

REPORT

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT

To: Mayor Jonathan Coté and Members of Council in Regular Meeting Date: June 13, 2016

From: Beverly Grieve, Director of Development Services File: 13.2630.10

Subject: 824 Agnes Street – Chinese Benevolent Association (CBA) Park Visioning Consultation Report

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council endorse the use of 824 Agnes Street as a park which would commemorate Chinese history and contributions to New Westminster and provide an important amenity to the Downtown neighbourhood.

THAT Council endorse the retention of a landscape architect to develop a concept and design for the park based on the general themes which emerged from the visioning sessions and that this work commence in 2017.

THAT Council direct staff to explore additional sources of funding for park development, including applying for grants related to diversity, heritage and infrastructure.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is threefold: (1) to share the results of the visioning sessions with Advisory Committees to Council, associations representing the Chinese community and the public; (2) to seek Council endorsement to retain a landscape architect to develop a concept and design for the park; and (3) to clarify existing and to explore additional sources of funding in support of park development.

SUMMARY

As part of the Chinese Reconciliation Process, there was support for exploring a more appropriate and respectful use of the Chinese Benevolent Association (CBA) site, which has been used as a temporary dog off leash enclosure since 2009.

The CBA site was the focal point of the Chinese community in New Westminster. It has been included on a list of the top ten most endangered sites by the New Westminster Heritage Preservation Society and considered for provincial recognition as a Chinese Canadian Historic Place by Heritage BC.

On February 18, 2013, Council directed staff to conduct a consultation process to inform a vision, concept and design for a park which would commemorate Chinese history and contributions on the CBA site. Staff has completed the consultation process, which included a number of visioning sessions with Advisory Committees to Council, associations representing the Chinese community and the public. The visioning session summaries are attached and the general themes are detailed in this report.

Based on the consultation, there was overwhelming support for a park which would commemorate Chinese history and contributions and provide a green space and refuge in the densely populated Downtown neighbourhood.

POLICY CONTEXT

The City's *Official Community Plan* (2011) includes the following goals under Quality of Life Issues:

- *foster multicultural understanding and promote harmonious intercultural relations;*
- *continue to work towards meeting the cultural needs of the community; and*
- *promote New Westminster as a healthy community and encourage diversity at the neighbourhood scale and the provision of complete communities.*

In November 2007, Council established a Multiculturalism Advisory Committee. The purpose of this body “is to promote multiculturalism and intercultural relations within the New Westminster and to foster engagement by all citizens in civic affairs and community life.” One of its primary objectives is “to foster an awareness about and understanding of the city’s multicultural population.”

The *Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Plan* (2008) identified the need for future new park space in the Downtown to serve the growing population in this neighbourhood.

BACKGROUND

Chinese Reconciliation Process

As part of the Chinese Reconciliation Process, there was support for exploring a more appropriate and respectful use of the Chinese Benevolent Association (CBA) site at 824

Agnes Street. In 2009, this site, as part of a *Downtown Nuisance Abatement Strategy*, was turned into a temporary off leash dog enclosure.

Chinese History in New Westminster

The Chinese were a part of the city from its beginning, arriving with other gold prospectors. Most were migratory but by 1861, a number of Chinese businesses had established. By 1884, there were 1,680 Chinese residents in New Westminster and the city was known as the second port of entry, after Victoria, for Chinese workers.

There is evidence of at least two former Chinatowns in New Westminster. The Great Fire of 1898 resulted in the destruction of much of the ‘Front Street’ Chinatown. As a result, a new Chinatown emerged in the area around Agnes, Carnarvon and Eighth Streets. This area included several prominent buildings, including the Chinese Freemasons’ Hall, the Chinese Methodist Mission and the ‘Old Man’s Home.’

Chinese Benevolent Association (CBA) Site

The CBA site had previously housed the Chinese ‘Old Man’s Home,’ which served for generations as a sort of civic centre for the Chinese community in New Westminster and was used as a school, a hospital and a residential care facility for the elderly. Built in 1905, it was also the home of the CBA.

The CBA property and building were gifted to the City in 1979. This building represented the last remaining structure of the ‘Westside’ Chinatown. The building was not adequately secured and fell into a state of disrepair and was subsequently demolished.

The New Westminster Heritage Preservation Society (NWHPS) has included the property on its list of the top ten most endangered sites. This was the only site without a building. The NWHPS noted that “heritage is not just about structures but about history and some sites should be preserved because they are rich in history.” The NWHPS also noted that “little has been done to recognize the contributions of a part of the city’s pioneer community, that of the Chinese.”

DISCUSSION

Consultation Process

City staff implemented a consultation process starting in 2013. This process included a series of visioning sessions with Advisory Committees to Council, associations representing the Chinese Community and the public. The purpose of the consultation was

to develop general themes to inform a vision, concept and design for a park which would commemorate Chinese history and contributions.

The consultation process included visioning sessions with the following groups:

- Canadians for Reconciliation Society
- Chinese Benevolent Association of Vancouver
- Chinese Canadian National Council
- Community Heritage Commission
- Downtown Residents' Association
- Multiculturalism Advisory Committee
- Parks and Recreation Committee

Individual consultation sessions were also held, including with Dale and Archie Miller, two local historians.

General Themes

Based on the consultation, there was overwhelming support for a park which would commemorate Chinese history and contributions and provide a green space and refuge in the densely populated Downtown neighbourhood. There were also a number of general themes which emerged, including:

- ensure that the interpretation is authentic or real – i.e., ‘the Chinese pioneers were practical people;’
- ensure that the interpretation tells the story of the Chinese pioneers, including their struggles and the injustices that they endured;
- recreate a portion of the former CBA building – e.g., the staircase and veranda were very prominent features;
- use interpretative signage, listening posts and murals to help park users and visitors visualize the CBA building and former ‘Westside’ Chinatown;
- capitalize on the sloped topography of the site by incorporating viewpoints, water courses and winding pathways;
- create a reflective and relaxing green space in the ‘heart’ of the city;
- ensure access through the site, as it is frequented by SkyTrain users;
- ensure the park is usable (not just commemorative) and employ a creative design (both function and form);
- incorporate landscape features and plantings that reference traditional Chinese gardens, including bamboo, pine and willow trees;
- partner with Lijiang, New Westminster’s sister city, which could provide expertise in the design of the park and strengthen socio-economic ties; and

- resolve issues related to the temporary dog off leash enclosure by developing an alternative site or sites.

To access the visioning session summaries, refer to attachment #1.

Chinese Canadian Historic Places Recognition

The City applied for formal recognition of the CBA site as a Chinese Canadian Historic Place. The purpose of this recognition is to promote the heritage values of historic places that demonstrate the contribution of Chinese Canadians to British Columbia.

After a thorough evaluation process, the CBA site was not selected to receive provincial recognition. One of the reasons cited for not selecting the site was its current use as a dog off leash enclosure. After the site has been developed as a park, efforts could be made to pursue formal recognition with Heritage BC. If recognized, the site would be included on the BC Registrar of Historic Places, and would be put forth for inclusion on the Canadian Registrar of Historic Places.

Dog Off-Leash Enclosure

The CBA site currently forms the northern portion of a temporary dog off leash enclosure which serves the Downtown neighbourhood. The southern portion (between Carnarvon and Victoria Streets) is leased by the City from private owners and there have been several development proposals related to this portion of the enclosure. As such, both the northern and southern portions of the enclosure, if developed as a park and building respectively, would not be available for use by dog owners.

The lack of an alternative location for a dog off leash enclosure delayed the completion of the consultation process related to the CBA site. On November 16, 2015, Council received a report which recommended that a dog relief station and an off-leash enclosure at another location be developed to serve the Downtown neighbourhood.

Given that the CBA site will take several years to develop and given that alternative arrangements are being implemented related to a dog off-leash enclosure, there should be minimal impact on dog owners.

Future Development at 813 Carnarvon Street

The site directly south of the CBA site will be developed in the future into a mixed-use or residential tower. The Development Services Department will request a 3-D model to measure the impact (including tower height, massing and interface) on the proposed park at the CBA site.

Possible Sources of Funding

The *2016-2020 Five Year Financial Plan* includes a provision of \$250,000 in 2017 for *Downtown Park Site Development Planning*. This amount is more than adequate for actual planning and design work but is likely insufficient to cover the full extent to park development work envisioned at the CBA site.

Recently, there has been developer interest related to adjacent sites on Agnes and Carnarvon Streets. There is the potential that funds could be realized through density bonusing revenues or voluntary amenity contributions to cover some of the costs associated with park development. Such use of funds would directly benefit businesses and residents of adjacent developments, as well as the larger Downtown neighbourhood.

There is also the possibility of applying for grants, including those related to diversity, heritage and infrastructure. Additionally, there is the possibility of partnering with Chinese associations such as the Chinese Benevolent Association of Vancouver and with Lijiang, New Westminster's sister city.

INTER-DEPARTMENTAL LIAISON

The Development Services and Parks and Recreation Departments worked closely with regard to implementing the consultation process and informing the recommendations.

OPTIONS

There are four options for consideration:

1. That Council endorse the use of 824 Agnes Street as a park which would commemorate Chinese history and contributions to New Westminster and provide an important amenity to the Downtown neighbourhood.
2. That Council endorse the retention of a landscape architect to develop a concept and design for the park based on the general themes which emerged from the visioning sessions and that this work commence in 2017.
3. That Council direct staff to explore additional sources of funding for park development, including applying for grants related to diversity, heritage and infrastructure.
4. That Council provide staff with other direction.

Staff recommends options #1, #2 and #3.

**Attachment #1:
CBA Park Vision Session Summaries**

CBA Park Site Visioning Session with Mr. Bill Chu, Canadians for Reconciliation Society – Session Occurred on March 22, 2013

Mr. Chu stated that the former building on the property likely faced Victoria Street. This observation is based on the topography of the property and the large number of stairs leading to the front entrance. He requested information as to the siting of the former building on the property.

Mr. Chu suggested that the frame or skeleton of the former building could be erected, which would provide a visual representation of its scale and size, as well as its location on the site. He also suggested that the façade of the former building, including stairs, could be re-created, which could form an entry point from the lower portion of the property. Additionally, he felt that it could act as a focal point, and provide an appropriate backdrop rather than the surrounding modern high-rise buildings.

Mr. Chu emphasized the importance of interpretation, especially given that there are no remnants of the former building or the two former Chinatowns. This interpretation would tell the story of the Chinese ‘Old Man’s Home’ and Chinese settlement and contributions in New Westminster. He also emphasized the importance of strategically locating artifacts on the property. He noted that some of the artifacts may be unearthed as part of the future excavations in the immediate area.

Mr. Chu suggested that copies of the original minutes of the Chinese Benevolent Association, which are stored at the Museum and Archives, be available or on display as part of the back or rear of the façade. He stated that these minutes talk about the struggles of the Chinese pioneers and they were prepared on the site. As such, they would be repatriated. He suggested that some or all of the minutes be translated into English.

Mr. Chu suggested that a Chinese garden be developed in order to create a place for relaxation and reflection. He stated that the topography lends itself to a winding water course with a reflective pond or ponds. He also stated that there could be different levels, which could incorporate seating, thus enabling park users to navigate the steep topography. He emphasized that the landscaping needs to be authentic and stated that Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden imported most of its materials from China. He noted that there could be a request from a sister or friendship city in China.

Mr. Chu felt that the park needed to be framed and symmetrical and that he would like to seek appropriate landscaping on the adjoining property wall to the west. He also stated that any redevelopment on the adjoining property to the east should be sympathetic to the park. More specifically, he felt that it should not overshadow or overwhelm the park and that it would be beneficial to have residences step-backed from the park, thus providing ‘eyes on the park.’ On this point, he felt that safety was important.

Mr. Chu emphasized the need to employ a landscape architect who has experience in creating Chinese gardens and working with the Chinese community.

CBA Park Site Visioning Session with Mr. Sid Chow Tan, Mr. Victor Wong and Ms. Mary Chan, Chinese Canadian National Council – Session Occurred on April 19, 2013

Mr. Tan and Mr. Wong raised the potential issue of feng shui, which is a Chinese system of geomancy believed to use the laws of both Heaven and Earth to help one improve life by receiving positive qi (life energy or life force). Both of them noted that they are not feng shui masters but did express the concern that the surrounding high rises could be viewed as gravestones or tombstones. Mr. Tan also raised the potential issue of shadowing and sunlight penetration and he noted that new developments bordering the park need to relate and be sympathetic to it.

Mr. Tan and Mr. Wong felt that the slope of the site is an advantage and they suggested that a performance space be developed on the lower slope. In this way, park users could see the performance from the upper slope.

Mr. Tan emphasized that the Chinese pioneers that settled in New Westminster were simple and practical people. He felt that any park should honour them. He further felt that a classical or formal Chinese garden would be ‘foreign’ to them, as such spaces were the exclusive refuge of emperors. Instead, he suggested that a part of the park should be dedicated to growing Chinese flowers and produce such as Bok Choy and snow peas. Mr. Tan stated that the Chinese pioneers would sell their vegetables.

Mr. Tan and Mr. Wong suggested that the park be named ‘Yi Fao,’ which translates to second port city after Victoria. They also suggested that the park should reference the Chinese Benevolent Association. For example, ‘Yi Fao Park, Gifted by the Chinese Benevolent Association to the City of New Westminster.’ They felt that the name should be in both Chinese and English. They also felt that banners could be hung in the vicinity of the park to provide entry references and that the signage on adjoining streets could potentially include a Chinese interpretation.

Mr. Tan and Mr. Wong emphasized the importance of interpretation to tell the story of the ‘Old Man’s Chinese Home’ and ‘Chinatown West.’ They noted that there is little or no evidence of Chinese settlement in New Westminster. To tell this story, they felt that audio stations should be installed whereby park users can access information by way of their smart phones and interpretative signage should be erected. They also felt that the frame of the former building should be erected and that consideration should be given to using the site for festivals or performances, possibly as part of larger celebrations such as the DiverseCity Multicultural Festival and Hyack Festival. They suggested that it would be beneficial if the frame could be designed to be easily covered, thus affording protection during inclement weather.

Mr. Tan and Mr. Wong felt that the park should also recognize and honour the efforts of the City of New Westminster to reconcile with its Chinese community. As such, it should refer to the Chinese Reconciliation Process and the City's formal apology to the Chinese, which was the first by a municipality in Canada.

Regarding the remainder of the property, Mr. Tan and Mr. Wong felt that it could be landscaped and possibly incorporate a water feature but that it should not be formal in its arrangement. They also felt that there should be a right-of-way between Agnes and Carnarvon Streets. In this way, more people would likely use the park and enjoy its amenities and learn about its history.

Mr. Tan and Mr. Wong emphasized the importance of consulting with Chinese historians and family members of Chinese pioneers to accurately tell the story. They stated that there are many important stories to tell such as that of Won Alexander Cumyow, who is said to have been the first baby of Chinese origin born in Canada and the only Chinese person to have voted both before and after disenfranchisement.

Mr. Tan and Mr. Wong suggested that discussions occur with Doug Bing, who was raised in New Westminster and is running for the BC Liberals in Ridge-Meadows; David Wong, who is believed to have his family roots in New Westminster; and Rhonda Larrabee, Chief of the Qayqayt First Nation and who has Chinese ancestry. Ms. Chan suggested that discussions occur with the spouse of Ken Yip, President, the Chinese Canadian Historical Society, as she has stories of her uncles who were raised in New Westminster.

Mr. Tan and Mr. Wong suggested that discussions occur with developers of adjoining properties to ascertain their interest in developing community space which would be complementary of the park. They also emphasized their willingness to discuss ideas for such a space with potential developers.

**CBA Park Site Visioning Session with Members of the City of New Westminster
Multiculturalism Advisory Committee – Session Occurred on April 24, 2013**

A presentation was made to the City's Multiculturalism Advisory Committee (MAC). This presentation included the Council motion in support of a park at 824 Agnes Street to commemorate Chinese history and contributions; the site's history, including information about the Chinese Benevolent Association (CBA) and Chinese Old Man's Home; and summaries from the visioning sessions conducted to date.

MAC members felt that the portrayal or story being told needed to be accurate and needed to reflect the lives of the Chinese pioneers who settled in New Westminster. Several members referred to the statement about the Chinese pioneers being "simple and practical people," which was contained in one of the summaries. It was noted that they were likely very connected to the land and that they likely tilled the land to supplement their diets and incomes. As such, there was support for an interpretative garden in which Chinese flowers and vegetables could be grown.

One member suggested that a replica bunk house be created. These shelters were used by Chinese pioneers in the 1870s and 80s. This bunk house could be "crouched inside a grove of sweet pea and wild bamboo." This member also suggested that a diorama be installed, which would be a three-dimensional life-size or miniature scene which would display figures of cannery workers, gold seekers and salmon fishermen. Additionally, it could depict the former Chinatowns in New Westminster. Regarding the latter, it could be a naturalistic setting against a painted backdrop.

One member shared statistical information related to the Chinese in New Westminster. This information, from 1881, included: 1 in 10 residents were Chinese; 65% of the labour force was Chinese; and 64% of the salmon fleet was Chinese.

One member suggested that a memory wall be created similar to the one that is located in Westminster Pier Park. This wall could include historical photographs and quotes, as well as information about the Chinese Old Man's Home. This member also suggested adding a small and simple Chinese fountain, along with benches, to create a focal point for the park and a place for reflection.

Several members emphasized the importance of being true to the challenges and struggles faced by the Chinese pioneers, including discrimination and racism. To this end, it was felt that there should be references to the Chinese Reconciliation Process, including the City's historic apology to the Chinese community. It was noted that these challenges and struggles are documented in Jim Wolfe's and Patricia Owen's book entitled 'Yi Fao: Speaking through Memory: A History of New Westminster's Chinese community, 1859 to 1980.

There was support for some representation of the former CBA building – e.g., a frame, a model, a mural, etc. There was also support for providing information on the former Westside Chinatown in which it anchored, as well as the former Front Street Chinatown. It was felt that this could best be done through interpretative signage. Where possible, it was emphasized that it needed to capture the voices of ancestors of the Chinese pioneers. In this way, it would make a connection and be personal.

Several members talked about the importance of having a sheltered area to enable the park to be used year-round. This raised a number of concerns about crime prevention and safety. It was felt that, where possible, residences should border the park, thus providing surveillance. It was also felt that consideration should be given to having a wrought iron fence surround the park to restrict access during the late evening and early morning. This was seen to limit illegal activities and loitering, while safeguarding important amenities, including artifacts and interpretative signage, in the park.

All members felt that the park should be a ‘green oasis’ in the built environment. Of note, a number of members stated that the landscaping should be less formal and should incorporate areas for relaxation and reflection. One member emphasized the need for landscaping to form part of the interpretation. Another member emphasized the importance of ensuring access through the site, thus enabling those who reside north of Agnes Street to access the SkyTrain station.

CBA Park Site Visioning Session with the Community Heritage Commission – Session Occurred on June 5, 2013

A presentation was made to the City's Community Heritage Commission (CHC). This presentation included the Council motion in support of a park at 824 Agnes Street to commemorate Chinese history and contributions; the site's history, including information about the Chinese Benevolent Association (CBA) and Chinese Old Man's Home; and highlights from the visioning sessions conducted to date.

CHC members felt that the site has significant heritage value. It was noted that if excavation occurs on the site, care should be taken to document any unearthened objects. It was noted that Douglas College and Simon Fraser University students could be of assistance in the documentation process. It was also noted that any unearthened objects could form part of the interpretation of the site.

CHC members emphasized the importance of recreating the staircase and verandah and possibly incorporating a performance space. It was noted that the verandah could also double as a viewing platform for a surrounding garden or green space.

CHC members felt that a garden or green space needed to be incorporated and that it should include bamboo. Regarding the latter, it could be an artistic representation or real. CHC members also felt that the garden or green space could be stepped or tiered and that it could incorporate a pathway which could connect interpretative features. It was noted that the pathway could also provide access to SkyTrain users living north of Agnes Street. As such, it would provide access but also educational opportunities.

CHC members stated that the interpretation should be accurate and balanced and that it should tell the story of Chinese immigrants, including the discrimination and isolation that they faced. CHC members also stated that it should reference the City's efforts to reconcile with its Chinese community, including its formal apology. It was noted that the research findings and reconciliation efforts could form part of a social justice curriculum.

One CHC member referred to Barkerville and its excellent efforts of interpreting the Chinese experience. For example, Barkerville has created a travelling exhibit to China (<http://www.barkerville.ca/docs/china%20exhibit%20overview.pdf>). Please see photo on opposite page. Again, CHC members stated that the interpretation should be accurate and balanced and based on the actual experiences of Chinese immigrants who arrived, lived and worked in New Westminster.

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CHC members felt that the New Westminster Museum and Archives should play a central role in the interpretation of the site and that the new Museum at the Anvil Centre should reference the site and provide additional information on Chinese settlement and the three former Chinatowns, as well as reconciliation efforts.



CBA Park Site Visioning Session with the Chinese Benevolent Association of Vancouver – Session Occurred on August 11, 2013

The Chinese Benevolent Association (CBA) of Vancouver participated in a visioning session after unveiling a mosaic on Columbia Street to commemorate Chinese history and contributions to New Westminster. Following the session, the CBA submitted a brief, which included below.

The CBA of Vancouver is an umbrella organization of more than 100 Chinese Canadian societies in the Lower Mainland, including the Chinese Cultural Centre of Greater Vancouver, S.U.C.C.E.S.S., the Vancouver Merchants' Association and many more.

The former site of the New Westminster Chinese Benevolent Association (NWCBA) is a symbolic piece of early Chinese history in Canada – the Chinese community has deep sentiments and holds a unique relevant perspective towards the development of this site and how this site will be used to commemorate the early Chinese pioneers. Having their origins from the Guangdong province in China, many of the CBA member organizations share the same roots as those of the early Chinese immigrants in New Westminster, and therefore have very close fraternal and ancestral ties with the park site in question.

The visioning comments provided below are based on consultation with these CBA member organizations.

Concept

The concept of a 'park' should address the past, present and future, in terms of the early Chinese settlements in New Westminster, as well as the vision and forward thinking in the development for the City.

Past

The early Chinese immigrants were born and raised in China. They would have deep sentiments for the architectures and gardens of their homeland where they grew up. It is believed that their souls would still cherish the fond memories of the leisure times they spent in the tranquility of familiar surroundings back in China. Therefore, the park should be a of a classical Chinese style garden.

Present

The City currently has many fascinating landmarks and attractions. There is a need for more ethnic spaces to reflect the rich history and cultural diversity of New Westminster. The construction of a Chinese classical garden would serve to commemorate the history of the early Chinese settlements and their contributions. This park should be open to the public as a leisure sport for strolling and resting.

Future

There is a continued growth in the ethnic Chinese community. Trade and tourism between Canada and China are projected to increase. The presence of a Chinese classical garden would not only provide a sense of belonging for Chinese visitors but also showcase the harmonious multicultural values of Canadians to the world.

Landscape

1. The construction should be simple to reduce costs and maintenance. Primary materials should be stone for durability and resistance to vandalism. Plants should be predominantly pine, willow and bamboo (for low maintenance).
2. The garden should consist of a small bridge over a creek, a pavilion or gazebo with table and chairs, and stone lions and lamps. The current terrain is well suited for water flow.
3. There should be panels erected to provide historic information of the site and of the early Chinese settlements in New Westminster.
4. Where practical, eco-sustainable and greening considerations and design should be incorporated.

Design and Construction

1. Lijiang is the sister city of New Westminster. The City should consider partnering with its sister city in the design and construction of the park. This partnership will not only provide the expertise needed for the Chinese classical garden but will also serve to bridge and strengthen the socio-economic ties between New Westminster and China. Moving forward, this engagement with Lijiang will stimulate and foster other cooperative opportunities.
2. If required, the CBA can assist and facilitate the bridging and communications with China.

**CBA Park Site Visioning Session with the Parks and Recreation Committee –
Session Occurred on February 27, 2014**

A presentation was made to the City's Parks and Recreation Committee (PRC). This presentation included the Council motion in support of a park at 824 Agnes Street to commemorate Chinese history and contributions; the site's history, including information about the Chinese Benevolent Association (CBA) and Chinese Old Man's Home; and highlights from the visioning sessions conducted to date.

PRC members were very supportive of a new park in the Downtown, with several citing that it would provide a green space or refuge in this densely populated and built-up neighbourhood. While there was general agreement that the park needed to commemorate Chinese history and contributions, it was felt that the park should be functional or useable. As such, it was noted that a creative design needed to be employed to meet multiple park objectives and users.

PRC members expressed some concern about the loss of the temporary dog off leash enclosure. It was suggested that a new location should be found prior to developing the park. If not, some dog owners may continue to use the site to exercise or relieve their dogs, which could lead to tensions.

PRC members noted that the site is used by those in the neighbourhood to access SkyTrain. As such, it was felt that any park design should incorporate a pathway which provides this access. One member felt that this could be an opportunity to inform transit users about Chinese history and contributions, particularly on their way home when they may have more discretionary time.

PRC members felt that interpretation mechanisms needed to be subtle and not overwhelm the park. This could include landscaping, listening posts and murals, with the latter being suited to the cement wall on western side of the site. One member suggested that interpretative objects should be 'hidden' within the landscape, thus inviting discovery, especially by children and youth.

PRC members emphasized that adjacent development should complement the site and, where possible, step down to it. This, it was felt, would allow for sun penetration and make the park far more useable. One member talked about the importance of orienting doors and windows to the park in order to provide 'eyes on the park' thus discouraging criminal and nuisance behaviour, including graffiti and vandalism.

CBA Park Site Visioning Session with the New Westminster Downtown Residents' Association – Session Occurred on May 20, 2015

A presentation was made to the New Westminster Downtown Residents' Association (DRA). This presentation included the Council motion in support of a park at 824 Agnes Street to commemorate Chinese history and contributions; the site's history, including information about the Chinese Benevolent Association (CBA) and Chinese Old Man's Home; general themes from the visioning sessions conducted to date; and possible park design elements to inform the discussion.

DRA members were very supportive of a park at 824 Agnes Street. It was noted that the Downtown is experiencing unprecedented population growth and it was felt that park space is not keeping pace with this growth. It was also noted that residents of multi-family developments have no or only limited access to private outdoor space, thus parks provide opportunities for leisure, recreation and relaxation.

Based on the communicated background related to the CBA site, it was noted that this is important cultural and historic site. One member stated that there are other 400 Chinese students attending Douglas College and that the Chinese community was instrumental in building New Westminster. There seemed to be agreement that this site needed to balance multiple objectives, including interpretation, leisure and relaxation. There was also a recognition that this would be challenging given the small size of the site.

Regarding interpretative features, there were a number of suggestions, including art work, landscaping, murals, sculptures and water features. More specific suggestions included: (1) creating a gateway based on prominent features of the former CBA building (e.g., external staircase and veranda); (2) incorporating a large communal dinner table, which could be used for community and family gatherings in the park; and (3) using black bamboo to define different park areas and to recall the past use of this prominent landscape feature.

There was support for continuing to consult with Chinese associations, including in the conceptual design phase. It was noted that the park could facilitate stronger ties with the Chinese community and provide opportunities to partner with Lijiang, China, the City's Sister City. The question was raised about the cost and timeline to develop the park and where this fit into the City's capital budget.

There was some concern that adjacent development may hinder sunlight penetration which could compromise enjoyment of the park. It was suggested that adjacent developments address the park and attempt to incorporate it into their design (e.g., include rights-of-way to provide easy access to the park, incorporate residences facing the park to provide for surveillance, and step down to the park to enhance sunlight

penetration and to not overwhelm the park). It was also suggested that park elements could be incorporated into adjacent development (e.g., landscaping, murals and public art). One member suggested a land swap in order to obtain a 'sunnier' site; however, other members were opposed to this idea, given that the existing site has significant cultural and historic importance.

Regarding the temporary dog off leash enclosure which currently occupies the CBA site, it was felt that dog owners are not picking-up after their dogs and the enclosure is not a pleasant place to use. It was also felt that it sometimes feels unsafe as some dogs are aggressive or poorly supervised and, occasionally, there are people with questionable character using the enclosure. It was suggested that an alternative dog off leash enclosure could be Albert Crescent Park. It was also suggested that the City explore small pet relief areas throughout the Downtown, which would be more convenient for dog owners. These areas could incorporate artificial turf, a container for the disposal of waste, an ornamental fire hydrant and a water fountain. To this end, it was noted that an excellent example can be found in Toronto.

CBA Park Site Visioning Session with Dale and Archie Miller, Sense of History Tours – Session Occurred on June 3, 2013

Archie Miller stated that he has a personal connection to the Chinatown site. He noted that his grandmother arrived with his two uncles in the early 1900s in New Westminster and that she would frequent the ‘Westside’ Chinatown to make purchases.

Mr. Miller stated that there were two and possibly three Chinatowns in New Westminster, with the ‘Westside’ Chinatown being centered around Blackie, Carnarvon, McInnis and Victoria Streets. He also stated that there were several prominent Chinese buildings in the area such as the Chinese Benevolent Association (CBA), Chinese Methodist Mission, the Chinese Nationalist League and the Freemasons Lodge.

Mr. Miller stated that the ‘Old Man’s Home’ (CBA) faced Victoria Street, with the staircase and verandah being located about mid-lot. He also stated that the building backed onto Agnes Street, where there was about a six foot setback. The siting of the building is shown on a 1957 City Fire Map (and on other similar, but older, maps).

Mr. Miller stated that there was a double-door which led into the building off the verandah and that you could not see the rear of the property from the entry. He also stated that there was a raised area for people to make official presentations in the main front room. Mr. Miller noted that he has a large slide show of the building and property and the areas comprising the New Westminster Chinatowns, which has proven popular in previous showings.

Mr. Miller stated that the building was not in good shape at the time when the Chinese Benevolent Association (CBA) gifted it to the City in 1979. He also stated that part of the foundation had subsided and that the cost to rehabilitate the building was likely the same or more than to build anew. Mr. Miller noted that this information is documented in an engineering report and was considered by Council prior to the building’s demolition in 1980. Mr. Miller’s extensive involvement with the building at this time (1979/1980) was through his position as City Curator.

Mr. Miller stated that little was salvaged from the building, with the exception of the double doors from inside the building leading to a back hall (light green and pink in colour), the transom from this door set, two wooden ornate brackets from the verandah (light green in colour), school desks, lap desks, one old very simple ladder used to reach the attic, and a house number showing either 824 or 825. He also stated that a sizable number of CBA records and other items, saved from the CBA at this time were transferred to the New Westminster Museum and Archives. All these items are in the Museum and Archives and this has recently been confirmed.

Mrs. Miller emphasized that the prominent features were the staircase and veranda and the bamboo foliage which enveloped the building. She noted that these two building features could be recreated and that they could offer viewpoints of the park and be accessible from the rear given the grade. Mrs. Miller stated that a pathway could wind through the park where visitors could learn about the three Chinatowns. She also stated that murals and sculptures could be used to convey the story and that the blank wall on the westerly portion of the site provided numerous possibilities.

Mrs. Miller emphasized that the interpretation needed to be authentic and balanced. “It should be based on the people who came here and not where they came from.” She stated that the interpretation should portray their “aloneness” – i.e., not feeling part of the whole. She also stated that it should incorporate colour, movement and sound, which is very important in Chinese celebrations. Regarding colour, she felt that it could be incorporated into elements of the park; regarding movement, she felt that it could be captured through flowing water and swaying bamboo; and regarding sound, she felt that it could be represented by wind chimes.

Mr. Miller stated that there are many important stories – bad and good - to be told. For example, during the famine in China, City Council made a donation. When CPR workers were arriving back in town after their construction work, they had little in the way of food and shelter which the City then provided.



Mr. and Mrs. Miller cited the Chinatown Mural in Philadelphia (see adjacent image). They also cited the Harbin Gate in Edmonton. Additionally, they felt that an invitation should be extended to Ken and Gail Yip of the Chinese Canadian Historical Society of British Columbia to take part in a visioning session.

Mr. and Mrs. Miller stated that they would be willing to stage a slide show about the earlier Chinatowns and the CBA building. It was noted that the CBA of Vancouver will be unveiling a mosaic on Columbia Street in August, thus this may be an appropriate time for the show, with an invitation to others.