

**Leaside Tunnel Project
Interim Report, August 2005**

**Prepared by:
Leaside Tunnel Project Committee
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July 2005**

Introduction

The following report was prepared by the Leaside Tunnel Project Committee with the assistance of the users of Leaside tunnel, residents in the area, and the Leaside Stakeholder Group. This proposal outlines the improvements to Leaside Tunnel that have been identified by the community and the Leaside Stakeholder Group over a two year period (2003 – 2005).

The Leaside Stakeholder Group is comprised of the Hastings-Sunrise CityPlan Committee, Hastings Community Centre, the Hastings North Community Policing Centre, the Hastings Community School, the Hastings Community Association, PNE, and the Vancouver Park Board. Other groups that have assisted in the consultation include the Kiwassa Neighbourhood House, E-Comm, the Hastings Park Conservancy, and the Vancouver Police.

What is Leaside?

Leaside is a space that connects the Empire Bowl area of Hastings Park to the end of East Pender Street, behind the E-Comm building. It is roughly the same width and height as one lane of the Cassiar Connector (7m tall, 11m wide x 49m long). The tunnel is owned by the Ministry of Transportation and Highways and was originally built to be a bus loop. The project was abandoned in the early 1990s and has since become a place for youth skateboarders, BMXers, mountain bikers, and graffiti artists.

One of the first young people to start using the space was a skateboarding graffiti artist named "Lee." Because Lee and his friends used it so much, and because there was a large mural with Lee's name there, the space became known as "Leaside."

Much of Leaside's popularity is due to the fact that it remains perfectly dry all year round, and for the last 4 years there have also been lights at Leaside so it can be used at night. It is also used by residents as a pedestrian/bike route to and from Hastings Park/PNE.

The tunnel is a City of Vancouver (Engineering) right-of-way. However, given the current uses of the space, Vancouver Park Board has expressed interest in helping to develop and maintain the space for 'park uses' in the future.

Map

(insert here)

Issues

Because there was so much garbage in the tunnel, there were some residents who wanted the tunnel cleaned up. There were also many youth actively using Leaside for skateboarding, BMX, and Mountain biking activities. So the community came together to find a solution that would work for both users and residents. Throughout the consultation, the main issues identified were safety; cleanliness; enhancing the pedestrian connection to Hastings Park/PNE; and keeping Leaside a usable space for youth. There was agreement by all groups involved, and it was clear that these issues would have to be addressed to ensure the long-term sustainability of any project in the tunnel.

Process

The proposal to improve Leaside Tunnel dates back to summer of 2003 when the Leaside Community Research Project was undertaken to determine if the community would like to see improvements to Leaside Tunnel. The public process included surveys, posters, and numerous community events, including a community clean-up and a large community meeting.

Over the past year, residents have expressed much interest in continuing the process to find a long-term solution for the tunnel. As a result, the City of Vancouver decided to continue the process from 2003, and proceed with a plan to improve the tunnel into a safe and well-utilized community space. There were posters, community events, as well as numerous design workshops, and a community clean-up/open house.

October 2002	12 users and parents meet to discuss improvements to Leaside
May 2003	Leaside Research Project begins – the purpose was to identify the users of the tunnel and to find out if the community what improvements, if any should be made. Stakeholder Group was comprised of Hastings Community Centre, Kiwassa Neighbourhood House, Hastings Community School, the City of Vancouver, and Hastings North CPC.
August 2003	Users, residents, and parents attend community meeting about the future of Leaside Tunnel. 40 surveys filled out over the summer, with a contact list of over 60 people.
September 2003	Leaside Community Research Project Final Report is submitted to the City.
May 2005	The City begins Leaside Project for interim design and discussion of long-term uses. Stakeholder group from 2003 was expanded to include Vancouver Park Board, PNE, and E-Comm.
July 2005	Five design workshops are completed with stakeholders, users and residents to determine improvements to Leaside Tunnel. Consultation has brought contact list to over 90 people.
July 2005	Two fires at Leaside. Engineering cleans out all the wooden structures from the tunnel. Stakeholder meeting was held at E-Comm. They agree to support interim plan for upgrades to tunnel.
July 2005	Parks Board staff offers to meet with the PNE about maintenance/garbage issues.
July 2005	PNE agrees to interim plan for upgrades to tunnel, and offers to put a garbage bin at the north end of Leaside tunnel. They also agree to take on opening and closing duties once the gates have been installed at both ends of the tunnel.

- Sept 2005 Liaised with Templeton High School about involving Templeton in the process, and discovered that “Leeside Lee” had been a student at Templeton.
- Sept 2005 Open House held September 17th at Hastings Community Centre; workshop results, preliminary design and report presented. Over 40 people in attendance, 21 signed up to be on the Leeside mail list. Received positive feedback from the community on the design and the overall process of the project, but most who attended wanted to know how soon the tunnel could be renovated.

Leeside Tunnel Improvement Proposal

Based on consultation with users and residents through surveys, design workshops, community meetings and events, the Leeside Tunnel Project Committee has determined the following improvements are needed to make the tunnel into a safe, clean, well-maintained and well-utilized space:

- pedestrian walkway going through the tunnel (to support existing users);
- re-grading of the slope on the south end behind E-Comm (to facilitate easy access);
- a gate to limit access to the tunnel at night (to ensure safety);
- concrete structures for skateboarding and bmx (to support existing users);
- landscaping improvements (to increase usability and aesthetic);
- regular garbage maintenance;
- resurfacing the tunnel (concrete/asphalt for safety and usability);
- signage at north and south entrances (to ensure safety), including
 - a number to contact for maintenance or safety concerns
 - a warning to wear safety gear and helmets

Interim Design

Since the issues of safety and maintenance are of utmost importance to all groups involved, the proposed interim plan includes the construction of a walkway, repaving of the surface of the tunnel, regarding the slope, and incorporation of some skateboard and BMX riding structures in the tunnel.

A long term plan could either be geared towards increased public use in the case that the interim design is a success. If it is determined that the space cannot be properly maintained and safety continues to be an issue, access and use could be limited. The Stakeholder Group, in consultation with the community, would revisit use and access options. In the case that neither option is successful, access would be completely restricted, and the tunnel would no longer be used.

Funding Sources

To be determined

Leaside Stakeholder & Stewardship Groups

The Leaside Stakeholder Group will continue to meet periodically to give advice on the design and long term use of the tunnel. The Leaside Stewardship group, made up of users of Leaside, will maintain the mailing list leaside-info@vancouvercommunity.net, the website, www.leaside.ca, and the email address leaside@vcn.bc.ca. They will also help monitor issues/concerns that may arise in the tunnel and communicate them to the Stakeholder Group.

Appendix A

- Workshop results from consultation with user groups and stakeholders.

Appendix B

- Principles For Leaside Stewardship Group

Appendix C

- Preliminary Design for Leaside Tunnel (using results from design workshops)

Appendix D

- Leaside Final Report 2003

APPENDIX A

WORKSHOP RESULTS

These are transcripts/results from five workshops held in June – July 2005:

- Leaside Stakeholder Group -- June 21st
- Mountain Bikers – July 5
- Skateboarders – July 12
- BMXers – 19
- Clean-up/Open House – July 23

1. The following is a summary of ideas we heard about the kinds of activities/uses/features that residents would like to see in Leaside Tunnel in the 2003 consultation process. Please review and add any other activities/uses/features that you feel are missing.

(participants were given 3 dots to indicate their own priority and what they felt was the community's priority for the tunnel. The numbers in the 'Your Priority' and 'Community Priority' columns reflect the number of dots each activity/use/feature received.

ACTIVITY 1

**Indicates ideas / elements that are key to the future of the Leaside Project.*

Ideas	Your Priority	Community Priority
<i>* Pedestrian walkway / bicycle path</i>		
<i>* Accessible, safe, well-maintained</i>		
Skateboarding, BMX, Mountain Biking Elements	32	16
- BMX (rideable structures / ramps)	10	6
- Skateboarding (skateable structures / ramps)	17	10
- Mountain Biking (rideable structures / ramps)	5	0
Exercise / Tai Chi	4	2
Art	15	10
Landscaping / Gardening	9	7
Multiple uses of tunnel	10	7
Better Access / Re-grade slope	5	7
Clean, Safe, Well-Maintained Space	13	7

Other ideas from individual workshops:

Ideas	Your Priority	Community Priority
garbage bin (dumpster dive proof), water fountain	3	2
street murals	6	3
Internet café and arcade	1	1
Leeside should be a legal graffiti wall	1	1
Washrooms in the tunnel	1	1
Water fountain should be for dogs and birds as well	1	1

Comments on the design at the Open House:

4' tall concrete half-pipe in Leeside	4	n/a
Wall-rides should be incorporated in skate/bmx design	8	n/a
Ramps should have some curved transitions, not just flat	5	n/a
Dirt jumps would be nice	2	0
Could use south slope as a path for riders to get speed	1	0
No path – pedestrians run the gauntlet	2	0
Allow graffiti outside the tunnel on adjoining N & S walls	1	0
Cross-directional traffic flow for skateboarders & bmx	2	0

ACTIVITY 3: INPUT INTO INTERIM MEASURES

1. Keeping Leaside safe is very important to the community, especially at night.
 - What are your ideas for keeping Leaside safe?

<i>Ideas or comments from individuals:</i>
<p>Signage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There should be a safety sign at both North and South entrances –“use helmets” “use at own risk”, etc. • There should be a sign with a contact number for maintenance issues, problems, etc. • Contact info should be at the tunnel • There should be signage about wearing a helmet or safety gear
<p>Lighting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There should be timers on the lights that would go off at 12 or 12:30 • Well-lit
<p>Monitoring/patrolling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Routine safety checks should be done by either volunteers, City Workers, PNE, or E-Comm. • More monitoring (contact homeless coordinator, video camera, lights)
<p>There should be a pay phone and a water fountain, good drainage, and well-lit.</p>
<p>There should be increased traffic and use as a riding facility, not just hanging out.</p>

- One possible way of keeping Leaside safe is to install gates. What do you think of this idea and do you have any ideas about the design / look of a possible gate?

<p>Good idea</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there should be barbed wire up to the very top of the tunnel • there should be a very high gate with a door the same size as the walkway • There should be a wooden gate with mosaic tile
<p>NO GATE!</p>
<p>Tunnel should be open 24-7, accessible at all times, gate is an expensive waste of money – same funds could be spent on wheelchair access</p>
<p>Later hours on weekends</p>
<p>Willing to compromise, if it takes a gate, put up a gate – whatever it takes – yay!</p>
<p>Gate is OK if we get our park</p>

2. Community Stewardship

Improvements to Leaside Tunnel will only be successful with long-term community support.

- Do you want to be involved in caring for the space? If so, why?

<i>Ideas or comments from individuals:</i>
<i>Robin Coope:</i> Yes, by facilitating communication with users, 2 forums already serve as a hub for Leaside communication issues: nsmb.com, feeblebmx.com
I would like to see a long-term facility
I like to see these things work
I want to see this happen, its been 7+ years waiting to see what will happen there
I want to keep the jumps in good condition. I want some jumps to jump!
Because if these jumps get built, I don't want to see them go bad
It would be a dry place to skate and a new park
It would be a new place to skate that is covered to get out of the rain
Keep the space safe and clean

- Do you know of any individuals or community groups that would be interested in helping take care of the space?

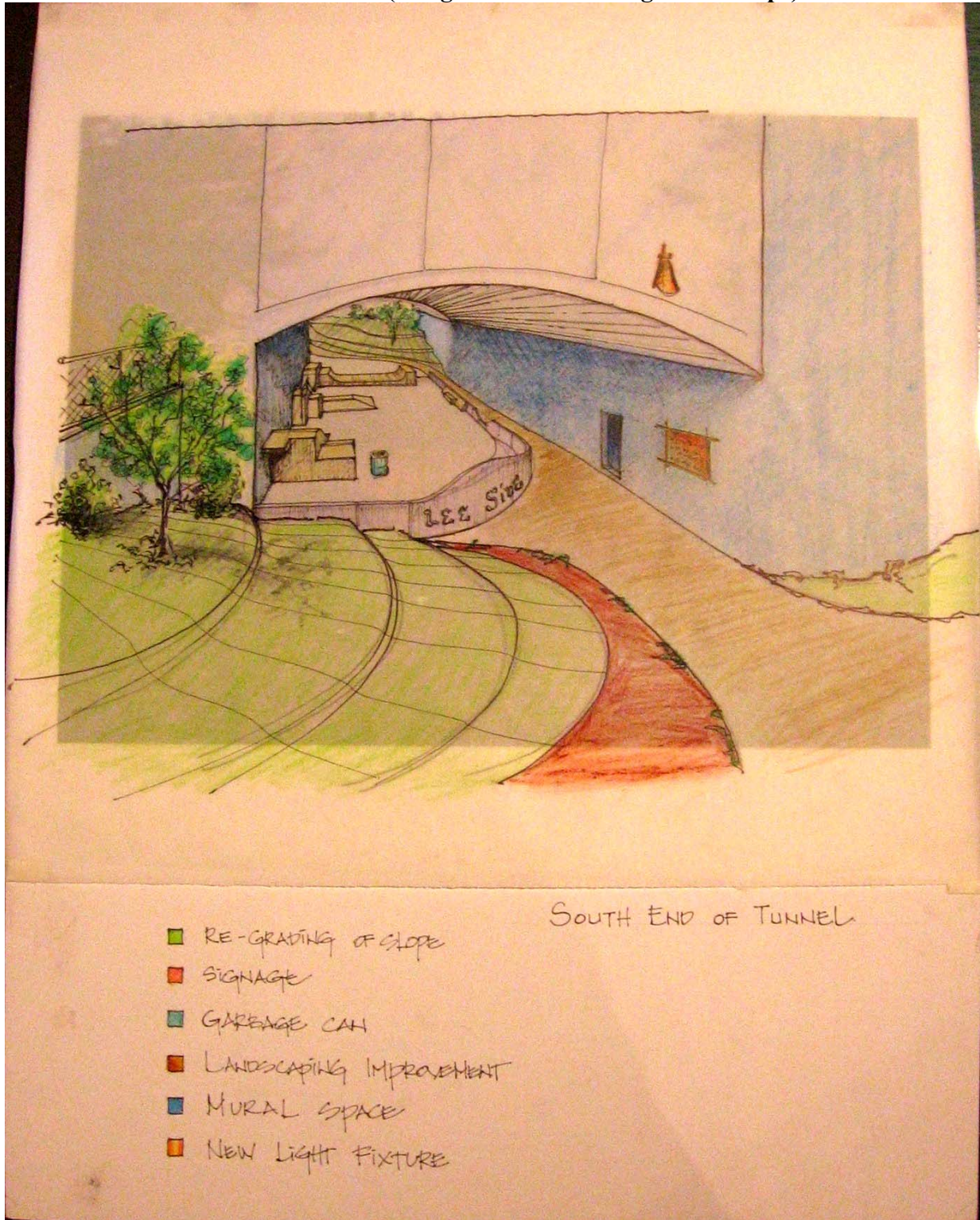
CAP hours for high schools to participate in clean-ups
Graffiti Art Contest
Graham Webb (referred by Shelby Davis)
Haida Lane
Don Wong
Hastings Park Conservancy
E-Comm

PNE
AR. Lord School
Franklin School
Templeton School
Our Community Stories (Maya and Jamie) Artist in Residence

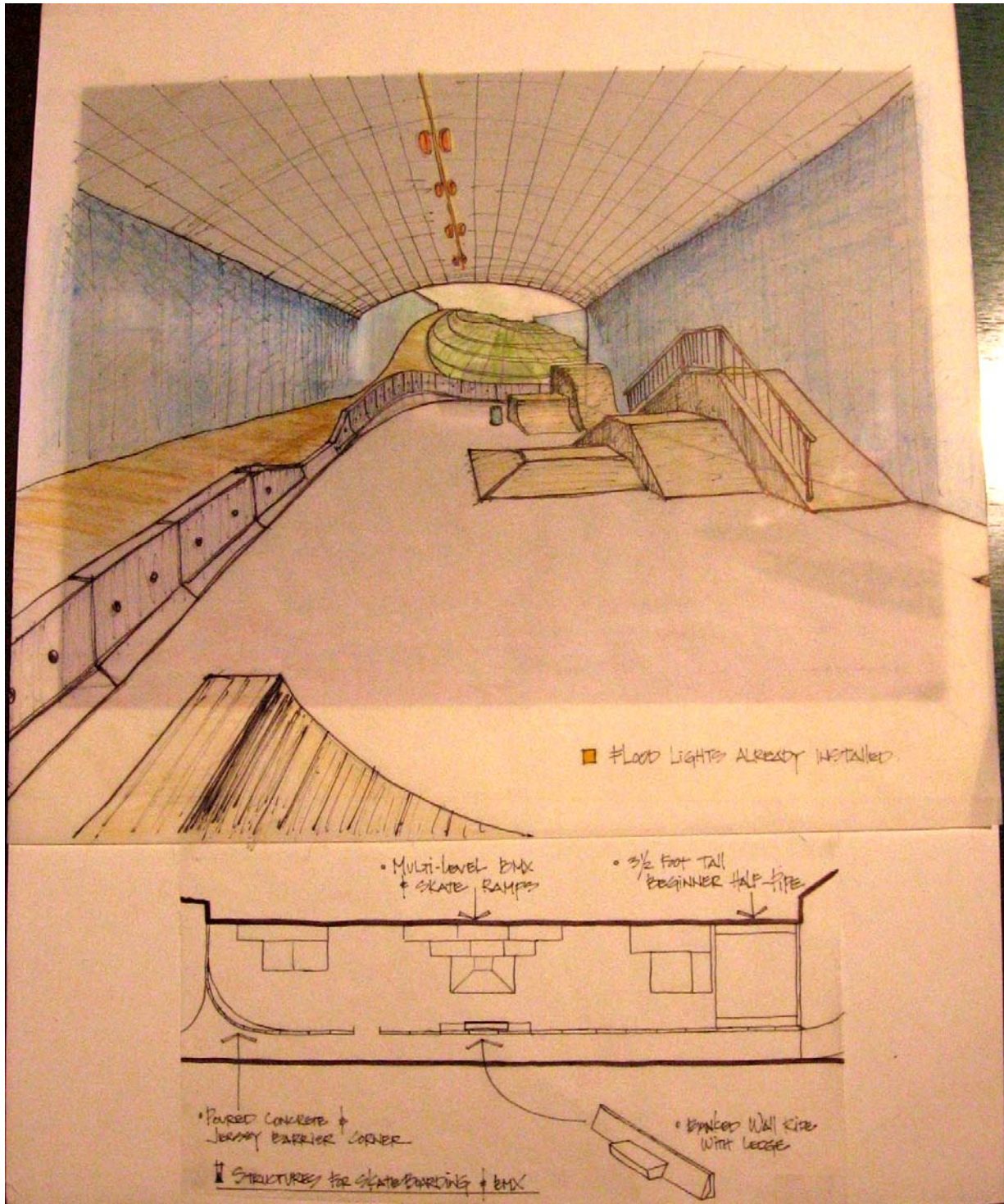
Draft Principles for Leaside Stewardship Group

A stewardship group for the “Leaside” Tunnel will uphold the following guiding principles:

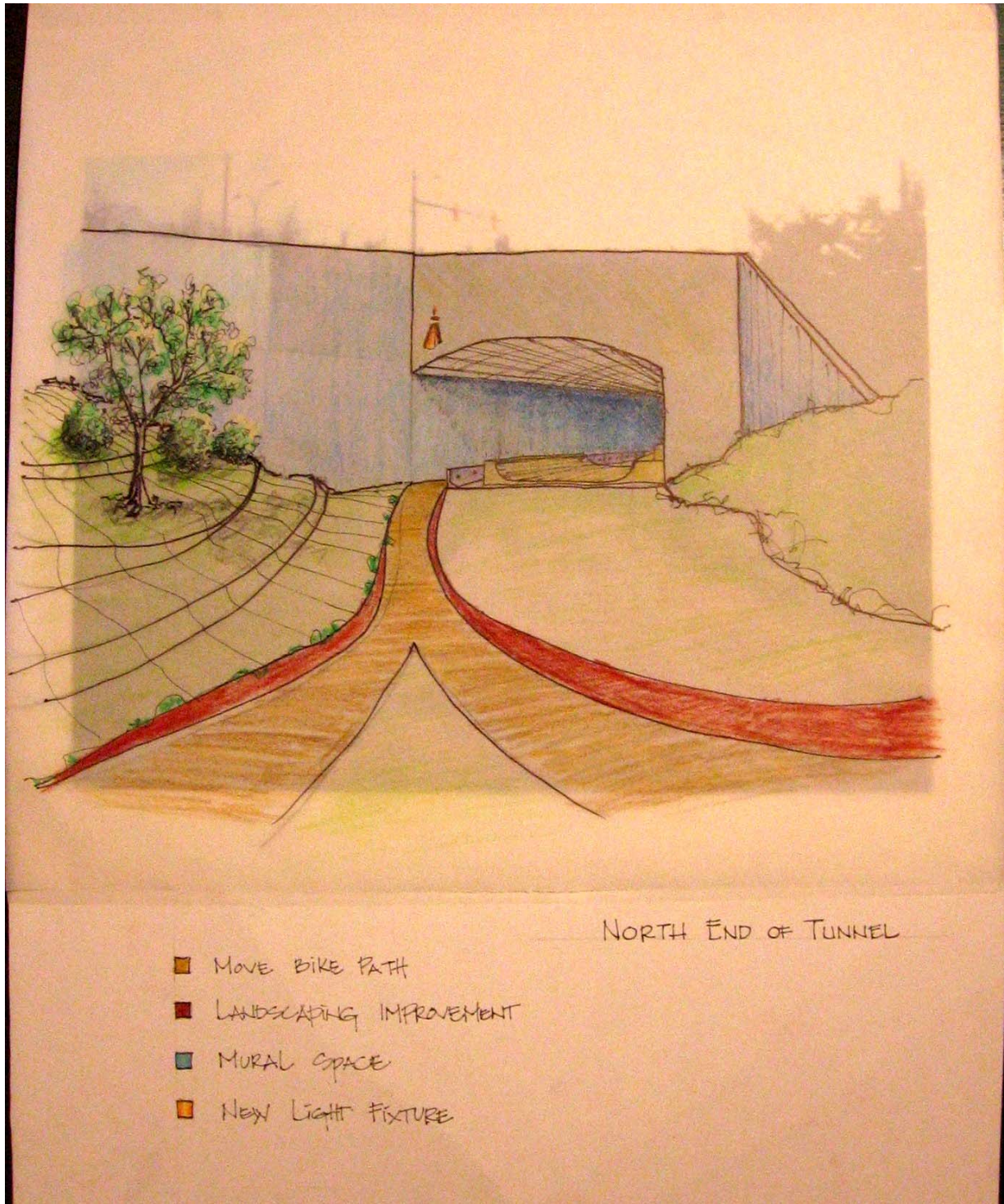
1. That the tunnel be safe, clean, well-maintained, and accessible.
2. The Leaside stewardship group will operate with representatives of user groups, residents, community organizations, civic institutions, and local businesses that hold a stake in the future of the tunnel.
 - a. Whichever City department is responsible for the tunnel will have at least one staff member represented at the stewardship group to be an intermediary between the concerns of the community and the City.
 - b. At least half of the currently active members of the Leaside stewardship group should also be currently active users.
3. There will be a contact number and email always posted at the tunnel that users may call with regards to anything related to safety, maintenance, access, and cleanliness.
4. The Leaside stewardship group will consider and seek to address any comments, complaints, or suggestions regarding the tunnel-- including use, maintenance, access, safety, or other issues as a group, and solutions must be agreed upon at meetings of the Leaside stewardship group.
5. The group will share among themselves the various tasks and duties of the group, including
 - a. Ensuring that there is effective communication between all stakeholders, and maintaining good relationships.
 - b. Ensuring that the tunnel is well-maintained (clean, safe, and usable)
 - c. Ensuring that the tunnel is being equitably shared among various uses, and that the tunnel is publicly accessible.



VIEW from the south end of Leaside Tunnel, facing north.



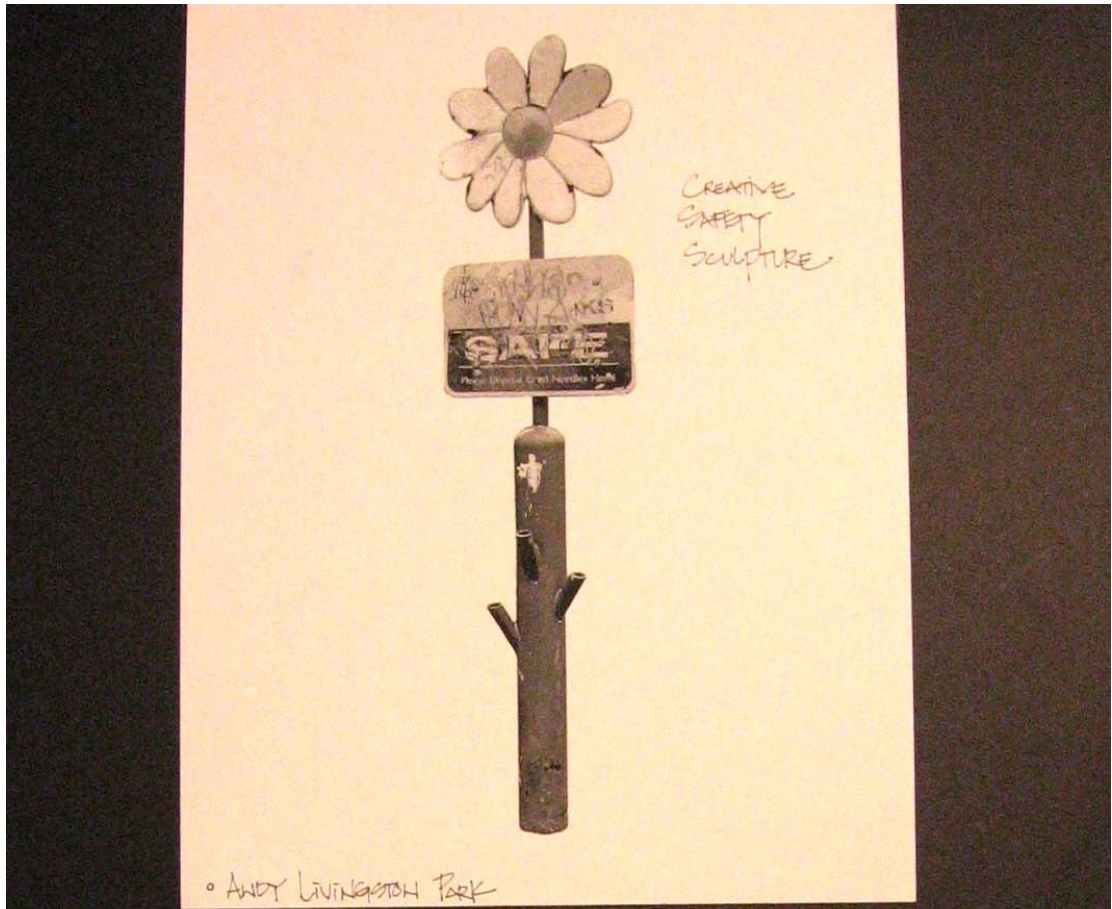
VIEW from inside Leaside Tunnel, facing South, and aerial view of ramps.



NORTH END OF TUNNEL

- MOVE BIKE PATH
- LANDSCAPING IMPROVEMENT
- MURAL SPACE
- NEW LIGHT FIXTURE

VIEW from the north end of Leaside Tunnel, facing south.



Graffiti can recycling sculpture, designed for Leeside Tunnel (Safety Sculpture at Andy Livingston Park, above)

LEESIDE PROJECT

Summer 2003

Matt Smed

Final Report

September 12th, 2003

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report has been written to introduce the “Leeside Project” and give a brief summary. It is based on the findings of a community research project that began May 26th and has continued until September 12th, 2003.

The report begins with an explanation of how the project came about and which community groups initiated the project. Following this are some details about “Leeside”- where it is, who uses it, and how it is used. The next section gives a detailed account of the important meetings and events that took place during the research and consultation process. Following this is an overview of the results of a survey which was used by the project to learn more about Leeside and to better understand the resident’s perceptions. Finally, the report concludes with a brief editorial about the project by the author of the report, and recommendations for the future of the project.

A website was also set up that was important to the promotion of the project over the summer, as it was used to direct people to information about what was happening. Both the Interim Report and the Final Report are posted on the site so that interested persons can download, print, and read the report (www.leeside.ca).

Sections of the report are as follows:

“Introduction”- <i>background information on the project</i>	page 3
“What is Leeside?”- <i>background information on the “Leeside” tunnel</i>	page 4
“Preparation & Research”- <i>a recounting of the work done during the project</i>	page 5
“Findings & Results”- <i>the results of the consultation with residents and users</i>	page 11
“Conclusion”- <i>summary of the findings</i>	page 14
“Editorial”- <i>author’s comments about the leeside project</i>	page 15
“Recommendations”- <i>what should be done in the future</i>	page 16
Appendix.....	page 17

INTRODUCTION

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The above photograph was taken in front of Leaside, circa 2000. It displays a message to all those who visit. If we pay close enough attention, we can read the graffiti: "WELCOME 2 LEE SIDE"-- as if to say that this is a place that is worth coming to, and young people enjoy it here. "Welcome to Leaside -- this is our place, we like it here."



Four years later, the wall is blank; no welcome message for visitors, no signs, and not much to indicate that there is anything particularly attractive or exciting about Leaside at all. It has begun to feel more and more like a "space," and less like a "place" - with almost nobody taking ownership, Leaside faces an uncertain future.

In January, 2003, the Hastings Community Centre and the Kiwassa Neighbourhood House, the Hastings Community Policing Centre, and the Hastings-Tillicum Community School decided to apply to the Office of the Solicitor General for

the Safer Streets Grant Program. They discussed two potential projects to apply for, and decided to go with Leaside. Since then, the City of Vancouver has come on board with the project, and representatives from all groups have been attending monthly meetings to act as an advisory committee to oversee the Leaside Project. The purpose of the project has been to gather information from residents, users, and stakeholders in the Hastings-Sunrise Community who are concerned about Leaside, and find out what all groups would like to see Leaside become. The project chose to hire a young person who would have an understanding of the issues that are relevant to the young people using Leaside.

WHAT IS LEESIDE?

“Leaside” or “Lee Side” is a tunnel that connects the Empire Bowl area of Hastings Park to the end of East Pender Street, behind the E-Comm. building. It is similar in design to the Cassiar Connector, but only one lane wide and 50 metres long. Originally, the space was going to be used by Transit to connect to a bus loop; however, the idea was abandoned. For this reason, the ownership of Leaside has been a point of confusion over the years, many thought that Parks Board was in charge of the tunnel, but in fact, the structure is located on a street, and the Moth has ownership of the tunnel structure. It was fenced off soon after it was built.

Years later, the tunnel had become a place for drug use, prostitution, and a shelter for homeless to sleep. About 5 years ago, youth started going to the area to skateboard and paint graffiti murals. One of the first young people to start using the space was a skateboarding graffiti artist named “Lee.” Because Lee and his friends used it so much, and because there was a large mural with Lee's name there, the space became to be known as “Leaside.”

More recently, Leaside has become an important space for BMX riders and Mountain Bikers. Much of Leaside's acclaim is due to the fact that it remains perfectly dry all year round, and for the last 2 years there have been lights at Leaside so that it can be used at night. A few BMX riders have been involved in this project as it has evolved; one of the main concerns of this group has been their need of a place to ride during the long winter months as there are very few places for BMX riders or mountain bikers when it is raining. Leaside is a perfect spot, and they have utilized it well, as have skateboarders in the past. Several wooden ramps have been built and maintained by the skateboarders, BMX riders and mountain bikers over the past 5 years.

This winter, there was an increased awareness about Leaside at City Hall, and there were rumours that the tunnel might be closed off for good. The users of the tunnel who heard the rumours responded by contacting the Mayor to express their disapproval. The letters were forwarded to the Hastings Community Centre, and the Hastings-Sunrise NIST, and talk about Leaside was resurrected.

PREPARATION & RESEARCH

The project began with research as there was some information available on the tunnel. There were then several meetings with people and groups who are stakeholders in the project. After this, it became clearer what some of the users and residents concerns were. Here are some comments from parents and skateboarders who use Leaside, from a meeting in October 2002:

- There is need for a garbage receptacle and regular clean-ups
- Access needs to be improved (South side is too steep; muddy & dangerous)
- Lights need consistent maintenance & repair

- Graffiti adds to the tunnel's character – (graffiti has an outdated stereotype of being “gang-related” let's help educate neighbours that graffiti is not a threat -- painting workshops or murals at Leaside)
- Drainage is a problem; some sewers are plugged and manhole covers are even missing.
- Fear that if city is involved, the tunnel will become over-regulated
- The surface needs refinishing, dirty and too rough.

One of the first meetings was with Angela Ko, a city planner for the Hastings-Sunrise neighbourhood. She had several recommendations that she had heard through community meetings regarding the project as well:

- Safety is a primary concern to residents
- Art and youth issues are relevant to the community
- Tunnel must support use as a passage / pathway
- Should be no misuse of tunnel in the future.
- There should be a 1 year pilot project, including clean-ups.
- There should also be a “plan B” – in case the pilot project fails.

So the project began with both the user's and the resident's perspectives in mind.

It seemed that one of the goals of the project should be to try to bring these two groups together. This would help to find out what each group wanted to see Leaside become. And if there were disagreements, a way could be provided for the groups to be brought together, so that each group could recognize each other's perspective and come to a compromise. Two questions had to be answered: what were the concerns of the users and the residents, and how could these groups be brought together to resolve some of these issues? This was to be the focus of the project for the summer. A survey was created as a tool to get a better idea about the different groups interested in Leaside, and what the

concerns of the groups might be. A copy of the survey has been included in the report (see Appendix 3).

There was much effort put into promotion of the project. Before both the Clean-up and BBQ event on July 19th and the Community Meeting on August 13th, posters were displayed at the Hastings Community Centre, Leaside Tunnel, along the Adanac Bike Route near Leaside, Hastings and Hwy #1 intersection, Hastings-Tillicum School, Kiwassa Neighbourhood House, Joy MacPhail's Office, Laughing Bean Coffee Shop, McGill Grocery, and Hastings Community Policing Centre and Wall Street Community Policing Centre. On July 14th, 10 volunteers from Hastings CPC handed out over 150 info brochures and surveys to neighbours living close to the tunnel, also promoting the July 19th Clean-up and BBQ, and the August 13th Community Meeting.

At the July 19th Clean-up and BBQ, there was a reporter from Independent Community Television who interviewed some people about the project and took some footage of the Clean-up. The piece was aired two weeks later on East Side Story; one of Shaw TV's public access channel programs. Also, at the Community Meeting, there was a reporter in attendance who did many interviews, and who is now planning on doing a story about Leaside for CBC Radio.

Listed below are some meetings and events that happened towards the completion of the project this summer. A more detailed list of each meeting and event has been provided as well (see Appendix 1).

One of the first meetings of the summer was with Doug Smith, who works for the City of Vancouver Engineering services. There was a discussion about the risks and potential of the space. He made it clear that it would be difficult to get the City to accept liability for the space as it currently sits. Here the idea of having a community clean-up

as one of the events for the project was discussed. Also discussed was the need for a community open-house to discuss plans for renovation of the tunnel.

A couple of weeks later, there was a meeting with Matt and Andrew – two dedicated Leaside users, the same ones who sent letters to the Mayor earlier that year. They expressed their love of the tunnel and their desire to help out to show that the tunnel is very important to both groups whom they felt they represented – the BMX riders (Matt) and the Mountain Bikers (Andrew). They explained that they felt there were many gaps of communication between the residents who had expressed concern about the tunnel and the users, and they wanted to help bridge those gaps. They heard about the meeting with Doug, and how the tunnel needed to be cleaned up and maintained better if there was going to be any future for Leaside. Matt and Andrew admitted that they were fearful of the space becoming over-regulated, but were willing to help out to keep Leaside open. They expressed that they would very much like to be involved in design meetings to discuss how the tunnel would be renovated.

On July 1st, there was a meeting with Jeannie, a resident that lives very close, in fact within view of, Leaside, and she expressed concerns with the safety and cleanliness of the tunnel. She also expressed that she felt that the users of the tunnel did not respect the residents and that is why she was concerned about the tunnel. She found out about the clean-up that was planned for the 19th of July, and she said she would like to come out for it to clean the tunnel up. She participated in the clean-up, and even when the clean-up was finished at 2pm, she asked for extra garbage bags and stayed late to do more cleaning up. As the project progressed, Jeannie became more and more involved and was increasingly concerned with a long-term solution for Leaside that would include regular clean-ups. She was even willing to leave one of her own garbage cans in the tunnel and empty it herself until the PNE or the City of Vancouver was willing to help out.

On July 4th, there was a meeting with Don, a resident who volunteers as a Block Watch captain. He expressed some of the concerns that he had with the tunnel, as well as his apprehension about drug users and homeless misusing the tunnel. As the project progressed, Don revealed that he likes to use the tunnel in the early mornings during the rainy months to do his Tai Chi exercises. One of the main concerns Don has is that the tunnel's entrance is very slippery and muddy to climb down when it is raining. He would very much like to see a proper entrance to the tunnel with a stairway and a railing built on the South side.

On July 14th, Clair from the Community Policing Centre brought 10 volunteers to the Hastings Community Centre with the intention of hand-delivering surveys and brochures about Leaside to the 9 square blocks around the tunnel. They met at Leaside and divided the information between us and split into a few groups. After about 1.5 hours of spreading the information to the neighbourhood, they met up and spoke about what they did. They came to the conclusion afterwards that people generally did not know much about Leaside, if anything at all. Later, the responses from the surveys confirmed this as well.

On July 19th, finally it came time for the Clean-up and BBQ. Some of the more



ambitious volunteers came to Leaside 2 hours early and got started on the clean-up.

There was a lot to clean! Good thing there were 12 volunteers to help complete the work. Layers upon layers of wood and dirt were at the North and South entrances, and nothing short of 4 hours of intensive hauling would be sufficient to remove all of it. Even after they completely filled the industrial sized dumpster that Engineering had provided

for the day, they continued to pile the wood up on the alleyway beside it. Jeannie and the other volunteers manned the garbage patrol and ended up filling at least (12) 40-gallon garbage bags full, mostly with McDonalds garbage and spray paint cans. They also found 3 needles, which was less than expected, as it had been many months since such a clean-up had been done. They ended the clean-up with a BBQ while one of the volunteers, Shelby, proceeded to show some bike moves on the ramps in the tunnel.

At the Vancouver Skate Park Coalition meeting on August 6th, there was discussion about the progress of the Leaside project thus far, and there was a lot of good feedback from coalition

members about ideas and how to help move the project along.

One of the ideas was to get

McDonald's involved in

helping keep Leaside clean.

The next day, the McDonald's

restaurant "across the street" from Leaside was notified about the cups and bags that were all over the tunnel. They said that they would call if they could help with this issue. That afternoon, the McDonald's area manager called, and said that he was willing to help out by sending employees down a few times a month to make sure the tunnel was clean of garbage from their restaurant. And it seems that they have been true to their word, as lately there have been less of their cups and bags lying around the tunnel. The PNE has also become involved since the clean-up, by providing a garbage can at the North end of the tunnel, to be emptied periodically.

On August 13th the community meeting was a great success; 31 people came out to discuss the project, and it was a good mix of committee members, residents, users, and



parents in attendance. The interaction that was happening during the meeting reflects well the values and concerns of the various stakeholders. All groups seemed to be interested in a long-term plan for the tunnel and the future of Leaside. Out of those concerns, there arose several conversations that are important to mention here.

Firstly, the interaction around the IDEAS table where people were encouraged to illustrate their own plans for the tunnel using markers and paper was very good. It gave a chance for everyone to draw out their ideas of the ideal Leaside.



Also there was a group of BMX riders who came out to support the project, and had some productive discussions about their desire to preserve Leaside. Many of the Vancouver Skate Park Coalition (VSPC) members were also in attendance, as the group has had an interest in Leaside for several years.



Leaside Lee even showed up to the meeting, and expressed concerns that all the effort that has been put into Leaside over the years should be recognized, and not wasted.

FINDINGS & RESULTS

There was a great effort put towards getting the surveys out to the residents that live near Leaside. Several volunteers helped out by volunteering at booths at community events, and even more came out to issue surveys and information to the houses around

Leeside. The City also got involved, and helped by sending out 740 surveys by mail.

Included is a map of the area that the mail-out went to (see Appendix 2).

The results of the survey seemed to be much of the same from the initial research process. Below, the results have been tabulated on a per-question basis, according to the most common answers, and highlighting some interesting responses. The results are based on 45 surveys completed to date. The results aim to accurately represent the groups involved, but this is by no means a professional survey. The survey has been used as a tool to get a better idea of what people think about Leeside. A full copy of the original survey has been attached as well (see Appendix 3).

Question #1: Do you currently use the Leeside tunnel? And if so, what do you use it for?

BMX or biking	8
Walk-through	6
Skateboarding	3
Graffiti	2
Tai Chi	1

Question #2: Do you know of any other ways that the area is being used?

BMX or biking	11
Skateboarding	9
Graffiti	9
Drug Use	2
Art Gallery	2
Filming	1

Question #3: What excites you most about Leaside?

It is a covered space when it rains	7
It is a place for youth to hang-out	6
It gives youth something to do and care about	5
Freedom / people enjoying themselves at their own pace	4
Nice graffiti	4
<i>It has been turned into something from nothing by the youth who use it.</i>	3

Question #4: What concerns do you have about the area?

Area might be used for Drugs	10
Decay from lack of maintenance, people will forget about it	7
Needs to be cleaned-up regularly	5
Safety	5
That the city might close the tunnel off	4
<i>That people won't recognize the great potential of this community space</i>	1

Question #5: In your opinion, what could be done to improve the area?

More clean-ups	10
Get money from the city to fix the lighting, drainage, improvements and designs...	7
Need better ramps in the tunnel	3
More landscaping	3
Better maintenance / organization	3
<i>Make it for everyone</i>	1

Question #6: Why are you interested in the Leaside project?

Because it is part of my community / I live close	7
I use it a lot and I really like it there	5
It is a place for youth	5
It engages community members	4
My kids like to use it	3
<i>It should be preserved</i>	2

CONCLUSION

In summary, Leaside tunnel is an important community space. A vast majority of all the groups surveyed (users, residents, community employees) would like to see a long-term solution for the tunnel. There was an effort to use the Community Meeting to raise awareness about Leaside in the neighbourhood. There was a corresponding concern at the Community Meeting by those who attended that there be more meetings to help generate excitement and support for the project in the community, and to keep the issues around Leaside fresh in everyone's minds.

Leaside is a valuable community space; users and residents have indicated that they care very much that Leaside is put to a beneficial use for all. There was an especially clear indication that the community supports Leaside as a place for youth, as it has been in the past. However, there is also an indication of fear that if the area decays, it would become a place for drug-use if it is not properly maintained. Many users, who have invested time maintaining Leaside expressed that they would like to get involved to help Leaside become a safe, well maintained place for youth. The users very much want to be able to keep Leaside alive, and have demonstrated that by volunteering and participating in the Leaside project throughout the summer. The skateboarders, BMX

riders, and graffiti artists that use Leaside should continue to manage the tunnel as they have been.

There has been much positive interaction between residents and users as a result of the community meeting, and there should be more meetings to help unite users and residents, so that they are ready to take ownership of the tunnel. Leaside needs improved drainage, garbage cans that are well maintained, pedestrian access through the tunnel, and landscaping to make it look like a more welcome place. The ramps inside the tunnel need to be repaired, and if they are no longer usable, removed. A design and cost estimate should be done with the Leaside community (users and residents) to determine what they would like to see the tunnel become; the needs of skaters, bike riders, artists, and pedestrians must be carefully considered.

EDITORIAL

There are several prominent aspects of youth culture today, such as BMX riding, skateboarding, and graffiti art, which are often misunderstood by non-youths. Many lines have been drawn in the sand, and clearly there is much pessimism about these aspects of youth culture. More recently, the City of Vancouver has been drawing lines that look a bit different; and it seems that there is some optimism about these aspects, as well.

However, whether optimistic or pessimistic, both sides often lack a sophisticated understanding of the issues that skateboarding, for example, faces. Growing up as a skater, I have learned that the best way to get to know skate culture is to ride a board. But not everyone does, and the realities of skating thus remain “secrets” to outsiders and are protected as such. However; building, sharing, learning, teamwork, and celebration are activities that build communities, and the skateboard community is no exception.

Leaside is one such community; it has been a place for youth to skateboard, BMX ride, and paint graffiti art for many years. There have been several dedicated groups of

users, and today, it continues to be a self-regulated place where young people can go to ride, skate, or paint without worrying about getting hassled. They are free to build ramps and paint murals, and since it is a covered area, Leaside can be used all year round. As a developer and a skater, my opinion is that if the community using Leaside are not both the authors and executors of Leaside's development, they will likely move on.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Leaside project recommends that:

- Someone be hired to take responsibility for further development of the Leaside project.
- This person have a good understanding of issues relevant to youth using the tunnel.
- The tunnel stay open and accessible for community use.
- If there is a need for maintenance or clean-up, users be contacted to complete maintenance and clean-ups *on their own*.
- If there are design meetings or further consultation, users & residents be the primary attendees of the meeting.
- Any new designs would favour the way Leaside has been used over the last several years as *a place for youth to freely recreate*.
- There be continued education to the community about the actual use of Leaside compared with the perceived use and fears that neighbours have.
- That all community agencies, listed in the "Introduction," and individuals involved in the project are kept up to date on the progress of the project. These are Matt, bikerockrevolution@hotmail.com, Dean ask@uniserve.com, Stefan buntinstation@hotmail.com, Matt smedboy@telus.net, and Andrew flowrider@shaw.ca.

APPENDIX 1

July 1st Booth = 10 surveys filled out & 3 volunteers recruited

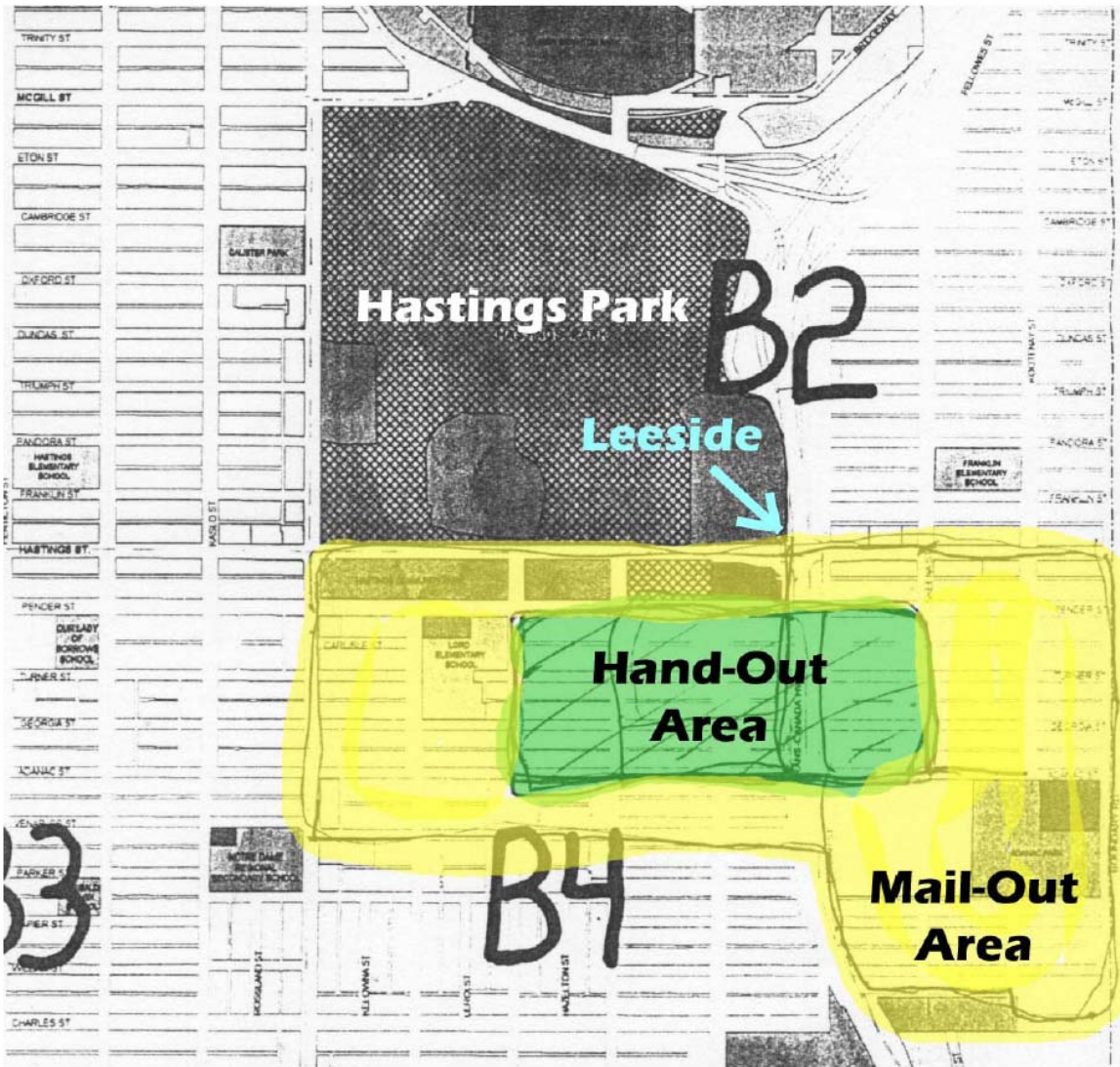
July 5th Booth = 4 surveys filled out

July 8th Booth = 1 volunteer recruited

July 19th Leaside Clean-up = 12 volunteers from neighbourhood filled up 1.5 dumpster loads with old wood and (12) 40-gallon garbage bags with trash. Barbecued 24 hot dogs and consumed 6 gallons of water and/or pop.

August 13th Leaside Meeting / Open House = 31 people attended, filled out surveys, drew plans for Leaside, and talked with each other for 2 hours.

Thursday May 29th	Community Safety Fair @ Pandora Park
Tuesday June 3rd	Meet Doug Smith from Engineering @ Leaside
Wednesday June 4th	Vancouver Skate Park Coalition Meeting @ Roundhouse
Thursday June 5th	Meet Clair MacGougan @ Hastings CPC
Friday June 6th	Meet Jennifer @ Hastings-Tillicum Community School
Friday June 6th	Meet Kathleen @ Kiwassa Neighbourhood House
Friday June 13th	Advisory Committee Meeting @ Hastings Community Centre (HCC)
Friday June 13th	Meeting with Mark Vulliamy @ Leaside
Thursday June 19th	Matt and Andrew @ Leaside
Monday June 23 rd	Meeting with Clair MacGougan and Michael
Tuesday June 24th	Meet Michael Gordon from VSPC @ Leaside
Wednesday June 25th	Meet Aviam @ Leaside
Thursday June 26th	Presentation to Hastings Park Conservancy @ HCC
Tuesday July 1st	Canada Day Celebration – 1 st Leaside Booth
Friday July 4th	Meeting with Don from Block Watch @ HCC
Saturday July 5 th	Hastings CPC Street Hockey Tournament – 2 nd Leaside Booth
Monday July 7th	Advisory Committee Meeting @ HCC
Tuesday July 8th	Hastings Park Community Forum Meeting – 3 rd Leaside Booth
Monday July 14 th	Hand-delivery of Surveys to neighbourhood
Saturday July 19 th	Leaside Clean-up & BBQ
Wednesday August 6th	VSPC Meeting at Roundhouse C.C.
Thursday August 7th	Meeting with McDonalds Manager
Tuesday August 12th	HCC Advisory Committee Meeting
Wednesday August 13th	Leaside Open House / Community Meeting



APPENDIX 3*“Leeside” Project Survey*

Do you currently use the Leeside tunnel? And if so, what do you use it for?

Do you know of any other ways that the area is being used?

What excites you most about Leeside?

What concerns do you have about the area?

In your opinion, what could be done to improve the area?

Why are you interested in the Leeside project?

Would you attend a community meeting or event about Leeside this summer?

Yes / No (please circle one)

What is your contact information?

Name: _____

Address: _____

E-Mail Address: _____

Age: 0-25 25-50 50 +

I am a Hastings-Sunrise resident: **Yes / No**

I live within 5 blocks of Leeside: **Yes / No**