



City of Richmond

Report to Committee

To: General Purposes Committee

Date: February 15, 2012

From: Dave Semple
General Manager Parks and Recreation


File: 06-2345-01/2012-Vol
01

Re: **West Cambie Area Plan and Alexandra Neighbourhood Natural Park
Considerations**

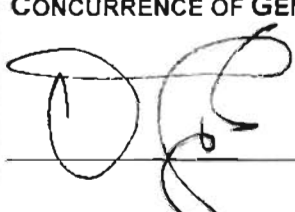
Staff Recommendation

That as per the staff report dated February 15, 2012, titled "West Cambie Area Plan and Alexandra Neighbourhood Natural Park Considerations:"

- 1) Planning and Parks staff lead a planning process to bring forth an Area Plan amendment to remove the Area Plan Natural Park designation on 9540, 9560, 9580, 9600, 9620, 9660, 9680, 9700, 9740, 9800, 9820 Alexandra Road and 4711, 4731, 4751, 4771 No 4 Road;


Dave Semple
General Manager, Parks and Recreation

Att. 2

FOR ORIGINATING DEPARTMENT USE ONLY			
ROUTED TO:	CONCURRENCE		CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER
Real Estate Services	Y <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>		
Sustainability	Y <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>		
Law	Y <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>		
Policy Planning	Y <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>		
Budgets	Y <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>		
REVIEWED BY TAG	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>	REVIEWED BY CAO YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>

Staff Report

Origin

This report is as a result of the following closed referral from the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Committee of October 27, 2009:

“That staff consider the potential relocation of the portion of the Alexandra Neighbourhood Parkland at the corner of Alderbridge way and No 4 Road to the Garden City Lands on the other side of Alderbridge Way, and explore the appropriateness of re-assigning City-wide DCC funds for this purpose.”

The West Cambie Area Plan, adopted in 2006, includes a neighbourhood park, a connecting greenway and a Natural Park between Alexandra Road, Alderbridge Way and No. 4 Road (Attachment 1). To date, all the properties for the neighbourhood park and most of the greenway have been acquired. The 15 properties identified for the Natural Park are included in the DCC Program for park land acquisition; 9540, 9560, 9580, 9600, 9620, 9660, 9680, 9700, 9740, 9800, 9820 Alexandra Road and 4711, 4731, 4751, 4771 No. 4 Road for a total of 4.86 ha. (12 acres) in area (Attachment 2). These properties were valued at \$23.6 mil. in the DCC program.

The City has received several requests from land owners to purchase their properties and to remove the park designation. The purpose of this report is to respond to the above referral and to provide an evaluation of the options regarding the future of these properties.

Analysis

The West Cambie Area Plan identified the Natural Park in the Alexandra neighbourhood for its current ecological value, for future ecological services and to satisfy the vision of the Area Plan to “encourage redevelopment of the Alexandra neighbourhood as a “complete and balanced community.”

The properties in question are subject to the following considerations:

1. Planning Policies:

a. OCP Land Use Designation

The properties have an OCP designation of “Public and Open Space” meaning: those areas of the City where the principal use is public or private recreation, parks, schools, religious facilities, public administration and City works, transportation, utilities, health care facilities, or other institutions.

b. OCP ANSD Policy

The properties are also regulated by the OCP Aircraft Noise Sensitive Development (ANSD) Policy as Area 1A, “New Aircraft Noise Sensitive Land Use Prohibited” which does not permit any OCP re-designation to any residential land use. Therefore, while the existing zoned single family uses are allowed, any

other proposed residential use would be subject to review by YVR who has, in the past, applied a no net loss principle requesting equivalent area to be designated for OCP ANSD non residential uses. The OCP ANSD Policy has no such net loss policy.

c. ESA Guidelines

Of the 15 properties identified for the Natural Park, thirteen were designated Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) prior to the adoption of the Area Plan. The ESA designation recognizes the significant stands of trees and associated understory present on the properties. This means that an ESA Development Permit would be required should rezoning of the properties be contemplated. Under the guidelines, any rezoning proposal would be required to show that there will be “no net loss” of natural area.

d. West Cambie Area Plan

The West Cambie Area Plan establishes the area as a “Complete Community” (e.g., achieving live, work, play principles; balancing residential and non-residential uses, providing natural and active open space and improved cycling and pedestrian connections)

The Natural Park was identified to satisfy the following Area Plan objectives:

“Set high standards for development for West Cambie, including means and methods to promote social, economic and environmental sustainability.”; and,

“Create a system of parks, greenways and community facilities that serve the residents of West Cambie, preserve sensitive environments, and help to retain Richmond’s heritage.”

The Natural Park area shown in the Alexandra Neighbourhood Land Use Map indicates the City’s intention to secure the area for public open space and ecological and sustainability benefits (i.e., air and water pollution management, groundwater recharge, stormwater management carbon sequestering, community recreation and health, biodiversity and habitat). In particular, the Natural Park in the West Cambie Area Plan was designed to meet four objectives:

1. Provide a multi-purpose greenway at the neighbourhood scale
2. Provide for the long-term opportunity of development of a larger, multi-purpose greenway linking the Nature Park to the Fraser River
3. Reduce ecological health loss
4. Bring nature and eco-amenities into neighbourhoods

The Natural Park and the open space system were developed through the community consultation process for the Area Plan. The current single family residential uses continue until the properties are acquired for the Natural Park.

e. *Current Zoning*

All 15 properties are zoned residential including RS1/F Single Detached and RD1 Two Unit Dwelling designations.

2. *DCC Program and Land Acquisition Status*

- a. The City acquisition of these 15 properties is guided by the 2009 Council approved "Park Land Acquisition and Development (2009)" DCC program and by the "Park Land Acquisition Strategy 2009 to 2013" which established acquisition priorities based on a set of criteria approved by Council. The Natural Park properties are included in the current DCC program and 10 of the 15 properties have been included as priorities for acquisition in the Strategy.
- b. The value of the DCC's attributable to the properties was determined during the West Cambie Area Plan process and was included in the DCC program update of 2006. It is likely that the current market value of the properties has increased since.
- c. None of the 15 properties has been purchased to date since other priorities, both city wide and within the Alexandra neighbourhood (including the neighbourhood park and the greenway sections from Cambie Road to Alexandra Road), have taken precedence over the purchase of the Natural Park properties.
- d. Several of the property owners in the area have been in contact with the City wishing to sell their properties.

3. *Park Standards*

- a. At the neighbourhood level, the access to open space goal is for residents to have access to a neighbourhood park within 800 metres without crossing a major street. The standard for access has been met in the Alexandra Neighbourhood with the acquisition of the neighbourhood park and by the location of the existing school park. The rest of the West Cambie Area is similarly well served.
- b. The greenway and neighbourhood park contribute to the city wide standard for quantity of open space of 7.66 acres per 1000 population. Since adoption of the West Cambie Area Plan, 3.12 ha. (7.71 acres) have been acquired for the Alexandra neighbourhood park and most of the greenway. The neighbourhood park is 2.34 ha. (5.79 acres) in size and the greenway area is 1.16 ha. (2.86 acres) to date. The current total area of open space in the Alexandra Neighbourhood, including the school district property, is 5.56 ha. (13.75 acres). As part of the DCC program, the 4.86 ha. (12 acres) area represented by the Natural Park would also contribute to the city wide standard.

4. *Future Park Location and the DCC Program*

Subject to discussions with the Province and review and analysis of current DCC legislation and guidelines, staff propose that the Natural Park area identified in the West Cambie Area Plan could be relocated elsewhere in the city. As more study is required for the Garden City Lands it has not been included in the City's open space calculations in the OCP.

Options for the Alexandra Neighbourhood Natural Park

In light of the 2009 Council referral and to address the desire of some or all of the property owners to sell now, staff offer for Council's consideration, the following options:

Option 1 Make no change to the Park designation in the OCP (not recommended)

In this option, the City would continue to implement the objectives of the West Cambie Area Plan and retain the Natural Park designation on the subject properties. The properties included in the DCC program would be purchased once they rose in priority according to the Park Land Acquisition Strategy and as funding became available. Given the cost of all 15 properties, the timeframe for acquisition will be longer than anticipated in the Park Land Acquisition Strategy. In the meantime, staff would ensure that property owners are aware that the Natural Park designation does not prevent them from selling their properties under the current zoning.

Advantages	Disadvantages
By adhering to the approved area plan, this option meets the objectives for the Natural Park and the expectations of residents and developers in the West Cambie Area	The timeframe for City acquisition may not meet the expectation of property owners who are anxious to sell
The site specific ecological values of the land would continue to be protected and the City's future sustainability performance would be improved by dedicating public open space to ecological services	Current property owners who are having difficulty in selling their properties will not have their concerns addressed
The OCP ANSD policy would remain unchanged and the City would avoid having to: (1) consult with YVR and (2) address their likely requests to replace an equivalent ANSD area	Park land acquisition DCC revenues are dedicated to an area that is already well served according to park standards

This option is not recommended since the timeframe to purchase the properties through the DCC program will be longer than anticipated and the property owners concerns will not be addressed.

Option 2: Amend Area Plan Following Completion of a Detailed Planning Process (not recommended)

In this option, staff would undertake a planning process to review appropriate land uses for the properties and bring forth recommended amendments once the planning process was completed. In this way, no change would be made until after public consultation. Options for securing other park land with equal or better ecological value would also be determined and adopted by Council prior to any changes being made to the West Cambie Area Plan. This option would also provide flexibility to consider retaining a portion of the Natural Area in West Cambie if this proved to be a viable and preferred option. A key consideration is the value in retaining, as a minimum, a greenway corridor in order that the entire Alexandra park system can be managed effectively as an interconnected ecological system. Alternative financial strategies could also be explored in order that City objectives pertaining to park acquisition in other areas could be met.

Advantages	Disadvantages
Respects the previous West Cambie Area Plan public process and re-engages the community in a transparent manner	Delays addressing property owner concerns
Provides opportunity for a complete solution approach (e.g., removal of the Natural Park designation with an appropriate replacement option articulated at the same time).	Does not provide certainty with regard to the removal of the Natural Park designation
Enables integrated planning within the broader context and provides flexibility in land use options (including complete and partial removal options of the Natural Park designation)	
Higher certainty regarding protection of the ecological values of the properties	

While this option provides greater flexibility in determining future land uses and allows for community consultation prior to removal of the Natural Park designation, it does not provide certainty to property owners.

Option 3 Amend the West Cambie Area Plan to remove the park designation from the subject properties (recommended)

In this option, staff would undertake a planning process to remove the Natural Park designation, review alternative land uses for the properties and bring forth recommended Area Plan amendments once the planning process was completed. Since the requirement for public open space has already been satisfied in the Alexandra neighbourhood and in the West Cambie Area, no additional park land is required to meet the City's standard for park access. If the park designation was removed, other land not currently included in the DCC program of equivalent size and quality (e.g., ecological value) could be identified. For example, the City has recently acquired 126.7 acres of land on Sturgeon Banks with Ducks Unlimited Canada which includes approximately 7 acres of upland riparian ESA.

This option would require an Area Plan amendment, which may require an amendment to the DCC program. Staff would be required to seek advice from the Province on whether a DCC program amendment is required. Any DCC amendment would require review and approval by the inspector of Municipalities and would occur prior to the OCP Update.

City staff would consult with local developers who have purchased properties in the area, and hold a public meeting to discuss land use alternatives. Any future rezoning of the properties for alternative land uses would still be subject to the OCP ESA guidelines.

Completion of the greenway linking Alexandra Rd. to Alderbridge Way is recommended as a condition of any future alternative land use. As part of consideration of alternative land uses, options to secure a greenway connection would be explored, (e.g., acquisition of one or more properties, legal agreements).

In the Area Plan, the Alexandra Road right-of-way fronting the Natural Park was proposed to be closed. If alternative land uses are identified for the properties, the Alexandra Road right-of-way

may be required. Existing property owners to the north would be consulted with regard to the continuation of Alexandra Road.

Advantages	Disadvantages
The OCP ANSD policy does not need to be changed	The sustainability objectives of the West Cambie Area Plan would not be realized.
Equivalent or better ecologically valuable land would be acquired elsewhere.	Less certainty regarding protection of the ecological values of the properties.
More certainty for property owners in the Alexandra Neighbourhood.	
Other priorities for park land acquisition can be pursued.	Some owners may expect higher value residential uses and a buyout process but this was never promised

This option is recommended because it allows the City to address park needs in other areas experiencing growth and provides certainty to the affected property owners.

The table below summarizes the effects of each option on the key considerations regarding the subject properties.

Proposed Options	Summary of Key Considerations					
	Meets Area Plan Objectives	Conforms to the OCP ANSD Policy	Conforms to the ESA DP Guidelines	Satisfies Park Standards	Meets Community Expectations	Meets Property Owners' Expectations
Option 1 Status Quo	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No - does not advance purchase of properties
Option 2 Complete Planning Process	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Uncertain - may not advance the purchase of properties
Option 3 Amend the OCP	No - removal of park designation	Yes	Yes	Yes	Uncertain - public consultation has not occurred	Yes

Financial Impact

The financial impact arising from staff recommendations cannot be quantified at this time until further analysis and discussions ensue.

Conclusion

Subject to future discussions and research, Option 3 is recommended in response to the referral of October, 2009 because it allows the City to reallocate DCC funding to acquire park space in another location where park standards have not been achieved. Residents in the Alexandra Neighbourhood and the West Cambie Area are well served by parks and other open spaces (school parks, greenways and publicly accessible open space on private property). While the objective behind the designation of the Natural Park will not be satisfied in the West Cambie Area, it can be satisfied elsewhere in the city by acquiring property with equal or better ecological value.

If Council approves the recommendation of this report then Planning staff will proceed to examine land use alternatives for the lands designated Natural Park, consult with area residents and stakeholders and the Province. Upon completion of consultations and research, staff will report to Council on the proposed alternative land uses, any DCC amendments and recommend an OCP amendment accordingly.



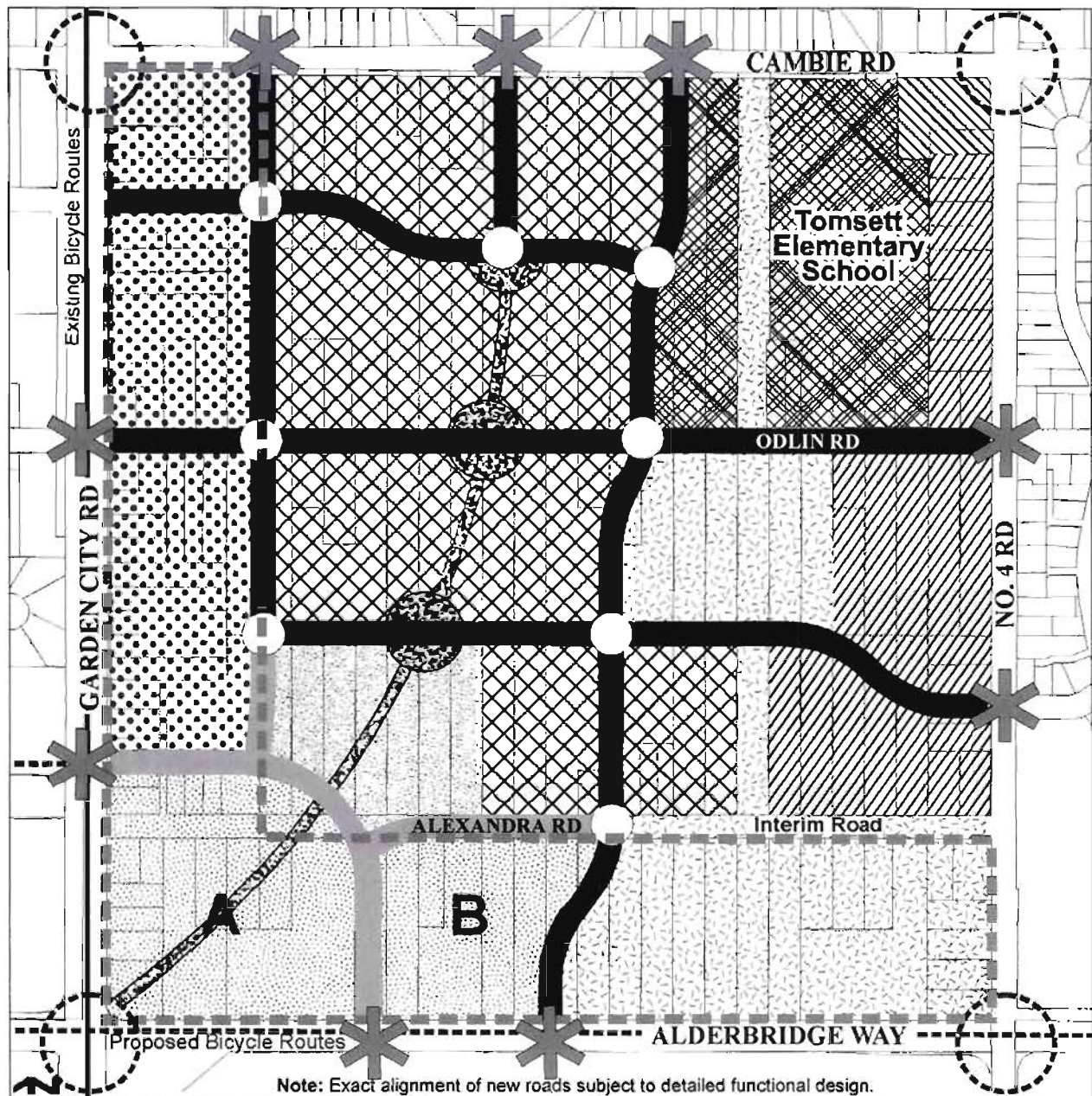
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Alexandra Neighbourhood Land Use Map

Attachment 1



Area of No Housing Affected by Aircraft Noise	Mixed Use: Hotel, office and streetfront retail commercial. Area A: Minimum 1.25 FAR up to 2.0. Area B: Large and small floor plate up to	Proposed Roadways
Business/Office – office over retail FAR up 1.25	Mixed Use: Housing over small floor-plate retail. 1.25 base FAR. Building heights low to mid-rise. (Max. 1.50 FAR with density bonusing for affordable housing).	High Street
Convenience Commercial	Community Institutional	New Traffic Signals
Residential Area 1 1.50 base FAR (Max. 1.70 FAR with density bonusing for affordable housing). Townhouse, Low-rise Apts. (4-storey typical)	Park: North Park Way, Central Park, Natural Park, South Parkway	Feature Intersections – details to be developed
Residential Area 2 0.65 base FAR (Max. 0.75 FAR with density bonusing for affordable housing). 2 & 3-storey Townhouses	Alexandra Way (Public Rights of Passage Right-of-way)	Feature Landmarks in combination with Traffic Calming Measures

Alexandra Neighbourhood Public Open Space Attachment 2

