



To: Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services
Committee

Date: October 15, 2013

From: Mike Redpath
Senior Manager, Parks

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Re: **Garden City Lands - Phase Two Concept Plan Options**

Staff Recommendation

That the Concept Plans as detailed in the report “Garden City Lands - Phase Two Concept Plan Options” from the Senior Manager, Parks dated October 15, 2013, be received for information.

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

Att. 3

REPORT CONCURRENCE		
ROUTED TO:	CONCURRENCE	CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER
Communications	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Sustainability	<input type="checkbox"/>	
REVIEWED BY DIRECTORS	INITIALS:	APPROVED BY CAO

Staff Report

Origin

On July 22, 2013 the following resolution was adopted by Council:

“That the Vision and Guiding Principles as detailed in the staff report titled Garden City Lands – Phase One Vision and Guiding Principles from the Senior Manager, Parks dated July 8, 2013, be endorsed as the basis for Garden City Lands future planning, Phase Two – Concept Development.”

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 July 22, 2013 Council direction to adopt the vision and guiding principles as the basis for Phase Two – Concept Development, by presenting three concept options for review prior to the public open house on November 7, 2013.

Findings of Fact

The City owned Garden City Lands (Lands) are approximately 136.5 acres (55.2 hectares) located at 5555 No. 4 Road within and on the eastern edge of Richmond City Centre, between Westminster Highway, Garden City Road, Alderbridge Way and No. 4 Road. In addition, a sliver of the visible grass and wetland areas along the western edge lies within a separate address, 5040 Garden City Road, a right-of-way created for the original construction of Alderbridge Way. This adds a little over 2 acres to the 136.5 acres and is included in the Garden City Lands planning project. This property and the Lands are located within the provincially designated Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR). The Metro Vancouver 2040 Regional Growth Strategy has designated the 136.5 acre Garden City Lands ‘Conservation and Recreation’.

In the current 2041 Official Community Plan (OCP) Land Use Map, the Garden City Lands, 5555 No.4 Road, are designated as ‘Conservation’. This is defined as being natural and semi-natural areas with important environmental values that may also be used for recreation, park, agricultural and food production purposes. The 5040 Garden City Road property has a number of land use designations including ‘Commercial, Neighbourhood Residential, Park and Conservation’. Both properties are zoned AG1- Agriculture.

Analysis

One of Council’s 2011-2014 term goals is to commence planning for the eventual use of the Garden City Lands. On October 22, 2012 Council adopted the following planning process for developing a Plan for the Garden City Lands.

KEY PLANNING STAGES



The first three steps outlined above have been completed as Phase One. This phase had focused on two main goals: ‘getting to know the land’ through conducting a technical review of the land and site context, and ‘getting to know the community vision’ through a very successful public consultation process. A report dated July 8, 2013 was written and presented to Council outlining the key findings from the background inventory and analysis, as well as a summary of the extensive community input.

The synthesis of the community aspirations, values and ideas gathered through the public engagement process provided clear and consistent messages, (**Attachment 1**). The key findings and synthesis provided a solid basis for the development of the following Vision and Guiding Principles adopted by Council on July 22, 2013, (**Attachment 2**).

Vision:

The Garden City Lands, located in the City Centre, is envisioned as an exceptional legacy open space for residents and visitors. Visible and accessible from many directions, the Lands are an impressive gateway into Richmond’s downtown, and a place of transition and transformation from the rural to the urban. Its rich, diverse and integrated natural and agricultural landscape provides a dynamic setting for learning and exploration. It is inclusive with a range of spaces, amenities and experiences that encourage healthy lifestyles, social interaction and a strong sense of community pride.

Guiding Principles:

- Encourage Community Partnerships and Collaboration
- Respect Agricultural Land Reserve
- Strive for Environmental Sustainability
- Promote Community Wellness and Active Living
- Maximize Connectivity and Integration
- Allow for Dynamic and Flexible Spaces
- Develop Science-based Resource Management Plans

Phase Two – Concept Options Development

The next step in the Garden City Lands planning process is the development of concepts, exploring different scenarios for the future of the Lands.

Prior to developing these options staff met separately with the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) staff, the Scientific Advisory Panel for Burns Bog, and a Faculty of Land and Food Systems representative from University of British Columbia, to provide some guidance and input into furthering our understanding of the Garden City Lands site conditions, management, program and site layout considerations.

This information together with all the previous background research has resulted in some key considerations for reviewing different options and ultimately developing a final plan. These are:

Key Considerations:

- **It is a long term vision** – Garden City Lands is unique in its size, City Centre location and site features. The Lands will be for future generations to enjoy and to actively participate in how it unfolds and is programmed over the years.
- **It has to be adaptable and flexible** – A long term perspective that keeps true to the Vision and Guiding Principles, allows for a plan to be flexible and adapt to changes. For instance, “What are best practices of the future? What will our community needs be? What will agriculture look like in the future? How will climate change impact our environment?”
- **It will require an ongoing relationship with Agricultural Land Commission** – An overall Concept Plan for Garden City Lands will help the ALC understand the rationale and relationship between different site elements that may ‘push the envelope’ while respecting the ALR. Finding the right balance of amenities and programs that best serves the community will require ongoing discussion.
- **Tread lightly and develop slowly.** Nature is a complex system. A Concept Plan will provide a framework for development of the Lands by identifying the different land use areas. However, understanding the hydrology regime is critical and requires monitoring

for at least two to five years. Further research and discussion will be needed to develop both a short-term and long-term Management Strategy.

Concept Options

Public Open Houses will be held on November 7, 2013 to present the following Options as well as other background information from Phase One, (**Attachment 3**).

All options share common elements that respond to the Vision and Guiding Principles and to the existing site conditions. The elements included in each concept are:

- Natural features
- Water features
- Agricultural fields
- Gateways and Connections
- Parkland Spaces and Circulation
- Interpretation Art Opportunities
- Community Hub

These elements will be expressed in different degrees and layouts in the options with the intent that ultimately the best ideas from each option will be used to formulate a final concept plan and design/development guidelines.

A key difference between Option A and Option B and C is that Option A focuses on the majority of the site being natural and the urban agricultural component being approximately 35 acres in total. Both Option B and C increase the potential urban agricultural component to approximately 50 acres. Option B and C are different design approaches to the layout of the other common elements.

Option A - In Nature

Long Term Vision – A Nature Conservation Framework

This option reflects the existing landscape with a focus on ecology and creating a natural ‘sanctuary’ or experience within the City Centre. The concept layout is also inspired by the historic Richmond grid for both urban and agricultural land uses while responding to the existing eco-systems.

A large naturalized woodlot is created on the north edge along Alderbridge Way to reflect the environmentally sensitive areas in West Cambie and to add biodiversity to the Lands. The existing seasonal wetlands (remnants of a slough system) will be expanded with the intent of creating a year round feature and potential storm water retention area.

The raised peat bog area will be retained in each concept and will require further research to determine the ultimate management strategy. The bog watercourse will be protected with a buffer area between it and other uses. Unique features such as the fern ‘forest’ and the large expanses of natural grass and sedge fields will be conserved.

This plan locates the Community Farm and Sustainability Hub and the multi-purpose community fields on the north edge with access from Alderbridge Way. Proposed roads and new cross-walks from the West Cambie area will make this location accessible and the existing disturbed land fill area could be considered suitable for non-farm uses.

The urban agricultural component of the site in this Nature Conservation option would be limited to approximately 35 acres.

Option B - 'On the Grid'

Long Term Vision – An Urban Agriculture Framework

This option draws inspiration from the historical Richmond grid which is reflective of the City's unique blend of urban and agricultural land patterning. The focus in this option is in creating a larger urban agriculture area through the middle of the site.

As in Option A, the plan locates the Community Farm and Sustainability Hub and the multi-purpose community fields on the north edge with access from Alderbridge Way.

The proposed new transportation and traffic patterns in the West Cambie area will improve access into the site from Alderbridge Way.

The plan breaks the site into one acre square parcels that logically work for agriculture, community, ecological conservation and woodlot succession. The grid patterns are flexible and can be combined into larger grid areas or broken down into even smaller units providing a variety of scales of agricultural plots, demonstration and garden areas, and community activity spaces.

The terminus of the future Lansdowne Greenway, which will utilize water as a major theme and ecological feature, is acknowledged through the design of a more formal water garden that transitions into the natural expanded wetland to the north. On the eastern edge along No. 4 Road, a natural succession bog forest provides a transition to the Department of National Defence (DND) and Nature Park and adds biodiversity to the Lands.

In each option there are perimeter trails as well as an extensive trail system within the Lands. A double row of trees along Garden City Road will help strengthen this edge as part of the Garden City Road Greenway cycling and pedestrian network.

Option C - 'Off the Grid'

Long Term Vision – An Urban Agricultural Framework

This option works with and reflects the historical and natural water flows of the Garden City Lands bog and the river slough tributaries. The agricultural plots and landscape patterns are at 45 degrees from the typical urban grid creating a unique and dynamic space within the City. As with Option B the flexible parcels work for agriculture, community, ecological conservation and woodlot succession.

This plan locates the Community Farm and Sustainability Hub and the community fields closest to the most urban edge along Garden City Road and provides easy access to the Canada Line station on No. 3 Road. The location of the Community Hub acts as a terminus to the future Lansdowne Greenway, which will ultimately connect to the Oval and the Middle Arm waterfront, and also acts as a major gateway into the Lands themselves. As with all concepts the land transitions from the more urban edge along Garden City Road to the natural edge along No. 4 Road.

A terraced landscape form provides a more structured gateway into the Lands on the northwest corner while a bog succession woodlot reflects a natural character in the southeast corner and connects to the DND lands and the Nature Park.

Next Steps

These options together with other support boards will be presented to the public on Thursday, November 7, 2013 and added to the creategardencitylands.ca and Let's Talk Richmond website. The feedback from these different venues will be summarized in a report back to Council before commencing with the development of a Final Concept Plan.

Financial Impact

None.

Conclusion

The Garden City Lands, located in the City Centre, is envisioned as an exceptional legacy open space for residents and visitors. On October 22, 2012 Council adopted a planning process for developing a Plan for the Garden City Lands. After a successful public engagement process in Phase One, Council in July 2013 adopted a Vision and Guiding Principles to be used as the basis for developing concept options in Phase Two. Three concept options have been developed and are presented in this report for information.

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