



April 11, 2016

**TO:** Park Board Chair and Commissioners  
**FROM:** General Manager - Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation  
**SUBJECT:** New Brighton Salt Marsh - Preferred Concept

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## RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT the Vancouver Park Board approve the concept plan for the creation of an intertidal salt marsh, including related park improvements in New Brighton Park, developed in partnership with Vancouver Fraser Port Authority, as described in this report; and
- B. THAT a Project Agreement be finalized to the satisfaction of the General Manager of the Vancouver Park Board and the Director of Legal Services, and be executed prior to the start of construction of the proposed park improvements.

## POLICY

The Board approves major changes in Vancouver parks, including the design and development of parks.

## BACKGROUND

**Biodiversity Strategy (2016):** Sets a goal to “increase the amount and ecological quality of Vancouver’s natural areas to support biodiversity and enhance access to nature”, and a specific action to “partner with Vancouver Fraser Port Authority to restore shoreline and shallow subtidal habitats along Burrard Inlet, English Bay, and the Fraser River”.

**Bird Strategy (2015):** Celebrates the importance of birds in Vancouver and provides voluntary landscape and architectural guidelines to enhance urban bird habitats.

**Rewilding Action Plan (2014):** Supports a broader role for environmental education and stewardship in parks, particularly for children.

**Park Board Strategic Plan (2012):** Includes five strategic directions, one of which is Greening the Park Board. The plan states that the “preservation and enhancement of the natural environment is a core responsibility of the Park Board” and that the Board “will develop sustainable policies and practices that achieve environmental objectives while meeting the needs of the community”.

**Hastings Park / PNE Master Plan (2011):** Included the creation of a daylighted stream connecting the Sanctuary pond in Hastings Park to a saltmarsh in New Brighton Park.

**New Brighton Master Plan (1997):** Included the development of a large saltmarsh east of the swimming pool.

## **PARTNERSHIP WITH THE PORT AUTHORITY**

This project is a partnership between the Vancouver Park Board and the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority, and both parties have guided the preliminary design development and public engagement process.

If approved to proceed, the port authority's Habitat Enhancement Program will lead the procurement and construction management process, with input, oversight, and some funding from the Park Board (as outlined in this report).

As background, the port authority manages a Habitat Enhancement Program that focuses on creating and enhancing habitat to benefit fish and wildlife. One aspect of the Program is to create or restore habitat in order to counterbalance unavoidable effects of potential future development that cannot otherwise be mitigated. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) will review the project and if accepted, it will be included under the terms of the Working Agreement with the port authority.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

### **Location**

The project is located on the east side of New Brighton Park (see Appendix A). Most of the project activities are concentrated east of the New Brighton Pool, but changes to the dog off-leash area and a soil fill area are proposed on the west side of the park.

### **Land Ownership**

The portion of park in which the proposed salt marsh is located is federal land owned by the port authority. This area is leased to the City of Vancouver under Lease No. VAN048-04394 F-001, and is managed by the Park Board. Some features of the proposed project are located on City of Vancouver owned land (e.g., creek connection to Creekway Park and western dog off-leash area).

The Park Board, City of Vancouver, and the port authority are discussing options for accommodating the proposed change in use under the existing lease. The port authority recommends that a Project Agreement with the Park Board be developed that outlines land tenure arrangements, a review and approval process for construction documents that include extensive operational input, access for purposes of construction, maintenance requirements, and funding components. Construction will not proceed until this Agreement is completed and executed to the satisfaction of the Park Board's General Manager and Director of Legal Services.

### **Habitat Features**

The conceptual plan for the salt marsh and related improvements is attached as Appendix A, and the features of this plan are described herein.

The focus of the project is to create an intertidal salt marsh which will restore habitat for fish and wildlife in Burrard Inlet, and increase access to nature in New Brighton Park. Intertidal wetlands were covered over during the early development of the inlet resulting in substantial loss of fish and wildlife habitat. The total area of the salt marsh and adjacent habitat areas is approximately 2.5 ha.

Key habitat features include:

- An intertidal salt marsh consisting of vegetated marsh areas, mud flats, and tidal channels. Two connections to Burrard Inlet are proposed to maximize habitat area and improve tidal flushing. Salt marshes are critical habitat for fish, particularly migrating juvenile salmon which feed along the shoreline of Burrard Inlet as they leave the Indian, Seymour, and Capilano rivers, and other small streams. Mud flats and salt marshes are also important for migrating birds such as shorebirds.
- A stream connection from Creekway Park will be incorporated on the south side of the salt marsh as part of the long-term restoration of Hastings Creek in Hastings Park.
- A small island formed by the two salt marsh outlets will be created. The island will be encircled by water under high tides, and connected both east and west during low tides. The island will be partially forested.
- Forest and shrub communities with native species will be planted on the east side of the salt marsh, forming a buffer between the park and the adjacent industrial use. This area will be bermed to incorporate some of the soil excavated to create the salt marsh. Logs will be used to improve habitat diversity.
- Beach grass meadows and some shrub thickets will be planted on the west side of the salt marsh to contribute to habitat diversity and allow for visual connections into the salt marsh from trails and viewing platforms.

### **Park Feature Components and Changes to Park Features**

The focus of park development components is to enhance access to nature using trails and viewing platforms linked to the salt marsh, shift the dog off-leash area to the western portion of the park, and improve beach access at the east beach.

Key park features and changes include:

- Two accessible viewing platforms will be created on the western side of the salt marsh to provide shoreline access and opportunities for wildlife viewing and appreciation of the landscape of Burrard Inlet and the North Shore mountains.
- Interpretive signs highlighting the ecological and cultural landscape will be incorporated into the viewing platforms. They are also anticipated to include information on historical and contemporary First Nations connections to Burrard Inlet based on input from Musqueam First Nation, Squamish Nation, and Tsleil-Waututh Nation.
- Pathways will be modified to define the edge of the salt marsh area and provide connections to the new viewing platforms.
- Access to the east beach (east of shoreline pier) will be improved by adding or upgrading stairs and providing benches and log or bench seating upslope of the beach.
- Signs, fences, and vegetation such as shrub thickets will be used to restrict access to sensitive habitats including the salt marsh and the forested areas on the eastern, edge of the park.

- The dog off-leash area will be moved to the western side of the park to provide beach and grass access, and reduce conflicts between off-leash dogs and other park activities. The new off-leash area will be enclosed with split-rail or similar fencing and will include a large grassed area (approximately 90 m in diameter), and year-round access to the western beach (the existing beach access for dogs is restricted during the summer). These improvements are in keeping with current guidelines established for dog off-leash areas.
- The existing tennis courts will be removed. Upgraded tennis courts are available at Burrard View Park.
- An area of soil fill is proposed for the western edge of the park in a depression created by an existing berm on the park edge and the port authority's truck storage area. The area can be filled from port authority property with limited disturbance to the park.

## WORK TO DATE

### Ecological Assessment and Site Investigations

The [June 2015 Existing Ecological Conditions Report](#) documents the existing ecological conditions at the project site. The project will be designed to restore and provide high quality habitat for species including juvenile salmon and other fish, resident and migrating birds, and other wildlife that use Burrard Inlet.

To evaluate soil and groundwater conditions at the project site, the port authority completed subsurface investigations in May and September 2015. The investigations indicate that the majority of the soil within the salt marsh area is of suitable quality to remain on site. It is anticipated that a small volume of soil will be removed from the site, due to contaminants within the soil from historical fill. A Soil and Groundwater Management Plan has been developed to guide the project through construction. City of Vancouver staff have provided technical oversight of soil management.

### Design and Engineering Process

Through 2015, a design team consisting of coastal engineers (Moffatt & Nichol), landscape architects (Connect Landscape Architecture), and biologists (G.L. Williams and Associates; Hemmera) worked with Park Board and port authority staff to develop the preliminary design. This included a wide range of issues including park use, topography, soil conditions, views, habitat values, and coastal processes, as well as input from the public, First Nations, and key stakeholder groups.

## FIRST NATIONS ENGAGEMENT

Engagement of local First Nations (Musqueam First Nation, Squamish Nation, and Tsleil-Waututh Nation) is being led by the port authority with assistance from Park Board staff. The primary objective of the engagement process is to support positive, productive, and lasting relationships between the port authority, Vancouver Park Board, and First Nations, and to ensure that all applicable legal, regulatory, and policy requirements are effectively addressed. The port authority's Aboriginal Consultation approach is based upon the Government of Canada's [Aboriginal Consultation and Accommodation - Updated Guidelines for Federal Officials to Fulfill the Duty to Consult](#) (2011).

Based on direction from the three local First Nations, a First Nations Technical Committee was struck for the purposes of consulting on design and other aspects of the proposed project and meetings are ongoing.

## **PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROCESS**

A comprehensive public engagement process has included a Stakeholder Advisory Group and three engagement events with open houses and online surveys. Input received during public consultation and engagement has, and will continue to be considered, along with technical information and other considerations, to inform project design and development.

### **Stakeholder Advisory Group**

A Stakeholder Advisory Group guided by a Terms of Reference was established in July 2015. Three meetings have been undertaken to date. The group includes members of the public and representatives of stakeholder groups identified in the New Brighton Park area including park users, Burrardview Community Association, Hastings Park Conservancy, Evergreen Canada, BCIT Rivers Institute, Hastings Community Association, and Stewardship Centre for British Columbia.

### **Pre-Engagement**

Pre-engagement, held in May and June 2015, included engagement with Aboriginal Groups and key stakeholders, including the East Vancouver Port Liaison Committee (EVPL) and members of the New Brighton Park Stakeholder Advisory Group, to introduce the proposed project, provide information about field studies, and discuss further opportunities for engagement.

### **Conceptual Design Public Consultation**

The project team conducted Conceptual Design Public Consultation from August 26 to September 9, 2015 to provide opportunity for community members, stakeholders and the public to learn about the project and provide feedback on access and recreational features ecological features, educational features, dog off-leash changes and park use.

The consultation included:

- A discussion paper, feedback form, and a Talk Vancouver online survey;
- A public engagement event at New Brighton Park on August 29, 2015;
- Five community visits conducted by the Project team in New Brighton Park.

There were a total of 285 participant interactions as part of Conceptual Design Public Consultation.

### **Preliminary Design Public Consultation**

The Project team conducted Preliminary Design Public Consultation from November 2 to 18, 2015, to provide opportunity for community members, stakeholders, and the public to learn about and provide feedback on two preliminary habitat restoration design options and dog off-leash and other park use features.

The consultation included:

- A discussion paper, feedback form, and a Talk Vancouver online survey;
- Two public engagement events at New Brighton Park and Hastings Room;
- Two community visits conducted by the Project team in New Brighton Park.

There were a total of 245 participant interactions as part of Preliminary Design Public Consultation.

#### **Public Engagement Regarding Dog Off-Leash Options in New Brighton Park**

Preliminary Design Public Consultation input regarding two options for dog off-leash areas indicated that some participants wanted an alternative option with off-leash use concentrated in the western portion of the park, and other participants commented that separation of off-leash use from the restored habitat area and other high-use areas of the park was important. Based on this input, the project team refined one option presented in the fall and developed a new option.

The consultation, which ran from February 1 to 15, 2016, included a discussion paper, feedback form, and a Talk Vancouver online survey.

There were a total of 216 participant interactions as part of this engagement.

#### **Detailed Design Public Consultation**

Based on the direction from the Park Board, the project team proposes to undertake an additional public consultation process between May 2 and 27, 2016, to provide information about the proposed project and gather feedback from communities, stakeholders, and the public about the detailed design process. Detailed Design Public Consultation will include a discussion paper, feedback form, a Talk Vancouver online survey, and a public engagement event.

As part of Detailed Design Public Consultation, the Project team will provide information about the proposed project, including project design, environmental studies completed as part of the proposed project, educational features, construction, project effects, and proposed mitigation measures and will gather feedback from communities, stakeholders and the public.

Further information about public and stakeholder consultation undertaken to date can be found [online](#)

#### **PROJECT SCHEDULE**

A Project Agreement between the Park Board and the port authority is anticipated to be developed in spring 2016. This will coincide with detailed design development, including a final round of public consultation planned for May 2016 and review by operations staff.

The port authority will lead the project's procurement process, tentatively planned for summer 2016, and it is currently anticipated that construction could start in September 2016 following the end of the busy summer season including pool use. Planting and project completion would occur in spring 2017.

#### **BUDGET**

Construction costs for the project are currently estimated at approximately \$2.2 million and design and permitting costs are approximately \$900,000. Under a Project Agreement, the port authority will fund the majority of construction and delivery costs for the project (i.e.

salt marsh and other habitat components, \$1.8 million). The Park Board has committed \$400,000 to cover a portion of park feature costs and for First Nations cultural/interpretive components. The port authority and Park Board will be working with First Nations in the planning and implementation of these components.

## **CONCLUSION**

The preliminary design for the salt marsh in New Brighton Park has been developed to meet the long-term vision for the park, and to address new goals to support biodiversity and provide access to nature throughout the park system. The project has been developed with input from First Nations, public, and stakeholders, and is supported by the local community. If the Board approves, staff will work with the port authority to advance the concept plan through detailed design and construction, and to finalize the Project Agreement to the satisfaction of the General Manager and Director of Legal Services, with targeted completion in the spring of 2017.

General Manager's Office  
Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation,  
Vancouver, BC

Prepared by:  
Nick Page & Dave Hutch, Planning and Research  
Tiina Mack, Park Development

/NP/TM/DH/jk/clc



Soil Fill Site

Fenced Off-leash Area (grass)

Fenced Off-leash Area (beach)

PARK BOUNDARY

Pier

East Beach

Playing Field

Seating Area

Viewing Platforms

Island

Salt Marsh

Pool

Fence

Forested Berm

Park Boundary

Hastings Creek Connection

0 25 50 75 100 m



Creekway Park

# Appendix A: New Brighton Park Salt Marsh - Concept Plan

April 2016

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