

Heritage Alert

Urgent Request of the withdrawal of Jingu Gaien Redevelopment, for the Preservation and Succession of the Core of the Garden City Park System inherited since the 17th Century in Tokyo

5 Sept. 2023

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ICOMOS, together with its Japanese National Committee, is issuing a Heritage Alert, to withdraw Jingu Gaien redevelopment project for the preservation and succession of the core of Garden City Park System inherited since the 17th Century in Tokyo, and to stop cutting of over 3,000 trees that will begin in September 2023.

Fig.1 shows the overall picture of Jingu Gaien Redevelopment project. The project plans to build two skyscrapers and one high-rise building and replace the existing rugby and baseball stadiums alternately. It involves the cutting-down of more than 1,000 trees which is above 3m height. The forest that has been formed over past 100 years will be completely destroyed (fig.2).

Developers are Mitsui Fudosan Co. Ltd., Meiji Jingu Shrine, Japan Sports Council, and Itochu Co. Ltd. Tokyo Metropolitan Government approved the plan in the absence of citizens.

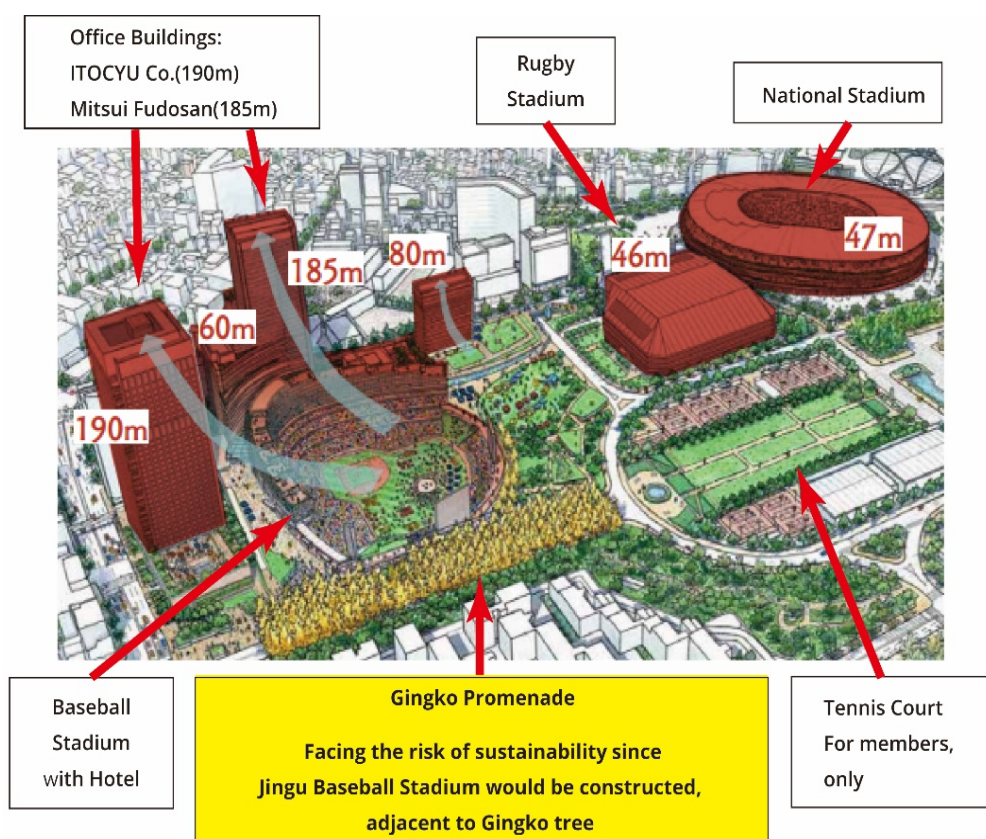


Fig. 1 Plan of urban redevelopment in Jingu Gaien by Mitsui Fudosan Co. Ltd., Itochu Co. Ltd., Meiji Jingu Shrine, and Japan Sports Council (2023)

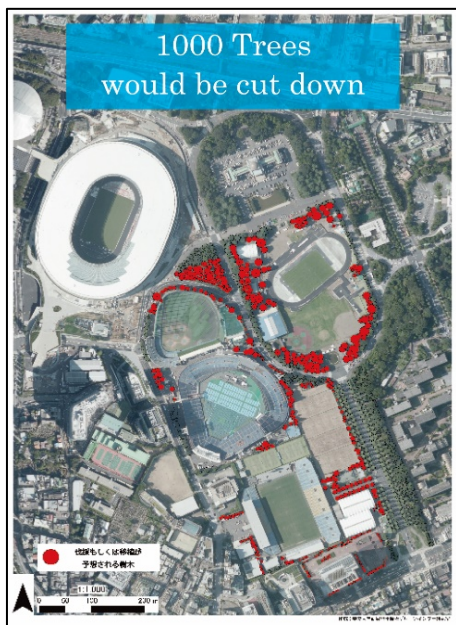


Fig.2 The location of existing trees (above 3m height), which will be cut down by the urban redevelopment plan



Photo 1
Forests which will be cut down on this coming September.
The steel wall constructed in April 2023, and to protest cutting trees, human chain was made many times.

Urban parks are places for people to relax, and to provide rich biodiversity. They will mitigate the heat island effect and protect human life as a shelter when the big earthquake occurs. Four rows of Ginkgo Promenade are the symbol of Jingu Gaien (Photo 2). However, new Jingu baseball stadium will be constructed by placing a 40-meter-deep pile only 6 meters apart from the trunk of the ginkgo trees. It will cause a heavy burden on the ginkgo trees, some of which are still not in a healthy condition. This is contrary to the principle of the project proponent and Tokyo Metropolitan Government to "preserve the ginkgo trees in perpetuity"(Fog.3).



Photo 2 Ginkgo Promenade,

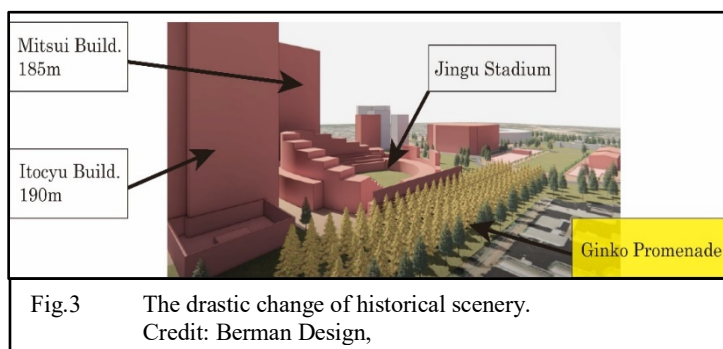


Fig.3 The drastic change of historical scenery.
Credit: Berman Design,

Fig.4 shows the current status of gardens, parks focused on the central area of Tokyo, which has been carefully protected and improved over 400 years, from Imperial Palace, through the inner and outer moats, to Akasaka Palace, Jingu Gaien, Naaien, and Shinjuku Gyoen National Garden. It is regarded as the core of Garden City Park System, which is the fundamental asset of Tokyo, leading the way to a World Heritage Site. However, Jingu Gaien, indicated in red in the figure, is the only exception, currently under threat of destruction due to an urban redevelopment project, despite its glorious history of being created with the public's donations, tree dedication and labor service by 102,792 people.

Jingu Gaien was created as a counterpart to Jingu Naaien, and has a unique structure unparalleled in the history of parks around the world. Jingu Naaien as the inner garden intended to be an "eternal forest" and over the past 100 years, it has steadily transitioned to an evergreen broad-leaved forest. It was a pioneering attempt in light of the fact that ecology was not yet established as an academic discipline. In contrast, the Gaien as the outer garden was designed to create recreational forests for people (Fig.5). These two gardens were connected by the parkway, and crowned with the designation of Japan's first Scenic District in 1926.

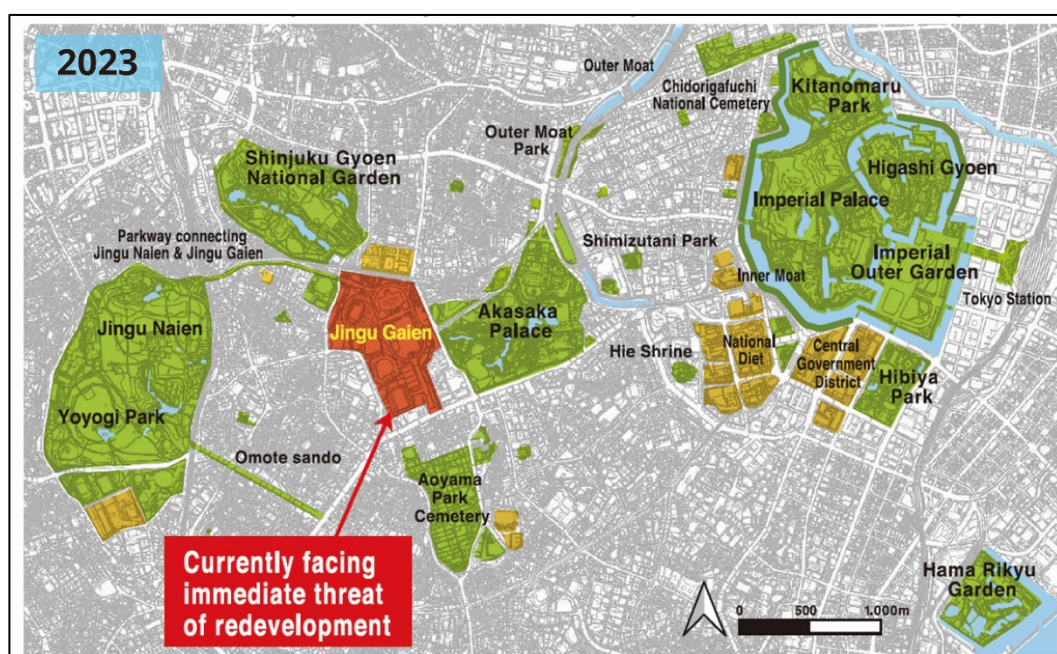


Fig.4 Jingu Gaien, the core of Garden City Park System, facing immediate threat by urban redevelopment



Fig.5 Park System created in 1926
Connecting Jingu Naaien (Inner park)
And Jingu Gaien (Outer park)

In light of the above, ICOMOS is issuing a Heritage Alert.

1. Mitsui Fudosan Co. Ltd., Meiji Jingu Shrine, Japan Sports Council, and Itochu Co. Ltd. should promptly withdraw the redevelopment project and fulfill their social responsibilities as an international corporation, a religious association, and a fair and honest promoter of sports.
2. Tokyo Metropolitan Government should review city planning decision in light of the seriousness of the fact that it has permanently deprived citizens' right to use the park, by removing the city planning park and constructing skyscrapers. The environmental impact assessment has many faults and should be re-examined with the introduction of scientific methodology.
3. Meiji Jingu Shrine should adhere strictly to the commitment and promptly withdraw from the project, considering that Jingu Gaien had created with the donations and labor of the people and dedicated with the promise to "maintain it as a beautiful park for eternity."
4. Minato, Shinjuku, and Shibuya wards should consider that the project is being carried out without residents, and work to withdraw it especially for the children's future.
5. The national government should not be sitting on the sidelines and assuming that this is Tokyo's problem, but considers the application of appropriate methodologies.
6. ICOMOS presented an alternative plan that does not involve the cutting down of numerous trees and prevents the emission of large amounts of CO₂ (Fig.6,7). It should create a platform for many experts and citizens to work together.

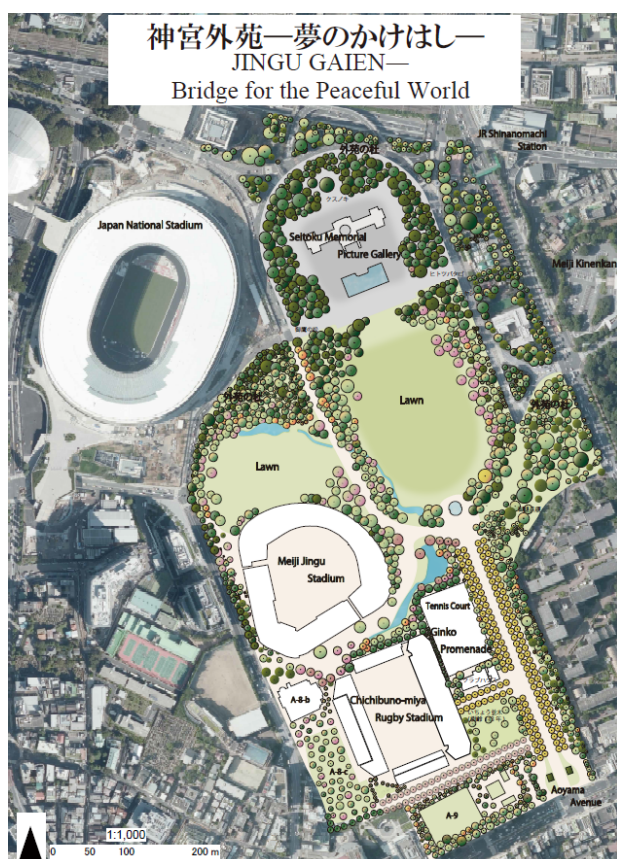


Fig.6 An Alternative Plan of Jingu Gaien
Proposed by ICOMOS in Sept. 2023

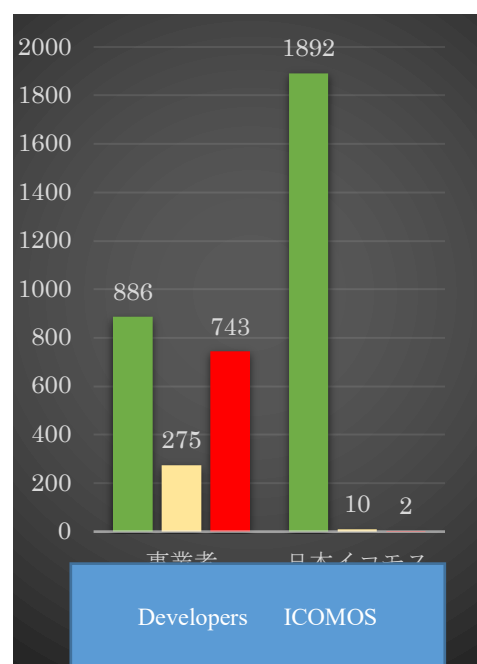


Fig.7 Comparison of the preservation of trees between Developers and ICOMOS
Green: Number of Preserved trees
Yellow: Moving, Red: Cutting down