

COUNCIL-IN-COMMITTEE

TO: **Mayor & Council** DATE: **February 24, 2003**

FROM: **General Manager, Planning & Development** FILE: **6520-20**
(South Westminster)

SUBJECT: **South Westminster Neighbourhood Concept Plan**

RECOMMENDATION

The Planning and Development Department recommends that Council:

1. Approve, in principle, the proposed Land Use Plan for the South Westminster area (Appendix 1);
2. Instruct staff to finalize the engineering servicing and financial strategies for South Westminster and conduct a Public Open House meeting to present the proposed final Land Use Plan and engineering servicing and financial strategy for review by the public, as part of the process of finalizing the South Westminster Neighbourhood Concept Plan ("NCP"); and
3. Instruct staff to review By-law Nos. 14527 and 14528 and bring forward recommendations regarding the further processing of these by-laws in conjunction with the report to Council on the final and complete South Westminster NCP.

INTENT

The intent of this report is:

1. To provide Council with an overall review of the planning process, to date, and the land uses proposed in the Neighbourhood Concept Plan for the South Westminster area;
2. To seek Council approval, in principle, of the proposed Land Use Plan for the NCP; and
3. To seek Council direction with respect to proceeding with a final Public Open House meeting and finalization of the engineering servicing and financial strategies for the subject plan.

BACKGROUND

South Westminster is situated in the north-westerly quadrant of Surrey. Located immediately south of one of the main entrances to Surrey (i.e., the Pattullo Bridge entrance), the area is emerging as a prominent gateway, due to transportation improvements in the area such as SkyTrain, the development of a park and ride SkyTrain Station at Scott Road and the opening of the South Fraser Perimeter Road. Given its prominent location, its good accessibility and its role as a gateway, there is a strong desire to improve its image from that of a salvage industrial area to an area that is oriented to higher quality types of development.

The current South Westminster Plans (1988 South Westminster Strategies and Opportunities Plan and 1993 Local Area Plan for Whalley) reflect an industrial area being occupied by predominantly water-related industries and auto-wrecking and salvage yard operations. The salvage industrial businesses have been regarded as interim uses since they do not provide large employment opportunities and are seen as a deterrent to new business developments in the area, due to the negative visual impacts and other nuisances that they create. For these reasons, Council has initiated the process of eventually eliminating these uses from the area. On July 31, 2000, Council adopted an amendment to the Salvage Industrial Zone (IS) to remove "salvage industry" as a permitted use. The existing salvage industry uses occupy approximately 50% of the prime industrial lands along Scott Road in South Westminster. Presently most of these lands are for sale. With the possible changes in land ownership and the amendment of the IS Zone, along with a general decline in water-based industry, there exists an opportunity to redevelop the lands for alternative uses that could potentially provide a greater employment base, an economic boost to the City and a general improvement to the image and aesthetic appeal of the area, thereby, creating a much more attractive gateway to the City. It was, therefore, timely to revisit the plan for the area and to create a new vision for South Westminster.

On February 15, 1999, Council approved a Terms of Reference (copy attached as Appendix 3) for and authorized the Planning and Development Department to proceed with the preparation of an NCP for the South Westminster area.

DISCUSSION

Study Area

The South Westminster area includes approximately 1,270 acres of lands designated Industrial in the Official Community Plan ("OCP") and is situated on a basin that is overlain by Fraser River alluvial and flood plain deposits. The area is generally flat with surface elevations varying between 1.5 metres (5 feet) and 3.0 metres (10 feet). The study area is bordered by the King George Highway to the north, the Fraser River to the northwest and the toe of the slope of the Whalley hillside to the south and southeast. It includes the Fraser Surrey Docks, a multi-berth port facility that is currently the largest industry and the most active use in the area.

Objectives

The objectives of the NCP were to develop a long-term vision that will serve:

1. To provide a framework for high quality development so as to promote and attract business development to the South Westminster area;
2. To achieve an aesthetically pleasing environment and an ambience that would encourage investment in South Westminster;
3. To capitalize on the City's waterfront assets for open space and recreation opportunities;
4. To improve the entrance image and provide an attractive gateway into Surrey; and
5. To guide short-term and long-term land use decisions that will meet the needs of the development industry, the Fraser River Port Authority and the Surrey community-at-large.

NCP Planning Process

The planning process commenced with the formation of a Business Advisory Committee ("BAC"), consisting of property owners and business owners from the South Westminster area and the appointment of Engineering and Land Economic Consultants. The BAC has provided input to staff on the proposed land uses and other issues throughout the plan preparation process. Members of the BAC also served as liaisons with other business and property owners in the South Westminster area.

By early 2000, the NCP process resulted in the creation of three optional Land Use Plans, which were presented to the BAC and the public at a Public Open House in May 2000. One of the three land use options was identified through this process as the Preferred Land Use Option. This Option was then further refined and fine-tuned to include details such as parks and open space and the road network. The servicing component of the study was also expanded to include phasing, costs and a servicing strategy. The specific land uses and open space details are presented as the proposed Land Use Plan for South Westminster that is attached to this report as Appendix 1.

The NCP planning process included a staff workshop on waterfront development strategies that was led by Dr. David Gordon from Queen's University, in February 2002. The workshop and presentation by Dr. Gordon focused on the latest practices and concepts in waterfront development, the importance of reclaiming the waterfront areas as a public realm and the redevelopment opportunities around major transportation nodes, such as the Scott Road SkyTrain Station area as a possible transit-oriented urban village.

Throughout the planning process, the Fraser River Port Authority raised concerns over the potential loss of waterfront industrial lands to alternative uses and the intended intensification of public recreation use along the waterfront area, between Brownsville Bar Park and Tannery Park. To address this concern and to obtain the Port Authority's endorsement of the proposed Land Use Plan, the waterfront strip between the two City parks (Brownsville Bar Park and Tannery Park) has been designated "Area Under Study" with a future waterfront pedestrian walk along the River. The Port Authority is agreeable to this approach and, subject to establishing more accurately alignment and design details, is in general agreement with a pedestrian walk between the two parks. This will enable the City to complete a Land Use Plan for South Westminster and to continue working with the Port Authority towards resolving the waterfront design in the near future.

Overview of the Proposed Land Use Plan

The South Westminster Land Use Plan envisions a variety of land uses including commercial, industrial, residential and recreational uses. The Plan provides five very distinct districts that are defined by existing major roads and railways. These five districts can be characterized by the different types of land uses they will support and can be identified as follows: the Fraser River Waterfront; the Transit-Oriented Urban Village; Yale Street Commercial; Scott Road Commercial; and the Port Industrial Area (Appendix 2).

1. Fraser River Waterfront

Location

The Fraser River Waterfront district is located in the north-westerly part of South Westminster, bounded by Pattullo Bridge/King George Highway to the north, the Burlington Northern Railway/South Fraser Perimeter Road to the southeast, the Fraser Surrey Docks to the southwest and the Fraser River to the northwest. The area is located directly across the Fraser River from the City of New Westminster.

Current Land Use

The area was a former settlement called Brownsville that existed in the early 1900s. Previous land use plans have designated this area for water-related industry. Presently, there is only one water-related industry, a lumber re-loading operation, in the area. The other existing land uses include industrial storage facilities, numerous small auto-salvage operations, warehousing, a trailer park and marine pub and City parkland.

In recent years, the City has acquired two waterfront parks along the river. One is located adjacent to the Pattullo Bridge (Brownsville Bar Park) and is developed as a family-oriented recreation area for fishing and picnicking and will include, in the future, an interpretative centre with information signage celebrating the significant role of the Fraser River in Surrey's past. The other park site (Tannery Park) is a recent acquisition that is located to the southwest, further down the River adjacent to the Fraser Surrey Docks. Tannery Park will be developed as a public amenity, featuring information signage to celebrate the Fraser River as a living/working river. The City's intention is to eventually link the two City parks with a public boardwalk that will be constructed along the Fraser River shoreline.

Objectives

The City considers the Fraser River waterfront as a high profile area that is emerging as a prominent gateway to Surrey. The public can easily see the area either from the SkyTrain, which travels above-grade through the area, or from the Pattullo Bridge/King George Highway. The City has a strong desire to improve its current waterfront image from that of an undeveloped or under-utilized industrial area to more attractive waterfront uses that can be enjoyed by the general public. Presently, the waterfront is comprised of vacant and semi-abandoned industrial lands. It is isolated from the City and cut off by railways. The proposed transformation of the waterfront area, to a place for recreation and leisure, will attract other compatible waterfront development and land uses, such as commercial, residential and/or marinas.

Proposed Plan

The Plan calls for a land use change along the waterfront from work-oriented to recreation-oriented. A very important element would be an active, uninterrupted pedestrian pathway along the River, including lookouts just above the water level and running the entire length of the River between the two City park sites. This pathway will continue at the north end from Brownsville Bar Park to link with the City's existing greenway system (Surrey Parkway) along Old Yale Road, up Peterson Hill and eventually arrive at the City Centre. On the south side, the pathway will be extended from Tannery Park southward along the Manson Canal and connect with the rest of the City along 104 Avenue.

To improve the visual appearance of this gateway to Surrey, the South Westminster Plan envisions the development of high quality business parks and/or multiple family residential uses around the Pattullo bridgehead area and along the King George Highway corridor. The existing trailer park site, located adjacent to the waterfront at Old Yale Road, could potentially be redeveloped to a higher density multiple residential use.

Issues

The proposed land uses, envisioned for the Fraser River waterfront area, present potential conflicts with the current Port activities. Since the Port Authority controls the majority of the waterfront area, the Port Authority's endorsement of the proposed Land Use Plan is important in the development of this area. The Fraser River Port Authority has clearly indicated its desire for all of the land in the vicinity of the Port to be designated for industrial activities only. Given the concerns raised by the Port Authority on the future land use of this area, the waterfront strip between the two City parks has been designated a Special Study Area to indicate that further review of this area will be required to determine the ultimate land uses that would be acceptable to both the Port Authority and the City. This matter will be identified as part of the Plan's implementation work that needs to be addressed.

2. Yale Street Commercial

Location

The Yale Street Commercial district is the area along Old Yale Road from Scott Road to Brownsville Bar Park/the Fraser River waterfront.

Objectives

Old Yale Road is a historic route dating back to the early 1900s when Surrey residents used it as access to the banks of the Fraser River for recreation or to the passenger ferry to New Westminster. The South Westminster Plan recognizes the importance of Old Yale Road as an historic link to the River and, once again, reinforces this role of providing a key and significant link to the Fraser River waterfront area.

Proposed Plan

Presently, public access to the Fraser River is constrained by the plethora existing railways and highways/streets traversing the area. In addition, the route to the waterfront along Old Yale Road is physically unattractive due to the existing industrial uses. To achieve an aesthetically pleasing and a continuous active pedestrian-oriented link to the River, the South Westminster Plan envisions the development of retail and office uses mixed with residential uses on the upper floors for the redevelopment of properties fronting Old Yale Road. Lined with small-scale pedestrian-oriented commercial uses such as shops, sidewalk cafes and restaurants along the street level on both sides of Old Yale Road, the street is envisioned to be open, inviting and have a pedestrian-friendly environment. The South Westminster Plan calls for the surrounding areas around Old Yale Road to be developed for high quality business parks mixed with multiple residential uses.

3. Transit-Oriented Urban Village

Location

The Transit-Oriented Urban Village district is defined as the area within a radius of approximately 500 metres of the Scott Road SkyTrain Station, bounded by the King George Highway to the north, the B. C. Hydro Railway to the southwest and the toe of the slope to the southeast.

Current Land Use

The predominant current land use in this area is a park and ride facility associated with the Scott Road SkyTrain Station which opened in 1990. The station has 2,400 park and ride stalls and a bus exchange. Since the opening of the SkyTrain station, the surrounding lands have been developed for highway commercial type uses. These include a Home Depot store, fast food outlets, indoor recreational uses, industrial offices and some public-oriented institutional uses such as technical and trade schools. Other land uses include small auto-salvage operations, used auto dealerships and a lumberyard. It is anticipated that these newer highway-oriented commercial uses will remain while the older, auto-related uses and lumber industries will redevelop to higher

density commercial and residential uses incorporating good quality public spaces and streetscapes.

Objective

Given the public-oriented and transportation focus associated with SkyTrain, the area is appropriate for a transit-oriented development that takes advantage of its regional accessibility and proximity to the riverfront and river views. The intent is to develop this area as an active residential community. Transit-Oriented Development ("TOD") is typically a compact mixed-use community centred at a transit station to encourage people to live near transit services and to decrease their dependence on cars. Key characteristics of a TOD are:

- Mixed-use development;
- Compactness;
- Centred at a mass transit station and is well served by transit within a walking distance of 500 to 800 metres;
- Developments and facilities that encourage the use of transit;
- Pedestrian and cycle friendly environment;
- Mix of residential, commercial and employment opportunities designed primarily for pedestrians and the use of bicycles and public transportation, without entirely excluding the use of automobiles.

Proposed Plan

The South Westminster Plan calls for commercial and residential development intensification. The development of the area is to be a high-density urban scale neighbourhood to include strong residential and entertainment components. The SkyTrain's existing park and ride facility, owned by Translink, could be redeveloped as an intensive urban node that combines shops and services, entertainment and residential uses. The surface park and ride facility could be replaced by parking structures. An increase in numbers of people living and working near the SkyTrain Village will ultimately be key to the success of this area as a TOD project. This is generally consistent with the OCP policies and the Liveable Region Strategic Plan.

The City owns approximately 29 acres of land (Trouton Pit) located in the southeast part of this area at 110 Avenue and 128 Street. The City-owned land and the area south of 110 Avenue could be developed with a variety of multiple family housing types at a density between 15 and 45 units per acre. Due to the development of residential uses in the area, a school and park site, if required by the School District, has been designated at the south part of the area adjacent to the railway. For safety reasons, the new school and park should incorporate a high fence and buffer and the school building and playfield should be oriented away from the railway.

4. Scott Road Commercial Area

Location

The Scott Road Commercial area is the area along Scott Road from 104 Avenue/Tannery Road to Old Yale Road and it includes the surrounding lands to the northwest, up to the South Fraser Perimeter Road and the lands to

the southeast up to the toe of the residential hillside.

Objectives

Since the opening of the Scott Road SkyTrain Station in 1990, Scott Road has become a major transportation corridor serving the commuter traffic of Surrey and North Delta residents. Consequently, the lands in the vicinity of Scott Road are attracting development interest due to their accessibility and relatively high visibility. Being auto-oriented, the development of large format (i.e., big box) retail outlets and fast-food drive-through outlets are appropriate along this stretch of highway. The intention is to develop a well-planned low density, but attractive and viable land use, over the next 20 to 30 years, which could then be further re developed and replaced by higher density uses over the longer term should the market conditions change.

Proposed Plan

The South Westminster Plan envisions the development of highway commercial uses along the Scott Road corridor from 104 Avenue/Tannery Road to Old Yale Road. The highway commercial outlets could be complemented by the development of business parks along the rear of the commercial corridor located adjacent to the South Fraser Perimeter Road and towards the east to the toe of the southeast slope of the residential hillside. The development of high quality business parks, adjacent to the residential single-family homes on the hillside, would provide a suitable transition to the residential areas on the hillside with respect to views, noise and lighting.

5. Port Industrial Area

Location

The Port Industrial area is defined as the area generally south of Manson Canal/104 Avenue to the toe of slope of the residential hillside and it includes the Fraser Surrey Docks.

Current Land Use

A major land use component of South Westminster is the existing Fraser Surrey Docks, which is a 54-hectare (133-acre) multi-berth facility located on the southern tip of the South Westminster industrial area. The Fraser Surrey Docks is regarded as a general-purpose marine terminal. It is equipped with six deep-sea berths to handle ships carrying containers, bulk and general roll-on/roll-off cargo. Although the loading facilities are at the southwest end of the site, Fraser Surrey Docks have assembled much of the adjacent land to the northeast and are currently leasing this land to a number of tenants involved in port-related industries and businesses. These uses include distribution centres, trucking operations, manufacturing and marine services. Over the years the Docks' three main areas of business, forest products, steel and containers, have steadily increased in volume. With the anticipated continued increase in commodity volumes and business activities, the Port Authority will require that additional lands be set aside for port related uses to support their growing business activity.

Proposed Plan

To ensure and protect the availability of land in support of the Docks' activities, the South Westminster Plan has designated the Port Industrial area for port-related industrial services and uses and/or for general light impact industrial uses. This will include industries that need to be in close proximity to the Fraser Surrey Docks. There are also currently a number of existing light impact industrial uses in the area and the Plan allows for the continuation of these types of industries in this area, including light manufacturing and warehousing.

NEXT STEPS

Servicing and Financial Strategy

An Engineering Consultant has been retained by the City to prepare a comprehensive servicing and financial plan as a means for managing the provision of services for and the development of the South Westminster area. The development of a servicing plan, in support of the proposed Land Use Plan, is necessary if the City is to implement a new and different vision for South Westminster. This engineering work will include establishing the costs associated with providing the required infrastructure, as well as a financial strategy and possible phasing of development based on the servicing constraints in the area. The details of this engineering study will be presented to Council in a separate report from the Engineering Department.

Council-Initiated Rezoning

In accordance with the recommendation of the Business Development Committee, amendments to the Zoning By-law were considered by Council in relation to the Salvage Industry Zone (IS). If adopted, these amendments would result in the Salvage Industrial Zone (IS) being renamed the Selected Business Zone (ISB) and would include a new set of regulations for this zone. These new provisions would prohibit the storage of vehicles, containers and materials, automobile-related services and recycling depots as a principal use, regulate the amount of outdoor storage in the rear and side yards and limit the amount of truck parking area within each site. Council had initiated the process of rezoning the large lots in the area bounded by King George Highway, Grace Road, River Road, South Fraser Perimeter Road and Scott Road that are currently zoned IS and IL to the new ISB Zone.

Although the associated Zoning Amendment By-law Nos. 14527 and 14528 were introduced and granted First and Second Readings on October 1, 2001, Council tabled the By-laws after the related Public Hearing on November 19, 2001, pending the completion of the South Westminster NCP, due to public concerns about the proposed rezoning raised during the Public Hearing process.

As part of the process of finalizing the South Westminster NCP, staff will review these Zoning Amendment By-laws to ensure that the subject by-laws and the area proposed for the new ISB Zone are consistent with the NCP land use vision. The final report to Council regarding the final NCP for South Westminster will include discussion and recommendations on these matters for Council's consideration.

Final Open House

If Council chooses to approve, in principle, the South Westminster Land Use Plan as presented in this report and the completion of the Engineering servicing and financial strategy plan, the Land Use Plan, along with the servicing component of the Plan, will be presented to the general public at a final Public Open House meeting in the next few weeks. Following this meeting, the NCP will be finalized including final servicing strategies and will be submitted for Council's consideration in the late spring of 2003.

CONCLUSION

The proposed South Westminster Plan responds to City objectives with a new vision that will transform an industrial waterfront into parks and public spaces and transform an existing unattractive and under utilized industrial area into new industrial neighbourhoods and business districts and special residential communities. The Plan will provide for an aesthetically pleasing environment that will encourage investment in South Westminster. Although the Plan is focussed on guiding the long-term development of the area, it will also serve to guide current land use decisions in improving the area's image and creating an attractive gateway into Surrey via the Pattullo bridge and the SkyTrain. The Plan will initiate the process of revitalizing the City's waterfront assets by encouraging open space and recreation opportunities. The Plan has been developed in consultation with the property owners and stakeholders of the South Westminster area and the area's industrial community supports it.

It is recommended that Council approve the South Westminster Land Use Plan, in principle, authorize staff to proceed with a final Public Open House meeting to present the Land Use Plan and the related engineering servicing and financial strategy to the public and then finalize and forward, for Council's consideration, the final and complete South Westminster NCP. It is further recommended that Council authorize staff to bring forward, as part of the final South Westminster NCP report, recommendations related to the further processing of By-law Nos. 14527 and 14528 that deal with the proposed ISB Special Business Zone.

Murray Dinwoodie
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cc General Manager, Engineering

Attachments:

- Appendix 1 Proposed South Westminster Plan
- Appendix 2 Proposed South Westminster District
- Appendix 3 Terms Of Reference

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