



Revamp plan for BC Place gets fast track

Official development plan to be ready by October, council decides

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VANCOUVER - The City of Vancouver will fast-track a redevelopment plan for the lands around BC Place Stadium to ensure the 25-year-old dome is renovated in time for the 2010 Olympic Games.

Councillors agreed unanimously Thursday to a proposal by BC Pavilion Corp. to have staff review the official development plan for the 6.56-hectare site by October.

PavCo had asked the city to amend the development plan for the area, which is part of the False Creek North Official Development Plan, because it wants to sell some of the vacant land for commercial and residential towers and put the money toward refurbishing the dome.

The company will contribute 50 per cent of the \$290,000 study, which is expected to go to a public hearing in October when the report is finished.

Councillors voted to support the proposal, maintaining that BC Place is a huge draw for visitors and a boon to tourism and the economy. The stadium generates about 200 event days a year, resulting in \$58.1 million in economic activity in 2007.

BC Place is hosting the opening and closing ceremonies for the Olympic Games.

Coun. Suzanne Anton said it is good news the stadium will be refurbished and kept on the site.

"I know for the last few years now we all feared that the stadium would come tumbling down but it's standing firm now," she said. "It's very good for Vancouver that the stadium is back on solid ground."

However, the proposal to speed the stadium development plan, without the inclusion of other areas of False Creek north, has frustrated some residents who say they are still waiting for amenities such as a park to materialize.

"This plan has been hatched in secret behind closed doors," said Patsy McMillan, of the Citygate Inter-town Community Group and False Creek Residents' Association.

Coun. Raymond Louie suggested amending the proposal to include the entire area but the motion was rejected after staff said it didn't have the workers or the time to complete the entire project by October.

The fact that other players, such as the Plaza of Nations, Tri-Power Developments and Concord Pacific support the proposal also swayed the majority of council to reject the amendment.

The development plan, which was started last May, was intended to be finished within 13 months but was delayed by the city's inability to recruit staff for the project and the three-month city strike.

The decision to hang on to the stadium comes after several years of speculation that the provincial government would tear it down, speculation fanned by some of the people eyeing the valuable piece of downtown land for development.

The speculation reached fever pitch last year when the roof on what's billed as the world's "largest air-supported domed stadium" ripped and then collapsed during a period of heavy snowfall.

Meanwhile, council was debating late Thursday whether to ask staff to come back within 90 days to report on how to reduce or eliminate plastic bags in the city.

Coun. Tim Stevenson said it's crucial Vancouver find a way to follow the lead of other jurisdiction that have banned bags, pointing out B.C. uses 1.3 to 1.4 billion plastic bags a year.

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