assisted them in communicating information about the development to the public. A brief presentation and question and answer period was held. The results of the second Open House showed that affected residents had specific concerns, but that the proposed location is the ideal location for the Fraser Heights Youth Park.

In the weeks following the Open House residents that opposed and supported the project communicated a range of information to the greater community about the proposal. The following is a summary of the efforts related to the project:

Supporting Residents:

- Fraser Heights Community Association puts project information on display at the Fraser Heights Country Fair June 13, 2003 and makes comment forms available.

Opposing Residents:

- One resident posts opposition notices, with misinformation, throughout the community, and posts signs in the park and on 160 Street telephone poles.
- Same resident sends letters to Mayor and Council, requests a delegation to Council, and solicits signatures on an opposing petition to Commission.
- A second resident in opposition meets with staff at the Annex, voices concerns, and indicates he will also request a Council delegation.

In the weeks following the first Open House, 103 comment sheets were returned. As of The results of the comments received are:

- **83.5%** *approve of the project at the proposed location*
- 13.5% oppose the project
- 3% agree with the project but have concerns

These and the first Open House results show that there is still overall support from respondents for the project in principal and continued support for the proposed location.

Two delegations appeared before Commission on July 9, 2003: the Fraser Heights Youth and Community Association, and the opposing Morefield delegation. Commission recommended that as necessary City staff should consult with the neighbours to ensure the proposed site is the best one for the facility.

Council should consider the reasons for resident concern. There are grounds for this opposition as well as some misconceptions. Most of the concerns surround the skateboarding component:

1. Residents living directly across the street from the proposed development are personally affected and feel that their peace and quiet may be disrupted.
2. There are perceptions of increased youth loitering and illegal activity and there are existing problems in neighbourhood.

3. There is a perception that the project will encourage more crime to the area.
4. There is a perception that the project will encourage more traffic to the area.
5. There is potential for increased graffiti

Some, but not all, of the concerns can be addressed when factored into the detailed design process if the project goes ahead:

1. Noise can be buffered and decibel ratings from skate parks and youth parks are similar to that of soccer games (van der Slam and Associates). The youth park and parking lot will have regular park hours: dawn to dusk.
2. The park will be a neighbourhood scale development, geared to beginner and intermediate users. There will likely be an influx of interest in the first few weeks from youth from beyond Fraser Heights. An average of 10-20 local users at one time is anticipated. The park will provide a legitimate place for youth to see and be seen, and participate in activities such as basketball, skateboarding, and in-line skating. The development will help reduce existing conflicts (replace need for skateboarding at commercial areas, school). There are existing problems in the Fraser Heights community. This project is seen as part of the solution.
3. To our knowledge there are no documented statistics that support increased incidences of crime and vandalism as a result of a youth park.
4. Most users walk, cycle, or skateboard to reach the park, and the average users are 14 to 16 year olds. Youth parks generate a need for 12 stalls on average (van der Zalm and Associates). There is existing parking available.
5. Graffiti can be problematic. The Parks Operations Section aggressively maintains all Surrey youth parks in accordance with the City's Community Improvement and Unsightly Property By-law.

Phase 4 – Community Dialogue

In response to the delegations a round table discussion was hosted at the Parks Recreation and Culture Annex boardroom on October 9, 2003. Members of the Fraser Heights Community Association, City staff, consultants and Commissioner Nico Buek were present. The RCMP Community liaison regretted he was unable to attend the meeting, but sent an email endorsement of the project at the proposed location. The opposing delegation chose not to attend. Key considerations discussed at this meeting were addressed to the satisfaction of all present.

There are resident concerns about the youth park development. These concerns can be partly addressed through design, maintenance, and parks and recreation programming.

The team is committed to continued involvement of the youth and residents throughout the design development phase, should the project be approved. The design shall respond to community concerns and provide a facility that is both fun and challenging to youth, yet respects the need for site integration, safety and security.

The Fraser Heights Park Site is the best location for the facility for the following reasons:

- Being close to the high school and community core, the youth park will be close to existing phone, washroom, parking and support facilities that are on or near the school premises.
- The proposed facility is adjacent to the high school and its sport facilities, making it a valued addition to already substantial youth services.
- The site of the new Youth Park would be located in an area that is set away from most residences (for noise and light concerns) yet close enough for concerned parents not to feel that their kids are too isolated.
- The location is highly visible from 160th Street and is fully accessible by sidewalk.
- Working with the existing grades on this site will make this park naturally blend into the surrounding environment.
- The city of Surrey Parks and Recreation will install a washroom facility for the existing sports fields; building the Youth Park next to the fields will be a logical next step in the development of this area as a prime youth recreational complex for Fraser Heights.

- The park will be situated next to an existing parking and drop off area.
- The RCMP supports this site and that helps youth feel safe.

Phase 5 – Reporting

In this final phase the team reviewed the results of the last Open House and community dialogue. City staff prepared a Commission report on the findings and Commission recommended the youth team make a Council presentation. The youth appeared as a delegation with two spokespersons and presented the results of the process to Council-in-Committee on December 8, 2003.

A final report will be prepared at the end of the project.

CONCLUSION

The joint efforts of staff from various Parks Recreation and Culture Sections combined with involvement from a great number of interested youth and residents of the Fraser Heights Community have made meaningful project phases and practical results for the Fraser Heights Youth Park Location Study.

The south end of the Fraser Heights Park is the site overwhelmingly preferred by respondents and the RCMP for the Fraser Heights Youth Park. With Council's approval, the next step in the process will be to work with the youth to develop detailed designs for the site and with continued input from the affected neighbours through the design process move forward with construction and a potential Youth Park opening in the summer of 2004.

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City Manager