

June 23, 2021

MEMO TO : Park Board Commissioners

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

SUBJECT : **Jericho, Locarno, and Spanish Banks Beach Parks - Future Planning - Board Briefing Memo**

Dear Commissioners,

The purpose of this memo is to inform you about upcoming proposed changes around Jericho, Locarno, and Spanish Banks beach parks, and staff's intent to address the impacts and opportunities of these proposed changes through a future park planning process with the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh (MST) Nations. This memo also provides an update on the City led Jericho Lands Policy Statement.

Current Park Use

In the western extents of the City of Vancouver, along the Burrard inlet waterfront, sit several of Vancouver's iconic waterfront parks: Jericho, Locarno and Spanish Banks Beach parks (see Figure 1 below). In addition to swimming beaches and the Seaside greenway, the parks contain a range of passive and active recreation elements such as sports courts and fields, a dog off-leash area, picnic areas and supporting concession and public washroom facilities, the Jericho Sailing Club, Hosteling International (HI) youth hostel, and Jericho Arts Centre. As destination parks, they face significant pressure from competing interests including hosting large events, providing daily park uses, and as a draw to residents across the city, see high levels of visitation.



Figure 1: Map of Western Beaches & Jericho Lands Development Project Site Map



Jericho Beach Park is one of the largest parks in the system and features a network of trails through an ecologically rich setting. Considered a biodiversity hotspot, the park contains one of the City's largest areas of native forest and one of the largest freshwater wetland networks as well as subtidal habitat. This area is an MST village site, part of a series of significant MST sites within the Park Board's destination park system. As with other sites, the Park Board secured highly desirable locations around the waterfront for park use. These actions inadvertently protected sites of archaeological significance through minimal urban development on those sites. We will need to continue to protect the land from over use and to work with the Nations on suitable use within the parkland.

Changing Context

A number of contextual changes are anticipated in this area in the coming years including increased upland and coastal flooding, significant future development of the adjacent Jericho Lands development site, and future rapid transit to the area.

Risk of Flooding

The parks are at risk of both coastal and upland flooding. Areas of the parks are subject to localized upstream flooding, with the works yard particularly impacted and periodically protected by sand bags. The City of Vancouver Climate Adaptation Strategy indicates this area currently sees both rare and common flood events and that it will see more frequent floods of greater depths in the future. This requires an intentional, targeted management approach. The City's Phase 2 Coastal Flood Risk Assessment (2016) recommends strategic level planning for this area begin in 2020, with design and implementation between 2030 and 2050. Decisions will need to be made around building significant dikes versus allowing portions of the park to be inundated with water.

Jericho Lands Development

Park Board staff are currently participating in the development of a City led Policy Statement for the Jericho Lands, a 90 acre site south of Jericho Beach Park (see Figure 1), jointly owned by the MST Partnership, represented by MST Development Corporation (MST DC) and Canada Lands Corporation (CLC). City staff are scheduled to present a [report to Council](#) on June 23, with a process update and in consideration of draft guiding principles and emerging ideas. Site planning will commence in upcoming phases of work, targeting public engagement in early fall 2021.

The development site, directly across West 4th Avenue from Jericho Beach Park, is anticipated to see a change in land use and become a high density site with increased residential population (population projection TBD). As a result, Park Board staff anticipate a significant increase in the use of Jericho Beach Park and a need to mitigate potential impacts. In particular, this relates to MST site significance and biodiversity objectives, including limiting impacts on the relatively intact forest, pond areas, and any known or suspected archaeological sites.

Park Board staff anticipate that some potential impacts on the park may be mitigated by the way in which the Jericho Lands development site is planned including:

- the addition of new park space on the development site;
- enhanced ecological connectivity on the Jericho Lands site and between the Jericho Lands site and Jericho Beach Park, and
- sensitively locating potential pedestrian crossings on West 4th Avenue in order to help protect areas of ecological and cultural sensitivity at Jericho Beach Park.



There will also be opportunities to emphasize cultural connections between the development and the park. Cultural liaisons from the local Nations reference the importance of arrival at the water and a desire to travel by foot from the waterfront to the Jericho Lands site.

The land owner and members of the public have suggested there may be an opportunity to connect water on the Jericho Lands to or through Jericho Beach Park. Park Board staff have indicated an openness to considering acceptance of some upstream rainwater runoff into the park, as we would like to be a good neighbour to MST and advance our collaboration with the City on its One-Water framework, but have indicated that any decisions would need to be made through a future Park Board led planning process for the park at large in order to consider the request against Park Board policies and other park objectives.

Future Rapid Transit

A potential future extension of the Millennium Line from Arbutus Street to UBC means that proximity to rapid transit could become a defining feature of the neighbourhood. MST DC and CLC are advocating for a future station on the Jericho Lands site. Regardless, there is likely to be a station near the site if the extension is constructed. Long-term changes in transit could include a community shuttle connection from a nearby station to the beaches, and generally improved transit access, which is very positive but will also place additional pressure on the park and western beaches with ease of access through rapid transit and resultant anticipated increased visitation.

Future Park Planning

As with any park adjacent to significant new development, there will be a future need for the Park Board to embark on a park master planning or comprehensive planning process for Jericho Beach Park and, as they are physically and programmatically integrated, recommend the scope include adjacent Locarno and Spanish Banks beach parks. As referenced above, flooding risk, increased users from the future Jericho Lands development and improved transit access from the potential rapid transit extension will all contribute to a modified context for these waterfront parks.

With this change comes potential opportunities to achieve broad Park Board objectives including collaboration with MST, as well as possible planning synergies between the Jericho Lands development site and the parks, particularly a watershed approach to rainwater runoff management and City and Park Board policies (e.g., Reconciliation, VanPlay, Biodiversity, and Urban Forest Strategy and RainCity). This is also an opportunity to work with MST on educating the public on the significance and history of the place.

Due to its status as a village site, discussions regarding the future of these parks are highly sensitive and require respectful engagement with the MST. This planning process will need to be rooted in decolonized practice, and consider that this waterfront area, as well as the city at large, is on the unceded territories of the MST peoples. A joint planning process provides an opportunity to craft a shared vision for the park with MST Nations.

A master or comprehensive planning process would allow for a holistic approach to potential major changes and re-visioning of the parks to meet future growth, as well as addressing park renewal needs. Such a process would allow for phased renewal of park and recreation amenities and facilities and would allow the Park Board to plan for a changing context.



Next Steps

There is not yet a timeline or resources for initiating a master or comprehensive plan for these parks. However, in order to align with coastal adaptation work and to proactively address opportunities and impacts associated with the Jericho Lands development prior to the development of the site, a planning program for these parks should be considered in the near term, including during the upcoming 2023-2026 Capital Plan process. Park Board staff also anticipate multiple short term steps, outlined below.

Preliminary Analysis

Later this year Park Board staff will initiate preliminary site analysis to begin to assess how much upstream rainwater runoff Jericho Beach Park could reasonably manage while meeting other park objectives. If the result of this study shows there is potential to connect the hydrological systems of the Jericho Lands development site and Jericho Beach Park without significant sacrifices to meeting other park objectives then this work would feed into the future Park Board planning process, where the idea of additional water in the park will be tested with the public, MST governments and the elected Park Board as part of a long term vision for the park. While no decisions will be made through this preliminary analysis, it is being undertaken prior to a more complete planning exercise in order to inform the ongoing Jericho Lands planning process, given a full park planning study is not likely to begin for several years. The preliminary analysis will not include engagement with the public or external stakeholders.

Contacting MST

Staff plan to contact the MST Nations in the short term, informing them of this preliminary analysis with an invitation for ongoing consultation if desired, as well as presenting the idea of a future collaborative planning process for Jericho, Locarno and Spanish Banks beach parks. Staff recognize that the pandemic has significantly affected the MST communities, and that priorities and staffing resources have been impacted as a result. Understanding the site significance for MST, staff would like to introduce the idea of this long term planning program to the Nations early in order to work collaboratively on establishing a project timeline.

Jericho Lands Policy Statement

Park Board staff will continue to collaborate with City staff on the development of the Jericho Lands Policy Statement and will provide the Board with updates at key milestones. Staff will continue to ensure that key issues related to Jericho Beach Park are framed for decision making in a future Park Board led planning process, and that further Board updates are provided as the process unfolds.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Donnie Rosa".

Donnie Rosa (*she/they*)

General Manager - Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation

ka/ds/kr/clc

Copy to: PB Senior Leadership Team
Park Project Team
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