

REPORT

Parks & Recreation

To: Mayor Johnstone and Members of Council
Date: October 30, 2023

From: Dean Gibson,
Director of Parks and Recreation
File: 2376279

Item #: 2023-686

Subject: **Riverfront Projects- Collaboration with First Nations – Process and Aspirations**

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council provides feedback on the process and aspirations for the potential partnership with First Nations to ensure Indigenous rights, land title, history, values and priorities are understood and established as a first step towards work on a future riverfront project(s), and

THAT Council endorse the next steps of hosting an informal information session, and subsequent iterative conversations, with each of the six Nations.

PURPOSE

This report introduces the project facilitators who have been selected to assist the City with early discussions with First Nations regarding the future of the New Westminster riverfront and Westminster Pier Park fire site, and seeks Council's feedback on the process and aspirations for the potential partnership with First Nations on a riverfront project(s).

SUMMARY

This report introduces four questions that will be posed to Council at the October 30, 2023 workshop to help the project facilitators better understand issues related to:

- Council's priorities, values, and aspirations for the riverfront;
- The meaning of partnership with First Nations; and
- The processes that may be most effective for sorting through the complexities, and establishing priorities, to co-develop a riverfront project.

BACKGROUND

At its October 16, 2023 meeting, Council received and endorsed the [staff report on Westminster Pier Park Fire Site](#). This report identified that the insurance claim associated with the 2020 fire at the Park has been resolved and that the City is now embarking on a process towards planning for a future riverfront project that is consistent with the City's reconciliation goals and therefore will include opportunity for collaboration with First Nations as co-creators with the City.

The typical process for major park and open space project planning and conceptual design is to engage stakeholder groups, staff working group, Mayor and Council and the broader community in a three-phase engagement process:

- Phase 1: Background Information and Analysis
 - o To share everything we know about the site and invite the community and stakeholders to identify any gaps and provide local user knowledge.
- Phase 2: Draft Concept Plans
 - o With input from Phase 1, present concept options back to the community and stakeholders and collect feedback on each option.
- Phase 3: Preferred Concept Plan
 - o Based on Phase 1 and 2 consultation, present a preferred option and confirm that we 'got it right'.

The process for this riverfront project will be approached differently and aims to exemplify Truth and Reconciliation in action. The first priority will be to meet with interested First Nations (staff to staff) to begin in-depth conversations to understand if/ how each of the Nations would like to collaborate with the city and whether they wish to partner with the City to work towards sharing and co-creation of: 1) a vision for the comprehensive riverfront; and 2) specific ideas and principles for a project(s) along the riverfront that reflect the shared vision.

This new approach to co-developing a riverfront project(s) is outlined in the [October 16, 2023](#) report to Council. In summary, the purpose of the report was to:

- Provide information on the settlement of the Westminster Pier Park (referred to as "WPP") insurance claim;
- Confirm the City's commitment and next steps for advancing our relationships with First Nations by way of this project; and
- Outline the City's commitment to community engagement and communication regarding the future of the site.

The next steps, as endorsed by Council, include engaging project facilitators to assist the City with these early discussions and guide Council and staff through this new way of working with First Nation partners. Rena Soutar (Cha'an Dtut), Reconciliation and

Intergovernmental Relations consultant, and Donnie Rosa Leadership & Consulting have been selected for this work and are supporting an interdepartmental City staff team to advance this work. The primary role of the facilitators is to assist in relationship building, including supporting workshops with City staff and with Council; as well as planning and facilitating culturally-safe discussions between the City staff team and staff from each of the six First Nations (Kwantlen, Kwikwetlem, Musqueam, Qayqayt, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh) that may have an interest in partnering with the City of New Westminster on a riverfront Project(s).

DISCUSSION

As part of the October 30 Council workshop, staff will provide a background information presentation to help further support Council's participation in the workshop session.

In advance of the workshop, Council is requested to consider the following four questions. Council's responses will help the project facilitators prepare for subsequent staff-to-staff meetings with the Nations:

1. What makes the Fraser River and/ or local riverfront special? What do you hope it would be like 100 years from now?
2. What uses of the riverfront do you think are essential?
3. What feelings or qualities do you want people to feel when visiting the area?
4. What words would you use to define a healthy relationship between the City and the Nations?

NEXT STEPS

Pending Council's input from the October 30 workshop, the interdepartmental staff team will work with the project facilitator to develop a framework for the upcoming informal information session, and subsequent iterative conversations, with each of the six Nations.

Staff acknowledge that this process will be different than our typical project planning process and may not take place in a linear fashion. Staff will update Council as discussions commence and the vision, values and priorities are better understood and shared amongst project partners.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The 2023-2027 approved Capital Plan includes \$205,000 for the initial planning and engagement process towards the future riverfront project(s). It is anticipated that a portion of this funding may be required to provide capacity funding to the Nations to support their involvement in the project.

As the City advances discussions with our potential partners to determine a preferred course of action towards a riverfront project, a more fulsome project brief with requisite funding requirements will be developed for further consideration.

INTERDEPARTMENTAL LIAISON

Staff from Parks and Recreation, Engineering, Finance, Intergovernmental Relations and Office of the CAO are collaborating with the consultants on next steps towards developing a relationship (staff to staff) with each of the Nations and working towards a genuine partnership.

OPTIONS

Options for Council's consideration include:

1. Provide feedback on the process and aspirations for the potential partnership with First Nations to ensure Indigenous rights, land title, history, values and priorities are understood and established as a first step towards work on a future riverfront project(s); and
2. Proceed with the next steps of hosting an informal information session, and subsequent iterative conversations, with each of the six Nations; or
3. Provide alternate direction to staff.

Options #1 and #2 are recommended.

CONCLUSION

The upcoming discussion with First Nations is very timely and is aligned with existing and emerging policies that will help the City better understand the profound ties that the First Nations have to the land and the Fraser River. Based on a commitment of mutual respect, this process intends to advance the City's Truth and Reconciliation goals in a genuine and meaningful way.

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