

File No. 04-1000-20-2014-124

June 27, 2014

Redacted

By email: Redacted

Dear Redacted

Re: Request for Access to Records under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (the "Act")

I am responding to your request received on April 4, 2014 for:

In regards to a Park Board Open House held on April 3, 2014 at the Mt. Pleasant Community Centre, related to a proposed skateboard park facility in Mt. Pleasant:

- **Meeting Item:** Presentation panels mentioned that 11 stakeholders were approached in January to March, 2014:
  - **Records Requested:** A list of these stakeholders and the City's consultation notes.
- **Meeting Item:** The Open House presented the public with two parks as the only two options to choose from for a skateboard facility (Robson and Jonathan Rogers):
  - **Records Requested:** A list of all locations that were considered for this facility before these final two parks were selected as possible locations for the skateboard facility.
- **Meeting Item:** Park Board staff indicated that \$225,000 had been previously allocated in a budget for a skateboard facility in Mt. Pleasant:
  - **Records Requested:** Documentation that shows all of the relevant studies that were used to make this decision and prioritization by staff.

All responsive records are attached. Some information in the records has been severed, (blacked out), under s.13(1) of the Act. You can read or download this section here:

[http://www.bclaws.ca/EPLibraries/bclaws\\_new/document/ID/freeside/96165\\_00](http://www.bclaws.ca/EPLibraries/bclaws_new/document/ID/freeside/96165_00)

In addition to the attached responsive records composed of the requested consultation notes, the following information was provided:

**A list of these stakeholders:**

- Grubwear - Studiotique shop, just off Kingsway on North side (Robson)
- Lion's Den café, also just off Kingsway on north side (Robson)
- Emille's Westside Kitchen on 7th Ave. (Jonathan Rogers)
- Thibodeau Architecture & Design at 138 West 8th Ave. (Jonathan Rogers)
- Executive Director, Mt. Pleasant Neighbourhood House (both)
- Robson Park Community Garden (Robson)
- Mt. Pleasant Family Centre staff (Robson)
- Boys and Girls Club (Robson)
- Field bookings, CoV Park Board staff (both)
- Community Recreation Coordinator, VPB, City of Vancouver) - (both)
- Milano Coffee (Jonathan Rogers)

**A list of all locations that were considered for this facility:**

All the locations considered by staff were all the parks in the Mount Pleasant Community including:

- Jonathan Rogers
- Robson
- Mount Pleasant
- Main and 18<sup>th</sup>
- Sahali
- Hillcrest/Riley
- Queen Elizabeth
- Grimmet
- Sahalli
- Tea Swamp
- China Creek

**Documentation that shows all of the relevant studies that were used to make this decision and prioritization by staff:**

There are 2 relevant studies to this project. The Skateboard Strategy that indicates the need and the capital plan that identifies \$225,000 in funding for a skateboard facility (refer to the Capital Plan Board report of February 2013 and the appendix of park board projects, page 2.

Here are the links to these documents:

<http://vancouver.ca/files/cov/2005-Skateboard-Strategy.pdf>

<http://former.vancouver.ca/parks/board/2012/120213/CapitalPlan.pdf>

<http://former.vancouver.ca/parks/board/2012/120213/allocationsbyproject.pdf>

Under section 52 of the Act you may ask the Information & Privacy Commissioner to review any matter related to the City's response to your request. The Act allows you 30 business days from the date you receive this notice to request a review by writing to:

Office of the Information & Privacy Commissioner,  
P.O. Box 9038, Stn. Prov. Govt.  
Victoria, B.C. V8W 9A4  
Tel. 250-387-5629; Fax 250-387-1696

If you request a review, please provide the Commissioner's office with:

- 1) the request number assigned to your request (#04-1000-20-2014-124);
- 2) a copy of this letter;
- 3) a copy of your original request for information sent to the City of Vancouver; and
- 4) detailed reasons or grounds on which you are seeking the review.

Please do not hesitate to contact the Freedom of Information Office at [foi@vancouver.ca](mailto:foi@vancouver.ca) if you have any questions.

Yours truly,



Barbara J. Van Fraassen, BA  
Director, Access to Information  
City Clerk's Department, City of Vancouver  
Email: [Barbara.vanfraassen@vancouver.ca](mailto:Barbara.vanfraassen@vancouver.ca)  
Telephone: 604.873.7999

Encl.

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## **Report on Initial Scoping for Possible Skateboard Facility in Mt. Pleasant - VEST**

### **Introduction**

In the last several years, the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation has been managing and responding to increasing demand for and visibility of skatepark facilities within the city, seeking to integrate such facilities in a thoughtful way. Due to the perceived and real impacts of unexpected use patterns in a new “skatespot” facility in Mt. Pleasant park, there is concern over disruption or conflict that might be caused by building a new facility to meet skateboarding demand.

The Park Board thus asked Vince Verlaan of VEST to complete ten-twelve short “key informant interviews” between January 10<sup>th</sup> and January 31<sup>st</sup> regarding the suitability of two parks in the Mt. Pleasant area for a new skatepark facility. The interviews were designed and carried out as a “pre-engagement exercise”, drawing on a small but diverse group of stakeholders so as to inform the Park Board on whether examining these locations further as a possible location was advisable.

The Park Board is considering using a formal engagement process to ask any and all stakeholders around and in both Jonathan Rogers park and Robson park as to the suitability of either for a new medium-sized skatepark facility. These interviews sought to gather initial information on current uses of the park, any use conflicts that existed, people to consider and invite to participate in any future engagement, and thoughts regarding the impact a new facility might have on the park and the local community. The interviews generally avoided discussion of facility design aspects, although siting was sometimes raised.

### **Methodology**

To ensure this initial scoping work was done efficiently, Park board staff worked with Vince Verlaan to create a list of possible “key informants” near each park, listing groups and individuals under business, service agency, park user, and park staff headings. Local residents were avoided as it was felt that at least their main concerns could be identified by people who use or are located near the park, and because it was felt that the next round of engagement (should it proceed) would focus heavily on them.

Park board staff and Vince Verlaan next worked to create some “key messages” to guide all correspondence and interaction with key informants, to ensure consistent and non-inflammatory conversations. This language focused on clearly stating that this was a preliminary discussion about a possible new facility, that the decision to site and build a new facility had not yet been taken, that the intention was to learn from stakeholders as to their initial concerns or suggestions, that there would be a larger and well-advertised consultation process if initial discussions merited, that there was a commitment not to directly disrupt or displace other park users if a facility did go ahead, and that any detailed design work would not occur until well after a siting decision was reached.

Vince Verlaan wrote to and phoned identified stakeholders around both parks in mid-January, booked interview times, and then conducted the interviews (mostly in person). A total of eleven interviews were conducted, five of which focused on Robson Park, three on Jonathan Rogers, and three covering both parks equally (two of these were with CoV staff).

Each interview took a maximum of 30 minutes and followed a similar format/pacing. Vince first introduced himself, stressing that he was a consultant and a Vancouver resident supporting the Park Board in its efforts to engage current park users near both parks as early as possible in discussing the

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possibility of a new facility. Vince then stated that current users and users were not to be displaced by the new facility, that it was only an initial proposal, and that the growing demand for skateboarding facilities in the city had led the Park Board to investigate whether either of these two parks might be suitable for such a facility. Vince then took point-form notes of the interviews, capturing responses to questions on current uses, issues, conflicts and suitability.

### Key Findings re Robson Park

This section describes the main points shared by interviewees, as well as insights from Vince Verlaan after spending time near or at this park and conducting the interviews. This is a summary and a grouping of issues raised and insights shared; please see the appendix for point form transcripts of the interviews.

#### *Current users/uses:*

Heavily used in the summer with less use in rainy and cold periods like most parks. Increasing use as the neighbourhood is densifying and changing in terms of more local residents, especially families.

Formal use includes the basketball and tennis courts being well-used by organized and pick-up games including ball hockey. Field used by both adult and youth/micro soccer leagues; occasional use for informal play noted. Park Board programming there in summer especially; draws a lot of participants.

Some additional events in the park organized by City, Family Centre, or other organizations. Heavy use of the pool in summer by families and this is staffed by PB staff from the MPCC, with hot dogs and other activities available. Some use of the fieldhouse for storage of field equipment.

A major and formal user is the Mt. Pleasant Family Centre who manage their own building and take care of the playground next to their building; while they do not manage the entire park, they are the heaviest users, are present often, and have a good idea of the users and issues. The garden group is active and their plots are in high demand. Another user is the Boys and Girls club, who take advantage of the open spaces of the park for their programs whenever the weather is good.

Informal use includes picnics, family gatherings, people hanging out in a green space, heavy use of the small children's playground, Frisbee, dog walkers, arts activities (like "piano in the park").

#### *Park issues/conflicts:*

Very few problems identified. Off-leash dogs and enforcement re: same has been a problem in the past but no longer. Some noise issues with late-night basketball but generally not a major issue as it is located next to a busy street (Kingsway) and people are thus used to some noise. Some drinking/pot smoking in the park, some littering, occasional needles, lack of garbage cans, occasional mental health issues. Many "eyes" on this park and few problems reported; some mention of new social housing and mental health support units coming into the Biltmore but no major concern.

#### *Suitability/reaction:*

Interviewee reaction to the idea of locating a skateboarding facility in this park ranged from neutral to supportive ("skaters need more places to learn and socialize") to very supportive ("what can we do to make this happen"). No strongly negative reaction was noted.

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All interviewees accepted the premise that skateboarding was a valid recreational activity and need; some saw it as a wonderful sport for youth and families and were actively supportive. Others saw it as something to be managed carefully but supported.

One major sentiment was that current users/uses could and should not be disturbed or displaced by the new facility. Comments included that the siting and design of the new facility would be key to its acceptability and smooth integration; this was seen as essential to reducing noise and behavioural impacts as well as risks to other park users (esp. small children being injured accidentally).

Another major sentiment was that local homeowners and residents would be most concerned about this idea, due to their location near to the park and their fears of noise, vandalism, behaviour and late-night use. The park has residences on 2 sides at least, and so this is a major consideration given recent experience, and Park Board siting criteria. Some interviewees offered to help “get ahead of” and respond to resident concerns, but the main point is that local residents would be most likely to have a negative reaction and deserved early and robust consideration.

### *Other considerations:*

Some comments were made about skaters and their behaviours and whether that would cause problems, but the interviewees generally felt this was overblown and that previous experience with young men as active park users was positive. The community service orientation of both the local business owners and the service agencies interviewed seemed to shape their way of seeing this new facility, as did the fact that the neighbourhood and Mt. Pleasant generally was changing rapidly.

Some concern raised by ED of the family centre that this investment in a new facility was being made without consideration of other needs at the park, including their operating grant, their building, sidewalks, drainage, garbage cans, and maintenance and especially replacing the well-used but aged playground equipment. This raises the issue of whether a new facility will be seen as a reaction to one user group’s advocacy rather than a part of a well-thought out management approach to the park.

The two local business owners were open to the idea, but other local businesses might have concerns with noise, graffiti and demeanour affecting perceptions of the neighbourhood among their clientele.

Two local serving agencies were unexpectedly willing to actively support the idea in the local community, and even offered to contribute to siting, design and operational aspects.

### **Key Findings re Jonathan Rogers Park**

This section describes the main points shared by interviewees, as well as insights from Vince Verlaan after spending time near or at this park and conducting the interviews. This is a summary and a grouping of issues raised and insights shared; please see the appendix for point form transcripts of the interviews.

#### *Current users/uses:*

Many organized teams (soccer, softball) and classes that rent the fields with less casual users of the field; no courts in the park. Gardening group is currently asking to expand their use of the park, adding on to their current plot area. Swings appear to get light use, no playground equipment. It appears that the old swimming pool is not used, even in summer. Casual use by joggers, kite flying, pick-up football

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and soccer, model helicopters, dog walkers (throwing balls for off-leash dogs). Regular use by local dog-walking and doggy daycare businesses. Substantial casual use by local office workers, especially during summer. Occasional casual use by people purchasing food and/or coffee from local businesses. Enjoyment of “open green space” in a mainly industrial area. Lots of “eyes” on this park from local businesses, including cafes; VPD headquarters nearby.

### *Park issues/conflicts:*

Appears to be no conflict, other than occasional food thefts from community garden. Previous request by local resident(s) to officially designate this park as an off-leash park; some off-leash use is apparent. Sometimes homeless people camp out there but no major issues. Park appears “unplanned” and “simple”, leading interviewees to ask for more benches, more thoughtful discussion of the future potential of the park, etc.

### *Suitability/reaction:*

Initial reaction was muted but tended toward negative due to concerns re noise, vandalism, threatening or disruptive behaviours, and the impacts of that on current and future users/uses. Further discussion lead in all cases to a willingness to examine the idea more thoughtfully, especially if displacement of current uses was avoided and risks were managed.

One issue for this park is the fact that it is surrounded by somewhat high-end businesses, including restaurants, publishing houses, warehouses, a catering business, architects, and health professionals. These people value the “low-key” and green nature of the current park and have also helped nurture the ambiance of the area and would not want to see that threatened.

Mention was made of the rapidly changing city and the surrounding neighbourhood with new housing on Cambie, Broadway and Main all changing the population mix. Concern that things are now going the “right way” and this new facility might damage that; concern also that a longer-term view of what the park can do for and with the neighbourhood not being taken.

Residents of a co-op one half-block south of the park are likely to have concerns.

Big-box businesses nearby may be opposed as skaters visiting the facility could cause issues for their patrons outside the store entrances.

### *Other considerations:*

This is not at all an “isolated park”, as it is very visible from many directions, and local streets are very well-traveled and busy. It is near major streets but set back from them in a quiet pocket that is rapidly developing its own identity and character; also near major cycling routes.

Close to busy and rapidly developing areas on Main, Broadway and Cambie with lots of homes and shops coming online and increased traffic of all kinds. New construction of buildings overlooking Jonathan Rogers shows how much the area is changing, and this is the context for this discussion.

Many higher-end businesses in the area, and they are likely to see this as a negative or at least a risk with very little benefit to them. Likely to organize among themselves if engagement not done well.

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Planning for expansion of gardens already underway, and it is difficult to see where new facility could go unless pool removed. Pool may be needed in future, and a very sensitive issue in this neighbourhood.

An alternative would be to move or remove the swings, but that will cause concern and in fact there may be demand/need for a full playground in that park.

Failure to create a master plan for such a park in a rapidly changing area of the city opens PB to criticism.

s.13 (1)



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s.13 (1)

