

DOUGLAS PARK COMMUNITY CENTRE

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Mayor and Members of Council

City of Vancouver

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March 10, 2000

Re: Open Space & Community Facility Opportunities Arising from the Proposed Vancouver Hospital Rezoning

Mayor and Members of Council:

This February 16th we were fortunate to have Mr. Tom Phipps, City Planner, present six VGH open space options to our Community Association Board. Our Community Centre is located in the district of South Cambie, eight blocks south of Vancouver Hospital, and is within walking distance of Vancouver Hospital, Broadway and Fairview Slopes.

Douglas Park Community Centre, in partnership with the Vancouver Park Board, delivers mainly two services:

- 1) outdoor recreational facilities and programmes. For example, our west field was recently upgraded and is intensely booked for soccer, while both the east and west fields have a total of four baseball diamonds and a cricket pitch.
- 2) community services and indoor recreational programmes. For example, we offer a wide range of child care services, and variety of other programmes such as sports, arts, seniors programmes, a programme for people with physical disabilities, etc.

We pride ourselves on being able to deliver the above services; however, it is becoming more difficult. Even though we upgraded our Community Centre six years ago, we now operate at our full programming capacity with no room for expansion. The increasing pressures upon our community centre programmes and outdoor areas are constant as a result of South Cambie's growth.

The City's evolving resolution to the Vancouver Hospital precinct is of major concern to us. Our response focuses on opportunities for future Vancouver Hospital zoning to address the need for additional:

- 1) outdoor open space; and
- 2) indoor recreational space for community services

As we understand, the City has a mandate to create "complete communities" as part of the overall "Liveable Regions Strategy". Therefore, we think it is in the City's best interest, as well as the residents -- both current and future -- of the neighbourhood surrounding Vancouver Hospital to plan for parks and services that will produce as complete a community as possible.

As we understand it from Mr. Phipps presentation:

- in the mid-1980's Vancouver General Hospital was rezoned to allow some 1,000,000 sq. ft. of additional floor area. This basically allows construction of the 'tower' on the VGH site;
- the 1980's zoning placed a restriction on title for 5.2 acres of consolidated open space as a public benefit for the area, which compensated for this significant increase in density on the VGH grounds;
- a demolition schedule was put in place to clear space on the VGH grounds, as new development occurred. Demolition was to be triggered by various stages of completion of the tower;
- Vancouver Hospital **is now seeking an additional 700,000 sq.ft.** of speculative medical research and medical office space. This additional density request, or inquiry, now takes place even before the past demolition schedule has been complied with;
- the Planning Department has prepared these six open space options, which maintains the total area of 5.2 acres of open space (with one option having a 'little' more open space);
- The Heather Pavilion was indicated for demolition; however, it remains in all options, despite the fact there appears to be no resources to renovate or maintain it; and,
- the 5.2 acres of open space remains on title for the moment.

Douglas Park Community Association Concerns:

All options to date have two 'givens', which we do not subscribe to:

- 1) Vancouver Hospital would be granted another 700,000 sq.ft. of speculative medical space (i.e. space not funded by guaranteed government funding, but private market space)
- 2) the 5.2 acres of open space is an open space 'ceiling' -- not to be increased.

It is not credible to increase the density in this precinct, without increasing the amount of guaranteed open space. If 5.2 acres of open space was provided for 1,000,000 sq.ft of development then a minimum of 7.5 acres of publicly accessible open space should be provided with the proposed addition of 700,000 sq ft. We are not recommending only one consolidated open space of 7.5 acres but major consolidated open space, or major open areas -- for example, a combination of 5.0 + 2.5 acres; or 4.5 + 3.0 acres. The Park Board should be consulted as to minimum sizes and dimensions of major open space.

Need for More Open Space in the Precinct

Fairview Slopes, Fairview Heights and Broadway are all severely deficient in open space. Now is the time -- with a new CD-1 rezoning ammendment -- to gain additional open space. When will the next opportunity arise to gain more open space in this critical area. Any new open space commitment should also be placed against title, to insure that future rezonings will not remove them.

As this is a new CD-1 rezoning exercise, there is no need to religiously adhere to a minimum of 700,000 sqft of new space. If the open space is increased, a massing analysis must be carried out to determine the resulting buildings. If the densities prove to be too great they should be cut back -- this is speculative medical and office space. Why couldn't some of the proposed new office uses move to Broadway, where zoning and heights can accommodate large development?

Need for More Recreational Activities

The open space options in South Cambie are limited, so too are the opportunities to find or create new places for community services. Assuming the Heather Pavilion will remain, there is a need in this new CD-1 rezoning to insure additional community service uses are accommodated on Vancouver Hospital grounds. New CD-1 rezoning presents an excellent opportunity to identify sites and buildings for new community services. A plan for these facilities could be phased in over time.

Need for Unfragmented Large Scale Open Space

The original goal to achieve major consolidated open space remains valid. We oppose options which fragment the open space for the benefit of individual buildings or multiple pedestrian routes. Major open space opportunities for recreational facilities south of 12th Avenue, such as soccer fields, baseball diamonds and tracks should not be lost. Additional open space of a slightly smaller scale could also permit public open spaces, with a passive nature, within the hospital grounds. Contiguous active and passive recreational open space could serve both public and institutional needs within the Vancouver Hospital grounds. Again the Park Board must be included in the functional use of these space.

Opportunity to Build a Complete Community

In conclusion, the new rezoning exercise presents opportunities for both Vancouver Hospital and the City. Vancouver Hospital wants more density, again. In return, this large hospital precinct's location, immediately beside newly identified residential areas and the Broadway corridor, presents rare opportunities for the City to build a complete community. What better strategic locations are available for the City to achieve **more open space and more community facilities** -- other than in the Vancouver Hospital grounds. Imagine the new densities and population on Broadway once the new mass transit service is in place.

Open space can be committed immediately on title, with areas and location specified. Community facilities may be achieved through long term solution, with buildings and areas to be specified as the funds arise. What we can say,

from our experience at Douglas Park Community Centre, is that both open space and community facilities are high priorities in this area; and, are subject to exponentially growing demands. The Vancouver Hospital rezoning presents an opportunity for the city to address some of the needs for open space and community facilities in South Cambie, Broadway, and Fairview Slopes.

Sincerely,

Jean Scribner
President

cc: Commissioner Christopher Richardson, Vancouver Park Board
cc: Ms. Susan Mundick, General Manager, Vancouver Park Board
cc: Planning Department, Mr. Tom Phipps
cc: Mr. Mark Vullimay, Manager of Research and Planning, Vancouver Park Board
cc: Ms. Liane McKenna, Director, Queen Elizabeth District, Vancouver Park Board