

Whitecaps relocate proposed stadium

NEWS BRIEFS

The Vancouver Whitecaps hope a plan to move their proposed downtown waterfront soccer stadium from its original location next to the Gastown rail yards and onto the Port Lands will win the consensus approval that has eluded the project thus far.

Last year, the Whitecaps submitted a plan to the city to build a 15,000-seat soccer stadium above the rail yards beside Waterfront Station. Council, in turn, asked the Whitecaps to address five key problems with the proposal: road access to the stadium; liability related to dangerous goods in the rail yards; how it would affect local residents; how it would fit into Gastown's historic architecture; and its impact on the Vancouver Port Authority land.

The Whitecaps believe that moving the stadium slightly northwest on an area of that includes the Port Lands and the SeaBus terminal is a big step toward their goal.

"The most important of the five key requirements was the impact on the future Port Lands

development," says Bob Lenarduzzi, the Whitecaps' director of soccer operations. "If we get [the Port Authority] onside, it's something that will go a long way to resolving the other four key requirements."

City staff, however, say it's still too early to determine whether moving the stadium onto the Port Lands will solve their four remaining concerns. City planner Matt Shillito says the proposal will now be put to public consultation over the next seven months. The city will study the stadium proposal in conjunction with its ongoing Central Waterfront Hub study. Any plan with the Port Authority would also require consent from the federal government.

The Whitecaps stadium proposal has received a great deal of support from across the city, but has met with strong opposition from Gastown and Downtown Eastside residents, who would be most affected by the development. The recent deflation of the BC Place roof has renewed the public's interest in looking at new stadium alternatives, but not everyone is sure building a stadium along the city's most valuable waterfront land is the best solution.

"There are still some hurdles and we need to keep our eyes and ears open for other sites," says Vision Vancouver councillor Heather Deal, who suggests the stadium might be better suited along the Southeast False Creek flats.

The city staff report will go to council on Thursday, Feb. 1.

Locals oppose English Bay restaurant plan

A parks board decision to build a privately owned restaurant on English Bay has drawn concern from some West End community activists and parks commissioners, who say its menu might not be respectful of beach-goers' economic diversity.

Last week, the Non-Partisan Association (NPA) majority on the parks board voted to pay Acton Ostry Architects \$59,000 to draw up plans for a 3,500 square-foot, 175-seat bistro to replace the old 1,600 square-foot, 28-seat concession stand that sits at the foot of Denman at Beach.

The proposed English Bay bistro is part of the parks board's plan (approved in May 2006) to privatize the food services on Vancouver's beaches. Coalition of Progressive Electors (COPE) commissioner Loretta Woodcock says she's received complaints that the prices at these private concession stands are too expensive.



PHOTO: DOUG SHANKS

West End Residents Association director Aaron Jasper: "Those are [the public's] parks and beaches."

"We've had some complaints [from families] that they can't afford the food when they bring their kids to the beach," says Woodcock. "I think there should be some acknowledgment or sensitivity to people who don't necessarily want to walk into a facility that's going to cost them a lot more money. It just discourages people from using it."

The English Bay bistro may prove to be similar to Watermark restaurant on Kitsilano Beach, which was leased out by the parks board to a private owner. Main entrées there range from \$14.99 to \$34.99. West End Residents Association (WERA) director Aaron Jasper says the proposed bistro should have gone to community consultation before the contract was awarded to Acton, in order to avoid a similar result.

"Our attitude is that the parks board is minding the shop," says Jasper. "Those are *our* parks and *our* beaches, and if you want to make alterations and do some renovations, then you had better run it by the landlord first."

NPA commissioner Marty Zlotnik says there

will be plenty of opportunity for West End residents to voice their opinion about the bistro once the plans are drawn up. However, he doesn't believe it's the parks board's responsibility to provide affordable food. "We're not planning on subsidizing the public here," he says. "If the people want inexpensive food, they can go across the street to McDonald's."

Sean Condon

IN THE CITY

UPCOMING EVENTS • inthecity@westender.com

Big box, little movie: The Necessary Visions series presents a screening of the documentary *Wal-Town: The Film* at the Vancouver Public Library's Central Branch (350 W. Georgia) on Thursday, Jan. 25, 7:30 p.m. The film attempts to raise public awareness about Wal-Mart's business practices and the effect the company's policies have had on Canadian communities and international human rights, through the efforts of six university students who make a cross-country trek to many of the megastores' sites. Info: Waltown.com and 604 331-3603.

Ciao bella: Andrea Batilla, director of the Milan Fashion School and Instituto Europeo di Design, makes a special presentation about Italian design and contemporary trends at the Sutton Place Hotel (845 Burrard) on Thursday, Jan. 25, from 4:30-5:30 p.m. and 7-8 p.m. The free event aims to teach budding fashionistas about the latest trends for the upcoming year. Info: info@iedDesign.com and 604 628-1647.

Me read pretty one day: The Vancouver Public Library and Literacy BC present a series of free events in celebration of Family Literacy Week at the library's Central Branch (350 W. Georgia) from January 25-31. On Friday, Jan. 26, Vanessa Little and Dr. Paul Kershaw present a lecture on 'Setting the Course for a Lifetime of Learning,' from 8-10 a.m. On Saturday, Jan. 27, authors Trevor Lai and David Ward present 'Write On!', a forum about child literacy, from 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Info and registration: family@literacy.bc.ca and 604 684-0624.

People get ready: The City of Vancouver continues its series of Neighbourhood Emergency Preparedness Programs with a Personal Emergency workshop at the Sunset Community Centre (404 E. 51st) on Saturday, Jan. 27, 2-4 p.m.; and a Disaster First Aid workshop at the Kitsilano Community Centre (2690 Larch) on Wednesday, Jan. 31, 7-9 p.m. These sessions offer advice on how to prepare for an emergency and provide basic support to injured persons during a disaster.

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