



Citizen Advisory Committee ("CAC"), the public, technical agencies and other stakeholders, toward preparing a General Land Use Plan for Grandview Heights. The planning process is nearing completion. Staff has compiled the public input received, to date, and are in the process of preparing a report to Council recommending a "preferred" land use concept for the Grandview Heights area for presentation to the public at an Open House to be held this spring.

The planning process has included, among other things, the identification of parks and open space requirements in relation to the future development of this area. An athletic (community-scale) park, as well as at least four neighbourhood parks and an extensive pedestrian walkway and cycling system, have been identified as components of this community as it develops over the coming decades.

Three preliminary land use options were presented to the public for review and comment in November of 2004. These three options indicated that an athletic and community park facility could be located in the central area of Grandview Heights, between 168 and 172 Streets and 24 and 26 Avenues. In response to the presentation of these land use options, a number of the land owners in and adjacent to the area of the possible athletic park facility have voiced strong objections to City Council and staff.

In response to these concerns, at its Regular meeting on December 13, 2004, Council adopted the following resolution:

***"That staff review the location of the community park in the vicinity of 168 Street and 26 Avenue in the context of the community plan".***

This report responds to this direction from Council, provides background information on this issue and suggest strategies for addressing the concerns, while also ensuring that the future residents of Grandview Heights have access to adequate parks and recreation opportunities.

## DISCUSSION

The City's Official Community Plan ("OCP") contains standards for the provision of parkland by population, including the provision of athletic parks. These standards are outlined in more detail in the Parks, Recreation & Culture Master Plan, which identifies the need for one athletic (community-scale) park for each 50,000 residents. Currently, the City of Surrey, with a population approaching 400,000, has constructed or has plans for at least one athletic park for each of Surrey's six communities. As illustrated in Appendix I, these include:

- Whalley Athletic Park (including the future Tom Binnie Indoor Artificial Turf Facility and Whalley Ball Park);
- Hjorth Road Park;
- Fleetwood Town Centre Park;
- Newton Athletic Park;
- Cloverdale Athletic Park; and

- South Surrey Athletic Park.

South Surrey has an existing population of approximately 60,000. It is currently served by the South Surrey Athletic Park. Redevelopment, at generally higher densities in the existing urban areas of South Surrey, combined with population growth related to new development in Grandview Heights, North Grandview Heights, Rosemary Heights and the Douglas neighbourhoods, reinforce the fact that there will be demand for another athletic park in South Surrey in the medium to long term. With the exception of Redwood Park, a large natural area, there are no large existing parks in South Surrey, east of Highway 99. Since the South Surrey Athletic park currently exists to the west of Highway 99, it is reasonable to plan for the second athletic park in South Surrey to be located in the Grandview area where the majority of the future population growth is expected to occur.

An athletic park typically includes playing fields, baseball and/or softball diamonds, a running track, washrooms, change facilities and supporting amenities, such as parking lots, playgrounds and picnic shelters. An athletic park in Grandview Heights would be community-focused, providing indoor and outdoor community, recreational and cultural amenities to Grandview Heights as it develops over time, in addition to providing for city-wide and tournament play.

Civic facilities, such as a community centre, library, a fire hall and other civic amenities, etc., will also be required in Grandview Heights as the population of the area grows. Each of these facilities will also require property for necessary related parking.

Ideally, an athletic park has the following characteristics:

- Is a minimum of 15 to 20 hectares (37 to 50 acres) in size;
- Gentle terrain (i.e., relatively flat land) to avoid excessive construction costs to create flat areas for playing fields and to avoid the costs and visual impacts of high retaining walls;
- Located on lands without significant environmental features, such as creeks, riparian corridors or mature forests to minimize impact on the natural environment, but where the preservation or creation of landscape buffers is possible; and
- Easy vehicular access by way of a collector or arterial route, as well as alternative forms of transportation.

City staff has evaluated at least six optional locations for an athletic park in the Grandview Heights area. These options are illustrated on the map attached as Appendix II. Staff hosted two recent, well-attended, meetings at which Grandview area residents were able to view the options and provide feedback. The parkland acquisition process was also described to those in attendance. Based on feedback received, none of the options are acceptable to all stakeholders. Specifically, owners in each of the areas identified in the various options have voiced opposition to the location of parkland in their area.

The major reasons for opposition to an athletic park facility at each location, based on feedback from the public meetings and from correspondence received, to date, are as follows:

- The perceived impact on property values if land is designated as "Park" on the General Land Use Plan. Concern that if land is shown as Park, no purchaser, other than the City, would be interesting in purchasing the property;

- Opinion that the athletic park should be located closer to higher density residential areas rather than in a suburban area;
- Concern that the proposed size of the park is too large and that the facilities proposed for the large park could be located in a number of smaller parks;
- Concern about safety in and around the park; and
- Concerns about a perceived increase in activity, excessive lighting, noise, crime and traffic in the area.

While many owners in Grandview Heights have expressed opposition to an athletic park, the City has also been approached by several owners of property in Grandview Heights, who have offered their property for sale to the City for park purposes.

The planning process is at the "general land use" stage. The current process is intended to develop a General Land Use Plan for Grandview Heights and to identify boundaries for neighbourhoods that will form the basis for the preparation of Neighbourhood Concept Plans ("NCPs") for each neighbourhood that are much more detailed than the General Land Use Plan. The first of the NCP processes, related to Area 1, is underway and a Terms of Reference is being prepared for Council approval to commence an NCP process for Area 2.

Development of an athletic park in Grandview Heights is not expected to be necessary for at least 10 years. Any property that the City purchases for parks is purchased at market value and on a "willing seller" basis.

There is no immediate need to determine the exact location for an athletic park in Grandview Heights, at this time, given the relatively long time frame before such a park facility will be needed. Given the strong concerns that are currently being voiced by area residents about each of the optional locations for the athletic park, it is recommended that the General Land Use Plan be completed without identifying the exact location of the athletic park. It is further recommended that the General Land Use Plan include a policy statement, regarding the need to ultimately identify a location for an athletic park and civic amenities along with the parameters that an acceptable location would need to satisfy. The location of parkland would then be determined at the more detailed planning stage, when NCPs are being prepared, over time, for the various neighbourhoods in Grandview Heights.

In summary it is recommended that:

- The General Land Use Plan include a policy direction related to undertaking the identification of a location for athletic park facilities and other civic facilities in the Grandview Heights area in conjunction with future NCP planning in the area and which policy also specifies the parameters that lands for such an athletic park and civic facilities will need to satisfy;
- The City continue to acquire properties within Grandview Heights (on a "willing seller" basis only) to establish a land bank in the area for park purposes. This land bank would be used in the future, either as parkland or be exchanged for land that is suitably located for park and civic facility purposes; and
- The locations of parks and civic facilities be determined as part of the NCP planning process for Grandview Heights, as and when such a process is undertaken for each of the proposed

neighbourhoods in Grandview Heights.

If the above approach is adopted, no landowners will have their property designated for a community-scale athletic park at the General Land Use Plan stage. The approach was reviewed with the Grandview Heights CAC, who are in general agreement with the approach.

### **Next Steps**

Subject to Council approving the recommendations of this report, staff will finalize a report to Council regarding the "preferred" general land use concept plan for Grandview Heights and forward that report to Council in April, 2005. That report will recommend that Council authorize staff to hold a final Open House to present the preferred general land use concept plan to the public for comments, prior to it being refined, as necessary, based on further input from the public, and be forwarded to Council for adoption.

### **CONCLUSION**

Based on the above discussion, it is recommended that Council authorize staff to incorporate, in the preferred land use concept for the Grandview Heights area, the approach, as documented in this report, for locating and acquiring parkland in the area, including land for an athletic park and for civic facilities.

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#### Attachments:

Appendix I Map showing existing parkland and athletic parks in Surrey

Appendix II Map showing 6 optional locations

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Appendix "I"

Existing Parkland and Athletic Parks in Surrey





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