



April 9, 2022

MEMO TO : Park Board Commissioners

FROM : Donnie Rosa - General Manager, Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation

SUBJECT : **Heather Lands Rezoning – Board Briefing Memo**

Dear Commissioners,

The purpose of this memo is to provide an update on the Heather Lands Rezoning (4949-5255 Heather Street and 657-707 West 37th Avenue) which is being considered by City Council as a [referral report](#) on April 12, 2022. If approved it will be presented at a public hearing later this spring. This work has been led by the City of Vancouver Planning Department, with involvement from staff from the Park Board and other City departments. Park Board staff are actively involved in the City's technical planning team and have played a key role in this process.

Background

In 2018, Council approved a Policy Statement for the Heather Lands that set broad directions for the future development of the site. As outlined in a [Board briefing memo](#) issued on May 14, 2018, the Heather Lands (previously referred to as the RCMP Fairmont Lands) comprise 8.5-hectares (21-acres) of land located between 33rd Avenue and 37th Avenue at Heather Street. The site is co-owned by Canada Lands Company (CLC) and the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations (MST) Partnership.

The redevelopment of the Heather Lands represents a unique opportunity to advance the principles of reconciliation in the City of Vancouver. It was the first MST Partnership site to go through both a policy statement and rezoning process. Planning for Heather Lands considers the long-term prosperity of the MST Nations members. Since the development of the Policy Statement, the MST Partnership has stated an interest in holding the lands in perpetuity. As a Government-to-Government relationship, the City of Vancouver committed to working with the MST Partnership and CLC to secure community amenities (parks and open spaces, cultural centre, childcare centre and affordable housing) in perpetuity without requiring dedication to the City. This ownership structure and legal mechanisms for securing public interest that are set out through the rezoning are unique for major project sites.

Key Aspects of Rezoning Related to the Park Board

The rezoning application includes 4.43 acres of park and public open space, which exceeds the requirements set out in the Heather Lands Policy Statement. The park and open space network is comprised of the southern park (2.27 acres), northern park (1.85 acres) and a cultural centre plaza (approximately 0.3 acres). Locations of these, and other open spaces on the site are indicated in Figure 1 below (Figure 8 in the [Council report](#)).

Consistent with the Reconciliation policies contained in the Heather Lands Policy Statement, ownership of the parkland will remain with the MST Nations. The southern park is proposed to be co-managed by the Park Board and the MST Nations through an intergovernmental working group, with the Park Board leasing the land for a nominal fee for 99 years and managing day-to-day operations. The northern park will be held and operated by the MST Nations or their

designate. Arrangements to ensure public access and long term use, including zoning the parcels as “park”, are included in the conditions of the rezoning report.

The Council report sets the stage for the applicant to work collaboratively with Park Board staff on the establishment of an intergovernmental working group between the MST Nations and Park Board, with terms of reference to be developed prior to the initiation of the co-design of the southern park. The purpose of the working group is long term co-management of the southern park, including high level decisions around park renewals or significant shifts in park programming. This working group could be framed to oversee the southern park at Heather Lands as well as other future co-managed parks on land owned by the MST Nations. Its work would be specific to the co-management of parks on land owned by the MST Nations within the City of Vancouver. While complementary, this working group is not associated with, or in response to, the recently [approved Board motion](#) to explore co-management of Vancouver’s parks with MST.



Figure 1 – Park and Public Open Space Plan

In addition to the park and public open spaces noted above, the rezoning application proposes a variety of public and private spaces designed to support public gathering, children’s play, improve ecological function, and enhance biodiversity to the site. The plan includes three character areas: a “meeting point”, retail passage and pollinator corridor. The pollinator corridor is envisioned as an ecological connection on 35th Avenue to create an east-west connection between VanDusen Botanical Garden, Oak Meadows Park and Queen Elizabeth Park. The pollinator corridor will ensure a richly planted zone within private property to support birds, bees and rewilding objectives. This connection is conceptually illustrated in Figure 2 (Figure 9 in Council report).



Figure 2 – Ecological Connection Concept



This rezoning application also includes a site for a new Conseil Scolaire Francophone School (CSF) elementary school. This school will replace the aging L'École Rose-des-Vents, currently located one block to the south on the same property as L'École secondaire Jules-Verne. The existing L'École Rose-des-Vents school has a lease with the Park Board for use of Oak Meadows Park sport field to support school needs. This lease expires in 2028, at which time the CSF will need to engage the Park Board regarding a renewed agreement.

Next Steps

The rezoning referral report for the Heather Lands will be presented to Council on April 12th. If approved, it will be presented for decision at a public hearing later this spring.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Donnie Rosa (*they/she*)

General Manager - Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation

/ka/ds/clc

Copy to: PB Leadership Team
Planning Policy and Environment
PB Communications