

GRANDVIEW HEIGHTS – NCP #2 (& NCP #1) HERITAGE ASSESSMENT

FINAL REPORT

SUBMITTED TO THE CITY OF SURREY

JUNE 2006

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1. CONTEXT

Commonwealth Historic Resource Management Limited was retained by the City of Surrey's Planning and Development Department in January 2006 to produce a heritage study for Grandview Heights, NCP Area #2 and NCP Area #1 (the latter now known as Morgan Heights). This study, as well as other background studies in planning, engineering, and the environment will all contribute to the preparation of specific Neighbourhood Concept Plans. Commonwealth's focus was to identify any heritage resources for NCP #2 (and by extension NCP #1, although most development in the Morgan Heights area has already been approved) in order to provide recommendations on the 'preservation, commemoration, and integration of any identified heritage features into development in these areas.'

In our scope of work we were asked to further:

- Research the history of the area
- Identify any historic name places and/or boundaries
- Identify any sites of historic/heritage significance other than ones identified on the Heritage register or the Grandview Heights Heritage Study. These may include buildings, corridors, roads, trees, natural features and cultural landscapes which define the heritage character of the area
- Provide details for any new sites heritage value and character defining elements
- Explore ways to preserve/commemorate the historic/heritage opportunities and incorporate them into the Neighbourhood Concept Plans

Commonwealth carried out the above assessments through the collection of relevant information – secondary histories of Surrey, primary sources such as land surveys, land registers, historical maps and aerial photography – as well as carrying out field visits, in which we photographed and mapped the area. Commonwealth also conducted a workshop session with members of the Grandview Heights Citizen Advisory Committee, Surrey's Heritage Advisory Committee and relevant City of Surrey Planning, Parks and Heritage representatives; this took place on April 6th 2006.

Commonwealth has liaised with City staff as required in order to explore ways to incorporate our findings and recommendations into the development of the NCP for Area #2 and the ongoing implementation of the NCP for Area #1. A draft of our findings was presented at the Citizen's Advisory Committee meeting on April 20th 2006. This final report reflects comments from participants at that meeting and also from staff. Illustrations are found at the end of the report. The headers for the illustrations correspond to those for the text.

¹ Donald Luxton and Associates, *Grandview Heights Heritage Study*, prepared for the City of Surrey, May 2005.

2. HISTORY AND OBSERVATIONS

Starting with a historical overview of the Grandview Heights area and then narrowing our focus to the designated areas, Commonwealth examined land use patterns, settlement, industry, agriculture, and other changes that have marked Grandview Heights over the years. While not revealing specific historic resources that are *exceptional*, Commonwealth found many *representative* examples of landscapes, subdivisions, houses, and other built and natural features that are specific to the heritage of Grandview Heights. The cultural landscape that is NCP #2 and NCP #1 has organically evolved by virtue of the many ways the land has been used.

The Land

Surrey, like most of the Lower Mainland, was largely covered in old-growth forest. Part of the rainforest ecosystem of the Pacific West Coast, the land in this area supported the Aboriginal people's lifestyle, including encampments close to riverbank areas and other areas of use. A small Halkomelem-speaking group called the Snokomish populated our study area. Their territory included the shores of Boundary Bay, from Point Roberts to the Serpentine, Nicomekl and Campbell Rivers. Shortly before 1850 the Snokomish were almost entirely wiped out by a smallpox epidemic. The survivors joined the Semiahmoo, and the Semaihmoo became the heirs to the Snokomish territory.²

Forestry dominated the region in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The Royal City Planing Mills established an operation east of Elgin and south of Cloverdale, near the Nicomekl River, to log the areas south of Kensington Prairie (i.e the Grandview Heights area). In 1886, a logging railway was built east through Grandview Heights and at the west of this line, logs were dumped into a ditch and floated into the Nicomekl River.³

The Surveys

Land division in Surrey (and in most of the Canadian West) was based on the homestead survey system. The basis of this was the township: a block six miles by six miles, containing 36 sections. Each section was one mile by one mile and contained 640 acres. Each section in turn was divided into quarter sections of 160 acres. The abstract lines dividing the sections became the grid pattern for Surrey's road system.

² 'Aboriginal Peoples, Semiahmoo of the Straits Salish,' in J.A. Brown, Surrey's History. Accessed April 5th 2006. http://members.shaw.ca/j.a.brown/Semi.html. Based on J.A. Brown's *The Historical Geography of South Surrey*, British Columbia, UBC Masters Thesis, 1971.

³ *Grandview Heights Heritage Study*, p. 5.

⁴ 'Surrey's road naming, numbering and address location,' in J.A. Brown, Surrey's History. Accessed April 5th 2006. http://members.shaw.ca/j.a.brown/Semi.html; Crown Lands: A History of Survey Systems, Crown Land Registry Services, Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks, 4th reprint, 1997.

1859 - The Coast Meridian

The Coast Meridian was defined by the meridian of longitude closest to the Pacific coast at the 49th parallel, i.e. where the international boundary meets the water. This survey line became a real road in 1880, with the awarding of a contract for construction. The southern portion was completed in 1886. This was Coast Meridian Road, which defines the eastern boundary of the study area. Joseph Trutch (subsequently the Premier of British Columbia) is credited with first surveying the area that would come to be known as Surrey – beginning at the Coast Meridian Road.

1873-74

NCP #2 falls within Section 13 of Township 1 West of the Coast Meridian, a part of the Fifth System of Survey to be done in the province of British Columbia, and carried out by surveyor William Ralph in 1873-74. This system was used by the Province of British Columbia to survey certain lands within the railway belt, prior to the transfer of the belt to the Crown Dominion. The townships were numbered and described as lying east or west of the Coast Meridian.⁵

The divisions between sections became today's principal roads, located one mile apart. First they had names and later they were numbered: Sunnyside Road became 24th Avenue, North Bluff Road became 16th Avenue, Stayte Road became 160th Street, and so on. The divisions between quarter sections became secondary roads, such as 20th Avenue, which runs through the middle of NCP #2.

1915

James Gibbons made a detailed survey of Township 1 in 1915. His Surveyor's Books tell us, in sketches and words, a great deal about the state of the land and settlement at that time. His Surveyor's Book describes what he saw. For example: 'The higher lands or ridge was originally very heavily timbered with cedar and fir 3 to 8 feet in diameter and formed one of the early day logging sections, being of easy grade and close to tide waters'⁶. A 'slash and burn' process, still in evidence on some properties today, had started clearing the land for farming. A few scattered houses with orchards and outbuildings start to show up in these 1915 records, as well as a school building, close to, but outside of our study region in Section 19, bordering on Section 24.

Pre-emptions

The quarter-section parcels were available for settlers to pre-empt, where the land could be held as a homestead as long as it was improved. Several criteria had to be meet with regard to settling one's 'plot' before being granted ownership. William Figg was the first in Section 13 (NCP #2), pre-empting the southeast quarter section in May 1892. Benjamin Welsher took the southwest quarter section in December 1892, Presbyterian minister John Arthur Stayt acquired the NW quarter section in March 1894, and George Figg (William's brother) took

⁶ B.C. Surveys Book 2. Gibbon D.L.S. 1915. pp. 1-14.

⁵ Descriptions of Land, Surveyor General Branch, Ministry of Lands and Parks, 1994, p. 10.

the northeast quarter section in November 1900. Many pre-emptions were not recorded until later, in the 1920s. This reflects the easier access to the area by virtue of the completion of the Pacific Coast Highway (today's 176th Street).

Other than homesteading plots, many other pre-emptions were Soldiers' Grants, given to returning soldiers after the First World War.

Trails and Corridors

Semiahmoo Trail

In 1872-73 the Semiahmoo Wagon Road (also called the Semiahmoo Trail) was built from Brownsville (South Westminster), south of the Fraser River, opposite New Westminster, to the International Boundary. This provided the first arterial road across Surrey. In today's South Surrey it followed a northwest-southeast alignment – a natural travel route that was the most convenient route between two places, rather than an abstract line that respected the compass points. In 1873 a mail stage began operating along the Semiahmoo Trail between New Westminster and Semiahmoo Spit. This road still exists in part in North Surrey and as a heritage trail in South Surrey.⁷

King George Highway

The shortest distance between Mud Bay and the border, King George Highway largely paralleled the route of the Semaihmoo Trail. It officially opened in 1940 with a ceremony at Peace Arch Park.

BC Hydro Corridor

The power transmission lines were the next to follow this angular route. This corridor forms the western boundary of NCP #2.

Highway 99

Highway 99, the freeway from Vancouver to the border, was built in 1962 as the Deas Island Freeway, crossing the Fraser River through the George Massey Tunnel at Deas Island. It too follows the same general alignment in South Surrey.

Land Use

Logging

Surrey's timber was said to be some of the biggest and best in the Lower Mainland. Logging began in the 1880s with oxen and horses, moving logs by floating them down the many river systems in Surrey, such as the Nicomekl and the Serpentine. Steam donkeys and logging railways later mechanized the process. The Royal City Planing Mills – which owned some of the land in Grandview Heights – Brunette Mills, and later the Campbell River Timber Company all operated in the area, the last as late as 1927.

⁷ 'Early Provincial Roads' in Brown, J. A. Surrey's History. Accessed April 5th 2006. http://members.shaw.ca/j.a.brown/Semi.html

Agriculture

As the timber was depleted and the area cleared for settlement, Grandview Heights began its agricultural era. This began in NCP #2 with the pre-emptions in the 1890s, described above. Most of the land in this area was classified as 'second-class,' made up of sandy loom soil.⁸ 'Favourable to the production of fruits and vegetables,' the land in this area was recommended for 'small holdings' only and not for larger farm plots. Farming in this part of Surrey ranged from small orchards with vegetable holdings and livestock, such as sheep, to chicken-farming and mink-farming.

Residential

The Pacific Coast Highway or Pacific Highway, opened South Surrey up to small-agricultural and non-agricultural residential settlement in the 1920s. Quarter sections were subdivided into holdings of only a few acres. Some of these small farms are still in evidence today. With this change, the study area went from being *rural* to *semi-rural*.

Over time, these properties were further subdivided into residential lots, sometimes by individuals, but often by developers who would create a subdivision of many lots and build speculative homes on them. This change made the study area *suburban*. Most of the land in NCP #2 would best be described as suburban.

The next transformation is turning this *suburban* area into an *urban* one. This is clearly visible in NCP #1 (Morgan Heights), where one sees applications for subdivisions with city-sized lots and multiple housing. This will occur in NCP #2 within the next few years.

Recreational

A number of recreational uses were developed as well. The most visible in NCP #2 is the Sunnyside Saddle Club. Appropriately, this will become a neighbourhood park, and therefore will continue in recreational use.

Architecture

Some houses from the first half of the 20th century remain, but most were built between the immediate post-war years to the present. They are representative of a wide variety of house-types of their time. They include small, one-storey, houses from the 1950s, 'Vancouver specials' from the 1970s, and larger Tudor Revival homes from the 1970s until recently. Some older farm buildings remain as well, both generic structures, such as cow barns and sheds, and more locally representative structures, such as mink sheds. While none with special heritage value were found, the older survivors are very illustrative of the range of vernacular housing over the last half-century and more.

⁸ B.C. Surveys Book 2. Gibbon D.L.S., 1915, pp. 1-14 and p. 2 of summary.

⁹ B.C. Surveys Book 3. p. 6 of summary.

People and Places

Commonwealth's initial research has yielded information on the some individuals in the study area. A more thorough search would provide more detailed information regarding the individuals who settled this particular area.

George and William Figg, the sons of early settler Joseph Figg, pre-empted quarter sections in Section 13, as mentioned above. One is recorded as having 'built a jog cabin and proceeded to clear the land.' Joseph met an abrupt death at the hands of one of the many trees that he helped clear.

A good portion of NCP #1 was pre-empted by a John Oliver. This is probably *not* the 'Honest John Oliver' who served as time premier of BC, bur rather one of his sons, also named John.

Outside the study area, close to the southern border of NCP #1, we have record of two preemptions by Japanese individuals – Tadajiro Maye and Yoshizo Takenchi. Japanese-Canadians formed an active part of Surrey's farming and fishing communities prior to the Second World War.¹¹

A Heritage Cultural Landscape

Over the past century and a quarter, the lands within the study area progressed from Rural to Semi-Rural to Suburban – and now will be moving into their Urban future.

What we see is a **cultural landscape** that has organically evolved by virtue of the different ways the land has been used. The character-defining elements of this cultural landscape include:

- The property lines having followed the boundaries of the original sections and quarter sections marked out by the early surveys and subdivided from there over time
- Unimpeded views along the roadways, with significant views from its highest points
- Coniferous (and some deciduous) plantings demarcating property lines and driveways into the properties
- Mature second growth evidenced throughout the area
- Fencing and posts, including farm, residential, and equestrian fencing
- Mailboxes
- Ditches between the asphalt roadways and the start of property lines
- Residences set back a distance from the roads
- A variety of streetscapes, characterized by a particular pattern of roadway, verges, roadside plantings, ornamental plantings on the residential properties, and house set-backs

¹⁰ Richard V. Whiteside, *Surrey Pioneers*, Evergreen Press Ltd., 1974. p.70.

¹¹ See Tom Zytaruk, Millennium Milestones – A History of Surrey, White Rock and North Delta, 2000.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

The heritage value of NCP #2 resides in our ability to understand the history of development of the area in the many features of the cultural landscape. This is made up of a large number of ordinary, representative features, and not features of outstanding quality. These features collectively have considerable value: with them, we can 'read' the layers of history that make up Grandview Heights, from the early surveys, through the forestry, agricultural, and residential phases. We can see the change from rural to semi-rural to suburban, which allow us to understand the context of the future urban phase. This is what the 'past' and 'roots' are all about. Without them we have no sense of where we have come from, nor where we are going.

Because the purpose of any heritage management activity is to celebrate the ordinary, a program of identifying, designating, and protecting individual heritage resources would not be appropriate. Rather, we see a number of ways in which parts of the tangible and intangible historical fabric of the Surrey Grandview Heights area can be conserved and maintained. These recommendations are meant as a guideline for the City of Surrey as it goes ahead with its Neighbourhood Concept Plans. We have divided the recommendations between the public and the private realms.

The Public Realm

The City of Surrey should take the initiative to include conservation and commemorative initiatives on public land. These might include:

- The naming of NCP #2 should take a name from the neighbourhood's history. Suggestions from the April 6th workshop included:
 - -Sunnyside [there was debate as to which exact area of Surrey 'owns' this name]
 - -North Bluff
 - -Coast Meridian
- Conservation: Retain some rural and semi-rural features, such as lines of trees (both those that demarcate properties and those that line driveways) and fences (various kinds). It would be preferable if subdivisions can be laid out so that some of these existing features fall on public land. A secondary solution would be to reconstruct (i.e. build or plant) some of these features on new public land.
- Commemoration: Panels or plaques at specific locations or vistas can explain what was once there perhaps with an old photograph and/or some text regarding the significance of the location. This is already done with the signs that provide the historical names of the principal roads.
- Interpretive storyboards that tell the story of the area: from logging to farming to suburban enclave to today. These might be located in proposed park areas, along main

roads, pointing out vistas, or at important intersections, such as the corner of Coast Meridian Road and Sunnyside Road.

- Retention/restoration of street and place names: perhaps returning to the old street names
 or having signs with those names in addition to those that use the present numbered
 system.
- The naming of the new proposed park area. Suggestions from the April 6th workshop included *Stayte Park* and *Figg Park*, named after early settlers in Section 13.
- Public art commemorating the past: Public art can commemorate the area's past. This can
 be done by competition or by commission. Other examples are the poetry rocks at
 Crescent Beach and the commemorative piece that sits in front of the new Surrey
 Museum.

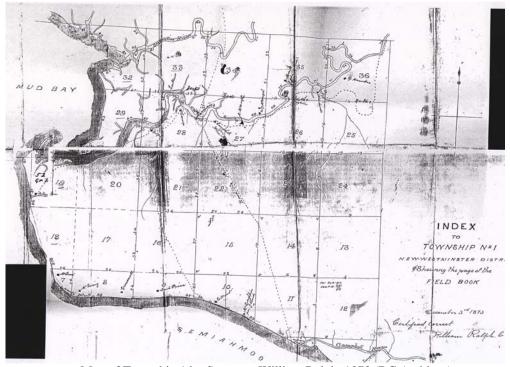
The Private Realm

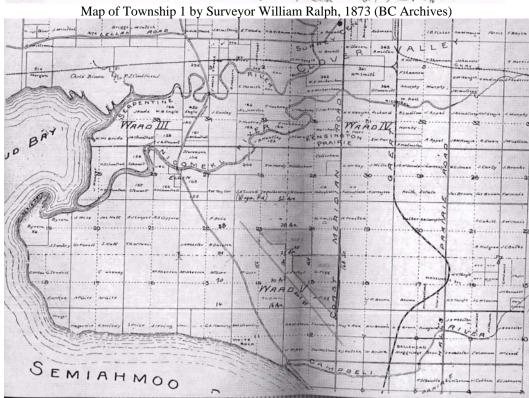
Since conservation initiatives address resources of ordinary value, a heritage designation program would not be appropriate, as stated above. Conservation on private property should therefore be voluntary and encouraged by planning incentives.

This can be achieved by offering planning relaxations in exchange for voluntary conservation. For example, the City might offer bonus density to a developer in return for conserving a heritage resource, based on the principle that the added value of the bonus density is done as compensation for the added cost of the conservation initiative. If negotiated in a constructive environment, the public would gain a heritage amenity and the developer would not lose any development potential. This kind of *quid pro quo* forms the basis of the heritage conservation 'tools' enabled by the Province in the *Local Government Act*.

4. ILLUSTRATIONS

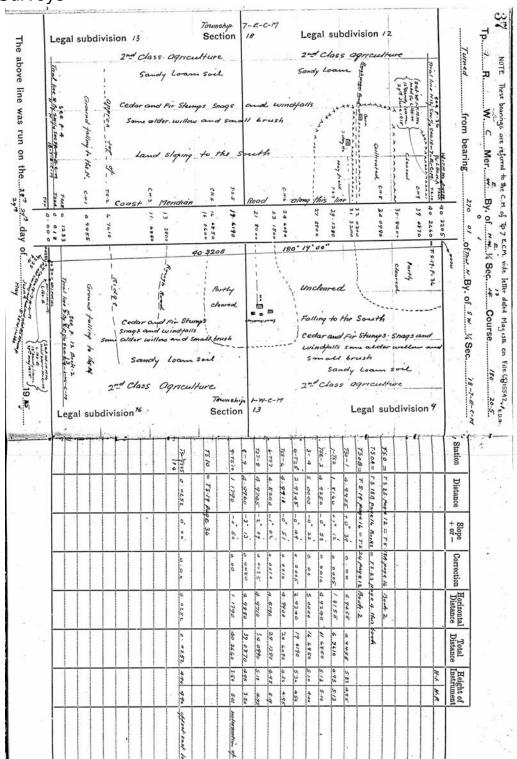
The Land





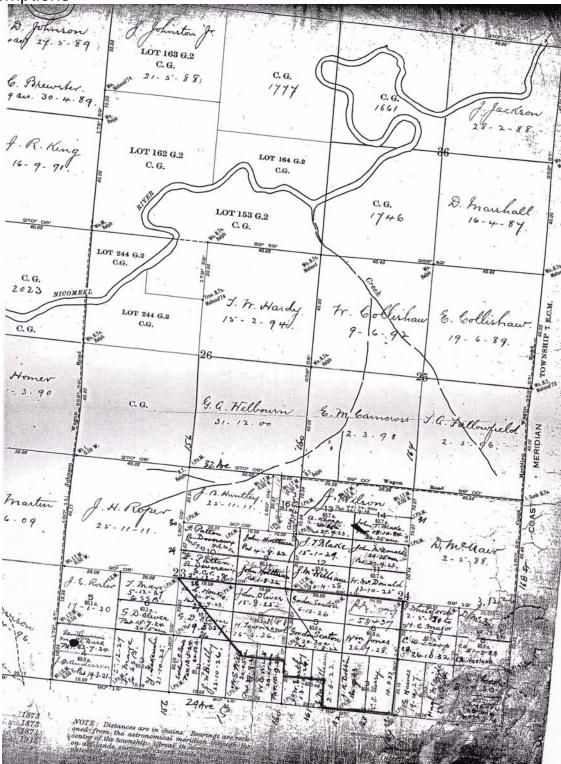
Map of Surrey, 1897 (BC Archives)

The Surveys



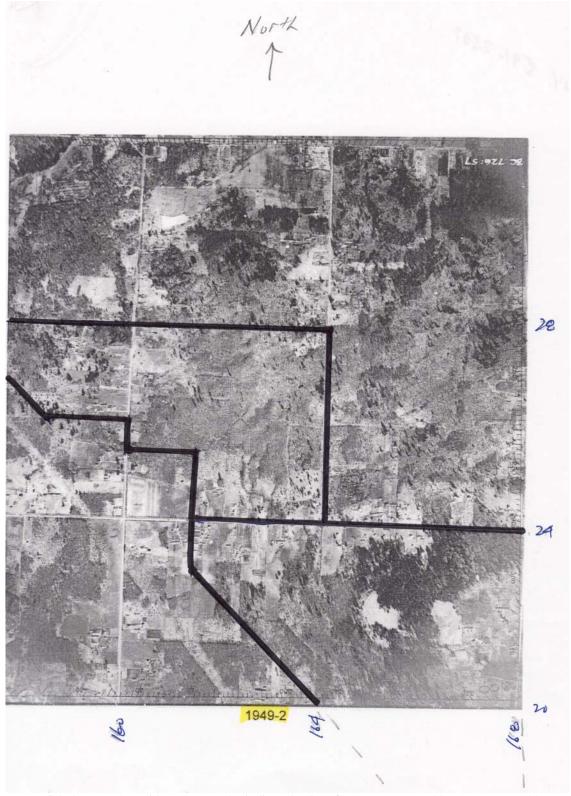
Field Sketches and Notes by Surveyor James Gibbon, Section 13, BC Surveys Book 3, Gibbon D.L.S., 1915 (BC Archives)

Pre-emptions

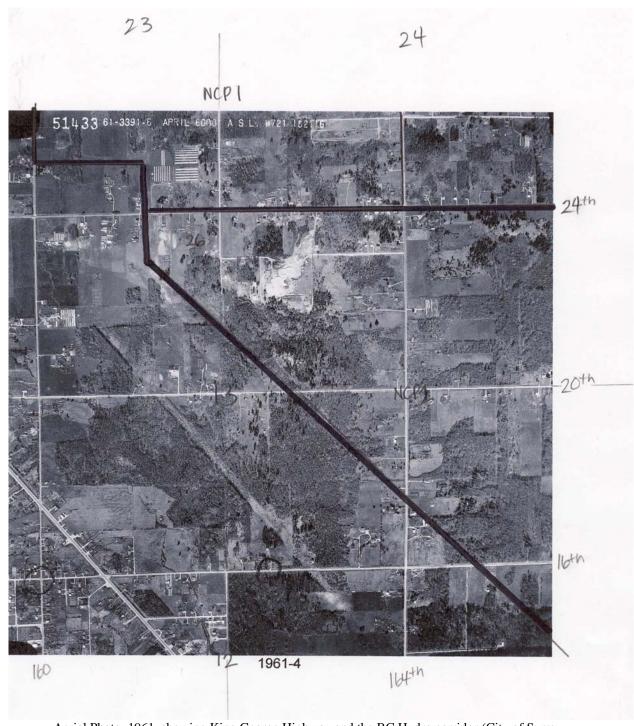


Base Map, 1918 with annotations showing subdivisions in the 1920s as Grandview Heights acquired small agricultural and non-agricultural uses (BC Archives)

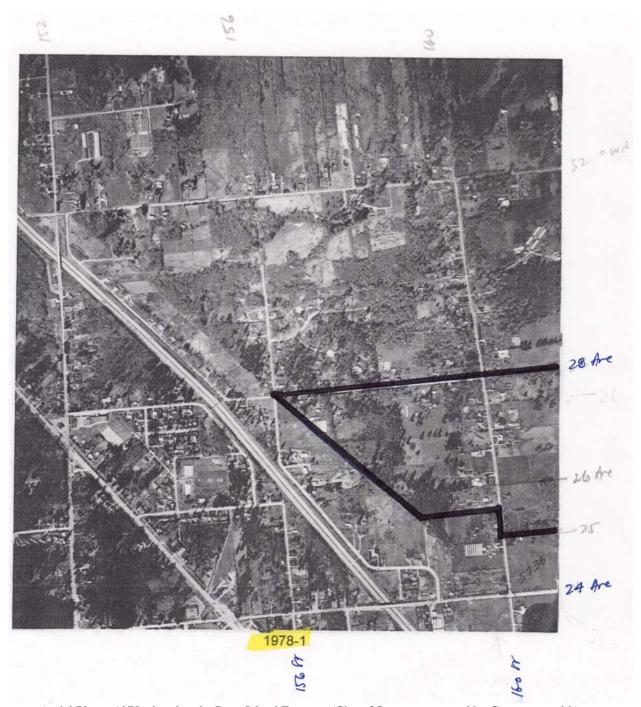
Trails and Corridors



Aerial Photo, 1949, With NCP #1 and 2 indicated (City of Surrey, annotated by Commonwealth)



Aerial Photo, 1961, showing King George Highway and the BC Hydro corridor (City of Surrey, annotated by Commonwealth)



Aerial Photo, 1978, showing the Deas Island Freeway (City of Surrey, annotated by Commonwealth)

Land Use: Logging





Logging in Surrey, http://members.shaw.ca/j.a.brown/Logging.html (Photos: Surrey's History by Jack Brown)



Stumps in Grandview Heights (Photos: Frank Spanevello)

Land Use: Agriculture



Mink Farms in Grandview Heights (Photos: Frank Spanevello)

Land Use: Recreational and Residential



Recreational use – Sunnyside Saddle Club (Photo: Hal Kalman)



Continuing agricultural use, NCP 2 (Photo: Hal Kalman)



Remnant agricultural building, NCP 1 (Photo: Hal Kalman)



Remnant farm, NCP 2 (Photo: Hal Kalman)



Post WWII housing, NCP 2 (Photo: Hal Kalman)



Continuing small agricultural use with a 'Vancouver Special' house, NCP 2 (Photo: Hal Kalman)



Small post-WWII houses, NCP 2 (Photo: Hal Kalman)



Late-20th-century subdivision, NCP 2 (Photo: Hal Kalman)



Tudor Revival house, NCP 2 (Photo: Hal Kalman)

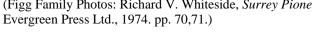
People and Places

New Westminster District - Township No. 1 West of Coast Meridian Section 13

Date	Name	Fiat No.	Patent Date
NW ¼ Sec 11.3.1890		54159	3.3.1894
NE ¹ / ₄ Sect 5.6.1890		75215	29.11.1900
SW ¼ Sec 2.11.1887 Homestead	Benjamin Welsher	50844	19.12.1892
SE ¼ Sect 18.4.1887 Homestead	William Figg	48152	11.5.1892



(Figg Family Photos: Richard V. Whiteside, Surrey Pioneers,





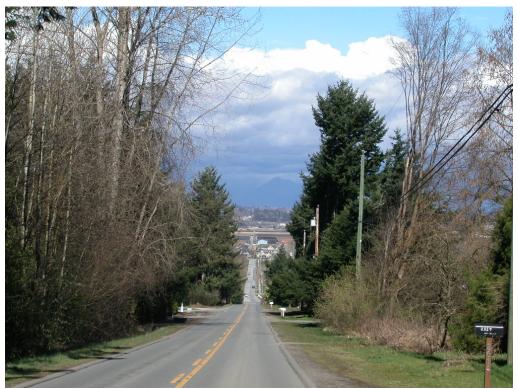
NCP 1, Area pre-empted by 'John Oliver' (Photo: Hal Kalman)





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A Heritage Cultural Landscape



Coast Meridian Highway, looking north, NCP 1 (Photo: Hal Kalman)



20th Avenue looking west at 167th Street, NCP 2 (Photo: Hal Kalman)



Fences marking property lines, NCP 2 (Photo: Hal Kalman)



Rows of trees mark an entrance drive, NCP 2 (Photo: Hal Kalman)

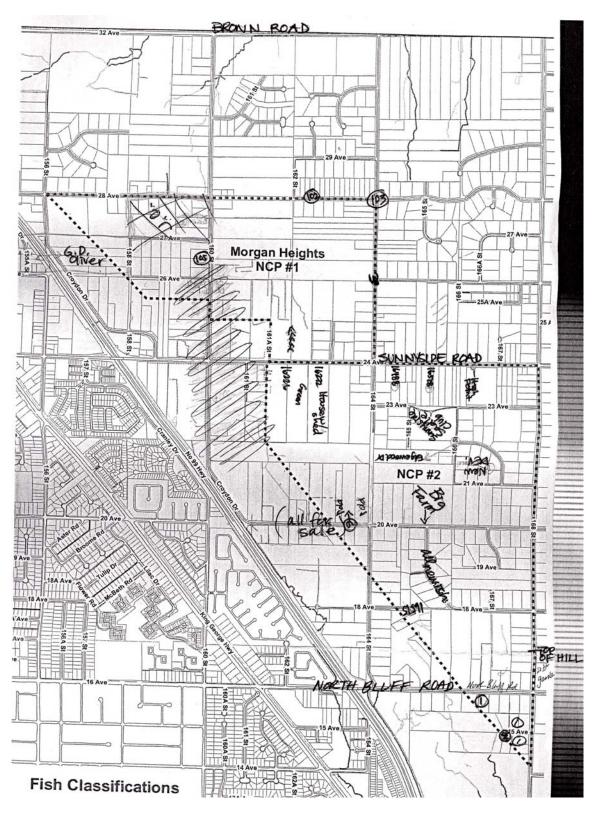


Rows of trees, NCP 2 (Photo: Hal Kalman)



A development proposal to identify property from 'suburban' to 'urban', creating approximately 340 lots and 550 townhouse units on what was once one single farm, NCP 1 (Photo: Hal Kalman)

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NCP 1 and 2 Map, Fieldwork Notes, 24 March 2006 (City of Surrey, annotated by Maria Cruz)