



CHANGE



CONTROVERSY



& COMPROMISE

Public Reaction to New Facilities in Vancouver's Parks

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Abstract

The objective of this report was to examine change, controversy, and compromise in the site selection process for new activities in Vancouver's parks. The research questions for the study were:

- What elements of the three proposals for new facilities in Vancouver parks generated controversy?
- What are the similarities and differences between the controversy generated by the three projects examined, and how were these concerns addressed?
- What are the implications for future projects?

The scope of the report was limited to facilities within the City of Vancouver as the report was being written to inform site selection processes undertaken by the Vancouver Park Board. The following three facilities were examined:

- Downtown Skateboard Park
- Beach Volleyball Tournament Facility
- Stanley Park Community Garden

A two-part methodology was utilized. First, two precedents were studied via on-line literature including Park Board reports and minutes, and media files from the websites of the *Vancouver Courier Newspaper* and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. Second, a detailed case study was undertaken of the Stanley Park Community Garden, a joint project of the West End Residents' Association and the Stanley Park Ecology Society. This case study included a review of Garden-related on-line Park Board documents and in-depth interviews with various stakeholders involved in its creation. Information gathered on the precedents and case studies was organized into the following areas:

- Background and stakeholders
- Project development process
- Controversy and project outcome

Areas of controversy identified by the general public in the research were organized by how commonly they occurred in the three processes – from most common

to least common. They were then discussed in terms of how the controversy was managed.

Parallels were drawn between the precedents and the case study, and the following controversial themes emerged:

- Consultation
- Change
- Noise
- Traffic and parking
- Private use of public space
- Loss of green space
- Design and appearance
- Attitude
- Dust and illegal activities
- Undocumented concerns

Overall, the causes of controversy can be grouped into two broad categories – process issues and liveability impacts. There are a number of steps the Park Board could take to address these issues and increase dialogue in future planning processes. Issues that could be addressed to improve process concerns and liveability impacts are:

- Proactive communication
- Use of precedents
- Facilitating partnerships, education, and stewardship
- Better record keeping
- Good neighbour agreements

In conclusion, this study examined the causes of controversy in three projects proposed for Vancouver's parks, and how well that controversy was managed. In two of the three cases the controversy was addressed sufficiently that the projects were approved, and are now open and actively used. In the third case, the controversy proved insurmountable. It is hoped that this study will give the Park Board a clearer understanding of the controversies inherent in managing change, and the role of constructive dialogue when introducing new recreation activities to Vancouver's parks.

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This paper marks the end of my formal education, at least for the foreseeable future. I’d like to end by thanking the person most involved in my education – my mother, Margaret Buchanan.

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Chapter One

Introduction and Methodology

Objective

The objective of this report is to examine change, controversy, and compromise in the site selection process for new activities in Vancouver's parks. It begins with a short discussion of these concepts in park planning literature before moving to the Vancouver context.

Literature on Change in Parks

Change has been a constant in North American park planning. In her seminal book *The Politics of Park Design* (1982), Galen Crantz presents an overview of four major epochs in park planning from the past 150 years: Pleasure Ground, Reform Park, Recreation Facility, and Open Space System. This time period closely mirrors Vancouver's short history.



Downtown Skateboard Park

Pleasure Ground: 1850 – 1900

Public park advocacy developed as a reaction to the squalor and resultant high rates of disease in cities. They were located at the peripheries of the city, where

land was cheap, and the accepted public health notion at the time was that the “good air” in parks was beneficial to a wide range of ailments. There was an emphasis on the pastoral landscape, with curvilinear paths to provide aesthetic pleasure and a break from the linear, finite experience of the city. This is not to say there were no recreation areas – there were numerous outdoor activities facilitated in these parks. In this model the city was a necessary evil for which an antidote was needed. This is the period when Stanley Park was founded.



Georgia Street Entrance to Stanley Park

Reform Park: 1890 – 1930

In this period it was recognized that there were limited opportunities to have “pleasure ground” type parks in the city. In order to bring the benefits of parks to the masses, they evolved into smaller facilities, and the pastoral illusion was abandoned. This was an era of social control, including prohibition in the US, when, for example, men and women used different entrances to pubs, and recreation moved indoors. Public health was becoming more specialized, and developmental psychology believed at the time that humans had different needs at different developmental phases.

Spontaneous play could no longer be trusted, as people needed supervision, preferably indoors, and age and sex segregation was introduced. In this period the city was seen as “reformable”, and the task was to get to work and change it.



Jonathan Rodgers Park
Mount Pleasant

The Recreation Facility: 1930 – 1960

According to Crantz, in this period (especially the latter post-war portion) parks were no longer used just to satisfy social agendas, they were for fun. The recreation facility came to be seen as a necessary component of the park system – in fact, a park facility didn’t need to have any green space at all. This period mirrors the growth of Vancouver’s community centres. In all three of the initial schools of thought that guided park planning, the decisions were largely made by professionals for the community, following the top-down modernist model.



Nat Bailey Stadium and
Riley Park Community Centre

Open Space System: After 1965

In contemporary parks, the city is both a part of the park system and visa versa. Two important facilities emerged from this period: the adventure playground for children, and the downtown pocket park. While her

1982 book ends with this period, Crantz argues that these park “typologies” last between 35 and 50 years.



Gildford and Haro Mini-Parks
West End

A more contemporary driver of change in the way parks are used is that the Baby Boom generation is aging, retiring earlier, and living longer. As Stoneam and Thoday note in their book *Landscape Design for Elderly & Disabled People* (1994), the recently middle-aged Baby Boom are getting involved to “help make the extra years that have been added to our average lifespan in this century a gift worth having.” There is also the recognition that there are health benefits that come from engaging with nature. As Parsons states, there are “potential stress-reducing, health, cognitive and psychosocial effects of human interactions with outdoor environments in general (1998).”

Another driver of change is the cultural shift that puts an increased emphasis on biodiversity conservation and enhancement. Finally, there is a growing call for community stewardship opportunities where citizens are active participants in the care and maintenance of public places.

With these changes comes controversy. Gobster argues that this tension in parks can come from differing visions of nature (1999). In his study, the following visions of nature emerged through dialogue with stakeholders:

- Nature as designed landscape;
- Nature as habitat; and
- Nature as recreation.

He found that trying to maintain these various visions of nature led to conflict, but that stakeholder negotiations could show how the visions were compatible and how features might “nest” within each other. The name of the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation, also known as the Park Board, with both parks and recreation in its title, recognizes this

balance between passive natural spaces on the one hand and active recreation areas on the other.

An increased use of dialogue and compromise to manage change is also taking place in the park planning profession. The design process and players are adopting the collaborative model, as noted by Whitaker in *Parks for People*: “Members of the community can be linked in a common feeling of interest and possession by being asked to play a part in helping with the running of their park.” In *Urban Parks and Open Space* (1997), Garvin and Berens put forward the position that stakeholder-driven, public/private partnerships will be the driving force of change in the future. The challenge is to ensure that these partnerships develop productively and equitably.

In her seminal book on planning theory, *Towards Cosmopolis* (1998), Leonie Sandercock raises many of these same issues. She points out that practical, local wisdom is invaluable to planners who want to move beyond the top-down modernist paradigm. There is the opportunity to make planning more people-centred and less document-oriented. However, Sandercock warns against seeing the “public interest” and “community” as being monolithic, as both can be inherently exclusive if there is not an acknowledgement of multiple publics.

Mirroring this academic discussion, there is a constant demand for increased diversity of recreational activities in Vancouver’s parks. This can be seen locally in the new sports and cultural activities that have increased in popularity, such as rollerblading, and the ones that are no longer practiced, like hula hoops. Each successive generation brings new demands for their activities to be accommodated. Change does not come easily, however, and often leads to controversy. The challenge is to manage change in a way that respects current uses while recognizing the legitimate need to meet new demands.

Context

Vancouver is unique in Canada in that it has a directly elected Board of Parks and Recreation (<http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/parks/info/aboutus/index.htm>). These individuals are politicians whose sole mandate is to act as the custodians of parks and recreation in the city. As such, Vancouverites are engaged in parks issues in a different way than their counterparts in other cities. Any alteration is closely watched by local citizens, who have exceptionally high expectations with respect to being consulted on changes taking place. The public’s engagement as

watchdogs of the parks system can be seen in the controversy over the widening of the Causeway through Stanley Park during the Lions Gate Bridge upgrading, or the proposal for a new restaurant at Kitsilano Beach.



Stanley Park Community Garden

The author of this report was involved with the development of the Stanley Park Community Garden in the role of participant observer. This unique position allowed him to see first hand how the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation addresses the public’s desire for change, the elements of controversy encountered along the way, and the compromise necessary to ensure success. His experience with the Garden’s creation led to the choice of topic for this report, his Master’s Project.

This report is written with the intent of creating a practical product – a carefully documented case history – that can inform planning practice, rather than an academic paper to advance planning theory. There is little in the way of case study documentation of Vancouver Park Board projects, illustrating the value of this investigation. In developing this report a member of the Park Board’s management team served as the project’s second reader. Data gathering consisted of information available on the World Wide Web and personal interviews, as well as a short literature review. The focus of the project was to develop a well-documented local case study that would add to the understanding of change, controversy, and compromise inherent in providing new activities in Vancouver’s parks.

Problem Statement and Research Questions

In general, consultation for changes to park facilities is geographically based. Any given user group is a minority of Vancouver's total population. At the same time, the total number of participants in a given activity city-wide may be larger than the population of any specific neighbourhood. The City is often faced with the challenge of providing facilities for a sizable minority – a given user group – over the objections of another minority – the local neighbours.

This report will scrutinize the public's reaction to various site selection processes for new community amenities in parks through an examination of two precedents – the new downtown skateboard park and the proposed beach volleyball tournament facility – and a carefully documented case study of the Stanley Park Community Gardens. The author will explore implications for the provision of future amenities to meet the public's increasing demand for new recreational activities, joint operation, and community stewardship in city parks.

The research questions for the study are:

- What elements of the three proposals for new facilities in Vancouver parks generated controversy?
- What are the similarities and differences between the controversy generated by the three projects examined, and how were these concerns addressed?
- What are the implications for future projects?

Methodology and Scope

A two-part methodology was utilized for this report. First, a number of mini case studies, or precedents, were proposed to the Park Board as a way to develop the background to the case study. The scope of the project was limited to facilities within the City of Vancouver as the report was being written to inform site selection processes undertaken by the Vancouver Park Board. After further discussion, criteria were developed to choose precedent projects that would more closely match the main study of the gardens.

The project had to have an external proponent – that is, they had to come from an expressed desire by the user groups to have their recreation activity supported by the Park Board, rather than originating from the Park Board itself. As well, the projects had to be small scale, comparable to the Stanley Park Community

Garden. As such, a new stadium in False Creek Flats and the new restaurant approved for Kitsilano Beach were deemed to be not suitable. Finally, they had to have a limited, defined constituency, as this would most closely match the situation with the Garden. These criteria led to the choice of two facilities to serve as site selection precedents – the recently completed downtown skateboard park, and the proposed beach volleyball tournament facility.

The review of the two precedents examined on-line literature including Park Board reports and minutes, and media files from the websites of the *Vancouver Courier Newspaper* and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. The precedent research did not involve interviews, although the precedents themselves did come up as a point of comparison in a few of the Garden interviews. Information gathered on the precedents was organized into the following areas:

- Background and Stakeholders
- Project Development Process
- Controversy and Project Outcome

Second, a detailed case study was undertaken of the Stanley Park Community Garden, a joint project of the West End Residents' Association (WERA) and the Stanley Park Ecology Society. This case study included a review of Garden related on-line Park Board documents and in-depth interviews with various stakeholders involved in its creation. The questionnaire is contained in Appendix A. The stakeholders included:

- Two male Park Board staff, a front-line employee and a member of senior management;
- Three garden volunteers, one middle aged female volunteer and two members of the WERA board, a thirty-something mother and a newly retired male; and
- Two retired female neighbours who were on record with the Park Board as having concerns about the gardens.

Information gathered on the case study was organized into the same areas as the precedents, namely:

- Background and Stakeholders
- Project Development Process
- Controversy and Project Outcome

Areas of controversy identified by the general public in the research were organized by how commonly they occurred in the three processes – from most common to least common. They were then discussed in terms of how the controversy was managed. Parallels were

drawn between the precedents and the case study, and planning implications were discussed.

There were research limitations regarding the choice of precedents. It is not certain that all controversial issues were captured using the chosen methods. For example, while the media reports and Park Board minutes did contain a fair amount of information, they cannot have been deemed exhaustive in listing the controversies, as this was not their primary aim and the question was not posed directly. As well, the minutes and media reports are by nature limited in length, and it is not possible to know what was edited out. It is also possible there were additional compromises reached throughout the volleyball and skateboard processes that aren't revealed in the literature available.

Project Organization

This report is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the study, research questions, and methodology. Chapter 2 is an overview of the two site-selection precedents – the recently completed Downtown Skateboard Park and the defeated proposal to create a tournament facility for beach volleyball. It begins with an introduction and lists the stakeholder groups. It then provides a history of the facility development process and notes the controversies encountered. It concludes by noting the outcome of the process. Chapter 3 presents the key findings of the Stanley Park Community Garden case study in a similar format to the precedents. Chapter 4 examines in more detail the various elements of change in parks that are controversial, and how this controversy was managed. Finally, Chapter 5 presents a number of implications for the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation pertaining to future site-selection processes.

Chapter Two

Site Selection Precedents

A number of Vancouver Park Board site selection processes were considered for inclusion in this report, as noted in the methodology section of Chapter 1. The two chosen – a downtown skateboard park and a beach volleyball tournament facility – will be discussed in this chapter.

Downtown Skateboard Park

Background and Stakeholders

Skateboarding has taken off over the past decade, from being a fringe activity to become a popular if not universally accepted form of youth activity. The activity is also a popular form of active transportation among youth, while the sport aspect has expanded beyond the bowl-based tricks to encompass “street-style” skating, where common urban objects such as curbs and benches provide the necessary equipment.



The problem for the general community and skateboarders alike is finding suitable sites for the sport aspect. With the increased popularity of the sport, downtown property interests have acted to prevent the utilization of the hardscaped plazas that provided the initial tableau to support the explosion of street-style skateboarding. Until recently, Vancouver had only one skate park – a small bowl-type facility built in the 1970s at China Creek, which compounded this dilemma. A second bowl was opened at Hastings Park in 2001 and a number of smaller features have been included in recent park renovations. While there were over thirty skate parks regionally, until September 2004 there was no significant official street-style facility in the City of Vancouver (Vancouver Park Board, March 5, 1998, <http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/parks/board/1998/980309/indyrace.pdf>).

The Park Board has been examining the feasibility of a skateboard park downtown since at least 1995, when one was proposed for the vicinity of the south approach to the Burrard Bridge. One was proposed but never built in 1998 as part of a payment-in-lieu scheme for the Molson Indy’s use of Creekside Park (Vancouver Park Board, March 5, 1998, <http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/parks/board/1998/980309/indyrace.pdf>). Ongoing planning to determine a suitable site took place over a number of years. The key stakeholder groups concerned in the site selection process included:

- Skateboarders, represented by the Vancouver Skate Park Coalition, who were concerned that the City was lagging behind other jurisdictions in providing sanctioned space for their burgeoning sport and were flexible in their location requirements;
- Local residents, notably the residents of the CityGate development at Quebec Street and Terminal Avenue, who feared that the skate park would negatively affect their quality of life

- and were against locating it in their neighbourhood;
- The developer of CityGate, who felt the city had failed in their consultation process;
- Business owners, including the Downtown Vancouver Business Improvement Association, and Chinatown Merchants, via the Chinatown Revitalization Committee, who were looking for a solution that would provide relief from what they viewed as a nuisance activity, but were satisfied that the proposal was situated outside their area of interest;
- City staff working in the Downtown East Side, via the DTES Core Staff Committee; and
- Park users, noting there was no information available on the concerns or attitudes of these last two groups (Vancouver Park Board, March 5, 1998, <http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/parks/board/1998/980309/indyrace.pdf>).

- Visible from nearby streets and buildings to minimize illegal use;
- Not situated too close to housing, so that residents were not negatively impacted by noise created from skateboarding.

Using these criteria the following areas were short-listed:

- South East False Creek,
- False Creek Flats,
- Central Business District, and
- Area near GM Place and Andy Livingston Park.



Project Development Process

On Monday, September 27, 1999, the Park Board approved \$235,000 in the 2000-2002 Capital Plan for the construction of skateboard projects, including a "street style" skateboard park in the downtown core (Vancouver Park Board, September 21, 1999, <http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/parks/board/1999/990927/cpfinal.pdf>)

At this same meeting a representative of BC Volleyball addressed the Board expressing disappointment that no capital funds for a beach volleyball tournament facility had been included in the three-year plan, as will be discussed later.

Over the period from fall 1999 to spring 2002 there were no Park Board reports or media stories from which to reconstruct the process, though planning could have been ongoing behind the scenes. Location suggestions were solicited in the spring of 2002 as part of a larger youth survey of 13 to 29-year-olds undertaken by the Park Board and City Hall (Vancouver Park Board, Monday February 24, 2003, <http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/parks/board/2003/030224/index.htm>). Park Board staff then developed the following site selection criteria with input from the survey:

- Immediately available for use;
- Large enough for proposed use (minimum of about 10,000 square feet);
- Accessible by public transit;
- Close to public washrooms, telephone and drinking water;
- Does not displace existing use;

Staff concluded that the most feasible site would be somewhere in the vicinity of GM Place and Andy Livingston Park, as this was far enough away from existing business and residential areas, had large enough potential sites, and there was less risk of displacing existing positive uses. With further analysis, the site eventually proposed was a triangular section of land under the Dunsmuir and Georgia Viaducts bounded by Expo Boulevard, Quebec Street and Union Streets (Vancouver Park Board, Monday February 24, 2003, <http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/parks/board/2003/030224/index.htm>). This site was preferred as its current use was as an underutilized parking lot close to an existing parkade and the land was orphaned from other park space and would not involve the paving of any green space.



Skateboard Park
And CityGate Towers

Controversy and Project Outcome

A number of impacts were identified as controversial in the planning reports, minutes, and media coverage of the process. They include:

- Insufficient consultation, as the local residents and CityGate developer first heard of the proposal in the media;
- Noise, as the CityGate stakeholders felt the clatter of skateboarding would be disturbing;
- Location, as the CityGate residents felt that the location was not sufficiently far from their homes;
- Transportation, with the concern being that the skateboarders would travel to the park via SkyTrain and disembark at Main Street Station, then skate past CityGate on their way to the park, exacerbating the concerns above;
- Public park space being monopolized by a special interest group; and
- Illegal activity such as vandalism, graffiti, and drugs (Vancouver Park Board, Monday February 24, 2003, <http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/parks/board/2003/030224/index.htm>).

Chapter 4 will examine in more detail the various elements of this proposal that were controversial to the neighbours and general public, and how this controversy was managed.

The Vancouver Park Board approved the skateboard park as proposed for the isolated site under the Georgia and Dunsmuir viaducts at their meeting of Monday February 24, 2003 (Vancouver Park Board, Monday

February 24, 2003, <http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/parks/board/2003/030224/index.htm>). Construction took place over the summer of 2004 and the park officially opened Saturday September 25, 2004.



Mayor Larry Campbell Opens
Downtown Skateboard Park

Beach Volleyball Tournament Facility

Background and Stakeholders

Like skateboarding, the popularity of beach volleyball has grown enormously over the past decade, as can be seen by its approval as an Olympic sport in 1993 and inclusion in the 1996 Atlanta Summer Olympics (Official Website of the Olympic Movement, www.olympic.org), as well as in the Canada Games (Canada Games Sports Page, <http://www.canadagames.ca/Content/SportsHome.asp?mnu=2>). It has traditionally been facilitated on a few Vancouver beaches with permanent posts for defined courts, and open beach areas for portable nets.

There was active planning for additional beach volleyball space in the mid 1990s. At this time there were only sixteen permanent courts in the city, with many temporary courts going up in a largely unorganized fashion on sunny weekends, leading to conflict with neighbours and other beach users (Vancouver Park Board, May 11, 1998, <http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/parks/board/1998/980511/index.htm>). Dust and decreased access to the beach were cited as reasons for opposition. There were also maintenance and safety concerns that the spikes used

for temporary courts sometimes got left in the sand and could injure other beach users and damage the Park Board's sand cleaning machine (Vancouver Park Board, May 11, 1998, <http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/parks/board/1998/980511/index.htm>). The major shortcoming identified by the volleyball community was the lack of a venue of sufficient size to hold tournaments.

The key stakeholders in the planning process for a tournament facility for beach volleyball were:

- Various sport groups including the BC Volleyball Association, Kits Point Volleyball Association, and the Vancouver Field Sports Federation, who were intent on finding a waterfront site for the venue, and felt that in the past the Park Board had listened too much to the local residents, resulting in many valid sports proposals failing due to NIMBYism;
- Neighbours of the proposed site, including residents' associations, who felt left out of the process and believed that the sports organizations didn't share their liveability concerns;
- Conservationists, who were concerned that the Park Board was breaking a past promise to be stewards of the local ecology; and
- Other park users, who were split between those who wanted the passive natural aspect of the beaches protected and enhanced and those who supported additional active uses (Vancouver Park Board, April 30, 2001, <http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/parks/board/2001/010514/volleyball.pdf>).

Project Development Process

Park Board staff met with beach volleyball representatives in the spring of 1997 to address both the increasing conflicts and recreation shortfall. The product of these meetings was a proposal to double the total number of courts in the city with the addition of a sixteen-court tournament facility on the grass area to the west of Spanish Banks West (Vancouver Park Board, May 11, 1998, <http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/parks/board/1998/980511/index.htm>). Community consultation on the proposal that summer revealed a great deal of public concern with the chosen site: the loss of green space, lack of washrooms, insufficient parking, and distance from public transit, though no more specific information is available in the Park Board reports. Consequently the proposal was not brought forward to the Board for approval (Vancouver Park Board, May 11, 1998, <http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/parks/board/1998/980511/index.htm>).

Instead, Park Board staff and the BC Volleyball Association moved forward in the planning process to develop a "Management Plan for Beach Volleyball" together with a new proposal for additional courts. This further work resulted in a plan that would have forty-two permanent and temporary courts situated throughout the park system.



Spanish Banks West Site

When presented to the Board at their meeting of May 11, 1998, thirty-three of the forty-two courts were approved for various locations around the city, none of which were in a large enough group to constitute a tournament facility (Vancouver Park Board, May 11, 1998, <http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/parks/board/1998/980511/index.htm>). Of the thirty-three courts approved, twenty-eight were actually implemented as a trial for that summer. On review of the expansion in 1999, the Board approved adding three additional courts, with all the new and existing courts located at west side beaches (Vancouver Park Board, January 25, 1999, <http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/parks/board/1999/990208/m99jan25.pdf>). However, even this significant expansion over the original sixteen courts proved to be insufficient to meet the popularity of the sport. As well, the expansion did not include a tournament facility, as finding a suitable large site proved difficult.

As mentioned in the skateboard park section, the volleyball community lobbied unsuccessfully for a tournament facility to be included in the 2000-2002 Capital Plan (Vancouver Park Board, September 27, 1999, <http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/parks/board/1999/991018/m99sep27.pdf>). However, planning went ahead, for Park Board staff felt it did not need to be included in the Capital Plan as the installation was to be cost-neutral – it was projected by the proponent that revenues from the rental of the courts would offset the estimated \$90,000 cost over about five years.

On May 14, 2001, the Park Board approved a public consultation process for a twelve-court beach volleyball tournament facility at Jericho Beach, with only three

speakers – two in favour and one concerned that the map wasn't clear enough (<http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/parks/board/2001/010528/minutes.pdf>). Afterwards, signs went up at the beach announcing the proposal and a short article appeared in the *Vancouver Courier* on May 17 titled "Beach volleyballers need new sandbox."



Proposed Jericho Beach Site

Controversy and Project Outcome

Once plans for the tournament facility were made public, a large amount of controversy was generated – similar to the experience four years before with the proposal for Spanish Banks West. A number of issues were identified in the planning reports, minutes, and media coverage of the process including:

- Insufficient consultation, specifically the exclusion of the local neighbourhood from the initial planning process;
- Location, given that there is limited beach area within the city;
- Noise, including amplification during tournaments, which was considered a threat to the liveability of the local neighbourhood;
- Traffic and parking impacts, particularly during the busy summer months;
- Private use of public park space, exacerbated in this case by the fact that the volleyball proponents were seen to be outsiders and not local or even city of Vancouver residents;
- Loss of greenspace and natural areas, and specifically that Jericho Beach was created to safeguard the local ecology from development;
- Design of the facility, in particular signage and corporate logos during tournaments which were felt to be inappropriate in a public park;
- Attitude of volleyball leaders, in particular their lack of flexibility in site selection; and

- Dust stirred up because the courts were built on sand, in particular during tournaments when there would be heavy use of the facility (*Vancouver Courier*, May – August 2001).

Chapter 4 will examine in more detail the various elements of the proposed beach volleyball tournament facility that were controversial to the neighbours and general public, and how this controversy was managed.

Neighbours close to Jericho Beach mounted a public campaign to block the proposal. They distributed flyers to local residents and beach users, and held a number of meetings. A petition was circulated and over two hundred and fifty people attended the public hearing, which had to be held over two nights due to the number of speakers (*Vancouver Courier*, December 3, 2001). Although the volleyball community responded with a campaign in support of the project (*Vancouver Courier*, August 27, 2001), at the end of the consultation period there were over four thousand submissions against the proposal, and less than four hundred in favour (*Vancouver Courier*, January 17, 2002).

The end result was that there was no approval granted for the site at Jericho Beach. In order to move forward the Park Board set up a task force composed of staff, volleyball proponents and citizens opposed to the development at Jericho to identify alternate locations (*Vancouver Park Board*, January 4, 2002, <http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/parks/board/2002/020114/volleyball.pdf>). The task force reported back with three possible locations to be considered for a new public process:

- The upper Jericho lands which are owned by the Provincial Government,
- Vanier Park, and
- Sunset Beach

At this point, rather than approving a new public process, the Board picked the upper Jericho Lands and Vanier Park locations and directed staff to proceed to implementation (*Vancouver Park Board*, May 27, 2002, <http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/parks/board/2002/020527/index.htm>). After having initially agreeing to the use of its site, the British Columbia Buildings Corporation reversed its position, which led to an impasse. According to the planning documents it appears that no further planning was undertaken on the Vanier Park site. There was then a civic election in the fall of 2002. A tournament site proposal has not been brought forward to the new Board, leaving the issue unresolved (Personal Interview, June 15, 2003).

There are a number of themes that emerge from the examination of the precedents. First, change was not welcomed. In both cases, consultation was not satisfactory for all the stakeholders involved. As well, each case brought up a number of concerns by neighbours relating to the project's impact on the liveability of their community – whether it was noise, traffic, visual pollution, or the privatization of public space. Finally, there were varying degrees of compromise amongst the stakeholders. These areas of controversy, including how they were dealt with, will be discussed further in Chapter 4.

Chapter Three

Case Study:

Stanley Park Community Garden

Background and Stakeholders

The case study of the Stanley Park Community Garden was carried out through a series of interviews with affected stakeholders and an examination of Park Board documents and media stories. The individuals involved were grouped into the categories of Park Board staff, West End Residents' Association (WERA) members (including directors and gardeners), the Stanley Park Ecology Society (SPES), and neighbours living adjacent to the Garden.

The West End Residents' Association spearheaded the creation of the garden. WERA is an incorporated non-profit which seeks to improve the quality of life for people living in the West End and was founded by a group of local citizens who believed that by getting involved with other like-minded people in their neighbourhood, individuals could have a positive impact on the community (www.wera.bc.ca). It had a history of involvement in the community, including advocacy for improved alternative transportation, housing, and public safety. It also had experience with community gardens through co-managing the existing garden at Mole Hill (Personal Interview A, June 16), and had identified the need for more garden plots due to the limited space at Mole Hill. One director described her own involvement at the beginning stages as follows:

It was both personal and political how it got started ... we looked for space in the West End, but found there were only a few spots at Mole Hill. We wanted through the Residents' Association to find a way for sanctioned community gardens to be established in the West End. We began with brainstorming at WERA meetings – hospital rooftop, Mole Hill,

and underutilized parkland. Two directors went out and scouted sites, took pictures, measurements, et cetera (Personal Interview A, June 16).



Mole Hill

The WERA Board approved moving forward on developing new community gardens in the West End in the spring of 2002 (Personal Interviews A&B, June 16). A number of options were explored with Park Board staff, and it was decided the most appropriate channel was to pursue funding through the Park Board's Neighbourhood Matching Fund Program. According to the Park Board's website (<http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/parks/arts/nmf/index.htm>) the Fund is

A program providing support for projects involving people in a way that promotes the development of community and builds neighbourhood connections. It provides funds to groups who want to improve and develop parks and facilities on parkland. Donations of

time, money and/or materials, equal to the amount requested from the Neighbourhood Matching Fund must be provided by the community. This is known as the 'match'.

Grants are given once a year, with the decision being made by a committee comprised of Park Board staff and one Board member. These decisions do not go to the full Board, unlike the precedents examined in Chapter 2. Two garden proponents, both directors with the West End Residents' Association, were identified as the lead contacts for the project.

Project Development Process

WERA met with Park Board staff for guidance periodically over about six months before submitting their grant request. They also carried out a site selection process utilizing the following criteria:

- Availability of direct sunlight, with a preference for locations with good growing potential;
- Proximity to the residential area of the West End, being near enough that gardeners would be encouraged to walk to the garden, but far enough from any individual residences to prevent potential impacts being an undue burden on any one building;
- Large enough to serve what was assumed to be a significant latent demand for community gardening;
- Located on land in the Park Board's jurisdiction (versus land that was held privately or by other city agencies such as the Engineering Department); and
- Did not displace an existing positive use (Personal Interviews A&B, June 15).

The WERA site selection process came up with the following three sites:

- Sunset Beach behind the concession stand (note that this area was being considered by the beach volleyball task force as an alternative tournament site at about the same time);
- The old shuffleboard courts by the tennis courts and the Fish House Restaurant in Stanley Park; and
- The grass terrace above the tennis courts and the old Chilco bus loop at the foot of Robson Street on the edge of Stanley Park.

Staff indicated that the site at the foot of Robson Street was the most suitable. As one staff member put it:

Because it was kind of down a hillside, and just a touch out of the way, we felt it would be inoffensive to the neighbours. We also had water there, and to bring water to the site was relatively cheap. Just by elimination, this site leaped out (Personal Interview, June 15).



Sunset Beach Location



Shuffleboard Court Location



Foot of Robson Street Location

Staff noted that it would be desirable to partner with the Stanley Park Ecology Society (SPES), as SPES had been looking for a site for a native plant demonstration garden for some time. They also noted that a vegetable

garden would not likely be approved as there would be a negative visual impact during the off-season and it would result in a strong outcry by the general public over the perceived ownership and/or privatization of Stanley Park, and suggested that the use be kept to flowers and shrubs. One of the Park Board staff had been to another city where he had seen successful community flower gardens, and thought this was an appropriate way to address the demand for community gardening and introduce community stewardship into Stanley Park (Personal Interview A, July 7).



Site of the Stanley Park Community Garden

WERA held discussions with various community organizations, and letters of intent were distributed to the residential buildings adjacent to the proposed site. All of the community organizations with the exception of the West End Community Centre provided letters of support for moving ahead on the project. Little feedback was received from the adjacent neighbours – one owner-occupied building expressed via a letter its non-support for the project without stating why; another, which was closest to the proposed site, wrote asking only to be kept informed of the process; and a third delegated someone to follow up on the proposal who didn't follow through (Personal Interview B, July 7). This oversight would become important later on. As a resident of this building said:

I first found out through a notice of the meeting delivered to our building. Notice of the project was discussed by our board six months to a year before, but (the) person allocated to follow up didn't (Personal Interview B, July 7).

WERA then submitted a grant request for \$10,000 for a community flower and native plant garden under the Park Board's Neighbourhood Matching Fund proposing a partnership with SPES. The grant was approved in the amount of \$4,000, with a space allocation of only twenty-five percent of what WERA had originally envisioned (Personal Interview A, June 16). At this point, WERA debated about whether to continue as they felt the project had strayed from their original vision far enough that it had a marginal chance of success. According to one WERA Board member at the time of the approval:

There was elation on one hand (at being approved for the grant) but also disappointment about no vegetables ... this combined with a disappointment about the size, flowers only, and partnership requirement with the Stanley Park Ecology Society (Personal Interview A, June 16).

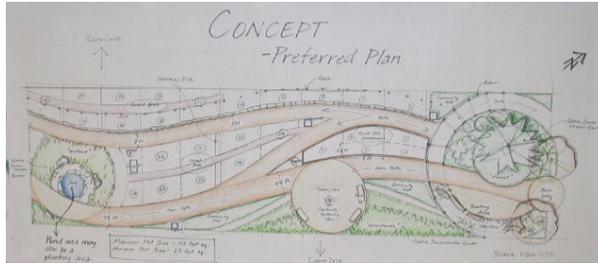
After some discussion, a new duo of WERA Board members took over stewardship of the project, one of whom is this report's author. Additional fundraising secured a supplementary \$5,000 from the Real Estate Foundation of British Columbia for the native plant portion of the garden, which ensured there would be enough funding to complete the project.

Parallel to the successful fundraising effort, meetings took place between WERA and SPES to determine the actual design of the garden and project responsibilities. The neighbours were not involved in the design process. The proponents worked with a volunteer landscape architect to develop a plan for the site which took into account their desire to create a beautiful legacy, as well as integrate the individual plots with the Ecology Society's educational gardens.

Once these issues had been worked out and the funding secured, a second layer of public process was carried out by WERA members. WERA distributed posters in the neighbourhood and directly to residences adjacent to the site, announcing the intention to create a community flower garden in Stanley Park, and inviting the public to an open house. It was at this time that the significant communication of concerns began, with phonecalls and letters to WERA and Park Board staff outlining the issues. People were encouraged to attend

the open house to find out the actual details of the process and document their concerns.

The open house took place at the West End Community Centre on Saturday April 12, 2003. There was a presentation of the design, a comment sheet, and a place for possible interested gardeners to sign up. A number of immediate neighbours to the garden continued to express concern over the location chosen and the lack of notification, although the project had already been approved (Personal Interview A, June 16).



Following feedback from Park Board staff and the public meeting, a revised design was developed for the garden – for example, deleting the pond which could have been a breeding ground for the West Nile virus. A final public meeting was held Saturday, June 26, 2003, to confirm the timeline and tasks of garden construction. WERA again put up posters around the neighbourhood and on the doors of the twelve residential buildings closest to the garden. As well, all the people who had originally signed up as interested gardeners were contacted by phone. A great deal of excitement was present, and people formed into groups based on their skills and physical abilities. A few immediate neighbours from the same building continued to voice their opposition to the project, as they felt it would have significant negative impacts to the liveability of their homes, as will be discussed in Chapter 4 (Personal Interview A, June 16).

During this process, SPES had secured a grant to hire a full-time coordinator to take care of daily administrative duties, the sourcing and purchasing of materials, and arranging for their delivery. WERA was responsible for volunteer management and on-site work. Construction began on Saturday, July 26, 2003, with over fifty volunteers, and continued over the next three months. There was significant private sector support from the plant and materials suppliers in the form of free and reduced-cost items. Free labour and materials were donated by the construction crew working on the S-Curve reconstruction right next to the Garden site. There was also noteworthy support from Park Board operations staff, who lent tools, placed granite curbs, et cetera (Personal Interview A, July 7).



Controversy and Project Outcome

When the posters were distributed in the neighbourhood announcing the openhouse to discuss the approved Garden, a resident of one of the buildings was concerned that the project had been approved without any notification of the adjacent residences. This person lived in the building where the individual delegated to follow up on the initial proposal notice that WERA had distributed had failed to follow through, though this was not discovered until later. They informed others of their concerns through through flyers distributed to residents of their building and personal phonecalls and conversations. Two neighbours in adjacent buildings wrote to express their concerns as well.

A number of concerns were identified in the interviews with the neighbours, some of which were shared by Park Board staff and members of WERA. In summary, the neighbours' concerns were:

- Consultation, as some neighbours felt that the plan was a fait accompli by the time they learned about it, and hence were not open to

- dialogue when they approached the consultation process;
- Change, with the neighbours who were interviewed feeling there was nothing wrong with the grass terrace, and so no need to change it to a more programmed use;
 - Noise, with the fear being that groups would be congregating in the garden with amplified music;
 - Traffic and parking, with the vision being that gardeners would drive to the Garden and exacerbate an already impossible traffic and parking situation in the neighbourhood;
 - Private use of public good, namely that a single user group was going to monopolize space in Stanley Park;
 - Loss of green space, related to the neighbours' feelings about change as noted above;
 - Design, as the design chosen was not to the taste of all the neighbours, who preferred things to remain the way they were; and
 - Location – first that it was in Stanley Park, which they felt was inappropriate, and second that it was too close to residences, whose owners would bear the brunt of the negative impacts (Personal Interviews, June 15, 16, July 3, 7, 12).

Chapter 4 will examine in more detail the various elements of changes in parks that are controversial to the neighbours and general public, and how this controversy was managed.

Work took place without incident over a number of weekends from July through September 2003, over one of the driest summers on record. The Garden was completed in time for the opening celebration on September 20, 2003.

There are a number of themes that emerge from the case study, most of which mirror the precedents. First, in all three cases, consultation was not satisfactory for all the stakeholders involved. As well, each project brought up a number of concerns by neighbours related to the project's impact on the liveability of their community – whether it was noise, traffic, or visual pollution. Finally, the privatization of public space was a concern.

Chapter Four

Discussion:

Controversy and Compromise

This chapter will examine in more detail the various elements of change in parks that are controversial, and what compromises were reached to manage the controversy. While the nature of the controversy will be discussed for all three projects, for the most part the management discussion will only cover the skate park and the Garden, as the volleyball facility was not approved. This is not to discount the importance of the volleyball facility, as knowing what didn't work can be as important as knowing what did. There are a number of impacts that were shared by more than one of the examples studied. These will be examined first, as it can be assumed they have a more universal application, and controversy over these impacts can be expected in future planning processes whether or not the changes being proposed are similar in nature or not. The impacts that were unique to each of the 3 examples studied will then be examined. Each section will discuss the area of concern, how the concern was addressed, and whether or not the results were satisfactory.

Consultation

There were a number of concerns shared by both the precedents and the case study, notably lack of consultation, change, noise, traffic, location, privatization of public space, and design. Chief among those was that of consultation. Most individuals and groups that were opposed to the new facilities cited the lack of notice and information regarding the proposed changes. For example, one Garden neighbour felt that the notification process was flawed, because it was assumed that no answer meant a tacit acceptance or support of the project (Personal Interview B, July 7). Both the developer and the local residents of CityGate were quoted in the *Vancouver Courier* as feeling that

there was insufficient notice regarding the location of the skate park. On balance, one staff member interviewed felt that for public processes in general flagging the lack of consultation was actually a coded method for people to say they were not in favour of the facility, without having to come right out and say it (Personal Interview, June 15).



There was a great deal of dialogue and a number of compromises were made in attempting to manage the controversy. The groups involved in advancing both the Garden and the skate park worked extensively with Park Board staff to choose a suitable site. They also met often with the surrounding community, and accepted modifications to their proposals that would address some of the community impacts, as will be discussed in more detail. WERA went so far as to include a

“Gardeners Agreement¹” that each participant would commit to, modelled after successful Good Neighbour Agreements used with licensed establishments by the City of Vancouver. In the interviews, Park Board staff highlighted these activities as a strength in the Garden process.

The ability of the community group to host its own public meetings and open houses, and work out those differences and issues with the local community, and take the time and energy to actually respond to that process ... the commitment to make the public consultation process work ... (it was) one of the better community processes in terms of notifying people and trying to get their input, and reporting back to them, which is a weakness of ours. The only issue that came up was the residents, and then, as I said earlier, that was dealt with in a very respectful and collaborative way (Personal Interview A, July 7).

In contrast, the volleyball process did not include the neighbourhood until later in the process, after the Board turned down the first proposal for a tournament facility at Spanish Banks West.

In the fall of 1997, the Park Board instructed staff “to work with the BC Volleyball Association and the other relevant stakeholders to develop a management plan for beach/sand court volleyball including possible expansion of permanent posts in dedicated areas, and to report back to the Board in the spring of 1998.” A committee of Park Board staff and representatives from the BC Volleyball Association met again and developed the accompanying “Management Plan for Beach Volleyball” (Vancouver Park Board, May 11, 1998, <http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/parks/board/1998/980511/index.htm>)

¹ Note that this Agreement has not been formalized, as at the time of the Garden planning the Park Board were in the midst of a review of their community garden policy, which remains ongoing. In the interim the garden would operate under the policies that WERA, the gardeners, the neighbours, and the Park Board concurred will ultimately be contained in the “Gardeners Agreement”. The Agreement will continue to be referred to as such for the purposes of this report.

Note that the adjacent residents were not identified as a relevant stakeholder, and that the “Management Plan” and accompanying proposal for a facility at Jericho Beach had not been developed with their input before going to wider consultation. The neighbours did not see any of their concerns reflected in the proposal and likely went into the process in a defensive mode. The proponents were likely consultation-weary and frustrated, as they had gone through a failed process at Spanish Banks West. There was little in the way of evidence available to the author that showed significant compromise on the part of the volleyball community.

This contrasts with the later part of the process, after the proposal for Jericho had been defeated. A task force to identify alternate locations was formed, composed of staff, volleyball proponents, and citizens opposed to the development at Jericho. It is noteworthy that the stakeholders, having gotten over their initial state of irritation, were able to work together constructively and complete their task together.

Change

Another concern that emerged as a significant theme with the Garden project and the beach volleyball proposal was the notion of change. Neighbouring residents and local advocacy groups expressed that things were fine the way they were, or at most that any change should create a more passive and ecologically sound park environment. While the discussion in this chapter covers most of the issues related to specific change, it is worth looking at the reaction to change in a general sense. Two of the Garden’s neighbours noted:

Whatever it was going to be we didn’t want it ... not in our back yard (Personal Interview B, July 7).

I think it’s when you are so used to something for a long time, and it changes, you don’t exactly welcome it. Many of these projects had happened before, not necessarily here, but in my life as I knew them, at sometimes really great expense, and much more serious disruption. A year later, there is nobody there, because the interest sort of went away (Personal Interview, July 12).

In responding to the concerns about change, it is revealing to note what the Park Board staff felt regarding how it was managed. Both staff members interviewed noted how the Garden proponents dealt with the neighbours:

We understand them (the concerns) and we share them with you, however, we still have to move on, and to ensure that you're not left behind we want you to come with us (Personal Interview A, July 7).

I'm very pleased that nobody went postal about the small but very focused neighbourhood response we did get from that one building. Everybody stayed calm, nobody got vicious about it except the people in the building, which included a telephone threat that I got that they would tear out anything that was planted (Personal Interview, June 15).

Noise

In all three activities, noise was mentioned as an anticipated negative impact. With the Garden it was the belief that groups of people would congregate and even play music at the site. With the skateboard park it was the noise of the activity itself, or the skating to and from the park, and with the volleyball facility it was the noise associated with tournaments – amplified music and announcements.

Ms. Gram suggested that the organizers should be told that the amplifiers should be used for announcements only (*Vancouver Courier*, December 3, 2001).

With the skateboard park, it was agreed that users would most likely be arriving by transit, and that they be encouraged to travel to and from the site via the Stadium SkyTrain Station. This was preferable to the alternative - Main Street Station, which was closer to the residents. With the garden, it was agreed the Garden Agreement would include a clause that there would be no amplified music brought to the garden, but that it would be open to the public for quiet contemplation. There have been no reported noise complaints, and both neighbours interviewed noted that the terraced area where the Garden is located had remained a quiet space.

Traffic and Parking

Transportation consistently ranks in the top two concerns of Lower Mainland residents, along with crime and public safety. Therefore it is not surprising that traffic and parking are issues in all three cases.

The site selection processes took very different paths when addressing this issue. For beach volleyball, the

focus was on accommodating the demand for parking, and finding a site for the volleyball facility that was close to plentiful parking. In the case of the skateboard park, it was recognized that the patrons of the facility would be using public transit or their own active transportation to access the chosen site, and this was taken into account in the site selection process. For the garden, there was the desire from the beginning to have a car-free facility. Staff wanted a site that was "attractive for walking or bicycling or anything except bringing your car to the community that would use it (Personal Interview, June 15)." WERA wanted to support the West End's inherent walkability and build their reputation as an active partner in creating a more liveable city (Personal Interviews A&B, June 16). When the adjacent neighbours raised traffic and parking as an issue, WERA readily agreed that the garden would be "car-free" and this will be codified in the Garden Agreement. The outcome of this has been largely positive – according to one neighbour "there wasn't the parking problem except on one or two (occasions) (Personal Interview B, July 7)."

Private use of public space

There's an underlying theme ... that runs through things like volleyball courts, through skateboard parks ... it's this whole very basic issue of the private use of a public good. That is probably the single strongest common thread in our decision making (Personal Interview, June 15)

This quote from a senior Park Board staff member illuminates a controversial theme that emerged most strongly in the case of the volleyball proposal, and to a lesser extent with the Garden. It did not come up with the downtown skateboard park at the proposed location. This is likely because the preceding use had been a parking lot, as the privatization of public space has come up in other skateboard park discussions (*Vancouver Courier*, September 10, 2003). As noted earlier, there wasn't evidence of initial compromise on the part of the volleyball proponents, who were focused on finding a beach location for their facility. The volleyballers saw themselves as a part of the "Vancouver lifestyle", and as such thought their needs should be facilitated. As Colin Metcalf, then president of the Vancouver Field Sports Federation, stated:

"his sport is hugely popular during the summer months and it's a great way to get people outside and exercise, he said. [Beach volleyball] is part of the active lifestyle of this city and shouldn't become the victim of NIMBYism (*Vancouver Courier*, August 1, 2001).

While the name of the sport is beach volleyball, in fact a beach is not a necessary ingredient, as the facility located on the grounds of the Golden Spike Pub in Port Moody shows.



Golden Spike Pub
Port Moody



Beach Volleyball court
Golden Spike Pub

The volleyball proponents may have had more success if they were willing to find an inland location. As one of the Park Board staff members put it:

The insistence that they be on the water hurt them too, as opposed to acknowledging that if you had sand, you could have an inland location on this thing (Personal Interview, June 15).

The end result was a lack of community support as noted in the quote below from the staff report.

The community believes that volleyball is already allocated a good portion of prime waterfront in the general vicinity and that the remaining waterfront areas should be preserved and protected for more passive pursuits (Vancouver Park Board, January 4, 2001, <http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/parks/board/2002/020114/volleyball.pdf>).

The process for developing the Garden was more proactive. Park Board staff anticipated the perception of privatization while the garden was at the pre-application stage. This resulted in the suggestion that the Matching Fund grant proposal not be for an allotment garden, with fences and private plots, but rather be an open community garden. There was also the suggestion to partner with the Ecology Society and restrict the garden to flowers and native plants, but with no vegetables allowed. As a result, there was little controversy over the privatization of Stanley Park, and the support of an important community partner was gained. Noted a Park Board staff person:

A vegetable garden is inherently selfish. A flower garden is inherently an open and sharing thing. You grow flowers to please others, you grow tomatoes to satisfy yourself and feed yourself (Personal Interview, June 15).

At the same time WERA needed to have sufficient direct sunlight for a successful garden, and were less compromising in terms of physically acceptable sites. There was some displacement of existing users, as the grassy terrace was being used regularly as an unofficial “off-leash” area, and the hillside was used by the occasional group of tennis players waiting their turn at the adjacent courts. As one gardener noted:

People waiting now are sitting in the plant beds, putting out cigarettes (Personal Interview A, June 16)



In hindsight, the Garden could have been designed to accommodate the tennis spectators. This points to the probability that in a dense urban environment there are no leftover spaces – just more and less visible uses.

Loss of Green Space

The loss of green space was controversial for both the Garden and the volleyball proposal, but was not an issue for the skateboard park for reasons already discussed. The site proposed for the garden was an under-utilized terrace of lawn that had very poor drainage and turned into a swamp in heavy rains. It was only used as a de facto off-leash area and by people waiting to use the adjacent tennis courts. However, the local residents were initially fearful of what would replace it. According to one neighbour it was:

Not so much the noise or anything else, but losing that nice stretch of lawn ... (there is a) history of huge oversized concrete things (Personal Interview, July 12).

The volleyball proponents appeared unaware of the history and ecology of their proposed site. Formerly an airstrip during WWII, the site hosted Habitat in 1976, the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements. After Habitat, the Department of National Defence had planned a large housing development. A huge public outcry arose and over 20,000 signatures were collected in support of turning the area into a park. The end result was most of the hangars were torn down, fill was dumped that eventually became overgrown, and the site was turned into a park. In 1981 the Park Board approved over \$50,000 for habitat restoration in the park. At that same meeting, they approved the following motion:

The Vancouver parks board commit itself to preventing active recreation activities from impinging upon the natural passive areas of Jericho Park (Vancouver Courier, December 3, 2001).

The site they were referring to and the site that received habitat restoration were not the area that was proposed for the volleyball facility. However twenty years later many of the same people who had fought for the creation of Jericho Park still lived in the neighbourhood, and brought these issues up at the public hearing and with the media. It was stated that the proposed site for the volleyball courts was the same site the Park Board had promised to protect (Personal Communication, September 15).



Proposed Jericho Site
Beach Volleyball Tournament Facility

The Gardens, however, were designed with the local ecology in mind from the start. Stormwater drainage was improved with the use of a constructed swale and holding trench. About 40 percent of the garden area was dedicated to a series of native species demonstration plots, which are used in the Ecology Society's education programs. As well, the Garden Agreement will commit gardeners to organic horticulture (Personal Interviews A&B, June 16). However, it is noteworthy that the ecological aspects of the garden had little bearing in people's opinion of the garden. In the end, it may have been a more prosaic reason that there was little controversy, as one neighbour noted:

Probably my main satisfaction is that at least no tree came down because of it (Personal Interview, July 12).

Design and Appearance

This area of controversy was primarily relevant for the garden. Although there were some complaints about the design of the volleyball proposal, specifically about the signage and fencing during tournaments, they were more closely related to the privatization of public park space. There was significant concern amongst some of the neighbours as to what the garden would look like.

I thought it would be nothing but earth and whatever residue there would be left from the summer flowers. Many people visualize community gardens as long rows like bowling alley. I am very much in favour of community gardens if they beautify the area, (but) in this particular case there was no problem, it didn't need beautification (Personal Interview B, July 7).

The garden proponents worked with a volunteer landscape architect to develop a design that would complement Stanley Park and the native plantings, and satisfy any concerns about what is possible for a community garden. It was designed with the north end being all native plant plots, which would be taken care of by the Ecology Society. This was done under the assumption that these plots would be better taken care of because they would be tended by an established organization with staff, and that as they would be native plants, it would be the most natural and inoffensive to the neighbours (Personal Interview A, June 16). However, taste is an individual thing, as illustrated by a quote from a neighbour.

It still looks piece-meal. I'm a person who likes symmetry ... (it) didn't look terribly balanced ... now that it's summer with the leaves on the trees we only see about one-third of it (Personal Interview B, July 7).



This neighbour was pleased that their view of the garden was limited. However, they also expressed disappointment that the flowers were not visible from their end of the garden, contradicting the proponent's assumptions that the neighbours would prefer viewing the Ecology Society's native plantings to the community's flower plots. This point illustrates the fact that had the neighbours been involved in a proactive way during the design process, they could have had their vision incorporated. However, at the time that the garden was being designed, they were strongly against it, and this did not present an opportunity for positive dialogue. At the same time, another neighbour who was quite concerned initially and who wrote a letter to the Park Board in opposition to the project has since changed her mind.

The actual design is very pleasing now – going away from the straight plots. Utilizing a large meadow, and bringing it into a meadow, is quite lovely. A little spot of brightness really is

very nice. Quite frankly, to say, now that it's in full bloom there, it's quite pretty, quite pretty to look at (Personal Interview, July 12).



Attitude

An examination of the documents and interviews reveals a contrast in attitude between the two successful projects and the non-successful one. From an examination of the available literature, it appears that the beach volleyball proponents did not exhibit the same level of compromise, which likely inflamed community opposition.

Colin Metcalfe, president of the Vancouver Field Sports Federation, generated a barrage of boos and catcalls when he told board members that beach volleyball is "under attack." The heckling grew in volume as he compared opponents of the volleyball facility to a "hyperbolic neighbourhood of nattering, nabob NIMBYs," prompting chairwoman Laura McDiarmid to appeal to the crowd to show respect for the speakers (*Vancouver Courier*, December 3, 2001).

This is not to say there wasn't name calling on both sides of the debate. In response to the negative picture of volleyball players painted by those opposed to the expansion, a player wrote a letter to the editor in the Dec. 17 edition of the *Courier* stating:

I am (a) non-BMW-driving, non-scantly clad, non-beer swilling, unoiled, glad-to-be-active-and-not-a-couch-potato volleyball player.

It is not possible to determine if this contrast was also a result of the media looking to generate controversy in order to make a good story. However, as noted in this quote from a Park Board staff member, there appears to

be a difference between the attitude of the volleyball proponents and that of the other two projects.

(The Park Board) foster entry level and truly recreational and amateur sport. We're here for the average family. The elite, because they're inherently righteous, are quite offended by this policy of supporting everyman as opposed to supporting the heroes. I think that's where the volleyballers went off track (Personal Interview, June 15).

The skateboarders, on the other hand, with little in the way of public sympathy or earned political capital, approached the process with a "Mother-ma By-I" attitude (Personal Interview, June 15). They proved to be active listeners and took the concerns expressed by the community as challenges to be overcome. Likewise, the community garden proponents, sensitive that their only significant previous engagement with the Park Board had been their disagreement over the expansion of the S-Curve and Stanley Park Causeway, strove to remain conciliatory and positive (Personal Interview, June 16). The importance of remaining positive and open to compromise is further illuminated by this comment from a Park Board staff member:

What I find most interesting at some of these meetings is things pop up that you just couldn't imagine, and in some cases, yeah, you're right, it's an issue (Personal Interview A, July 7).

Dust and Illegal Activities

There were two concerns that were quite unique to each of the individual precedents. Opponents of the beach volleyball courts were concerned about the dust that would result from the sport being played on sand courts. As noted in the minutes for a public hearing on beach volleyball, one neighbour to the existing courts at Kitsilano Beach felt that the dust associated with the sport needed to be addressed in a more proactive way:

She hopes the watering will reduce the dust and any cost should be borne by the players. The practice sites should also be watered if possible (Vancouver Park Board, November 2, 1998).



Finally, the opponents of the skateboard park were concerned that the facility would bring an increase in illegal behaviour, most notably graffiti, drugs, and vandalism.

In a letter to the *Courier*, the CityGate group raises a list of concerns, including noise, lack of limits on hours of operation, lack of an observation area outside the park and a planned graffiti wall, which residents worry will encourage more graffiti in the area (*Vancouver Courier*, April 2, 2003).

According to Corey McIntyre of the Vancouver Skate Park Coalition:

Many people have the misconception that skateboarders are drug users (*Vancouver Courier*, March 17, 2003).

However, these fears were not shared by the Park Board staff or elected representatives, as the following quotes show.

Mark Vulliamy, manager of recreation and planning for the parks board, said he met last Tuesday night with about 30 concerned residents of the CityGate housing complex, located at Main and Quebec streets. Also on hand were Vancouver police Insp. Dave Jones and Corey McIntyre of the Skate Park Coalition (*Vancouver Courier* March 17, 2003).

Comm. Allan De Genova, parks board (sic) liaison for the area, suggested Citygate residents look to Hastings Park as an example of how a skate park can work. Despite neighbours' initial concerns about increased garbage, graffiti and vandalism, the skateboarders have taken on responsibility for

maintaining the facility and keeping noise to a minimum.

“There have been zero problems,” he said. “The skaters have taken ownership of the park and it’s never looked better” (reference).

It is worth noting that a police officer also attended a community meeting regarding the proposed skate park at Quilchena Park ((Vancouver Park Board, Sept 16, 2003,

http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/parks/board/2003/PE030916/MoM_Sept16_03.pdf).

Unfortunately, neither the Courier articles nor the Park Board reports mention the Vancouver Police Department’s perspective on skateboard parks. However, both skate parks were unanimously approved by the Park Board so it could be inferred that the police were involved to assuage the community’s fears of illegal behaviour.



Mayor Larry Campbell
Manager of Park Board Planning Mark Vulliamy
Park Board Commissioner Lindsey Popes
Corey McIntyre Vancouver Skate Park Coalition
Opening of the Downtown Skate Park

Undocumented Concerns

It should be noted that the above list is not exhaustive. Given the differing data-gathering methodology of the precedents and the case study – a survey of the available on-line material versus in-person interviews – it is quite probable that the dissenting population in the precedents had additional concerns that were not documented.

The controversial issues revealed in the three examples can be grouped into two broad categories – process and liveability. The issues that would fall under process include consultation, change, and attitude. It is clear from the discussion above that dialogue between interest groups is a key to success. The issues that fall into the liveability category include noise, traffic and parking, loss of green space, appearance, and illegal behaviour. The concluding chapter will suggest policy implications regarding these issues.

Chapter 5

Policy Implications and Conclusion

This chapter will suggest a number of policy implications that emerge from the preceding discussion and areas for further study. People are often suspicious when they first engage in change, though once stakeholders get beyond this stage, dialogue can begin to move people. As mentioned, the controversy encountered can be broken into two broad categories – process issues and liveability impacts. There are a number of steps the Park Board could take to address these issues and increase dialogue in future planning processes. Issues that could be addressed to improve process concerns and liveability impacts are:

- Proactive communication;
- Use of precedents;
- Facilitating partnerships, education, and stewardship;
- Better record keeping; and
- Good Neighbour Agreements.

Proactive Communication

Beginning communication early in a process with all affected stakeholders and continuing dialogue throughout could help turn concerns and constraints into opportunities. Concerns can be expected to arise no matter what the topic area. As one staff report notes:

The consultation process also has a longer term objective of building and sustaining a communication bridge between skateboarders and the rest of the local community. Of the more than thirty skateboard facilities which now exist in the Region, none appears to have been built without some initial degree of opposition. However, park and recreation planners from other jurisdictions who have confirmed this fact also note that once such a facility is in operation, public support tends to build. Critical

to project success is that both the end users and the broader community are engaged with design and operating decisions so that the end result is a facility which is attractive, fun and safe (Vancouver Park Board, September 16, 2003, http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/parks/board/2003/PE030916/MoM_Sept16_03.pdf).

Precedents

Precedents could be used in two ways – to generate ideas and to mitigate fears. As mentioned earlier, Park Board staff had seen community flower gardens work in other jurisdictions, and felt this was an appropriate avenue to expand community stewardship and recreation in the inner city. Precedents can also be used to mitigate fears. This was particularly important in the case of the skateboard park. Helping groups to find successful precedents could be an important part of the consultation process. As noted in the discussion, a police officer was brought in to talk with residents about their fears regarding a proposed skateboard park, based on the police's experience with existing parks.

Partnership, Education, and Stewardship

There is always an inherent partnership with any new recreation proposal in Vancouver's parks, as it involves a new user group, existing neighbours and park users, and the Park Board. In this context, partnership includes linking both formally and informally for support and program development. This could include partnering with other organizations, the community at large through education, and the biosphere that supports life through stewardship, as was the case with the Garden. The

following Park Board staff quote would be valuable knowledge for any group wanting their activity accommodated in Vancouver's parks.

Anything that the community wants to do in partnership with us that has a strong learning component automatically moves up the approval ratcheting (Personal Interview, June 15).

There was a missed opportunity with the skateboard park to utilize alternative treatments for stormwater management. The landscaped areas could have served as retention ponds with native plantings rather than the traditional ornamental plantings and a reliance on the sewer system.



Conventional Stormwater Management
Downtown Skateboard Park



Ornamental Landscaping
Downtown Skateboard Park

Increasing the connection between stewardship and environmental considerations would also help groups to

gain support for their proposals. As one Park Board staff member noted about the Garden:

This is where the role of the Ecology Society was critical. We rolled into it the notion of the a native plant interpretive element into this thing to say this is one of our brother or sister organizations that helps us and they're endeavouring to create a product that frankly we couldn't do (Personal Interview, June 15).

Record Keeping

There is some room for improvement in the Park Board's current record keeping in order to enhance learning opportunities. For example, in the public hearing minutes, there is only a list of speakers, and then a list of bulleted points raised by those speakers. It is not possible to know who said what. In addition, staff reports don't always contain facts that would be of most interest to stakeholders. The following excerpt provides an example:

Because of the high level of interest caused by the proposal to build a skateboarding facility at Quilchena Park, Inspector Dave Jones from the Vancouver Police Department was invited to discuss the relationship between skateboarding and potential criminal activity, a topic that had been brought up as a concern by many nearby homeowners (Vancouver Park Board, Sept 16, 2003, http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/parks/board/2003/PE030916/MoM_Sept16_03.pdf

Unfortunately, the minutes do not go on to note what the officer said and an important learning opportunity has been lost. While those present at the meeting received an expert's opinion on the impact of skateboarding on public safety, incomplete minutes prevent that information from being shared with the larger community.

Good Neighbour Agreement

This agreement, and specifically the controversies it directly addresses, proved to be effective in a number of areas. Dialogue took place between the neighbours and WERA, initially mediated by the Park Board but increasingly one-on-one. Potential impacts were acknowledged, giving the neighbours a voice, even if they were not initially in favour of the location choice. Concessions were negotiated and it was agreed that:

- No radios or amplified music be brought to the Garden site;
- Gardeners use active transportation to visit the Garden, and not drive; and
- Organic horticulture would be employed.

This concept could be adapted to numerous other activities. There may not be the same ability to obtain a 100 percent buy-in, as few other activities have the one-on-one commitment to a given space that community gardening does. However, organizations that represent specific interest groups could commit themselves to follow and promote the liveability assurances that a Good Neighbour Agreement would outline. For example, the volleyball and sports federation organizations could commit their members to using public transit or active transportation to reach the facilities. They could have a requirement that tournament participants not arrive by car, and promote alternative transportation for spectators, or they could follow the lead of other organizations and provide public transit tickets as part of their tournament admission.

Future Research and Conclusion

There are a number of areas that warrant further research. With regard to the precedent selection, there was some discrepancy in scale, as has been earlier mentioned. There is also the fact that the Garden was promoted by local neighbourhood advocates who were also future users, versus the volleyball and skateboard facilities, which were promoted by larger regional organizations representing the user groups. As one staff member noted:

I think that makes a world of difference, when you're one of us out in the community, people respect that more than if you're wearing a hat of an organization that they can point to and criticize and question your motives (Personal Interview A, July 7).

Finally there is the fact that the Garden was approved by a committee mandated to make decisions regarding

the Neighbourhood Matching Fund, while the other two projects went through a very public process and were approved (or not) at a meeting of the elected Board. A study could be conducted that examines projects within similar parameters – for example, all projects that are funded under the Neighbourhood Matching Fund, or all projects that are involved in the Park Board's Park Partners Program.

Another area for further exploration is how to address the issue of respecting existing collective agreements as community stewardship projects grow in size and number. Currently the maintenance and expansion of park facilities is done by unionized labour. It will be necessary to redefine existing relationships as the community gets more involved. This issue was not anticipated by the garden proponents during the planning proposal, but was raised by staff in the interviews (Personal Interview, June 15). One methodology would be to examine a series of case studies across a number of jurisdictions that have mature community stewardship programs. As one staff member noted:

We sold this thing as a demonstration project in some ways, and in particular this helped us over any issues with the collective agreement (Personal Interview, June 15).

Further research would help to chart a way forward as community stewardship projects move into the mainstream and are no longer demonstration projects.

The whole topic of community gardens also deserves further investigation. As noted earlier, many good suggestions from those involved for how to improve the design of the Stanley Park Community Garden were revealed in the research, but are outside the parameters of this study.



Mock-up of Future Garden Plots at Downtown Condominium Marketing Centre



Additional local study is warranted to examine the attitudes towards the private use of public space. How do various stakeholders view this topic, and what shapes their views?



Streethockey Tournament
Expo Boulevard

In conclusion, this study has examined the causes of controversy in three projects proposed for Vancouver's parks, and how well that controversy was managed. In two of the three cases the controversy was addressed sufficiently that the projects were approved, and are now open and actively used. In the third case, the controversy proved insurmountable. Overall, the causes of controversy can be grouped into two broad categories – process issues and liveability impacts. It is hoped that this study will give the Park Board a clearer understanding of the controversies inherent in managing change, and the role of constructive dialogue when introducing new recreation activities to Vancouver's parks. As one staff member noted:

It's becoming easier and easier to convince neighbours that this is a positive thing (Personal Interview B, June 16).

Appendix A

Case Study Interview Script

Stanley Park Community Gardens

What was your role in the Stanley Park Community Garden?

What can you tell me about how the Garden got started – who was involved and how was the location chosen?

What was your opinion when you first heard about the Garden?

What was proposed to address your concerns?

Were your concerns adequately addressed – why or why not?

What are your feelings now that the garden has been built?

Do the various environmental features of the Garden affect your opinion? Would you prefer the Garden did not have onsite composting and stormwater retention, a car-free commitment by gardeners traveling to the Garden, and promotion of native plants?

Does the non-traditional design of the garden affect your opinion? Would you have preferred a traditional design of wooden boxes in rows?

Do you have any recommendations for the planning of future joint operation and community stewardship projects in city parks?

Is there anything else you'd like to add?

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Downtown Skateboard Park

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ENQUIRIES
Skateboard Park
January 25, 1999
<http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/parks/board/1999/990208/m99jan25.pdf>

Capital Plan 2000 -2002
Date: September 21, 1999
<http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/parks/board/1999/990927/cpfinal.pdf>

Victory Square Park - Design Concept
Regular Board Meeting
Monday, April 22, 2002
<http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/parks/board/2002/020506/minutes.pdf>

VICTORY SQUARE - DESIGN CONCEPT UPDATE
May 16, 2002
<http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/parks/board/2002/020527/victory.pdf>

Board of Parks and Recreation
Regular Board Meeting
7:00 pm Monday, February 24, 2003
Development of a Downtown Skateboard Facility - Quebec and Union Streets

Development of a Downtown Skateboard Facility -
Quebec and Union Streets
MINUTES OF MEETING
OF THE BOARD OF PARKS AND RECREATION
ON MONDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2003
<http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/parks/board/2003/030310/m03feb24.pdf>
Development of a Downtown Skateboard Facility -
Quebec and Union Streets

1. Sunset Beach Parking Lot Use
July 17, 2003, Park Board P&E committee
http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/parks/board/2003/pe030916/MoM_July17_03.PDF

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Planning and Environment Committee
Board of Parks and Recreation
September 16, 2003
Quilchena Park
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HELD IN THE PARK BOARD OFFICE
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Vancouver Courier

Show some respect - November 7, 2001
Grafitti and skateboarding at Victory Square
<http://www.vancourier.com/issues01/112201/entertainment/112201en6.html>

Park planners looking to teens for input
teen survey by park planners - Jan 8 2002
<http://www.vancourier.com/issues02/012102/news/012102nn3.html>

Long-awaited upgrade for Strathcona Park -
January 14, 2002
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3, 2002
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Skateboard, blading helmet law in works - October
16, 2002
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Boarder gives thumbs up to skate park plan
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<http://www.vancourier.com/issues03/023203/news/023203nn4.html>

Developer never informed about skateboard park
Bosa at CityGate - March 17, 2003
<http://www.vancourier.com/issues03/033103/news/033103nn6.html>

Online poll: March 15th - March 20th, 2003

Do you support a skateboard park downtown?

Yes 80% No 20 %

Citygate towers residents say skate park will put
city at risk - April 2, 2003
<http://www.vancourier.com/issues03/041103/news/041103nn3.html>

City considering fate of unofficial skate park
Cassiar Tunnel Skakepark April 21, 2003
<http://www.vancourier.com/issues03/044103/news/044103nn4.html>

Skateboards safe from the Man - April 23, 2003
<http://www.vancourier.com/issues03/044203/news/044203nn4.html>
mentions P&E committee approval of DT
Skateboard Park

West Siders don't want skate park - September 10,
2003
<http://www.vancourier.com/issues03/092203/news/092203nn5.html>

Nova building perfect for youth park - August 11,
2003
Heritage Building in SEFC
<http://www.vancourier.com/issues03/082103/opinion/082103le6.html>

Skaters zipping around plaza-legally – September 15, 2004
<http://www.vancourier.com/issues04/092204/news/092204nn10.html>

CBC Vancouver

Cold cash for cool skating jobs
Port Moody – July 18, 2002
http://vancouver.cbc.ca/regional/servlet/View?filename=bc_skate020718

New 'street style' skateboard park – February 25, 2003
http://vancouver.cbc.ca/regional/servlet/View?filename=bc_skater20030225

Beach Volleyball Courts

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THE MANAGEMENT OF VOLLEYBALL ON VANCOUVER BEACHES
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June 1999

<http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/parks/board/1999/990621/brproc.pdf>

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OF THE BOARD OF PARKS AND RECREATION
HELD IN THE PARK BOARD OFFICE
ON MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 1999
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April 30, 2001
DEVELOPMENT OF AN OUTDOOR 12 COURT
VOLLEYBALL FACILITY
<http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/parks/board/2001/010514/volleyball.pdf>

MINUTES OF MEETING
OF THE BOARD OF PARKS AND RECREATION
HELD IN THE PARK BOARD OFFICE
ON MONDAY, MAY 14, 2001
Development of an Outdoor 12 Court Volleyball
Facility
<http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/parks/board/2001/010528/minutes.pdf>

January 4, 2002
DEVELOPMENT OF AN OUTDOOR 12 COURT
VOLLEYBALL FACILITY
RECOMMENDATION
<http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/parks/board/2002/020114/volleyball.pdf>
There were no delegations to this report

Park Board Receives Report on Beach Volleyball
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May 27, 2002 Staff report dated May 15, 2002
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Anticipation of imminent vacation leads to bugs list – August 1, 2001

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West Side volleyball opponents a bunch of NIMBYs: sports boss – August 1, 2001

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Another great spot gone to dogs – August 15, 2001

Letter to the Editor

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Serene park no place for noisy volleyball courts – August 15, 2001

<http://www.vancourier.com/issues01/083201/opinion/083201op3.html>

Put volleyball courts on private land – August 22, 2001

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V-ballers mobilize, belatedly – August 27, 2001

<http://www.vancourier.com/issues01/085101/news/085101nn2.html>

Court controversy continues – October 17, 2001

<http://www.vancourier.com/issues01/103201/news/103201nn4.html>

Results of our Nov. 29-Dec 6th, 2001 poll question:

"Should the parks board allow 12 permanent sand volleyball courts at Jericho Park?" generated 144 votes.

As of the unofficial cutoff point for tabulated results on noon Dec. 6, 43 participants, or 30 per cent, had votes yes, 101, or 70 per cent, voted no.

Commissioners hear pros and cons of volleyball at Jericho Beach Park – December 3, 2001

<http://www.vancourier.com/issues01/121101/news/121101nn2.html>

Send beer-swilling volleyballers to warehouse on Terminal Ave – December 6, 2001

<http://www.vancourier.com/issues01/121201/opinion/121201le4.html>

Elderly 'NIMBYs' helped create Jericho Park – December 12, 2001

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Misinformation clouds V-ball debate – December 17, 2001

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Beach volleyballers outplayed by politically savvy opponents – January 9, 2002

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Sports field users say funding falls far short – March 17, 2002

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Task force picks new volleyball site, won't say where – May 13, 2002

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<http://www.vancourier.com/issues03/094103/news/094103nn3.html>