



Date: May 4, 2015

TO: Park Board Chair and Commissioners
FROM: General Manager - Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: New Brighton Saltmarsh Project - Design and Consultation Process

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Board support a design and public consultation process for the creation of a habitat enhancement project in New Brighton Park in cooperation with Port Metro Vancouver; and

FURTHER THAT staff report back to the Board following the public consultation and seek Board approval of the preferred concept plan before proceeding to detailed design.

POLICY

The 1997 Master Plan for New Brighton Park included the development of a large saltmarsh east of the swimming pool.

The 2010 Hastings Park/PNE Master Plan included the creation of a daylighted stream connecting the Sanctuary pond in Hastings Park to a saltmarsh in New Brighton Park.

The Park Board's 2012 Strategic Plan supports the creation of healthy ecosystems in parks to enhance biodiversity and create more vibrant and broadly-appealing parks.

BACKGROUND

The creation of a daylighted stream is a key component of the master plan for Hastings Park. The long-term goal is to create a stream corridor that will flow from the Sanctuary Pond (created in 1999) through Hastings and Creekway parks and into saltmarsh on the shore of Burrard Inlet on the eastern edge of New Brighton Park. The completion of this daylighted stream is an ambitious and long-term vision: at almost 1.2 km in length, this stream daylighting project is one of the largest projects of its kind currently being undertaken in the Pacific Northwest. This vision was strongly supported by the public and local stewardship groups during the public consultation process for the Hastings Park/PNE Master Plan. The BCIT Rivers Institute has also been a strong supporter of the City and Park Board's efforts to daylight streams and restore shoreline habitat.

The proposed habitat enhancement project in New Brighton Park is a key part of the Renfrew Creek restoration initiative. The project would provide essential habitat for fish, birds, and other wildlife, as well as create an interesting and dynamic park experience. Both the north and south shores of Burrard Inlet have lost extensive coastal wetland habitat, which impairs their ability to support migrating fish from rivers and streams, and provide foraging habitat

for shorebirds and waterfowl. New Brighton Park was created by filling a large area of intertidal habitat in the 1960s for park development.

In 2013, Port Metro Vancouver approached the Vancouver Park Board to explore a potential partnership to assist in achieving the goal of creating or restoring aquatic habitat. Port Metro Vancouver (PMV) manages a Habitat Enhancement Program that focuses on creating and enhancing habitat to benefit fish and wildlife. One aspect of the Habitat Enhancement Program is habitat banking, whereby habitat is created or restored in order to counterbalance unavoidable effects of potential future development that cannot otherwise be mitigated. Port Metro Vancouver works with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) under an established Working Agreement, which guides the administration of the Port's habitat bank. Port Metro Vancouver also engages with other regulators, aboriginal groups, and adjacent communities as appropriate to coordinate potential habitat enhancement opportunities.

In 2014, Port Metro Vancouver and Park Board staff identified nine (9) potential sites for shoreline habitat enhancement in Vancouver that could be advanced as part of the Habitat Enhancement Program and provide productive fish and wildlife habitat. New Brighton Park was selected because of compatibility with existing park master plans, value for fish and wildlife, and location on Burrard Inlet.

Port Metro Vancouver has undertaken surveys, concept design, and high-level costing to review project feasibility.

Public engagement has not yet been undertaken, outside of the extensive process for the 2010 Hastings Park/PNE Master Plan. First Nations consultation will be undertaken throughout preliminary assessment and further project development.

The Port Metro Vancouver executive team has expressed support for the preliminary design phase of the proposed habitat enhancement project.

DISCUSSION

The first phase of the proposed design process will lead to the development of two or more concept plans that will be reviewed by a stakeholder advisory group and the public. A preferred concept plan will be the product of the first phase of the design process.

The preferred concept plan will be presented to the Park Board in the fall 2015 for review and approval. The second phase of the project focusing on detailed design will be undertaken in fall 2015, based on that review. Habitat enhancement work may occur in early 2016, depending on the results of the design process and public engagement.

The design process will be led by a team of consultants (coastal engineers, landscape architect, and biologists) hired by Port Metro Vancouver. Park Board staff will work with Port Metro Vancouver staff to oversee the design process. Park Board staff will complete an analysis of existing park uses (tennis, passive recreation, dog off-leash), and will identify strategies for mitigating changes to park use. The construction phase and maintenance activities will be guided by a License Agreement or similar legal tool to the satisfaction of the Park Board.

Public engagement will be led by Park Board staff with assistance from Port Metro Vancouver. It is expected to include a stakeholder advisory group, open houses, and web-based engagement tools. First Nations consultation will be led by Port Metro Vancouver with assistance from Park Board staff. As per usual, Park Board Commissioners will be notified of any public consultation events.

SUMMARY

The creation of a potential habitat enhancement project in New Brighton Park is an exciting opportunity to restore biodiversity and enhance ecological health, while at the same time creating a more dynamic and interesting park experience. The project supports the direction of the Park Board's Strategic Plan and Rewilding Action Plan. It also implements the vision of the 2010 Hastings Park/PNE Master Plan and the 1997 New Brighton Park Master Plan. The possible creation of a saltmarsh in New Brighton Park is a critical component of the long-term restoration of Renfrew Creek.

More broadly, New Brighton Park is one of the only significant opportunities to restore coastal wetland habitat on the south shore of Burrard Inlet. The historic industrialization of the shoreline from Coal Harbour to Second Narrows has impaired its ability to support fish and wildlife. Juvenile fish from Indian and Seymour rivers have been known to experience high mortality as they migrate through Burrard Inlet. A restored saltmarsh would provide productive habitat for juvenile fish, shorebirds, and waterfowl.

Staff support this collaboration with Port Metro Vancouver to further Park Board strategic goals and existing park master plans.

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

Prepared by:
Nick Page, Biologist, Planning & Research
Dave Hutch, Manager, Planning & Research
/np/clc