

REPORT TO COUNCIL

TO:

Richmond City Council

DATE:

September 3, 2004

FROM:

Cllr. Steves, Chair

FILE:

06-2345-01

Parks. Recreation

Cultural

Services

Committee

RE:

TERRA NOVA RURAL PARK CONCEPT PLAN

and

The Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Committee, at its meeting held on Tuesday, August 31st, 2004, considered the attached report, and recommends as follows:

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION -

That the Terra Nova Rural Park Concept Plan, including Option 1 of Part C, (presented in the report dated August 17th, 2004, from the Director of Operations and the Manager, Parks - Programs, Planning & Design), be approved as the long term vision for the park.

Cllr. Steves, Chair Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Committee

Attach.

VARIANCE

- That the Terra Nova Rural Park Concept Plan (presented in the report dated August (1) 17th, 2004, from the Director of Operations and the Manager, Parks - Programs, Planning & Design), be approved as the long term vision for the park; and
- That the dog management approach (as outlined in Option Two of this report) be (2) approved.

Staff Report

Origin

In 1996 a Referendum was passed authorizing Council to acquire properties for public use within the area referred to as the Terra Nova North West Quadrant. Since then the City has successfully acquired 63 acres of land. In 2001, an inventory was conducted that documented the environmental, heritage, and landscape character features and assets of the lands. The information from the inventory formed the basis to begin a park planning process for the site in late 2003.

The Park Concept Plan was presented to Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Committee on July 27th, 2004. At that meeting, staff was directed to revise the Plan and report back on the following referrals:

- (1) the complete removal of all dog related areas from the park;
- (2) the enhancement of the flow of water through the waterway;
- (3) the provision of timelines for development of the park plan, along with information on applications for alternate funding; and
- (4) information on how the concept of constructing boardwalks into the marsh area of Sturgeon Banks would be achieved as the approval of the DFO would be required.

The purpose of this report is to outline the park planning process, respond to the referrals, and present the preferred Concept Plan for approval by Council.

Analysis

A. THE PROPOSED TERRA NOVA RURAL PARK CONCEPT PLAN

The Vision:

Terra Nova has many existing unique features that include a wide range of ecosystems, a rich cultural landscape with evidence of an agricultural and fishing heritage, and a pleasant ambience and rural landscape character (Attachment 1). The Plan is designed to enhance these features and provide people with a place to enjoy, respect and learn about the past.

At each of the Open Houses the public expressed a deep appreciation for the site. A number of distinct themes evolved and were repeated to how the park should develop. These included:

- tread sensitively on the land and keep the park natural;
- keep the park unique and peaceful;
- retain the openness, views and rural agricultural feel; and
- combine the best of all the features.

Based on the public input and the unique existing assets the long term Vision for the site is:

To preserve the unique rural landscape character of Terra Nova North West Quadrant Park while providing a balance between agricultural heritage, wildlife conservation, and recreational uses.

The Plan and main elements of the proposed *Terra Nova Rural Park* are presented in detail in Attachment 2.

B. THE PUBLIC PLANNING PROCESS

Three sets of Public Open Houses were held in February, April and June of 2004 with an additional presentation to three Advisory Committees (Environment, Heritage, and Public Art) on April 21st, 2004.

One hundred and eight (108) people attended the final Open House(s) at City Hall to review the Preferred Concept Plan and 99 filled out the Comment Sheets (see Attachment 3 for results).

An overwhelming 98% *Liked* or *Very Much Liked* the overall Preferred Plan and vision. For those few that did not support the Preferred Plan their main focus was the environment and an interest in preserving the land exclusively for wildlife with no or absolutely minimal human activity.

The two specific proposed uses that did not receive strong support were the *community gardens* (68% support) and the *dogs off-leash area* (61% support).

The community gardens were viewed by some people as an "exclusive use" of park land. However, there are community benefits to locating this use here. Over 2,500 people live in townhouses in the immediate area with little to no backyard space and community gardening is a popular activity that promotes wellness and connecting with others. The intent for these gardens is that there will be a strong educational component and programs that support sharing food, such as *Plant a Row - Grow a Row*, will be promoted. In addition, the temporary No. 2 Road community garden will need relocating in the near future. For these reasons staff is recommending that this use be kept in the Park Plan and that the focus should be on creatively integrating the gardens into the park and allowing for community access.

Concern was also expressed over the proposed dog's off-leash area. Those who supported a designated area believed that there is a need for places where dogs can run freely. Those against this use predominately cited environmental reasons - either that it was not the best use of the land or that dogs are detrimental to wildlife.

C. PLAN MODIFICATIONS

Dog Management Zones

Referral 1 - "the complete removal of all dog related areas from the park"

At the meeting on July 27th, Committee continued to discuss the dog access issue and it "was agreed that staff would review the matter further, keeping in mind the opinions on the Committee on this issue".

The City is presently taking over enforcement responsibilities from the S.P.C.A. management has been an ongoing issue throughout the City and Committee expressed at the last meeting a particular concern with Terra Nova, the West Dyke Trail and Garry Point Park.

Based on the discussion at the Committee meeting and further review, staff are presenting two options for consideration:

Option 1

Complete ban of all dogs from Terra Nova Rural Park

As directed by Committee, the designated dogs off-leash area and other dog management zones have been removed from the Terra Nova Rural Park Concept Plan.

Some of the possible implications of looking at Terra Nova in isolation and creating a no-dog zone over the whole 63 acres include:

- □ Limiting a popular recreational past time for many residents (there are over 3,500 licensed dogs in the City). The Vision approved by the public for the park was to balance recreational uses with heritage and environmental uses.
- Penalizing the responsible dog owners for the few irresponsible owners.
- Difficulty in enforcing a no-dog zone due to the size of the park and time needed to access someone in the middle of the park.
- □ Increased frustration of residents being banned from a local park. Experience in other municipalities have indicated that creating a no-dog park is very difficult when it is adjacent to a residential area. Existing no-dog parks are either isolated or are time and season sensitive allowing more flexibility in management.
- An increased enforcement regiment would be required.

For these reasons, staff does not recommend this option at this time.

Develop a comprehensive Dog Management Strategy for Terra Nova, the West Dyke Trail, and Garry Point Park; and

Create two zones in the park that include a controlled dogs on-leash zone and a no-dog zone as a pilot project for one year.

Dog control and access management is an ongoing issue in the City. With the City's new enforcement responsibilities, it is timely to review Terra Nova, the West Dyke Trail, and Garry Point Park as a whole and prepare a separate sustainable and comprehensive Dog Management Strategy that looks at all the issues and options in this popular recreational corridor.

At the same time, staff is recommending that a two zone management approach balancing the environmental sensitivity of the site and recreational uses be implemented as a pilot project. The two zones would divide the park into half with a controlled dogs on-leash zone and a no-dog zone. This would be evaluated after one year and the outcome reported back to Council for review.

This option would include an education and signage program informing the public of the rules and responsibilities of dog owners while also increasing their awareness of why it is important to wildlife to control dogs.

With the removal of the off-leash area as a specific land use in the Plan, staff is recommending that the Terra Nova Rural Park Plan be approved as a design plan allowing staff to continue with the next stage of detailed design and that any further discussion and decision about dogs in the park be considered a separate management issue.

Slough Enhancement

Referral 2 - "the enhancement of the flow of water through the waterway"

Upon further research and discussion with Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), it has been determined that both the internal water quality and the environmental benefit to fish and other wildlife would be greatly improved by opening up the heritage slough to the Fraser River. Once developed the waterway would be eligible for Fisheries habitat compensation credits. An automated irrigation gate system similar to the one at No. 7 Road North that is used to provide water for the farmers could be applied in Terra Nova. The whole system including the slough and edge planting will be designed in detail to ensure that an appropriate environment is created for compensation credits and that the necessary flood control measures are in place.

The Concept Plan has been modified to include an irrigation gate/flood control system that connects the slough with the river. This will add approximately \$350,000 to the cost of developing the park.

Marsh Boardwalks

Referral 4 – "information on how the concept of constructing boardwalks in the marsh area of Sturgeon Banks would be achieved as the approval of the DFO would be required"

The approval process for constructing the boardwalks would be through the Fraser River Estuary Management Program of which DFO is a member. The initial investigation into the feasibility of building these boardwalks indicates that approval will likely not be given as this area is a designated Red Zone which means it is highly productive habitat for wildlife.

Two of the boardwalks have been removed from the Concept Plan and the focus will be on trying to work with FREMP on developing a boardwalk at the north end by River Road. This is a major destination spot and the boardwalk connected to the outlook and shoreline decking would create a unique experience and greatly increase awareness and appreciation of the value of the marsh. The one north boardwalk is shown as a dashed line on the plan to indicate that it is under consideration.

D. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Referral 3 - "the provision of timelines for development of the park plan, along with information on applications for alternate funding"

The Terra Nova Rural Park Plan is a long term plan and will be implemented over a number of years as finances allow. The timeline and allocated funds for developing the park is outlined within the projected 5 Year Capital Budget Program.

The proposed phasing priorities are based on public input, site requirements (e.g. removal of invasive species), further land acquisition, and availability of tenanted City lands.

Phase One 2004/2005 - \$1,750,000 (2004- \$1,250,000; 2005 - \$500,000)

The focus will be on site restoration, public access and the provision of some of the proposed site features including site cleanup and invasive species removal, woodlot and hedgerow plantings, trails, securing City owned heritage houses (to prevent further deterioration), community gardens, additional parking along River Road, establishing a caretaker, and park gates.

Phase Two 2006

Construction would focus on enhancements to the waterfront including the marsh lookout and decking

Phase Three 2007

Construction of the heritage slough

Phase Four 2008

Planting, boardwalks, retrofitting of buildings for public programs, field lookout structure

Phase Five 2009

Planting, parking, community garden expansion, heritage gardens

Further funding will be needed to complete this project. Staff will pursue a number of potential grant programs such as the EcoAction Grant and Green Infrastructure Grant as well as potential partnerships with agencies such as Ducks Unlimited and Canadian Wildlife Services.

E. NEXT STEPS

Land Acquisition

The City owns the majority of the land in the area and is pursuing the acquisition of two outstanding properties. The City owns a number of homes and auxiliary buildings with different tenancy agreements ranging from a monthly lease to a life tenancy (Attachment 4 for a map showing land ownership and tenancy agreements). The proposed plan is a long term vision that shows how the whole site could be developed including the two properties that are still under negotiation.

Heritage Settlement Management Strategy

A heritage, architectural and structural assessment has been undertaken for the two City owned heritage homes. A similar assessment would be conducted if the City acquires the three remaining heritage listed buildings. Upon completion of the assessment an heritage management strategy will be developed.

Archaeological Study

A permit from the Provincial Government has recently been issued and fieldwork will be undertaken to provide the City with an archaeological inventory of the site. The findings may impact the design layout and details and influence the interpretation themes.

Heritage Slough/Wetland Viability Engineering Study

Vonne Zich

Further engineering research and fieldwork is needed to determine how the heritage slough and irrigation gate/flood control system would be constructed to ensure a sustainable system.

Financial Impact

Subject to available funding, potential grants, and partnerships, the cost of this project is in the order of magnitude of \$6,000,000 - \$8,000,000. Further refinement of the budget will occur at the next phase of detailed design. Available funding for implementation of Phase One is \$1,250,000 approved in Capital Budget accounts 40822, 40826, and 40837.

Conclusion

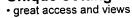
The Terra Nova Rural Park Concept Plan as presented was supported by the majority of the public that attended the final Public Open Houses held on June 16th and 17th, 2004 at City Hall. The vision for this site is to preserve the rural character while providing a balance between agricultural heritage, wildlife conservation, and recreational uses. The Plan and a recommended dog management approach are presented in this report for approval by Council.

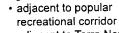
Yvonne Stich Park Planner (3310)

What's unique and valuable about the Terra Nova North West Quadrant Lands?

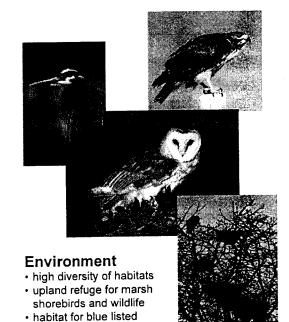


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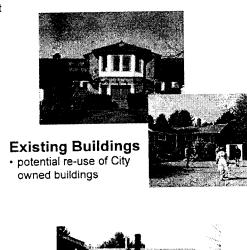
adjacent to Terra Nova Natural Area and Sturgeon Banks





Rich Cultural History

- 1868 first non-native settlement
- · heritage listed buildings
- mature trees from original homesteads
- visible remnants of original subdivision plan



species



Cold Comfort Farm



Rural Landscape Character



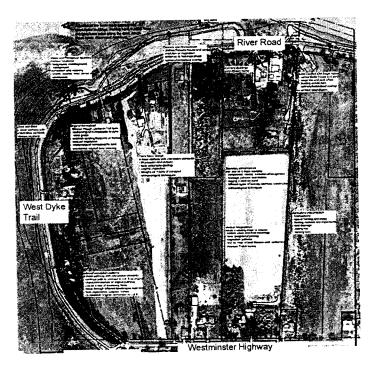


The Terra Nova lands have a long history of human interaction with the land. The Musqueam First Nation provide the first evidence of human use of the area, probably for food gathering and use of waterways in the Terra Nova area as a means of transportation. The first non-native settlers arrived about 1868, and they sub-divided the land and worked both in the farming and fishing industries.

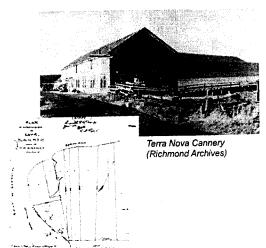
Today the site contains evidence of many periods of past use during a variety of historical periods including:

- archaeological sites that contain evidence of First Nations use
- foundation remnants and pilings from the Terra Nova and Alliance canneries
- early houses and structures related to both agriculture and the fishing industry
- remnants of farm use including orchards, heritage trees, planted woodlots and fields
- hedgerows and fences delineating original property lines

These surviving heritage features are a *living story book* of the history of the Terra Nova lands.



- Existing Homestead Building
- Existing Cannery Related Building
- Homestead Building Footprints



Original Crown Grant of 8 Subdivisions (1890)



Early homesteads were located close to the riverfront Gorden property (Don Gordon Papers)



Aerial 1974

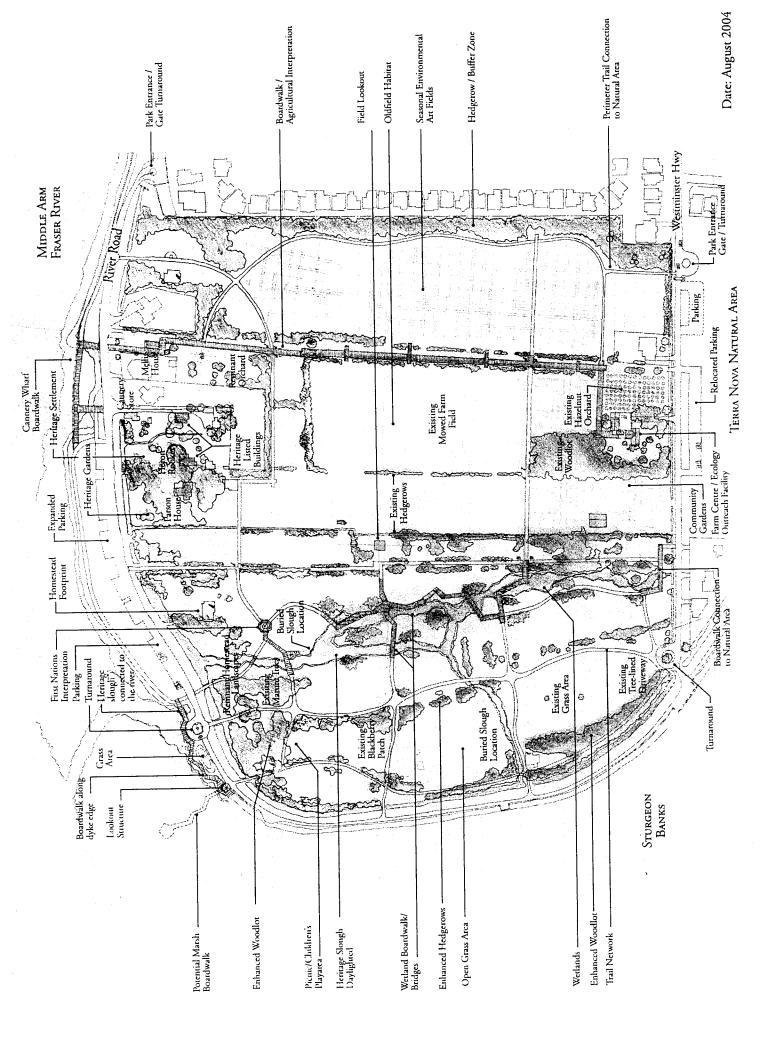


Gordon property (Don Gordon Papers)



Terra Nova 1915 Richmond Archives





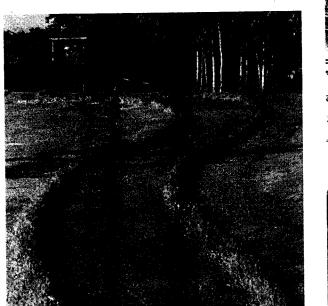
Attachment 2

1. Heritage District

- ☐ Heritage Settlement Site
- ☐ Heritage Interpretive Features
- ☐ The Cannery Wharf

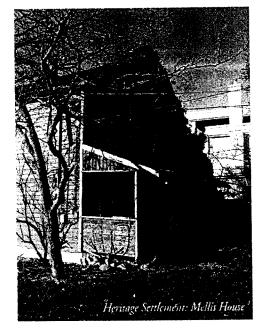


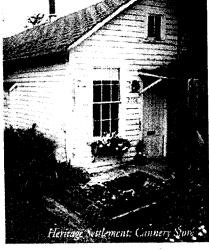


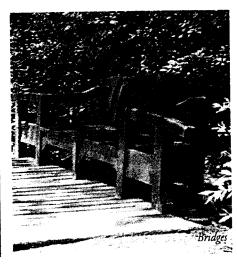












Heritage District

This district refers predominately to the land that was settled along River Road and still contains five heritage listed buildings as well as remnants of the fishing industry. The intent is to preserve and interpret the rich story of the pioneer settlers, and the farming and fishing history of Terra Nova.

• Heritage Settlement Site

The long term goal is to retain the five (5) settlers' houses and establish creative adaptive reuses such as caretaker's suite, interpretive center, museum outreach programs, community meeting space, artist-in-residence workshop, exhibition space, or a concession stand. A minimum of two should be open for park uses while the others may find a P3 use to be financially sustainable, be rented out or stand as interpretive artefacts in the park. Grounds of the heritage houses will be restored to reflect the character of the original landscape.

The intent is to balance heritage authenticity while protecting the wildlife values and features, specifically the heron rookery (which is located on the private property with the three heritage buildings). A management plan needs to developed and the approach taken will depend upon whether the City owns the group of five houses (assuming further acquisition) or only the two houses.

• Heritage Interpretive Features

The goal is to provide interesting, subtle and creative interpretation and not inundate the park with too many signs. Included in the plan is the artistic creation of homestead footprints in the location of the original homesteads; bridges, benches, outlooks and thresholds that would contain simple interpretive elements and messages (these would occur throughout the park) and a recreation of the Mellis Terra Nova/Vancouver/ Eburne stage coach.

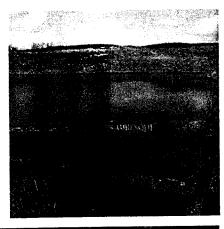
The Cannery Wharf

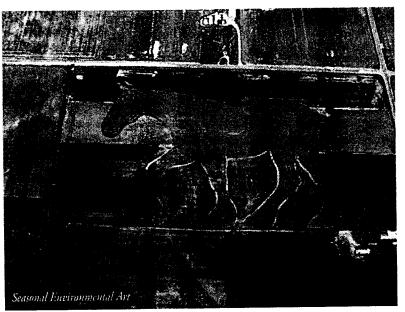
A raised boardwalk/deck will cross the water where the former BC Packers cannery was located. This will allow people to get out over the water, provide interpretation opportunities, and make a connection back to the upland heritage landscape. The former cannery store (the small white heritage building across the street) could potentially be used as a small concession stand.

2. Site Interpretation

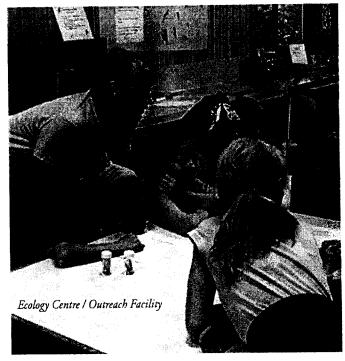
- ☐ First Nations Interpretation
- ☐ Seasonal Environmental Art
- ☐ Ecology Centre / Outreach Facility
- ☐ Field Outlook Structure
- ☐ Save Terra Nova Interpretive Feature













Site Interpretation

Throughout the park there will a wide variety of features to encourage learning and discovery of the unique history and ecological features of the site in a creative manner.

• First Nations Interpretive Site

An open interpretation structure and an interpretive trail will be developed adjacent to the historic slough. The theme and specific topics to be interpreted will depend upon the outcome of the archaeological research and fieldwork.

• Seasonal Environmental Art Fields

Temporary and seasonal field patterns will be created through a sensitive use of plant material (grasses or crops). The field will remain fallow in winter and provide refuge for wildlife. The intent is to add interest and agricultural interpretation while retaining environmental values.

• Ecology Center/ Outreach Facility

This is a potential adaptive reuse of the one of the City owned buildings (proposed at 2771 Westminster Highway) for Nature Park outreach programs, as meeting space for nature groups, and as a starting point for self guided interpretation tours.

• Field Outlook Structure

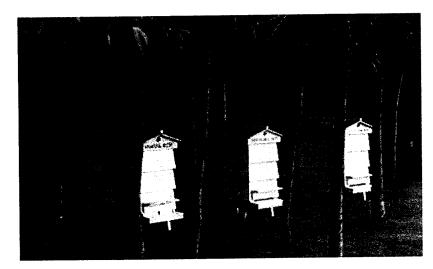
An outlook structure will be constructed in the middle of the site to provide maximum 360 degree viewing. Bird blinds may be added to increase bird watching opportunities.

Save Terra Nova Interpretive Feature

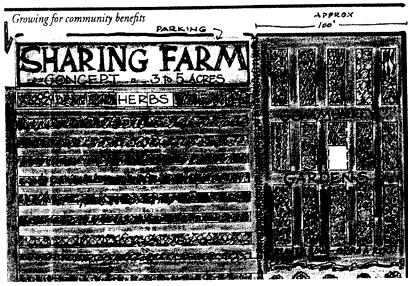
The history and evolution of land uses in Terra Nova from the 1880's to the present day park use is an interesting story. The intent is to sensitively show how economic and community values and decision making have evolved over the last hundred years.

3. Farm Centre

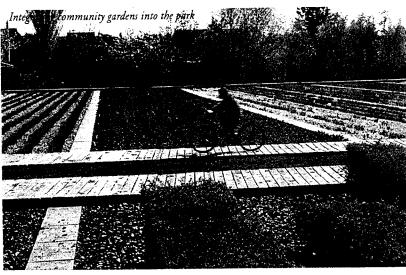
- ☐ Farm Management Centre
- ☐ Group Farming / Community Garden Plots

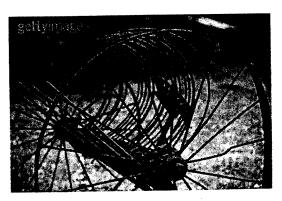












Farm Centre

The goal is to build upon the agricultural heritage of the site and modern urban needs by creating a central area where community based 'farming', community gardens, agricultural interpretation, and education about food sources could occur. One of the existing houses with auxiliary buildings along Westminster Highway would be adapted for reuse as part of this centre.

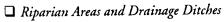
• Farm Management Centre

The intent is to utilize existing buildings for maintenance equipment, agricultural education, and as a community meeting area. The proposed site for this center is 2771 Westminster Highway which would also be used as the Ecology Centre/ outreach program facility. This site has a number of buildings and landscape features such as an established hazelnut orchard and a beautiful manicured garden that will be retained and could be used for weddings or other events.

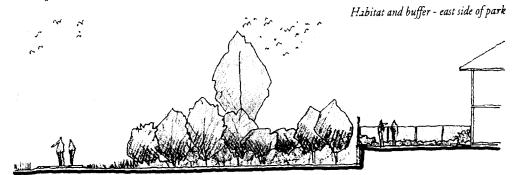
• Group Farming/Community Garden Plots

A portion of the park will be designed to allow for community members, school groups, and potentially a non-profit organization group such as the Fruit Tree Project to maintain gardening plots. Food crops could be grown for educational and community benefits e.g. providing fresh produce for the Food Bank through initiatives such as *Plant a Row - Grow a Row*.

4. Wildlife Habitats



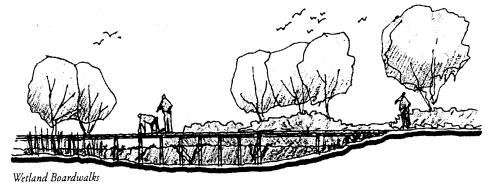
- ☐ Woodlots and Mature Trees
- ☐ Hedgerows
- Old-field Habitat

















Wildlife Habitats

The goal is to protect and enhance the biodiversity and habitat values of the site. Much of the existing environmental benefits of the land are a result of a century of farming and homestead landscapes that are now predominately fallow and naturalizing. The site is being enhanced to protect species with the greatest need, have restricted or threatened habitat requirements, whose habitats are well suited for this park (building upon existing features) and for breeding, overwintering and migratory birds.

• Riparian Areas and Drainage Ditches

Water features provide an extremely rich habitat with food and nesting places for a wide variety of species. The heritage slough will be daylighted (reinstated) for interpretation opportunities and for enhancing the biodiversity of the site.

• Woodlots and Mature Trees

Many of the existing trees are a result of landscaping around the original homesteads. These will be protected, enhanced and further planting will be introduced. These trees together with the adjacent old-fields provide important habitat for raptors (the blue heron and barn owl). The understorey plants in the woodlots provide one of the most diverse habitats for wildlife on the site.

• Hedgerows

Hedgerows provide habitat and movement corridors for small animals and connect larger patches of habitat. Many of the existing hedgerows delineate the original property lines. These will be preserved, enhanced, interpreted and a new hedgerow will be added as a buffer on the east side of the site adjacent to the residential area.

• Old-field Habitats

Farmland, predominately in the centre of the site, will be maintained and managed as fallow or 'old-field' land for its habitat values for raptors. Preserving this type of habitat is of regional significance as open fields are rapidly being lost in the Lower Mainland.

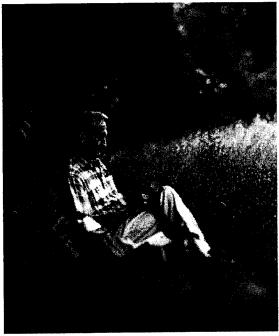
5. Passive Open Space

The intent is to have areas and features that allow for informal leisure use such as picnicking, children's play and a dogs off-leash area. This community use space is located on the west side of the site close to parking and includes features such as picnic tables, open grass areas for informal play, creative children's play facilities, new planting and washrooms. Rehabilitation will be undertaken in this area that contains remnants of concrete, garages and large patches of blackberries.











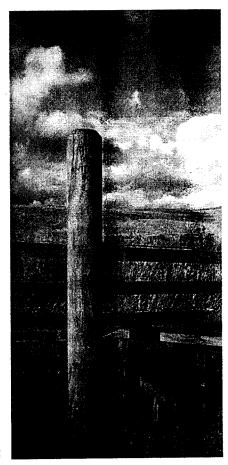


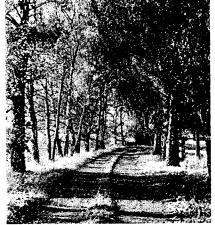
6. Park Infrastructure

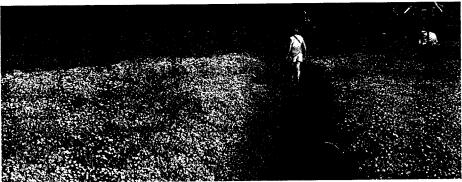
- ☐ Turnarounds and Park Entry
- ☐ Trail
- ☐ Field and Riparian Boardwalks
- ☐ Parking















Park Infrastructure

New elements such as trails and entry gates will be developed that allow people to move through the site and make the vehicular circulation more functional. A variety of trails will be constructed using existing laneways and paths as well as new boardwalks.

• Turnarounds and Park Entry Features

These features include gates at Westminster Highway and River Road to control access to the site at night and turnarounds at the end of the roads and at the gate entrances. The security gates will be designed to ensure that the few residents on these roads can still control access to their homes when the park is closed at night.

• Trails

The trail system will include existing lanes, farm pathways and new paths, follow along hedgerows, connect to the dyke trail, and be a mix of hard and soft surfaces. A major north-south boardwalk will be constructed that will link to the cannery wharf boardwalk; travel adjacent to the old-field habitat; and link to the Farm Centre and Terra Nova Natural Area. Interpretation and lookouts will occur along the boardwalk.

• Field and Riparian Boardwalks

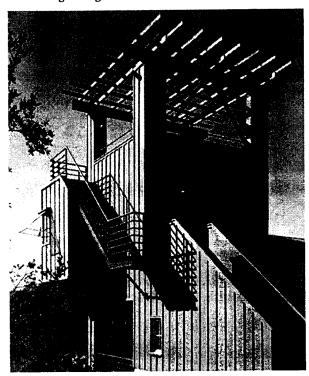
Boardwalks will be constructed over open fields to help create separation and over the historic slough and the wetland.

Parking

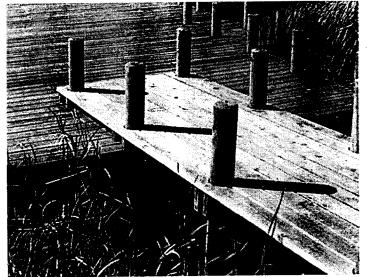
The parking has been reorganized and more spaces have been provided with opportunities in the plan for further additions as needed. The parking will be perpendicular to the River Road at the north and will be moved closer to the future community garden area along the south.

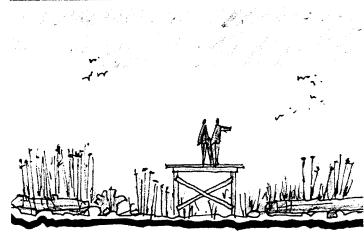
7. Dyke Perimeter

- ☐ Marsh Boardwalk
- ☐ Lookout Structure
- ☐ Heritage Slough Enhancement

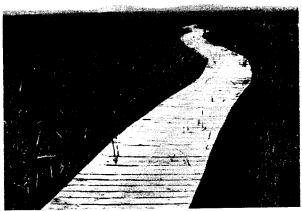


1910 - Dyke and Cannery buildings









Dyke Perimeter

The waterfront is an important aspect of the site both historically and recreationally and is highly valued by the community. River Road and the trail system provide the main access and gateway to the site. The goal is to link the waterfront physically and through interpretation to the upland uses; maximize viewing opportunities; and enhance circulation.

Marsh Boardwalk

One boardwalk into the marsh is proposed at the north end adjacent to the lookout structure and decking. Further discussion is needed with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to confirm the feasibility of this proposal.

• Lookout Structure

This is located at a strategic spot that allows for maximum views of both the river and the marsh. Parking will be relocated and this area will be enhanced with a mounded grass sitting area, a dyke edge deck and boardwalk, and a two-storey observation structure.

• Heritage Slough Enhancement

This involves connecting the heritage slough to the river with an irrigation flood gate, riparian improvements, and creating a boardwalk/bridge with interpretation over the water.

Public Open Houses June 16th and 17th, 2004 Summary of Public Input

The plan was presented with proposed features/land uses numbered and referenced to boards that described them in more detail. The public was asked to fill out a comment sheet and first rate the overall Vision and then rate the individual features from Like Very Much to Dislike or the option Don't Know.

Results

22 out of the 25 land uses received 80% or better support, with only three receiving between 60% and 80% support (see below)

Many of the respondents also commented that the planning team had listened to earlier comments at the first open houses and incorporated them into the Preferred Plan:

- "Great job pulling all the material from the previous open house into a strong proposal."
- "I think it is a superb conceptual use for the area. A big hurrah for the people involved! It makes me proud to live in Richmond."
- "Very, very exciting, thanks for listening."
- "It appears that the whole plan has been well thought out, and the proposal would have my full support."
- "If I made a park it would be like this-good job."

Comments that reflected concerns or cautionary notes included:

- "Please no off-leash dog park...Area too sensitive"
- "Tall trees will block views"
- "Ensure that there is minimal encroachment on the existing open spaces"
- "Very peaceful and quiet should stay that way"
- "Move garden plots/farming away from residential area"
- "Not asphalt except for some areas for wheelchair accessibility"
- "We don't need to manage and manipulate every blade of grass- we might just scare off the birds, wildlife etc."

Summary of Ratings:

*Note: All other proposed park uses not mentioned below had an approval rating above 96%.

Land uses	Percentage Liked
Ecology Centre	96 %
First Nations Interpretive Site	95%
Turnaround/Park Entry	95%
Marsh Boardwalk	94%
Seasonal Mown Fields	92%
Parking	92%
Save Terra Nova Interpretive Feature	e 90%
Farm Centre Buildings	88%
Seasonal Environmental Art	78%
Group Farming/Community Garder	ns 68%
Dogs Off Leash Area	61%

