

Garden City Lands - Endorse a western portion for sports fields too July 22, 2013

The Garden City Lands area has been included in the provincial ALR, and zoned Conservation and Recreation.

Historically, it has been used for a rifle range (a sports use), but never been farmed.

The City purchased the 136 acres for \$59 M, which most agree is four times the current cost of local ALR farm land. In the leadup to this purchase many enlisted support by suggesting that the Garden City Lands should include sports fields.

Richmond's City Centre population is growing between 3000 and 4000 annually depending on market conditions, and is anticipated to double within the next few decades.

The City is behind in providing downtown park and recreation land, it will be hard or impossible to find a 20 acre parcel for grass sports fields elsewhere downtown, and it could cost a vast sum of taxes to do so. Having touted a walkable downtown core, Richmond also needs to include the sports amenities downtown.

Minoru Park is often very busy, and it is typical to see Kajaks training on 5 lanes of Minoru track, having to place cones all around the track to keep local residents walking on the outside 3 lanes. It is also now necessary to request walkers clear the track before starting each race heat at local track meets.

On the date of the recent Garden City Lands ideas opening, I returned home via Minoru Park and noted:

- 1) Four field hockey teams and families concurrently using Minoru field 2 for 2 simultaneous games;
- 2) Two teams playing baseball on Minoru Latrace field being watched by their families;
- 3) A cricket match;
- 4) The tennis courts in use;
- 5) Training on the Latrace track, as well as people walking around it. People sitting in the grandstands;
- 6) Families using the playground, and the swimming pools, and lacrosse in the arena.

There were more people using Minoru Park than advertising attracted to the Garden City Lands that day. The same would also have applied to Hugh Boyd Park and other sports parks that day.

Stanley Park in Vancouver and Central Park in New York have shown how conservation and recreation and tourism can be mixed to the advantage of all. The fusion of user groups provides more users and supporters than either group alone, and a better park attracting more users of every type results.

I note that there is an application from Kwantlen University for use of Garden City lands for a farm. Having heard of such prior requests for the south end of #3 Road and for Terra Nova lands, last year I contacted the local MLA Linda Reid, about the possibility of using 20 or more acres of unused land at the Westminster Highway and Highway 99 interchange.

Farm school use of that area would provide Kwantlen University an opportunity to access suitable previously used land within walking distance of their Richmond campus directly from the province. It would also provide:

- 1) A way of uniting Richmond Nature Park west and east sides, with a suitable intermediate use;
- 2) A relatively secure area that would be less vulnerable to crop pilfering;
- 3) An area with good visibility on regional transportation routes, which would support promoting farming;
- 4) A way of pioneering using such highway interchange lands throughout the region.

I put Kwantlen University in touch with the appropriate Transportation Ministry staff. Had they proceeded then their farm program graduates could perhaps be underway now. I still think this is a better bigger opportunity for them.

I think part of the western portion of the Garden City Lands disturbed lands should be used for recreation and sports to attract many local residents to these lands. I think proposals for use of a relatively small portion of the lands for farming and community gardens and other such uses can be compatible with the current lands.

I hope that a significant part of the eastern end of the Garden City lands will only be minimally altered for viewing and pathway access, and preserved as a gateway to the Nature Park Lands to the east, for generations yet unborn. I hope Kwantlen University will be encouraged to take a long look at the possibility of using land between the Nature Park west and east for a significant pilot farm as an opportunity to use surplus highway lands productively.

Peter Mitchell (6271 Nanika Crescent, Richmond BC 604 277 8882)

Attachments

Garden City Lands

printed in Richmond News July 19, 2013

Learn from other large parks

Many have expressed desire for the Garden City Lands to become a world class park like Stanley Park or New York's Central Park. Both these parks evolution took over a 100 years, and both have an extensive range of users and features that make them so special.

Stanley Park is 125 years old this year, and sports and recreation have been integral since the very beginning, with organized cricket being played there over 120 years ago, and the Brockton Clubhouse opening in 1927. Sports in Stanley Park include: cricket, rugby, track and field, lawn bowling, tennis, and rowing. There are many active sports clubs.

Recreationally, there is also the 2nd beach pool for swimming and fitness classes; jogging, rollerblading, cycling and walking on the seawall; softball, pitch and putt golf, and yachting. Stanley Park also attracts visitors to town with Sports Hosting.

Stanley Park also has many other features including lakes, beaches, gardens, woods, viewpoints, fountains, statues, totem poles, an aquarium, a mini train, restaurants, Malkin Bowl outdoor theatre, horse drawn tours, and an equine patrol.

Stanley Park's success is based on showcasing its natural beauty, and adding some sports facilities, attractions, and arts and cultural elements to attract a diverse range of supporters and users.

New York's 150 year old Central Park has most of Stanley Park's sports, arts, and cultural features, and also has handball, winter skating, basketball, and bridle paths. Central Park also has pedicabs, playgrounds, a bakery, a dairy, a zoo, a carousel, cafes and a gift shop.

Richmond's City Centre currently has twice Steveston's population and is growing 4,000 people annually. Minoru Park is now busy most of the time and with the downtown population set to double in the next few decades another large space is needed to satisfy the future passive park, recreation, and conservation needs of central Richmond and all Richmond residents.

The 136 acre Garden City Lands are much larger than Minoru Park so they can satisfy urban large park needs, and the transition to a more rural park and community garden park, and as gateway to the relatively undisturbed 136 acre adjoining National Defense lands and 201 acre Richmond Nature Park.

Both Stanley Park and Central Park are renowned because they offer something for everyone, from sports to recreation to arts and culture to beautiful calm quiet places to walk or meet people.

These parks took over a hundred years of many diverse groups of people's efforts to evolve into great parks for both residents and visitors. We should also take our time and enlist the widest community input possible in planning for the Garden City Lands future.

Peter Mitchell (6271 Nanika Crescent , 604 277 8882)

See over, Stanley Park Sport Hosting

Stanley Park

Stanley Park is a world class 400 hectares evergreen oasis beside Vancouver's downtown core. It has amenities available for event hosting of all types: from races, festivals, tournaments, regattas and more.

Second Beach Pool, located on the English Bay side of the park, is one of Vancouver's most beautiful and scenic outdoor pools. The pool is freshwater, heated and features three 50m swim lanes.

Stanley Park is home to 21 tennis courts and each year plays host to the Stanley Park Open, one of the biggest amateur tennis tournaments in North America.

Brockton Oval offers options for a multitude of sports including cricket matches on first-class pitches, rugby tournaments, and small track and field events.

Stanley Park's Prospect Point softball fields are well-kept and surrounded by majestic firs, hemlocks, and cedars.

The Stanley Park Lawn Bowling Club and Vancouver Rowing Club also operate out of the park and have the ability to host events.

The park contains one of Vancouver's three pitch and putt golf courses – perfect for a fun, active corporate/team event.

Additionally, Stanley Park also contains a number of dining and hall rental facilities to meet the needs of either formal or informal festivities.

Stanley Park's numerous and picturesque trails and famous seawall provide many opportunities for hosting walk/run events;

the City's Engineering Department can provide access to roadways within the park for a limited number of events per year.

For more information about the seawall please visit www.hostingbc.ca/content/vancouver-seawall

Fast Facts

Second Beach Pool:

- beach-entry style pool - 50 metre, 3-lane lap area
- located directly off of the Seawall, convenient for triathlon events - parking located nearby

Tennis Centre:

- 21 outdoor courts - parking located nearby

Brockton Oval:

- 2 cricket pitches - 2 rugby fields (surrounded by a track) - bleacher seating for 250 spectators
- adjacent Brockton Clubhouse for events - hosted international play - several parking areas nearby

Lawn Bowling:

- full service clubhouse

Facility Specs

Year completed	1888	Scoreboard	Yes	Sound System	No
Seating capacity	250	Owner			PPP
Parking capacity	2317	Office space			No
Medical room	No	Weight room / fitness facility			No
Warm up area	No	Equipment storage			No
Licensed for alcohol	No	Ticket box			No
Official rooms		Media room			No
Food services	Yes	Internet capability			
Dressing rooms		Hospitality room			Yes

Facility Hosting Services

Tourism Vancouver has a dedicated "sport tourism" staff ready to assist in locating facilities, accommodations, sports & event services and bid preparation.

The Vancouver Sports Tourism Task Force provides a network of resources and expertise in the sports event and facility industry.

Vancouver has a city funded "sport hosting grant" to encourage the use of city sport facilities, coaches and resources.

For more information please visit vancouver.ca/parks/info/sporthostinggrant/index.htm

Hosting Portfolio

A number of sporting events take place yearly within Stanley Park including:

2009 World Police & Fire Games English Bay Swim Club Lees Triathlon
Multisports Canada Vancouver Triathlon Running Room St. Patrick's 5km Various rugby and cricket tournaments

Weather Information

Vancouver's average maximum temperature is 6°C (43°F) in January and 22°C (72°F) in July.

Facility Contact

Michelle Taylor Manager, Meeting & Convention Sales Tourism Vancouver 604.631.2866

City to buy Garden City lands

It may well be the longest real estate negotiation in the city's history.

→ By Richmond News March 10, 2010



It may well be the longest real estate negotiation in the city's history.

Thirty-five years after the city first started negotiating to get its hands on the Garden City lands, city council has agreed to buy it for \$59.17 million.

In a deal Mayor Malcolm Brodie called "financially unwise," city council voted 7-2 at a special council meeting Monday to buy out the Musqueam First Nation and Canada Lands Company, which jointly own the 55-hectares (136-acres) of undeveloped land.

"I think that this deal is financially unwise," said Brodie, who wanted to give taxpayers a chance to vote on the deal through a referendum.

In the end, however, he voted in favour of the purchase. Councillors Evelina and Greg Halsey-Brandt were the only two holdouts.

They too wanted to see the purchase put to a referendum. Given the restrictions on the land, which is locked in the Agricultural Land Reserve, they fear the city may be stuck with land that it can't use for many of the things the public wants to see, like rinks and arenas.

"I'm not going to pay \$60 million without knowing what I can do with these lands," said Evelina Halsey-Brandt.

However, other councillors felt the city should move now, while the Musqueam and CLC were in a mood to sell, and then decide later how to use the land.

"Ownership is job one," Coun. Ken Johnston said.

Under a deal struck with the Musqueam and CLC in 2005, the city would have ended up with half the land for just \$4.8 million. But that deal fell through when the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) twice refused to release the land from the ALR -- something which may have motivated the Musqueam and CLC to sell.

→ Greg Halsey-Brandt and Brodie said \$433,000 per acre is four times what comparable ALR land in Richmond is going for. But other councillors felt the price was a good one.

"I think it is a legacy for the city and I think it is money well-spent," Coun. Linda Barnes said.

"I see this as an investment for the taxpayers," said Coun. Bill McNulty, adding that the city has been trying to get its hands on the land for 35 years.

"I think it's an incredible legacy," said Coun. Sue Halsey-Brandt, who is out of town and participated in the special meeting by conference call.

The money will come from a special land acquisition fund created with the sale of waterfront land left over from the development of the Richmond speed skating oval.

Aspac Developments paid the city \$141 million for land adjacent to the oval. Some of that money went to pay for the oval. But roughly \$100 million went into a special land acquisition fund. Once the Garden City lands are paid for, only \$15 million will remain in that special fund -- something Greg Halsey-Brandt found troubling.

But Steves said the city has budgeted to raise \$220 million through DCCs for parks between now and 2031 and said buying the Garden City lands now will put "a major dent" in the city's long-term need for parkland.

Jim Lamond, chairman of the Richmond Sports Council, applauded the purchase, saying it will provide much-needed space for things like playing fields and possibly even skating rinks and swimming pools. "I hope you have a very convincing argument for the Agricultural Land Commission," Brodie told Lamond.

Brodie fears the city could be stuck with land that can't be used for anything but agriculture -- something groups like the Richmond Food Security Task Force would be happy to see.

Jim Wright of the Garden City Lands Coalition urged council to approve the purchase only on the condition that the city commit to using the land only for "ALR permissible uses."

But council refused to put any such conditions on the purchase agreement.

→ Steves said 51 acres of the land parallel to Garden City Road is damaged and could be used for non-permanent sports infrastructure like soccer pitches and ball diamonds. Those kinds of uses do not require the land to be removed from the ALR -- it only requires a special exemption.

→ Anywhere else in the city, \$60 million would only get the city 20 acres of sports fields, Steves added. He added he would like to see the east portion of the land remain as peat bog as a carbon sink.

Because the city does not have to borrow any money to buy the land, it did not have to go to a referendum. But Brodie and Evelina and Greg Halsey-Brandt said it should have gone to referendum anyway.

The Garden City lands are surplus federal land that has sat unused for decades.

When the city negotiated with Ottawa to have the land transferred to the city, the Musqueam First Nation applied for and received a court injunction.

Senior governments are obliged to negotiate with First Nations with outstanding land claims before divesting itself of surplus land.

Ottawa ended up selling the land to the CLC, an arm's-length Crown corporation, for \$10 million. Five years ago, the city, Musqueam and CLC announced a three-way deal that would see the city get half the land for \$4.8 million. The rest was to be jointly developed, with the Musqueam benefiting from land sales.

Garden City lands survey was misleading

Published: October 10, 2007 5:00 PM

Updated: October 10, 2007 5:10 PM

Re: "Support for Garden City lands split," Sept. 20.

I am writing in regards to the Innovative Research Group and their misguided survey on the Garden City lands.

This company misrepresented the situation when it stated in its survey "in fact, lands in the ALR may only be used for agricultural and not for other community uses." This statement is false.

This statement tricked the people who answered the survey into believing that removing the Garden City lands from the ALR (Agricultural Land Reserve) was the only way to gain use of the land for recreational purposes, this is a deceptive way to do a survey.

I have to ask who paid for the survey?

→ I have contacted the Agricultural Land Commission, which governs the ALR, and it has confirmed to me that the land could be used for recreational purposes, but that the city would have to make an application for it under the Parks Act.

History has shown that it is common for the Agricultural Land Commission to approve these applications.

The Canada Land Company needs to change its position and delete the requirement to remove the land from the ALR to allow for transfer of the land.

Without this change, the land will not likely change hands because the Agricultural Land Commission has received a lot of interest from the community and is well aware that the people of Richmond do not want more development and the only way to guarantee that is to keep the Garden City lands in the ALR.

Our fair city is being infested with high-rises and open space is critical for our future. The rate of development is frightening. Our city council is developer driven and has ruined massive areas of our city. The citizens of Richmond do not trust them to maintain this green space for eternity.

The Canada Lands Company can truly benefit the people of Richmond by removing the ALR condition and allowing us to maintain this incredible open green space for future generations.

Carol Day
Richmond

email sent Oct 17, 2012.
discussion ran from Aug to Dec 2012

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Dear Kent:

To briefly recap items discussed when we met at Kwantlen University's Richmond campus on September 21, I've heard and read about your farming program at Kwantlen University's Richmond campus, and its land needs for student farming and more recently for incubator farm plots for new graduates of the program.

I was present at a presentation you made to Richmond Council about farmland needed in central Richmond, and I saw that they discussed leasing land at Terra Nova and/or the south end of #3 Road in Richmond.

As a long term Richmond resident and active community volunteer, I knew access to land near Kwantlen University's Richmond campus and Richmond's city centre would be very beneficial for your program promoting urban farming.

As I mentioned when we met, I asked the local Richmond East MLA about the possibility of the provincial land west of Highway 99 in the Highway 99 & Westminster Highway interchange and other similarly well located parcels of currently unused land being available for use for a farm program such as yours.

She had an individual in the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure contact me about the request, and after discussing my understanding of your program with him, I felt confident about this opportunity for your Kwantlen program.

We met and discussed the opportunity and you expressed a need for 20 to 50 acres for your program, and a preference for it to be in Richmond. I advised that the land I was thinking of was more than 20 acres, was located only 3 Km from Kwantlen University's Richmond campus, and that it appeared to be good land, and it had great frontage and drive by visibility to promote the Kwantlen program. This lands location in between halves of the Richmond Nature Park means that it has complementary neighbouring uses and the area already attracts like minded individuals. I also noted that the general public would not have easy access without consent, which is beneficial for avoiding public pilfering or tampering.

You expressed strong interest, so I immediately followed up with Grant Smith at the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure and forwarded your contact information to him. He advised me a week later that he had emailed you to contact him at your convenience.

With three weeks having elapsed since I mentioned the potential opportunity, I contacted you recently, and learned you haven't yet contacted Mr. Smith.

I think there is great potential for Kwantlen University Richmond campus in this proposal.

Further, in talking with Mr Smith, I have the impression that beyond this location the ministry has land elsewhere about the region that may also not be in active use and present similar opportunities for incubator farming elsewhere. With a successful start here, it may be possible to spread this Richmond opportunity elsewhere about the region as your program's graduate base expands.

I hope you will contact Mr. Grant Smith soon, because I think this could be a wonderful opportunity for your Kwantlen University urban agriculture program.

Sincerely,

Peter Mitchell (petermitchell@shaw.ca 604 277 8882)