

**Corporate** NO: C001**Report** COUNCIL DATE: February 5, 2001

COUNCIL-IN-COMMITTEE			
TO:	Mayor & Council	DATE:	January 23, 2001
FROM:	General Manager, Parks, Recreation and Culture	FILE:	8350-108
SUBJECT:	Panorama Lands Park Master Plan		

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. Receive this information.
2. Support in principle the preferred option for the Panorama Lands Parks Master Plan attached as Appendix I.

BACKGROUND

The 184-hectare (455 acre) Panorama Lands Park site, located south of Panorama Ridge in Newton, was acquired by the City in December 1998. The park site consists of two main parcels of land. The parcel north of Colebrook Road is a mix of agricultural land and forest, while the smaller block to the south of Colebrook Road is agricultural land. Two houses are located on the park site. The Colebrook Farm House is located at the western edge of the park just north of Colebrook Road. The house was built at the turn of the century and is of historical significance, although it is presently in poor repair. The log house is located on the central northern edge of the park and was built in 1977.

Prior to a park planning process taking place, a biophysical assessment of the park site was undertaken in October 1999, which provided an overview of the site conditions, vegetation soils, slopes, hydrology, and wildlife issues. The findings of the biophysical assessment undertaken by Dunster and Associates Environmental Consultants revealed that the future parklands contain extensive tracts of valuable wildlife habitat. The seasonally flooded fields are a particularly important feature for wildlife habitat. There is considerable opportunity to create additional habitat elements, including more ponds and to maintain a wide array of habitat diversity. The environmental consultant recommended that the continued use of active agriculture within the fields would be a means of maintaining habitat diversity. The consultant advised that there is considerable potential to use the parklands for a wide array of outdoor activities, including the creation of horseback riding, hiking and cycling trails if measures are taken to ensure that the important habitat aspects are not disturbed. The layout of more active recreation activities should ensure that the wildlife habitats and the ponds and nesting areas are well separated. During 2000, a Master Plan was prepared in collaboration with City staff, a steering committee and the public through a comprehensive consultation process.

DISCUSSION

Panorama Lands Park Public Consultation Process

The Panorama Lands Master Plan was prepared under the direction of the Panorama Lands Park Steering Committee, Parks, Recreation and Culture staff, and a Consultant from Sharpe & Diamond Landscape Architecture. The Panorama Lands Steering Committee was comprised of two residents from Panorama Ridge, representatives from the Agricultural Advisory Committee, the Ministry of Agriculture, the White Rock and Surrey Naturalists, and Parks, Recreation and Culture and Engineering Department staff. The public consultation process included a workshop with various interest groups and

three public Open Houses.

Workshop for Interest Groups - February 29, 2000: The workshop consisted of an open house in the afternoon for persons representing regulatory agencies and an evening workshop for people representing various interest groups. Representatives from the following government agencies attended the afternoon open house: Colebrook Diking District, Surrey RCMP, Ministry of Environment, Canadian Wildlife Service, B.C. Hydro, Ministry of Agriculture, and B.C. Rail. City of Surrey Engineering staff also attended. Representatives from the following community interest groups attended the evening workshop: Panorama Ridge Riding Club, Diversity Advisory Group, White Rock/Surrey Naturalists, West Panorama Ratepayers Association, and Surrey Seniors.

The two workshops included an overview of the study purpose and the site context, a review of the site resources and some of the initial ideas regarding park opportunities. Participants were asked to complete a comment form as a means of recording their ideas.

Workshop participants generally agreed with the preliminary vision of the park for passive recreation such as walking, nature viewing and interpretation, picnicking and horseback riding. It was felt that the park should be family oriented and should encourage use by the surrounding residents and the community as a whole.

It was suggested that parking should be limited to one parking lot at the southeast corner of the site, adjacent to King George Highway. This location would encourage surveillance of the parking lot and reduce the likelihood of vandalism. Participants felt that pedestrian access to the park should be provided at a number of locations around the perimeter of the park. Horseback riding could be provided on a loop trail in the lowland section of the park.

Public Open House Meeting of March 14, 2000: The first public Open House was held on March 14, 2000. Letters of invitation were mailed to property owners in the Panorama Ridge area surrounding the park and advertisements were placed in the local newspapers. The background information presented at the Open House was the same as that presented at the interest group workshop. No preliminary plans were presented at the meeting, as the purpose of the Open House was to allow the residents to provide suggestions regarding the park prior to development of the park options. Attendees were given a comment form to complete in order to document their feedback and to provide suggestions.

The Open House was very well attended with over 110 people. A range of ideas and suggestions about possible uses for the park were compiled from the ninety-one comment sheets that were filled out. Of the 91 respondents, 81 felt that the park was suited for passive recreation; four respondents stated that the park should be for active recreation; and 4 respondents selected both active and passive recreation. Attendees were also asked which activities and uses should be included in the park. The three most preferred activities were walking (23 responses), horseback riding (17 responses) and bicycling (12 responses). The three most preferred uses to be included in the park were walking trails (21 responses), an 18-hole golf course (17 responses), and tennis courts (14 responses).

Public House Meeting of April 27, 2000: The comments gathered from the first Open House allowed staff and the consultant to generate the three draft park options that were presented at the second Public Open House held on April 27, 2000. At the Open House, panels of information were on display giving background information about the site, mapping of resource inventory material and conceptual drawings of the three draft options. The Open House portion was followed by a more formal presentation of the options and a questions and answer period. The three park development options presented to the public are briefly described below and are attached as Appendix II.

Option 1 – Trails & Agriculture

Option I emphasizes an expansion of the existing active agriculture on west portion of the site (approximately 30% of the park site area) with a mix of passive uses, trails and informal fields. The parcel south of Colebrook Road (southwest corner of the site) and a band of fields immediately north of this road would continue to be farmed, while the forested lands to the east would be used for pathways and habitat protection.

· ***Option 2 – Informal Recreation and Wildlife***

This option proposes a more limited area allocated to agriculture and trails, and a greater emphasis on wildlife habitat protection and enhancement. The parcel south of Colebrook Road would be sold for continued farm use, and the fields that are presently used for active farms would remain for agriculture.

· ***Option 3 – Golf Course***

The proposed golf course, including a clubhouse, parking and maintenance facilities would utilize approximately 40% of the land. Agricultural uses would occur in the western portion of the site and in the southwest parcel. Park uses would be more limited in scope with public park access at the 136A Street alignment off Colebrook Road. A gravel-surfaced parking lot would be situated north of the BC Rail track with a trailhead. A more limited trail system would be provided through portions of woodland and open meadow. In this option, a golf course developer would be sought for a public-private partnership.

A total of 86 people attended the Open House. Of those in attendance, 65 completed and returned comment forms. The majority of people in attendance, 88% (46 responses) indicated a preference for Option 1 or 2 or a combination of the two options. Just over half (54%) selected Option 2 – Wildlife Enhancement. A minority, 22% (14 responses) favoured Option 3 (Golf Course).

If people were unable to complete their comments forms at the Open House, they were asked to return them to the City of Surrey by May 5, 2000. During the week following the second Open House, 73 additional comment forms were faxed to the City with 13 favouring a mixture of Options 1 and 2 and 55 in favour of Option 3. It is not known if these people had attended the Open House and had already submitted a comment form. Of the 73 comments forms submitted to the City, the majority of residents (75%) selected Option 3 – Golf Course as their preferred option.

Because the results of the responses received from those who attended the Open House and those that came in after the meeting were diametrically opposed, a report was submitted to the Parks, Recreation and Culture Commission on May 24, 2000 to advise of these divergent results and to request approval in retaining a professional research firm to conduct a public opinion poll. Commission approved the undertaking of a public opinion poll to determine the preferences of the three options being considered for the development of the Panorama Lands Park.

The Mark Trend Public Opinion Survey: The public opinion survey was conducted during the month of June, 2000. Two groups of residents were randomly sampled for the study. The intent was to survey 200 residents from the Panorama Ridge area and 300 residents from the rest of the City (including the areas of Newton).

Residents were first randomly recruited by telephone for participation in the study. These residents were sent an information package that included a description of the Panorama Lands Park and the three park options. Respondents were asked to read the information and were then called back a week later to conduct a follow-up telephone interview. The package mailed to residents included maps and descriptions of the three park options based on information presented in the previous open house with residents. The key findings of the Mark Trend Survey were:

- Awareness of the plan to develop the Panorama Lands Park is quite high in the Panorama Lands Park region; however, there is limited familiarity with the plans throughout the rest of Surrey. In the park region, 79% of residents claim to have heard about the plan to develop the park. By comparison, just 20% of general Surrey residents had heard about the plan prior to the survey.
- Option 2 (Informal Recreation and Wildlife Enhancement) holds the most overall appeal for residents. Among Surrey residents, 86% considered it appealing (50% very appealing and 38% somewhat appealing). Option 2 also tended to be the most appealing option for Panorama Lands Park residents, although support was less strong. Nevertheless, 72% considered it appealing (35% very appealing and 37% somewhat appealing).

- Between both sets of groups, there was a general consensus that trails are the highest priority feature. Both nature trails (for pedestrians only) and multi-use trails (for pedestrians, equestrian, wheelchair and possibly cycling) tend to have the most overall appeal.
- Surrey residents in general are quite opposed to Option 3 (Golf Course and Informal Recreation), as 81% find it “unappealing”, including almost two-thirds (65%) who consider it “not at all appealing”.
- Attitudes are split among Panorama Lands Park region residents in regard to Option 3, with 44% considering this option appealing and 56% considering it unappealing. There is a polarization of opinion, with sentiment on both sides strong rather than moderate.
- Attitudes differ significantly between the two groups of residents when it comes to development of an 18-hole golf course. Among Surrey residents in general, 72% consider it a “major disadvantage”. In the Panorama Lands Park region, opinions are more divided: 43% consider a golf course an advantage, while 55% feel it is a disadvantage.
- Among Surrey residents in general, we find a clear preference for informal recreation and wildlife enhancement, as nearly six in ten (58%) favour Option 2. Option 1 is the next preferred option overall, while Surrey residents show relatively little interest in the golf course option.
- Options 2 and 3 are less clear-cut for those living in the park region. No consensus emerges among these residents, as both wildlife enhancement and the golf course option are considered about equally appealing. Option 1, (informal recreation and agriculture), trails slightly behind the other two options in terms of popularity.
- The prevailing sentiment among residents in the Panorama Park Lands region points to deep divisions among this group. Those who prefer the golf course concept (36%) are generally strong proponents of this option. Support also runs strong, however, among those who favour the wildlife option (41%) or the informal recreation and agriculture option (24%), with these residents demonstrating considerable opposition to a golf course (most find it “not at all appealing”).

After considering the results of the survey, the Commission, at their July 12 meeting, recommended that Option 2 be presented to residents as the preferred option for the development of the Panorama Lands Park.

Final Public Open House – September 14, 2000: A final Open House was held on September 14 to present Option 2 as the preferred option. A total of 53 people attended the Open House. A comment form was distributed that asked for any further comments in regard to the preferred Option 2 for the Panorama Lands Park. Of those in attendance, 23 completed and returned comment forms. Of the people who filled out the comment forms, 65% (15 responses) indicated their preference for Option 2.

Presentation to the Agricultural Advisory Committee – October 13, 2000: Staff presented the preferred option to the Agricultural Advisory Committee on October 13, 2000. They supported the preferred option and recommended to Council that agricultural options for the parklands to the north of Colebrook Road be investigated, in collaboration with the Agricultural Advisory Committee, and further, that park lands to the south of Colebrook Road be sold for agricultural use.

Presentation to the Parks, Recreation and Culture Commission: The draft Master Plan was presented to Commission on October 18, 2000. Commission recommended that they support, in principle, the preferred Option 2 for the Panorama Lands Master Plan and that a delegation to present the plan be forwarded to Council.

Final Draft Master Plan – Plan Summary

The preferred Panorama Park Master Plan is attached as Appendix I. The proposed Master Plan includes a substantial trail system, areas set aside for habitat protection and enhancement, and a limited area for continued agricultural uses. The primary access point is located on the southeast portion of the site, adjacent to King George Highway. A series of pedestrian-only access points along the northern perimeter of the park link the Panorama Ridge neighbourhood to the park. A series of loop trails offer several choices including a main multi-use pathway, which accommodates pedestrians, bicycle riders and horse riders. The multi-use trail links up with a future greenway

to the east. At least one loop will be accessible by wheel chairs. The trail layout takes users through a variety of habitats and environments including open fields, deciduous and coniferous stands of trees, seasonally wet areas, small streams and agricultural fields. An optional secondary access from Colebrook Road is indicated in the plan, dependent on whether the log house will be for use by community groups.

Washroom facilities and an informal field area for picnicking and family and group activities such as ball games are located adjacent to the parking lot. A small wetland located near the informal field amplifies the wildlife habitat. A view mound gives vistas toward the farmlands and the Serpentine River and the potential re-use of both the log house and the farmhouse. A gravel parking area for approximately 48 spaces adjacent to the King George Highway entrance is proposed. A portion of the site is designated for active agriculture and a portion for a wildlife area with minimal access for preservation purposes. The cost of the parking lot and main access trail is approximately \$250,000. Funding is not identified in the current Five Year Capital Budget. Some preliminary trail development could be carried out in the next two years.

CONCLUSION

The proposed plan reflects months of community input and is the preferred option for a majority of the residents. However, some residents would prefer to see an active use such as a golf course implemented in the plan. It is proposed at this time to pursue the preferred option, which does not include such a facility. However, should a proponent come forward with a strong proposal for a public-private partnership project on the site, the Parks, Recreation and Culture Commission may direct staff to work with the proponent and residents towards a consensus on a possible amendment to the plan.

Don Hunter, General Manager

Parks, Recreation and Culture

JC:dlg

Attachments.