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Corporate Plan Output: Parks Plans and Policy Statements	

The purpose of this report is to update Councillors on progress at Washington Reserve and to gain approval for the development of the street-skating area.

BACKGROUND

Washington Reserve is located on the corner of Moorhouse Avenue and Waltham Road. To the west is Washington Way, which leads into a commercial area. The reserve is bounded by the railway line and Canon New Zealand Limited to the south. Beyond the railway lines are more tilt-slab buildings. These buildings together with the Waltham overbridge provide an obvious concrete environment in which the reserve sits. The high vehicular activity and the surrounding built environment were significant factors considered in the siting of a concrete skating facility at Washington Reserve.

The first stage in the development of a skating facility at the reserve was completed in June 1998. Further development of the facility (Stage 2) is programmed to start by the end of June 1999.

USE OF THE FACILITY

The Committee is reminded of initial reaction to the park when it was officially opened. Skater, Kerry Wardlaw, was quoted by The Press on 8 June last year saying "I'm stoked man, the Council rocks!"

Generally, people are amazed at the popularity of the park and most comment received by staff about the facility has been very supportive.

It has also been commented on favourably by Fondle Magazine, Christchurch's own skating magazine and by New Zealand skateboarder magazine which stated in the June/July 1998 issue, "This could very well be the best park in the country, make sure you check it out next time you're in Canterbury."

In November last year Cheapskates held a competition at Washington which attracted four of New Zealand's professional skaters.

PROPOSED STREET SKATING ARENA

For some time skaters have requested an area with steps, rails and other street-type obstacles. The demand for this together with the use of items in streets around town and the numbers wanting to use the existing area has confirmed to staff that development of a street skating arena is a sensible next step as proposed in the Washington Reserve Development Concept Plan.

The Parks Unit has funds (\$60,000) for the construction of the main street skating arena and car park, which will form Stage Two of the development. This has been designed by Andy Wylie in conjunction with other skaters and City Design engineer, Jeff Bellamore. The contract for the area has been advertised and tenders received. The contract area was divided into two parts due to a predicted shortfall in funding.

The Parks Unit also plans to provide lighting as part of the construction of the street-skating area (Part One). Prices for the lighting contract are being received over the next week. There have been some concerns that skaters are using the park at night when lighting is inadequate. The installation of lighting will make the area safer.

CONCERNS OF NEIGHBOURS

In December last year Craig Oliver and Suzanne Weld met with Mr David Sloan and Mr Richard Peebles who own most of the property on Washington Way. Also at the meeting were, Mr Garth Huston of Business Distributors Limited and Mr Tony Phibbs and Ms Teri Bennett-Myer of Canon New Zealand Limited.

The main issues voiced by the landowners and tenants related to use of the car parks in Washington Way, tagging in the area, general damage to some property and the incidence of water fights and altercations in the area. The use of Washington Way as a through-route was highlighted. Most neighbours believed that due to the good surfacing of Washington Way, skaters chose to skate to the park via the street and their properties rather than use Moorhouse Avenue footpaths.

Canon New Zealand Limited were annoyed that skaters drove into their car park during working hours (they are happy for skaters to park there at night) and have requested that a fence be erected between their car park and the reserve. The Parks Unit has undertaken to do this at no expense to the owners of the property. Staff from Canon have congratulated the Council on the installation.

Parks Unit staff gained a clear impression that due to the anti social activity associated with the skating facility the landowners in Washington Way did not wish any further development of the facility to take place. They indicated that they wished to speak to Council about the matter.

MANAGEMENT OF WASHINGTON RESERVE

Both the skating area and Canon New Zealand Limited's walls have been targeted by taggers. The whitening out of graffiti on Canon's wall has occurred regularly on Monday mornings when the city's graffiti squad do their rounds in the central city area. In addition to this, the Parks Unit has formed a mound along the boundary near the east-facing wall of Canon's building. This has been planted in an attempt to deter taggers and at the same time give staff in the building a more pleasant outlook. It seems that this landscaping has in fact reduced the incidence of graffiti on their property.

At the request of Canon New Zealand Limited a fence has been erected between Canon's car park and the reserve to restrict pedestrian movement between their properties and the reserve and to deter use of Canon's car park all together. It is expected that the construction of 12 car parking spaces within the reserve will further reduce any need for skaters who may arrive by car to park in any of the other nearby car parks. This has been planned as part of the Stage Two works. However, Environmental Services Unit planners believe that 107 car parking spaces are required to meet the rules of the Christchurch City Plan. This issue will be dealt with by the Resource Consent process.

Toilets and a drinking fountain have been constructed on the reserve to reduce the need for skaters to annoy neighbouring properties. The park is closely looked after by an honorary warden who is there during the weekend and by two roving Park Rangers. Parks Unit staff have also talked to police who say that while there are some problems associated with the Washington Way area these are not uncommon in the Moorhouse Avenue part of town.

MEASURES THAT COULD FURTHER REDUCE NUISANCE

The Parks Unit has received a number of complaints from inner city businesses about skaters using the footpaths and property for skating. It is not just isolated to Washington Way properties. This has reinforced that idea that a street-skating area should be added to the facility at Washington Reserve. It is also apparent that often the existing area is so busy that some young people become frustrated at not being able to use the area freely. Parks Unit staff believe that Stage Two will provide additional areas for skating which will relieve the pressure on the existing area and neighbouring properties.

For the immediate Washington Way area, it may be possible to put a By-law into place similar to the one on Victoria Square. This would encourage skaters to use Moorhouse Avenue to reach Washington Reserve. If vandalism and crime are a real concern to property owners and lessees, the installation of security camera could be an option.

It is also important to note that while Washington Reserve's skating facility is attracting many people from across town and from out of town, it is only one of many skating options that young people have. There are a number of existing facilities in the suburbs with new facilities planned for Sumner, Templeton, Burnside and St Albans. The skating area at Thomson Park will be upgraded within the next few months.

There is also a need for a comprehensive skating strategy for Christchurch. The Parks and Leisure Units will begin working on a strategy which not only identifies new sites for facilities but addresses issues such as management of facilities and whether there ought to be a “Skaters’ Guide” (or Code of Practice) for skating in public areas.

CONCLUSION

Parks Unit staff believe that the skating facility in Washington Reserve is a valuable recreation option for the city’s skaters. While there are some anti-social elements associated with it staff believe that it has been successful in providing a challenging and exciting skating facility for skaters. With the provision of a street-skating area, lighting and a car park, some of the problems associated with its popularity and poorly lit nature will be overcome. The Parks Unit will endeavour to work with adjacent neighbours to minimise any future nuisances.

The Committee noted the concerns raised by an adjoining property owner regarding the anti-social behaviours arising from the use of the facility including “tagging”, vandalism and alleged drug use and drug dealing.

In an effort to mitigate these problems the Committee suggest that a facilitated meeting with affected parties and the Police be called to work through the issues.

- Recommendation:**
1. That construction of Stage 2, the street-skating arena and car park, be initiated once a resource consent has been approved.
 2. That the future development of the facility be supported.
 3. That it be recommended to the Council Hearings Panel that the resource consent application be publicly notified.
 4. That a report be prepared identifying the key issues surrounding the facility and that a facilitated meeting with affected parties and the Police be called to work through the issues.

(Note: Councillor Anderton requested that her vote against recommendation 3 of the recommendation be recorded.)