

NO: R137

COUNCIL DATE: June 29, 2015

REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: **Mayor & Council** DATE: **June 24, 2015**
FROM: **General Manager, Parks, Recreation and Culture** FILE: **4100-01**
SUBJECT: **Surrey Centre Cemetery Development Plan**

RECOMMENDATION

The Parks, Recreation and Culture Department recommends that Council approve the Concept Plan for Surrey Centre Cemetery in principle and as generally described in this report.

INTENT

The purpose of this report is to provide information regarding the planning and design process for the further development of Surrey Centre Cemetery and to recommend the approval of the Concept Plan for the cemetery.

BACKGROUND

The City of Surrey operates 3 civic cemeteries: *Surrey Centre Cemetery*, *Sunnyside Lawn Cemetery* and *Hazelmere Cemetery*, as shown in **Appendix I**. *Surrey Centre Cemetery* is located in West Cloverdale at 16671 Old McLellan Road. The cemetery is approximately 14 acres (5.7 ha) in area with roughly 7.8 acres currently utilized for interments. *Surrey Centre Cemetery* is the resting place of many of Surrey's pioneers and is also noted for its many unique trees and shrubs.

In 2005, a 2.75 acre portion of *Surrey Centre Cemetery* was sold to Congregation Schara Tzedek and is now operated as a Jewish Cemetery. The net proceeds from this land sale have been held in a capital reserve for future development of Surrey's civic cemeteries. It is important that the City plan for the highest and best use of its cemetery lands; this is particularly critical as available land at *Surrey Centre Cemetery* diminishes.

The City wishes to increase the diversity of interment and memorialization options to better serve Surrey's diverse population and increase revenues to fund further capital improvements in the future. To this end, in 2014 City staff engaged the services of a Cemetery design consultant, *Lees & Associates Consulting*, and has been working with this company on a cemetery development strategy for *Surrey Centre Cemetery* to address current and future interment needs. Two conceptual design options for the future development of *Surrey Centre Cemetery* were developed that illustrated the opportunities for utilization of the remaining available lands for a variety of interment and memorialization services.

City staff presented the two conceptual design options at two public open-houses that were held on January 21st 2015. The first open-house was directed towards funeral home operators and other organizations involved in the death-care industry. The second open-house was focussed on the general public and was well attended by neighbourhood residents. A summary of the information from the public open houses is attached as **Appendix III** to this report. Generally, the conceptual plans were well received and neighbourhood residents were pleased to discuss the beautification initiatives that would be undertaken through the eventual implementation of the plans.

DISCUSSION

Feedback received from the January 2015 public open houses has been incorporated into a preferred Concept Plan for Surrey Centre Cemetery and this is attached as design Option 2 which is attached as **Appendix II** to this report. Implementation of the concept plan is intended to achieve the following goals:

- Beautify the cemetery and provide an enhanced park-like experience for visitors.
- Create walking trails throughout the cemetery to provide opportunities for active use of the cemetery lands.
- Expand the current area of remnant native forest by intensive planting of native trees to establish an expanded forest grove that will also offer interment opportunities.
- Increase capacity for in-ground interment by allocating additional areas of the cemetery for traditional and non-traditional casket interment.
- Increase capacity for cremation interment by constructing columbaria and niche walls at a number of different locations throughout the cemetery.
- Designate sections of the cemetery for the installation of upright headstones to address demand for such options.

The Surrey Centre Cemetery concept plan is intended to guide the development of Surrey Centre Cemetery over the next 15 – 20 years; however, full implementation of the plan will be driven by demand for services and death rates in Surrey and Metro Vancouver. A phasing estimate for the plan is being developed by the cemetery design consultants and it is expected that implementation of Phase 1 would occur in late 2015.

Staff is proposing to utilize approximately 50% of the funds that are currently held in a Cemetery Development reserve that was established through the previously discussed sale of a portion of Surrey Centre Cemetery in 2005. This amount (approximately \$500,000) will act as seed money to fund the initial investments in cemetery infrastructure, landscaping and interment facilities with an expectation that sale of interment lots & niches will generate surplus funds for the investment in ongoing future implementation of components of the cemetery plan.

Staff wish to proceed with implementation of Phase I of the Surrey Centre Cemetery development plan by proceeding with the development of detailed designs and construction documents. Construction would then be expected to commence in late 2015.

Concurrent with this process, staff will also be commencing a conceptual planning exercise for *Sunnyside Lawn Cemetery* in South Surrey, and will issue a separate report to Council once this exercise is at the Conceptual Plan phase.

SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS

The implementation of the Surrey Centre Cemetery development plan will assist in achieving objectives within the City's Sustainability Charter; more particularly the following Charter scope action items:

- SC5.5: Ethnically and culturally appropriate and inclusive services, opportunities and programming;
- C10: Historical and Heritage Assets;
- EC4: Sustainable Fiscal Management Practices;
- EN12: Enhancing and protecting natural areas and wildlife habitat;
- EN13: Enhancing the public realm through the creation of comfortable, safe and beautiful public space.

The Surrey Centre Cemetery development plan will form the basis of a sustainable cemetery operation by maximizing the utilization of available cemetery lands for a variety of interment options. This will ultimately extend the life of this cemetery by reducing the footprint of lands required for interment. The plan will aim to maximize the interment capacity of the remaining unencumbered lands while maintaining the park-like aesthetics and enhancing community access to this area of public green-space.

CONCLUSION

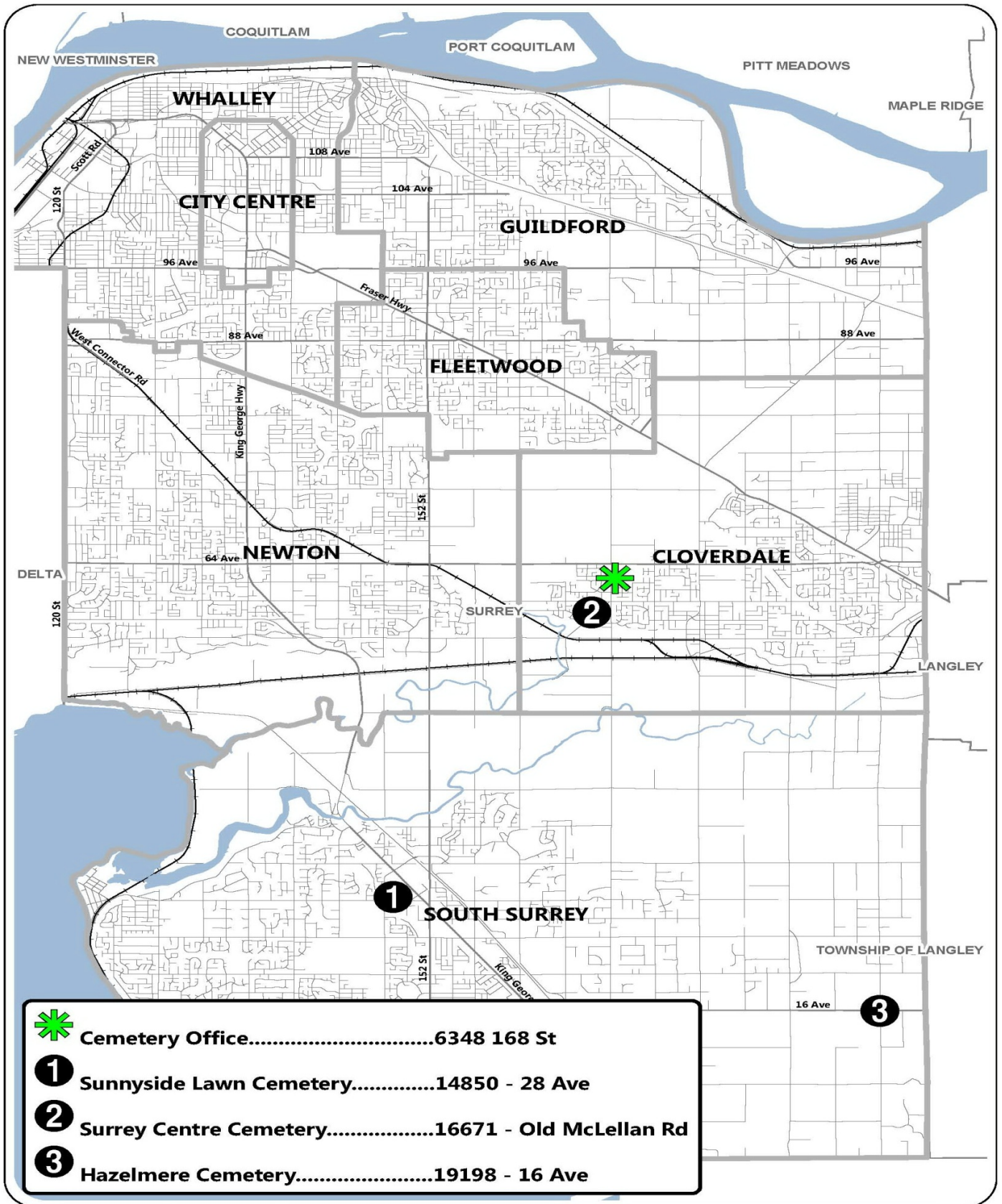
Staff has created a conceptual plan for the future development of Surrey Centre Cemetery that will increase interment and memorialization options to families, maximize the interment capacity of available lands and beautify the cemetery lands through improved landscaping.

Based on the above discussion, it is recommended that Council approve the Concept Plan for the development of Surrey Centre Cemetery and authorize staff to proceed with detailed design and development of this site.

Laurie Cavan
General Manager
Parks, Recreation and Culture

Appendix I – Locations of Surrey's 3 Civic Cemeteries
Appendix II – Concept Plan
Appendix III – Public Open House Feedback – January 25, 2015

Appendix I



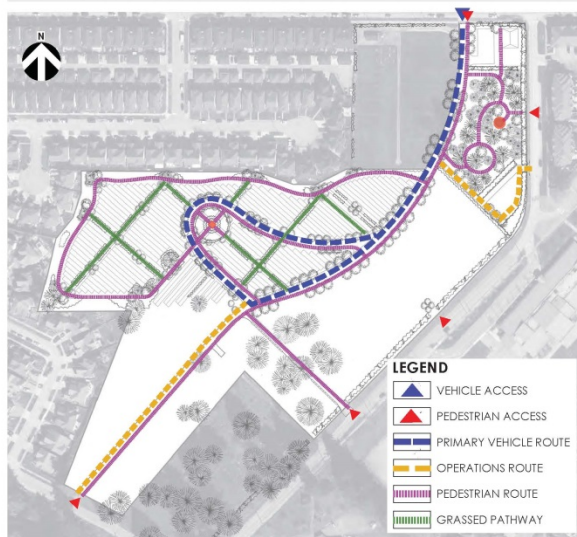
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OPTION 2 - LOOPED DRIVEWAY

OPTION 2 - KEY DESIGN FEATURES

- New looped cemetery driveway;
- Driveway planted with clusters of street trees;
- Cemetery office and parking located at 60 Avenue entrance;
- Extended forest cremation and memorial garden;
- Majority of graves aligned in a north eastern orientation;
- Tree planting in linear arrangement within interment areas;
- Central columbaria garden orientated with views towards historic cemeteries and mountains;
- Intermittent boundary planting of ornamental shrubs provides separation from neighbours and opportunities for cremation interment, and
- Bell Road access is closed to vehicles, no public through traffic is permitted.

OPTION 2 - CIRCULATION



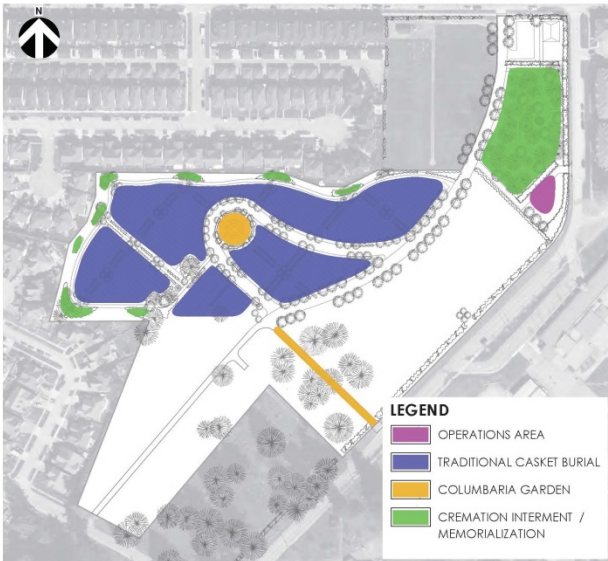
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OPTION 2 - LOOPED DRIVEWAY

OPTION 2 - ILLUSTRATED DESIGN FEATURES

- **A. FOREST CREMATION AND MEMORIAL GARDEN** - Opportunities for a trail network and cremation interment are created within an expanded area of tree planting anchored by the natural setting of the existing stand of trees.
- **B. INTERMITTENT PLANTED BOUNDARY** - Boundary to residential houses is planted with groups flowering shrubs and occasional trees which line the perimeter pedestrian pathway. Pockets designated for cremation interment and memorialization are located along the pedestrian path.
- **C. CENTRAL COLUMBARIA GARDEN** - A central columbaria garden is located to take advantage of views towards the heritage cemeteries and mountains.

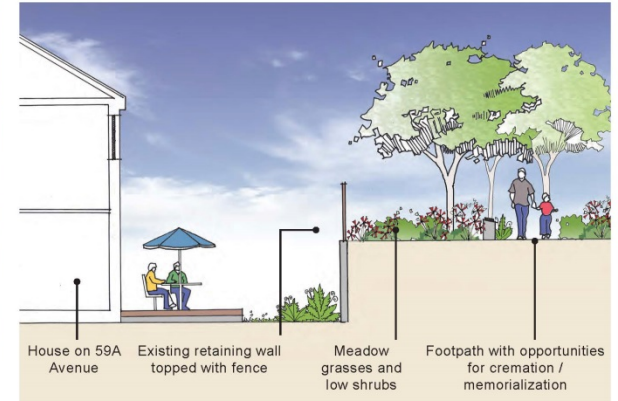
OPTION 2 - INTERMENT AREAS



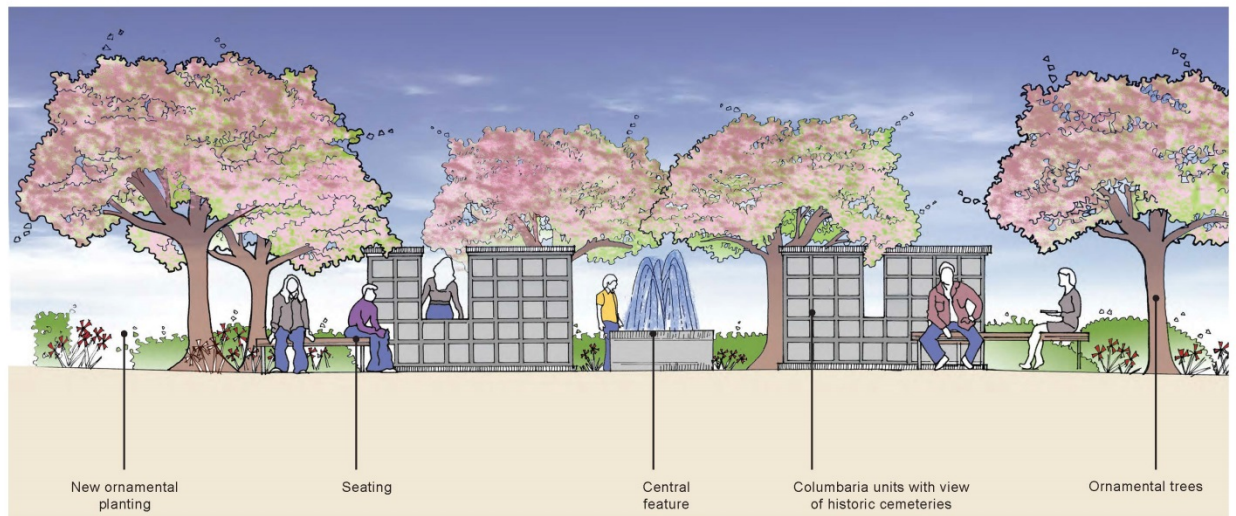
A. FOREST CREMATION AND MEMORIAL GARDEN



B. INTERMITTENT PLANTED BOUNDARY SECTION B-B



C. CENTRAL COLUMBARIA GARDEN SECTION C-C'



Public Open House Feedback - January 25th 2015

1. Open House #1 - External Stakeholders

Summary of attendance: 23 attendees

Issues raised

- “Diverse Community needs a diverse approach to the cemetery”
- Request for upright markers – “Gives cemetery more dimension”
- Need to request burial rites and tradition, Cremation River is a good idea.
- Don’t like veteran’s area – needs improvement
- Design should consider installation of monuments – wider access roads for cranes etc.
- “Excellent Ministry service”
- Cremated remains are an issue for those who pass away first (in reference to interring in a columbaria)
- Potential to convert option 2 to option 1 (utilising idea of infill to the access road for maximise land efficiency)
- New architectural features are needed, not run of the mill columbaria
- Desire to have Bell Road access open for funerals
- For Sikh and Asian rituals look at who is there and base on customer demand
- Need for admin. Building

1. Appreciated Qualities from other cemeteries:

- -Mature trees, experience of walking in a forest, natural setting, mix of interment types (no big ‘wall’ of niches)
- -Meandering paths
- -Angles, variety of layout
- -Stepping stones, benches, views

2. Appreciated Qualities of Surrey Centre Cemetery

- -Heritage aspect of the cemetery and the church
- -Natural layout, slope, crest, views, mature trees

3. Issues at Surrey Centre Cemetery

- Drainage
- Traffic flow through, narrow road forces people to pull over onto the grass and this worries/disturbs them because they don’t want to be disrespectful
- Big open field is a magnet for off-leash dogs and active recreation which are not appropriate
- Important than any kind of enforcement or site security does not take away from a positive visitor experience

4. This group represented family of interred, neighbours and a Christian Church group

- Maintain the park-like quality so people can enjoy being here i.e. places to walk, benches
- Ensure site is accessible for wheelchairs, for elders
- Need better solutions for funerals that have large attendance i.e. wider road, better traffic management

- Happy to see the plan to provide plots for casket burial; church community is 99% casket burial
- Somehow provide visitors/users with more stories about the interred, interpretive signs, digital codes on headstones that link to information about deceased

5. Cemetery Office

- Office doing a good job as is, no need for more outreach, appreciate that they will help you when you have a death as well as find a family member who is interred
- Don't want the office to have a huge staff

6. Integrating traditional casket burial and interment of cremated remains

- Overall very supportive of integration, this is preferred approach, dislike for separate areas for different types of interment
- Support for integration of faith & cultural groups as well, no support for designated areas

7. Missing interment types

- Mausoleum (1 person stated interest in this)
- Memorial trees (everyone liked this idea)
- Perfume/fragrance gardens

8. Programming/Community Needs

- A shelter from sun and rain so families have place to gather/visit before or after interment, for use by visitors at any time

2. **Open House #2 - Public Consultation**

Summary of attendance / feedback:

45 signed sign-in sheet

15 returned questionnaires at event

11 received by email (during following month)

Comments on Design Option #2

Likes

- Really likes the memorial forest concept
- Ease of travel
- Park like setting, it works for everyone
- The more tree and shrub coverage around the perimeter the better
- Forested walk area
- Traffic flow
- Circulation
- Vehicle circulation and gardens and designated areas well thought out
- Makes more sense from a traffic-flow standpoint
- Perimeter shrubs nice
- Like the boundary to keep separation between neighbours and opportunity for cremation interment
- Like Forest memorial gardens
- Likes the extended forest memorial garden
- Intermittent tree lined driveway

- Forest memorial garden
- Prefers tree clusters rather than shrub border
- Walkways and gardens
- Easier to access central grave sites
- Like the intermittent hedge so prefer this option

Dislikes

- Too much roadway
- Architectural memorial is concentrated in one area
- Plan is too much removed from the atmosphere of the existing cemetery
- Don't like fact that people could walk right up to the northern property boundary
- Do not like central memorial area. The area would have better utility as a gathering space
- Do not like the idea of larger trees to the perimeter of the property.
- Sectioning of the property appears to segregate NW section of the property from the rest of the cemetery
- Driveway extends to the centre of the plot
- Forested area is too dark

Additional comments

- Surrey Centre has historical, ecological and traditional significance to the City. Over the last 100 years there has been a balance and this must be continuous.
- When Bell road entrance is closed place fill in ditch and install sidewalk
- Plans are solid appreciate sharing with the public. The nicer the park and the more gardens the more everyone enjoys.
- Hopes that the new plan will address dog issues on the property
- Would like double depth, natural burial, family plots, uprights.
- Likes the idea of a scattering river
- Closing road from Old Mclellan and making pedestrian is excellent
- Concerns with funeral attendees using washrooms at Surrey Elementary
- Concerns about people using property as a dog park
- Concerns regarding vandalism to upright headstones
- Easier for surveillance if flat markers are used
- Drainage is needed to northern property line in the wet season
- Surrey Centre Cemetery is too small for a crematorium and separate religious sections
- A combination of both plans is good
- Would like completed sidewalk to Bell Road
- Cemetery should be well hedged and have a dignified design to discourage dog walkers and vandalism
- Open space is good to encourage visibility
- Concerns about poor drainage along the north border
- Focus on veterans area
- Focus on history
- More benches and a picnic area desirable
- Continued focus on Veterans graves and history

If you are considering interment at the Surrey Centre Cemetery, which options are/would you consider for yourself or others?

Casket Burial: burial in a traditional grave	4
Cremation: interment in an urn placed in a columbarium niche	3
Cremation: interment in a cremation lot	6
Cremation: interment in an existing family grave	10
Cremation: interment in an ossuary (vessel for comingled remains)	0
Cremation: scattering (scattering garden)	4
Cremation: scattering (at a location outside of a cemetery)	3
Green Burial: burial in a grave in a naturalized setting	1

Please check those items below that you think should be considered as part of future plans for the cemeteries:

Areas designated for specific faith groups or religions	5
More seating	11
Upright headstones	3
Community Gathering Space	6
Community events	4
Heritage interpretation	7
Cremation: scattering (at a location outside of a cemetery)	6
Green Burial: burial in a grave in a naturalized setting	5