

DATE OF MEETING June 19, 2023

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SUBJECT PARK AVENUE CONCEPT PLAN - 933 PARK AVENUE (DRAFT - JUNE 2023) - LAND USE OPTIONS

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report

To present land use options for the Park Avenue Concept Plan - 933 Park Avenue (Draft - June 2023) for Council consideration, and to receive direction to proceed with Phase Two consultation.

Recommendation

That Council receive the Draft Park Avenue Concept Plan - 933 Park Avenue (Draft - June 2023) and direct Staff to proceed with a Phase Two public review and input process.

BACKGROUND

The property at 933 Park Avenue was purchased by the City of Nanaimo in 2019 to meet several complementary community benefits identified by Nanaimo Foodshare Society (NFS) and City Staff. *“NFS and City Staff have identified a number of potential uses. These may include food production, a farmers market, wetland restoration, public nature park, and affordable housing. All of these uses would be further investigated through a public planning process should Council decide to acquire the Property.”* The property purchase was funded from the City Property Acquisition General Fund to support affordable housing on two acres, and from the City’s Parks Development Cost Charge Fund, to facilitate community recreation, environmental protection, and food security on the remaining three acres.

A consultation process to guide the development of a Concept Plan for the property at 933 Park Avenue began in the summer of 2022. The phase one community engagement included a guided site tour and charrette workshop to gather input from community members and representatives from other interested parties. A link to the phase one community engagement report is in Attachment A.

At this time the NFS currently has a licence to use a portion of the property as an education centre, community garden, and urban farm (including operating a farm stand for food and produce sales and farm tours) until 2023-DEC-31. The existing house on the property has been rented to a family.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of the draft Concept Plan is to guide the future park use and improvements for the benefit of the immediate and wider community. Guiding principles for the draft Concept Plan were drawn from community engagement; Council’s objectives for purchasing the property; the City

Plan: Nanaimo ReImagined; the Harewood Neighbourhood Plan; and, the Five Acres Farm Project: Land Use & Environmental Planning Report (MABRRI, 2018).

The Park Avenue Concept Plan - 933 Park Avenue (Draft - June 2023) contains four land use options for consideration, with variations being primarily related to the location and extent of the proposed affordable housing parcel (Attachment B). The draft Concept Plan outlines six goals:

1. **Protection of the Natural Environment** (protect the wetland, arable land, heritage trees)
2. **Recreation** (passive recreation including trails, gathering space, nature play area)
3. **Food Security** (small scale farming, community market, workshops)
4. **Affordable Housing** (ground-oriented townhouse units, maximum three storeys)
5. **Education** (agriculture and food related education and gathering opportunities)
6. **Connectivity** (neighbourhood pedestrian and bike path connections)

Assessing the Four Land Use Options

A preliminary analysis of the pros and cons of the four draft Concept Plan land use options is provided in Attachment C. The analysis is based on the City's policy and bylaw requirements in relation to the parcel at 933 Park Avenue. To accommodate affordable housing, it is anticipated that a rezoning and development permit application would be required, as well as subdividing any future area for housing from the parent parcel. When reviewing a proposed rezoning, development permit and subdivision application, compliance with the following policies and bylaws is required: *City Plan – Nanaimo Re-Imagined*, General Development Permit Area Guidelines, Zoning Bylaw, and Subdivision Control Bylaw (including the City's Manual of Engineering Specifications and Standards – MOESS).

City Plan – Nanaimo ReImagined

The property at 933 Park Avenue is designated 'Suburban Neighbourhood'. In the 'Suburban Neighbourhood' designation ground-oriented multi-unit dwellings are supported including triplex, fourplex, and townhouses, to a maximum of three stories.

General Development Permit Area (DPA) Guidelines

The following are relevant DPA guidelines that should be considered when assessing a parcel's suitability for proposed affordable housing use:

- "A presence or prominence of homes or businesses on the street contributes to the security of the public and results in a blending of the edge between public spaces and private spaces. Designers can position units, windows, and entries, and prescribe paths of movement and areas of activity so as to strengthen the building's relationship with the street. This makes the street an interesting and secure urban space."
- "To ensure infill development in existing neighbourhoods contributes to the preservation of neighbourhood character. To preserve and protect existing neighbourhood identity, the design of new construction must complement and be sensitive to the neighbourhood context. Building setbacks, height and building character should respect existing adjacent development forms to create an integrated streetscape."
- "Development of a walkway network is encouraged that provides access to important onset and off-site destinations."
- "Building mass should be compatible with adjacent buildings and the streetscape."

- “Entrances should front on main streets and be emphasized by building design”
- “Building heights should be designed in consideration of views from overlooking properties, access to sunlight of adjacent properties, and provide for privacy from overlooking adjacent uses.”

Zoning Bylaw

The parcel is currently zoned Single Dwelling Residential (R1). To achieve the land use objectives of the City Plan ‘Suburban Neighbourhood’ designation a rezoning to Low Density Residential (R6) is recommended. The R6 zone provides for a mixture of low density ground-oriented multi-unit developments on lots compatible with other residential development in the area. The minimum parcel size in the R6 zone is 1500m², and the parcel frontage is required to be 15m, and the parcel depth is required to be 30m.

Subdivision Control Bylaw (and MOESS)

When reviewing a proposed new parcel, the Approving Officer considers factors such as driveway access, land use, parcel shape, environmental impacts, and servicing. During the review of a proposed new parcel it is typical to expect adjustments to proposed property lines to accommodate for new information that arises in the review process, and to ensure the best design for the long term. For example, a large sanitary sewer main runs from Alpen Way to Boardwalk Avenue, that would be costly to move, thus must be considered when reviewing proposed new parcel lines and building footprints. Note that with all four proposed land use options road frontage improvements along property frontage(s) may be required, in accordance with the MOESS, potentially impacting some land area along the frontage(s) of the parcel.

Next Steps

Staff are recommending that Council receive the Draft Park Avenue Concept Plan - 933 Park Avenue (Draft - June 2023), and direct Staff to proceed with a phase two public review and input process. Following the phase two review and input process a revised Concept Plan will be presented to Council for consideration of endorsement.

OPTIONS

1. That Council receive and endorse the Park Avenue Concept Plan - 933 Park Avenue (Draft - June 2023) and direct Staff to proceed with a phase two public review and input process.
 - The advantage of this option: Allows Council an opportunity to confirm the proposed land uses in the draft Concept Plan prior to proceeding with the Phase Two public review and input process. The land uses in the draft Concept Plan reflect the intention for purchasing the property to achieve several community benefits. The proposed lands uses are consistent with the *City Plan: Nanaimo Re-imagined* goals and land use designations.
 - The disadvantage of this option: Council may wish to eliminate one or more of the land use options in the draft Concept Plan prior to proceeding with the Phase Two public review and input process.
 - Financial Implications: The Phase Two public review and input process for the draft Park Avenue Concept Plan is within the City’s 2023 budget.

2. That Council provide alternative direction on the proposed land uses in the Draft Park Avenue Concept Plan – 933 Park Avenue (June 2023).
- The advantages of this option: Allows Council to provide alternate direction regarding the proposed land uses for the property at 933 Park Avenue prior to proceeding with the Phase Two community engagement on the draft Concept Plan.
 - The disadvantages of this option: Further changes to the draft Concept Plan will require additional resources to amend the draft, and delay opportunities for community engagement on the draft Concept Plan.
 - Financial Implications: The lands at 933 Park Avenue were purchased following Council direction, using funds from different City sources related to the community needs the lands were intended to support. Changes to the proposed land uses in the draft Concept Plan may require a change to the City's financial reporting and assignment of funds used to purchase the property.

SUMMARY POINTS

- The property at 933 Park Avenue was purchased by the City of Nanaimo in 2019 to meet several complementary community benefits.
- During the summer of 2022, a public engagement process (involving community members and other interested parties) was completed to inform a draft concept plan for City-owned land at 933 Park Avenue.
- Based on public input, Council objectives for purchasing the site, and supporting policy documents, a draft Concept Plan has been completed with four land use options for the affordable housing site.
- Staff are recommending that Council receive and endorse the Park Avenue Concept Plan - 933 Park Avenue (Draft - June 2023) and direct Staff to proceed with a Phase Two public review and input process.

ATTACHMENTS:

ATTACHMENT A: Link to Park Avenue (933 Park Avenue) Engagement Summary
ATTACHMENT B: Park Avenue Concept Plan - 933 Park Avenue (Draft - June 2023)
ATTACHMENT C: Review of Land Use Options in the Draft Park Avenue Concept Plan |

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