



City of Richmond

Report to Committee

To: Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Committee

Date: September 13, 2012

From: Mike Redpath
Senior Manager, Parks

File:

Re: Garden City Lands – Phase 1 Planning

Staff Recommendation

That the Phase 1- Inventory and Analysis of the Garden City Lands as described in the report entitled “Garden City Lands- Phase 1 Planning” dated September 13, 2012 from the Senior Manager, Parks be approved.

Mike Redpath
Senior Manager, Parks
(604-247-4942)

Att: 3

REPORT CONCURRENCE			
ROUTED TO:	CONCURRENCE	CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER	
Communications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Finance Division	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Sustainability	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Law	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Policy Planning	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
REVIEWED BY SMT SUBCOMMITTEE	INITIALS: 	REVIEWED BY CAO	INITIALS:

Staff Report

Origin

At the July 24, 2012 Parks Recreation and Cultural Services Committee, staff received the following referral from Committee:

“That staff report back on the Garden City Lands public consultation process at the September 25, 2012 Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Committee.”

In addition, this report directly relates to the achievement of the following Council 2011-2014 term goal:

“7.4. Commence planning for the eventual use of the Garden City Lands.”

The purpose of this report is to respond to the above referral and present a proposed Phase 1 planning and public engagement framework for the eventual use of the Garden City Lands.

Finding of Facts

The City-owned Garden City Lands (the Lands) are approximately 136.5 acres (55.2 hectares) located on the eastern edge of Richmond City Centre, between Westminster Highway, Garden City Way, Alderbridge Way and No. 4 Road (Map-Attachment 1). The Lands are located within the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) and are currently vacant. The City maintains the Lands by mowing it three times a year.

Presently, in the approved OCP the Garden City Lands are identified as Public and Open Space Use with a zoning of Agriculture. In the City Centre Area Plan, the Lands has been designated as Park-Further Study Required. The Metro Vancouver 2040 Regional Growth Strategy has the Lands designated ‘Conservation and Recreation’.

Analysis

One of Council’s 2011-2014 term goals is to commence planning for the eventual use of the Garden City Lands. Staff was directed at the July 24th, 2012 Parks Recreation and Cultural Services Committee to report back on a public consultation process for the Lands.

The Lands present complex ecological and land use considerations and, consequently, are of interest to a broad range of Richmond residents, community groups, and regulatory agencies. Any public engagement process will need to be comprehensive, transparent and inclusive. Ultimately, the goal of a public process is to develop a common shared vision that benefits the whole community.

In 2007, Council endorsed three preferred uses (as outlined in the staff report from the Acting Director of Development dated December 13, 2007) to guide the development of a proposed 65 acre (26 hectares) public open space. These uses were: 1. Community Wellness and Enabling Healthy Lifestyles, 2. Urban Agriculture, and 3. Environmental Sustainability (Attachment 2). Determining whether these uses still form the framework for site planning and programming of the whole 136.5 acres (55.2 hectares) will be a part of the future planning process.

A Multi-Phased Work Program

In order to ultimately develop a master plan for the Garden City Lands, it is important to follow through a sequential planning process. The extent and type of public engagement will differ with each step in the process and will need to be continually evaluated to ensure that it is appropriate and effective.

The steps in the proposed planning process for the Lands, as well as a range of tools for public engagement are outlined in Attachment 3 and summarised below:

1. Inventory and Analysis
2. Opportunities and Constraints
3. Vision and Guiding Principles
4. Concept Options
5. Final Plan
6. Implementation
7. Resource Management, Monitoring, and Review

While the main study area will be the Lands, the planning process will include its relationship to the larger ecological, social, and urban context.

Phase 1 – Inventory and Analysis

The first step in the planning process which was used very successfully in Terra Nova Rural Park (TNRP) was the Inventory and Analysis that provided a thorough and comprehensive understanding of the land as well as its context. The Inventory and Analysis for Terra Nova was conducted by a team of consultants with technical expertise in vegetation and habitat mapping, soil and hydrology, and landscape character analysis. This first step, which led ultimately to the preparation of a vision and final master plan adopted by Council, was the keystone for guiding and ensuring informed decision making throughout that process.

The planning for Terra Nova Rural Park took over three years beginning in 2001 with the Inventory to final approval of the vision and plan in late 2004. It is anticipated that a similar comprehensive planning process would be undertaken for the Lands commencing in 2013 and completed by 2016. It is recommended that the planning and public engagement for the Lands commence with Phase 1- Inventory and Analysis in 2013. The proposed tasks and public engagement are listed in the following Table.

Garden City Lands: Phase 1- Planning Process	
Inventory and Analysis	Community Engagement Options
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Document and review all existing studies 2. Conduct a comprehensive inventory of the Land’s ecological resources and services and investigate how its various dimensions function and relate to adjacent land uses e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vegetation types and distribution • Soils types and distribution • Environmental assessment • Surface and subsurface hydrology • Fauna including inventories and assessments of invertebrates, amphibians & reptiles, fisheries, birds and mammals • Terrestrial and Aquatic Ecosystem Mapping • Habitat and Wildlife Suitability Mapping 3. Review and summarize existing and relevant city strategies and policies, and provincial and federal legislation and regulations to understand how they may impact the use and development of the site. Included in this would be identifying Agricultural Land Commission’s requirements and approval processes for farm and non-farm uses. 4. Review outcome of the Inventory with Council. <p>Concurrently:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Begin to gather best practices and innovative programs for similar unique sites. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop ‘fact’ sheets and summaries of technical reports. • Update the web site dedicated to the Garden City Lands with the technical reports. • Gather and review previous public input and proposals with the goal of acknowledging and understanding the community values and aspirations that have been expressed to date. • At the end of the background information gathering, conduct open houses to share what is known and identify what might not be known about the site. • Committee/Council meetings where delegates are received provide another opportunity for the public to express their support or concerns.
Desired Outcomes:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge and clear understanding of the site that will allow for informed decision making. • To ensure openness and transparency for all future site planning. • To reach the broadest possible audience in Richmond. • Inform and direct current site management practices. • Complete Inventory and Analysis by Fall 2013. 	

The specialized and technical steps required to complete the Phase 1- Inventory and Analysis, as stated above, necessitates forming an interdepartmental City team, as well as a professional multi-disciplinary consultant team. This consultant team would provide those specific technical and advisory services that the City does not have in-house. Commencement of Phase 1 would require the issuance of an Expression of Interest to engage an appropriate consultant team.

Financial Impact

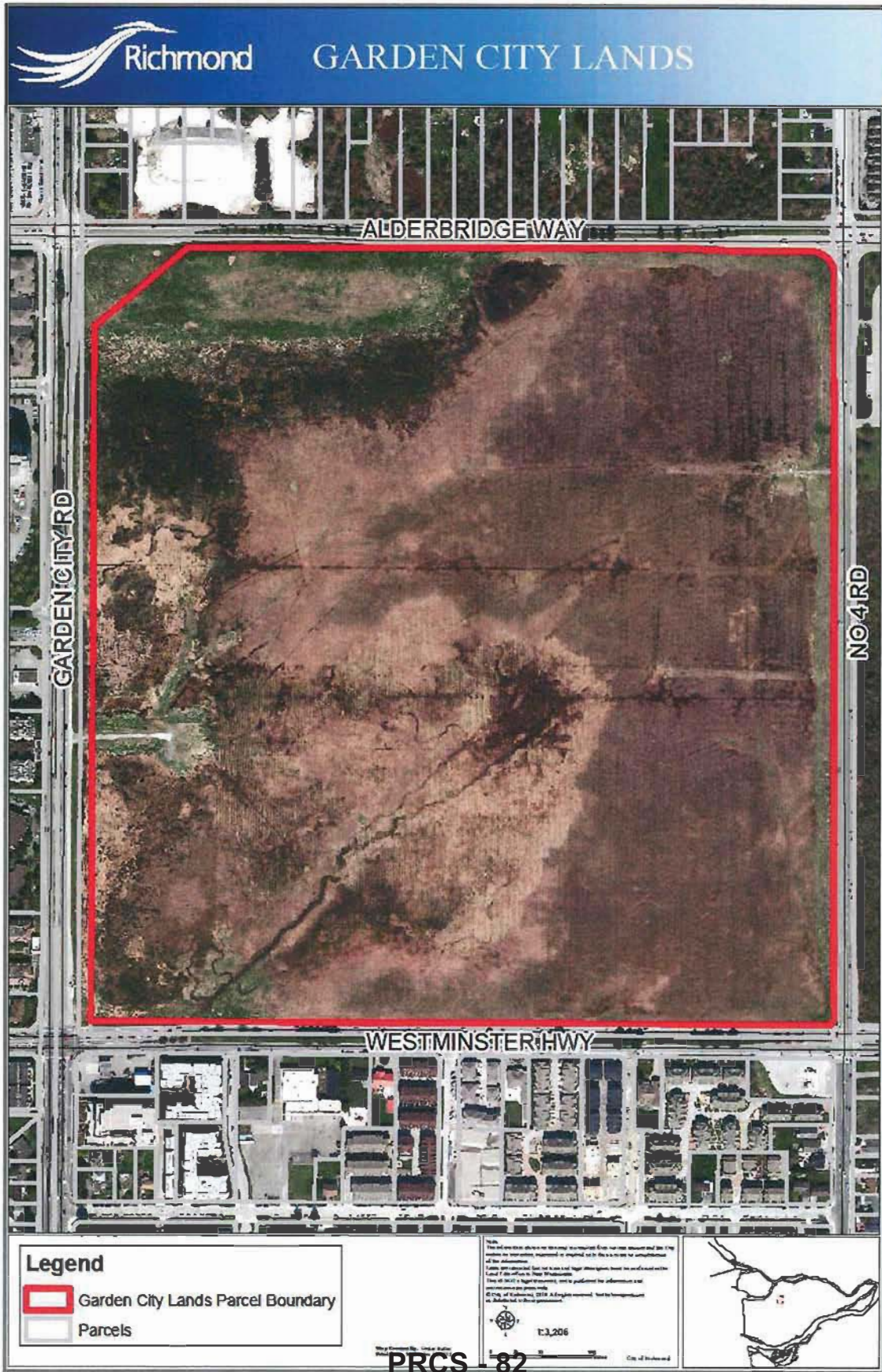
The estimated study will cost \$150,000 and is already budgeted (Additional Level Provision).

Conclusion

The Garden City Lands represent a unique opportunity to provide a broad range of public amenities integrated with significant urban agricultural and environmental features. Very few cities in the world have the opportunity to plan and implement civic spaces within a city centre context. This report proposes the commencement of a phased planning process to determine future uses of the Lands.


Mike Redpath
Senior Manager, Parks
604 247-4942


Yvonne Stich
Park Planner
604 233-3310



Attachment 2

In 2007, Council adopted the following overarching uses for the proposed park and open space within the Tri-Party Sale and Agreement Land Use Plan.

Community Wellness and Enabling Healthy Lifestyles

As a City committed to maintaining and improving community wellness and healthy lifestyles, the provision of a variety of outdoor public amenities is necessary to serve a growing population. Examples of these amenities include: passive and active parks and open spaces, trails and pedestrian connections, play spaces for all ages and abilities, gathering places for community celebration, and youth oriented activity zones. In addition, a range of outdoor community sport amenities and playing fields is envisioned to provide increased capacity for community use and for tournaments.

Urban Agriculture

The interest for urban agriculture is demonstrated by the demand for community gardens in Richmond. The City has constructed community gardens in four locations across the City and maintains lengthy waitlists for garden plots. The Garden City Lands could be a model for meeting the need for urban agriculture. The Garden City Lands and its location at the urban/agricultural interface presents a tremendous opportunity to engage the community in awareness building and active programming related to agriculture and food security.

Showcasing Environmental Sustainability

The Garden City Lands could play a significant role in showcasing environmental sustainability. This could both mitigate the impacts of urban development and to integrate environmental resources into urban areas. The size and location of the Garden City Lands could present a unique opportunity to develop another environmental showcase such as the establishment of wetlands for storm water management and habitat, the creation of an urban forest would contribute to improved air quality, alternative energy technologies and improving the city's resilience to climate change.

Attachment 3

Site Planning Steps	Options for Public Engagement
<p>Inventory and Analysis</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Document and review all existing studies. 2. Conduct a comprehensive inventory of the Land's ecological resources and services and investigate how its various dimensions function and relate to adjacent land uses e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vegetation types and distribution, • Soils types, and distribution • Environmental assessment • Surface and subsurface hydrology, • Fauna including inventories and assessments of invertebrates, amphibians & reptiles, fisheries, birds and mammals, • Terrestrial and Aquatic Ecosystem Mapping, • Habitat and Wildlife Suitability Mapping, 3. Review and summarize existing and relevant city strategies and policies, and provincial and federal legislation and regulations to understand how they may impact the use and development of the site. Included in this would be identifying Agricultural Land Commission's requirements and approval processes for farm and non-farm uses. <p>Review outcome of the Inventory with Council.</p> <p>Concurrently:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Begin to gather best practices and innovative programs for similar unique sites. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop 'fact' sheets and summaries of technical reports. • Update the web site dedicated to the Garden City Lands with the technical reports. • Gather and review previous public input and proposals with the goal of acknowledging and understanding the community values and aspirations that have been expressed to date. • At the end of the background information gathering, conduct open houses to share what is known and identify what might not be known about the site. • Committee/Council meetings where delegates are received provide another opportunity for the public to express their support or concerns.
<p>Opportunities and Constraints</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Once the Inventory and Analysis phase is completed and the site's existing characteristics understood, explore a range of opportunities and constraints. 2. Present the range of opportunities to Council for approval to proceed to the next step. 3. Develop or refine a more detailed Public Participation Framework. There will be a better understanding of the complexity of the project and the potential stakeholders at this point. <p>*ALC Considerations: This will be a critical stage where the City will need to determine what can be achieved within the ALC guidelines or whether the City engages in a discussion for potential non-conforming uses.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host focus group sessions and or workshops with stakeholders and interested residents to disseminate information and explore possibilities. • Convene 'expert panel discussions' to more clearly understand the characteristics and range of issues and opportunities that might exist for the site. • Utilize Let's Talk Richmond to disseminate information and seek feedback in a user friendly format that is universally accessible to anyone with Internet access • Establishing a task force and/or advisory committee to help guide the process and ensure public participation is transparent. • Committee/Council meetings where delegates are received provide another opportunity for the public to express their support or concerns.

<p>Vision and Guiding Principles</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a clear vision and set of guiding principles for the possible uses of the site, based on the site's opportunities and constraints, Council and community values, and priorities. 2. Present the Vision and Guiding Principle for approval by Council. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host focus groups and/or workshops to establish the Vision and Guiding Principles. This may be rolled into the Opportunities and Constraints workshops or be Part 2 of a series of workshops. • Post on <i>Let's Talk Richmond</i> with a survey while maintaining an open forum for the public to pose questions and make comments online at their convenience. • Work with the media to have feature stories or inserts placed in the local newspapers. • Committee/Council meetings where delegates are received provide another opportunity for the public to express their support or concerns.
<p>Concept Options</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop different concept plans based on the adopted vision and principles, and the site's opportunities and constraints. 2. City may begin to identify cost sharing opportunities, grants, and potential partners. 3. Present to Council the land scenarios/concepts for consideration and approval to proceed towards a Preferred Final Plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host a series of guided design charettes which allow for participants to be part of the creative process and program and design within a short intensive period. Drawings/illustrations are taken away and refined. 3D modelling can be used to express the ideas. • Alternatively, the City and community could host an international Design Competition that would potentially elicit bold and innovative ideas from around the world. • Host a public open house as well as utilize Let's Talk Richmond to review and comment on options. • Committee/Council meetings where delegates are received provide another opportunity for the public to express their support or concerns.
<p>Preferred Final Plan</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Evaluate the comments from the 'Scenario/ Conceptual' design phase and synthesize these into a preferred final plan. 2. Presentation to Council for final approval. 3. Staff would proceed with any potential: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OCP amendments • Rezoning bylaw • DCC Bylaw 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host public open house(s) as well as utilize Let's Talk Richmond to review and comment on the Preferred Plan. • Drawings/ illustrations/ 3D modelling can be used to express the ideas. • Committee/Council meetings where delegates are received provide another opportunity for the public to express their support or concerns.
<p>Implementation</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prepared detailed Construction Design 2. Seek all regulatory approvals 3. Construction commences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public involvement typically drops off during this phase. Special interest groups with specific expertise may stay involved in an advisory capacity. • If partnerships are being formed leading to management or programming of the site then they may also want to remain involved.
<p>Resource Management Monitoring and Review</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a Resource Management Plan 2. Monitor and Review Success 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote Stewardship programs and Friends of Garden City. • Depending upon the final use and plan there may be partnerships developed with a variety of non-profit organizations.