

NO: R149

COUNCIL DATE: July 25, 2011

REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: Mayor & Council **DATE: July 21, 2011**

FROM: General Manager, Parks, Recreation and Culture **FILE: 6140 - 20/PM**

SUBJECT: Development of a South Asian Centre for Culture, Harmony and Wellness in the Newton Community

RECOMMENDATION

The Parks, Recreation and Culture Department recommends that Council:

1. Authorize staff to prepare a terms of reference as the basis for a consultant to be retained by the S.P.A.R.K. Education Foundation (the "Foundation") and under the guidance of City staff to undertake a feasibility study of each of the two sites in Newton described in Appendix 1 attached to this report, which will assist in determining whether either or both of these sites would be suitable for the development of a South Asian Centre for Culture, Harmony and Wellness (the "Centre") as proposed by the Foundation and, if both are found suitable, to establish which of the sites is the preferred site;
2. Authorize staff to enter into negotiations with the Foundation to develop a draft memorandum of understanding (the "MOU") between the City and the Foundation that addresses the contribution of land and the construction, operation, programming and maintenance of the Centre and related parking along with the terms of public access to the Centre and the terms of ownership of the proposed Centre, among other things, that would form the basis for a potential future agreement; and
3. Request that staff provide a further report to Council in due course that documents the results of the feasibility study and, subject to favourable results in relation to the feasibility study, includes the draft MOU for Council consideration.

INTENT

The purpose of this report is to inform Council of a proposal received from S.P.A.R.K. Education Foundation (the "Foundation") regarding the construction of a South Asian Centre for Culture, Harmony and Wellness ("the Centre") in Newton and that requests that the City consider a partnership with the Foundation in relation to the development of such a project.

BACKGROUND

On June 22, 2011 representatives of the S.P.A.R.K. Education Foundation appeared as a delegation before the Parks, Recreation and Culture Committee with a presentation regarding the merits of constructing a South Asian Centre for Culture, Harmony and Wellness in Newton and seeking a partnership with the City related to the development of such a project.

The delegation advised the Committee that the Centre is intended as a tribute to South Asian Pioneers that settled in Surrey over the past 100 years. It would have exhibits that demonstrate the significant contribution made by South Asians during the City's dramatic growth from a rural agricultural community to a thriving metropolitan area.

The delegation further advised the Committee that the Centre would be open to anyone; however; it would provide a programming focus for South Asian Youth with a view to connecting them more strongly to their community through activities and events that are typical of the South Asian community. Facility design and programming would aim to close current gaps in delivery of recreation and cultural programs in the Newton area, especially with respect to youth-oriented programs. The Centre would also provide day-time programming opportunities for South Asian seniors, who would use the Centre typically at times when it is not being used by youth.

The delegation noted that they have had preliminary discussions about a potential site at Newton Athletic Park on 128th Street. The delegation indicated that the Foundation was willing to fund a feasibility study for this site in Newton and suggested that the City's contribution to the project would be to make lands available for development of the Centre with funding for construction and operation of the Centre to be provided by S.P.A.R.K. and other levels of government.

The Foundation was incorporated under the British Columbia Society Act in 2004, and is based in offices located at 8120 – 128th Street. The Foundation has been involved in providing funding for educational initiatives such as SPARK (Students, Preparation, Access, Reaching goals and Knowledge), which is an ongoing innovative four-way partnership between Kwantlen Polytechnic University, Surrey School District No. 36, the provincial government and the Foundation. The Directors of the Foundation listed on the Certificate of Incorporation are prominent business people based in Surrey.

At its meeting on July 20, 2011, the Parks, Recreation and Culture Committee considered a report, dated July 12, 2011, from staff on the proposal from the Foundation and adopted the following resolution:

“That the Parks, Recreation and Culture Committee recommend that Council:

- 1. Authorize staff to prepare a terms of reference as the basis for a consultant to be retained by the S.P.A.R.K. Education Foundation (the “Foundation”) and under the guidance of City staff to undertake a feasibility study of each of the two sites in Newton described in Appendix 1 attached to this report, which will assist in determining whether either or both of these sites would be suitable for the development of a South Asian Centre for Culture, Harmony and Wellness (the “Centre”) as proposed by the Foundation and, if both are found suitable, to establish which of the sites is the preferred site;*

2. *Authorize staff to enter into negotiations with the Foundation to develop a draft memorandum of understanding (the “MOU”) between the City and the Foundation that addresses the contribution of land and the construction, operation, programming and maintenance of the Centre and related parking along with the terms of public access to the Centre and the terms of ownership of the proposed Centre, among other things, that would form the basis for a potential future agreement; and*
3. *Request that staff provide a further report to Council in due course that documents the results of the feasibility study and, subject to favourable results in relation to the feasibility study, includes the draft MOU for Council consideration.”*

DISCUSSION

City staff has met with Foundation representatives to better understand their proposal. It has been determined that the Centre would likely be constructed in phases over time, with the full build-out development having area of approximately 40,000 square feet (3700 square metres). This scale of building would need approximately 130+ parking spaces to properly support its use. Although plans are very conceptual at this time, it is expected that the Centre will include multi-purpose flex space, meeting rooms and a gymnasium.

The Centre is interesting from staff's perspective in that it would provide additional recreational/amenity space to support the needs of the growing Newton community without the City having to fund its construction or to operate the facility. However, if the City were to contribute land for the project there would need to be an agreement regarding public access to the facility.

Two Newton locations have been identified in relation to this potential development. These sites are described and illustrated in Appendix 1 attached to this report.

Staff has determined that there are two steps that should be taken in relation to further exploring this opportunity. These are:

1. To undertake a feasibility study of the two sites that have been identified as potential candidate sites for the facility to confirm whether either or both of the sites is suitable for the development and, if both are feasible, which of the two sites is preferred; and
2. To negotiate a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the City and the Foundation that would form the basis for an agreement with the Foundation regarding the contribution of land by the City, the construction, operation, programming and maintenance of the Centre and related parking, the terms in relation to public access to the Centre and the terms of ownership of the proposed Centre.

The Foundation has agreed to fund the feasibility study to which 1. above refers. Subject to the Council approving the recommendations of this report, staff will develop a terms of reference for the Foundation in relation to undertaking such a feasibility study and will report the results of the study to Council in due course.

With respect to the proposed MOU, representatives of the Foundation have advised that it is their intention to approach the provincial and federal governments for funding assistance in relation to the capital costs of the proposed Centre and that an MOU with the City would help to demonstrate the legitimacy of the project to the other orders of government. The MOU would also form the basis for an agreement between the City and the Foundation regarding the responsibilities and privileges of each party in relation to the Centre.

SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS

Development of a South Asian Centre for Culture, Harmony & Wellness aligns with the goals of the City's Sustainability Charter; more particularly, Socio-Cultural Action items SC4, SC5, SC12 and C10, by encouraging cultural awareness in the community, providing ethnic and culturally appropriate services, opportunities and programs, facilitating volunteerism and educating the public about the City's history, respectively.

CONCLUSION

Based on the above discussion, it is recommended that Council:

- authorize staff to prepare a terms of reference as the basis for a consultant to be retained by the S.P.A.R.K. Education Foundation (the "Foundation") and under the guidance of City staff to undertake a feasibility study of each of the two sites in Newton described in Appendix 1 attached to this report, which will assist in determining whether either or both of these sites would be suitable for the development of a South Asian Centre for Culture, Harmony and Wellness (the "Centre") as proposed by the Foundation and, if both are found suitable, to establish which of the sites is the preferred site;
- authorize staff to enter into negotiations with the Foundation to develop a draft memorandum of understanding (the "MOU") between the City and the Foundation that addresses the contribution of land and the construction, operation, programming and maintenance of the Centre and related parking along with the terms of public access to the Centre and the terms of ownership of the proposed Centre, among other things, and would form the basis for a potential future agreement; and
- request that staff provide a further report to Council in due course that documents the results of the feasibility study and, subject to favourable results in relation to the feasibility study, includes the draft MOU for Council consideration.

Laurie Cavan
General Manager
Parks, Recreation and Culture

APPENDIX 1

POTENTIAL SITES FOR THE PROPOSED SOUTH ASIAN CULTURE, HARMONY AND WELLNESS CENTRE (“THE CENTRE”)

The following is a description of sites in the Newton Community that have been identified on a preliminary basis as being potentially suitable for the Centre (see Appendix A – Newton Community Map):

Site 1 – Princess Margaret Park (see air photo attached as Appendix A – Site 1 Princess Margaret Park)

Current description of the site and amenities on the site:

- 2.8 hectares (6.9 acres) in area
- Gravel night-lit all-weather field
- Baseball diamond
- Playground
- Parking lot (22 regular stalls; 2 handicap stalls)

Some site considerations:

- i. The park is of a sufficient area to easily accommodate the development of a 40,000 square foot facility plus required parking (130+ stalls), leaving room for development of outdoor athletic amenities that would complement the Centre;
- ii. The park is currently somewhat under-utilized from an outdoor athletics perspective when compared to many other parks in Surrey with athletic amenities;
- iii. The current users could likely be accommodated elsewhere if displaced by the development of the Centre;
- iv. The site is on a major transit route for easy access by bus;
- v. It is directly across the street from Kwantlen Polytechnic University, which raises opportunities for shared gymnasias and shared parking, etc;
- vi. Adjacent to Princess Margaret Secondary School, so that youth/students could easily access the Centre after regular school hours;
- vii. There is a partially developed road allowance adjacent to the site on the north, with an existing left-hand turn bay in the median, which would facilitate south-bound entry to the site;
- viii. There are some mature trees to the south and the east that provide some level of buffering from adjacent residential areas;
- ix. The location lends itself to its development as part of an institutional precinct, given the close proximity of the University and the Secondary School;
- x. The presence of single family residential housing to the south and the east would need to be taken into account in relation to the layout and design of the Centre [*a similar residential – institutional interface occurs nearby where single family residential homes on 126A and 126B Streets are located immediately south of the KPU Surrey Campus*]; and

- xi. The road frontage of the park is only 115 metres in length, which provides less visibility for the Centre from the street than would be the case at the Newton Athletic Park.

Site 2 – Newton Athletic Park (see air photo attached as Appendix B – Site 1 Newton Athletic Park)

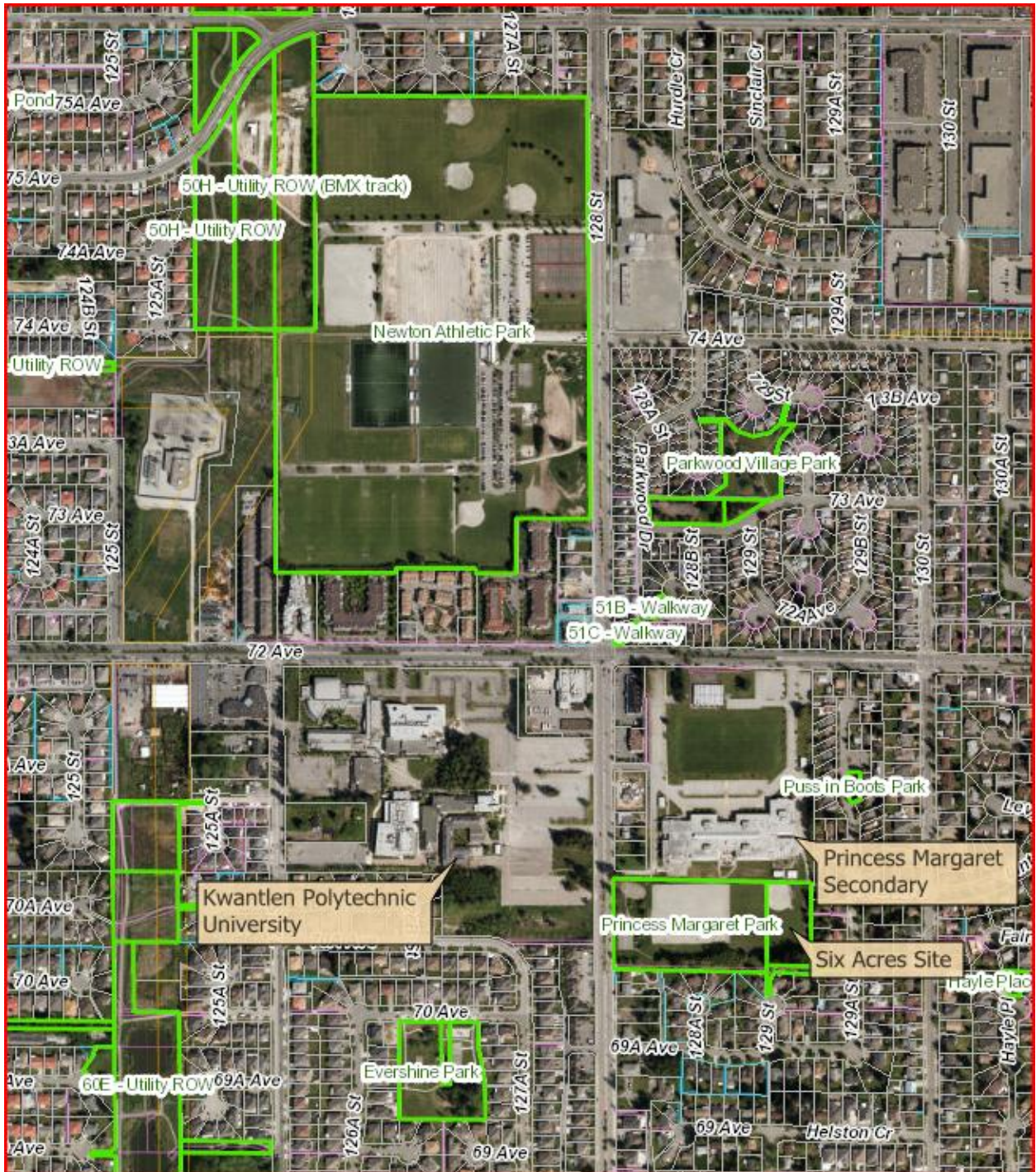
Current description of the site and amenities on the site:

- 21.3 hectares (52.6 acres) in area;
- 1 large field house to support field-based athletic activities;
- 1 small building containing a community room used by seniors, and public washrooms;
- 3 artificial turf fields;
- Walking loop;
- 2 Cricket pitches;
- 2 playgrounds;
- 1 softball diamond;
- 8 Tennis Courts;
- 7 mini soccer fields;
- Bleachers;
- Benches;
- 1 permanent park shelter;
- 1 Portable park shelter;
- 3 outbuildings;
- Large parking lot (358 stalls, plus over-flow of 500 on the gravel all-weather field).

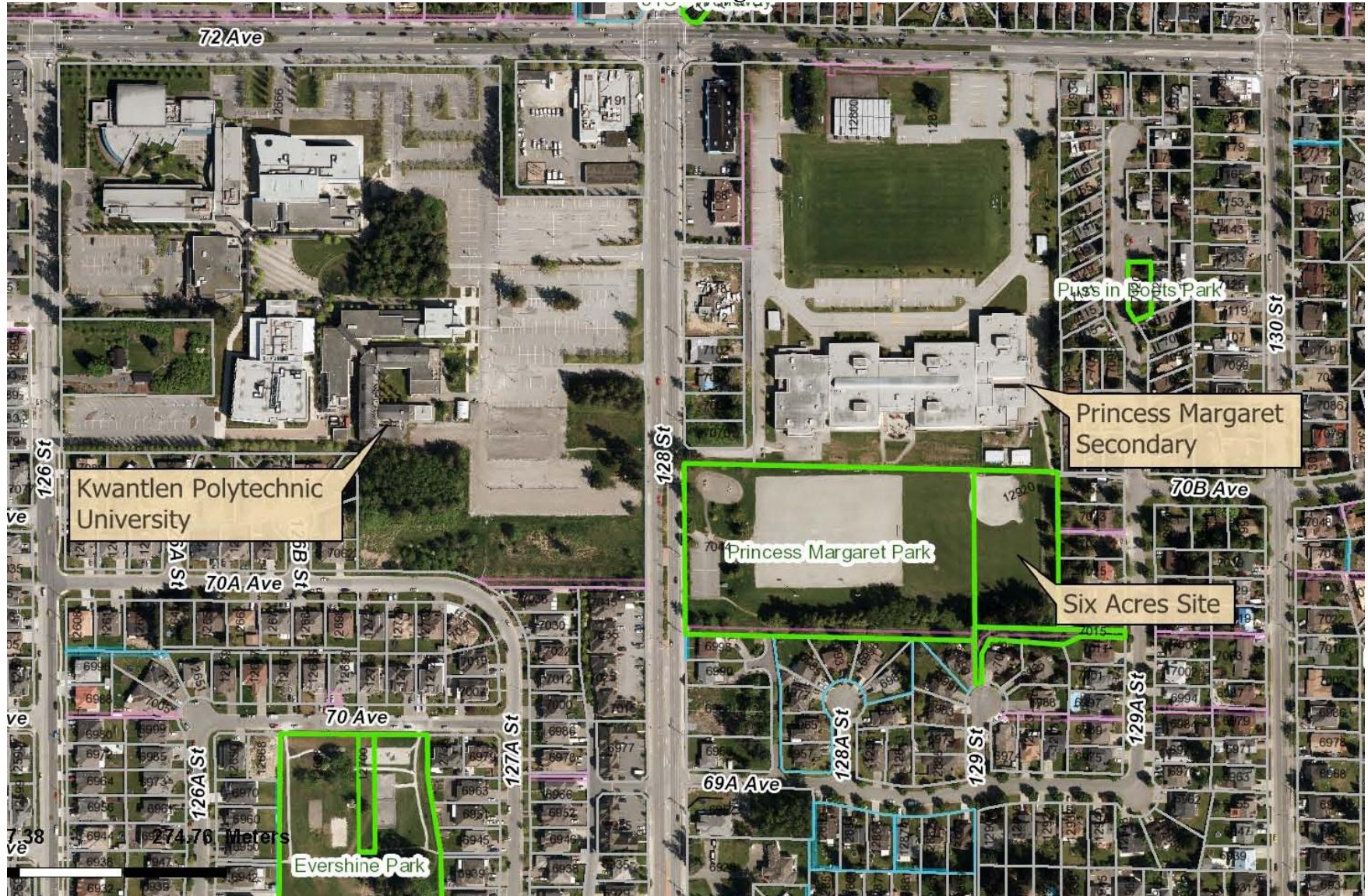
Some site considerations:

- i. There is sufficient area in the Park for the Centre but it would displace the potential for other amenities that have been planned for the Park;
- ii. The street system in the vicinity of the Park is sufficiently developed to accommodate this additional use without significant impacts;
- iii. Transit access is available to the Park;
- iv. The site is near Kwantlen Polytechnic University, which may allow for some level of partnering;
- v. The Park has a very long frontage on 128th Street, providing good visibility for an iconic building; and
- vi. Parking for existing park amenities is currently in short supply at the Newton Athletic Park.

APPENDIX A Newton Community Map



APPENDIX A
Site 1 - Princess Margaret Park



APPENDIX B
Site 2 – Newton Athletic Park

