

Park Avenue Concept Plan

DRAFT - June 2023

CITY OF NANAIMO
THE HARBOUR CITY





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INTRODUCTION

In 2019, the City of Nanaimo purchased 933 Park Avenue to meet several complementary community benefits. This property is designated Suburban Neighbourhood in City Plan – Nanaimo Reimagined (City Plan), and is identified as a potential park in the Harewood Neighbourhood Plan.

BACKGROUND

The property at 933 Park Avenue lies within the Traditional Territory of the Snuneymuxw First Nation who have many significant ancestral village sites through the city. In 1863, Captain Horace Douglas Lascelles and Dr. Alfred Robson Benson purchased 9,000 acres of Crown land in the area and formed the Harewood Coal Company. Settlement in Harewood began in 1886, when Samuel Roberts of the Vancouver Island Coal Mining and Land Company subdivided this area into five acre parcels so the company's miners could provide for their families. The park site is one of the last remaining 5-acre parcels in the neighbourhood with approximately a third of the property serving as a natural wetland. The farming legacy has continued on this parcel through operations by private owners and community groups.



Figure 1: Site Map | 933 Park Avenue

PARK GOALS

The following park goals were identified by the neighbourhood residents, interest groups and City staff in the engagement process as community priorities for uses on the site.

1 Protection of the Natural Environment

2 Recreation

3 Food Security

4 Affordable Housing

5 Education

6 Connectivity

COMMUNITY VISION STATEMENTS:

A place where people with diverse abilities can live, grow, and feed their communities while celebrating our shared histories and environment.

Family friendly environment that supports local food production and education positive by integrating service, space, and residences more deeply.

This will remain a working farm and historic site that keeps the historic significance in place, recognize Indigenous values, food, medicine and provide education and food sovereignty for the community.

A green space, preserved for community use that meets the needs for residents and also provides a mitigating effect for inevitable climate change through preservation of wetlands and wild spaces, with agricultural land preserved secondarily.

Park Ave Park is a community gathering place that inspires celebration and diverse engagement to establish a valued and sustaining healthy relationship with food and well being.

A gathering place promoting community and sharing.

A community farm, where the soil, land, water, plants and animals and the human community work together to enhance food sovereignty for each new generation to come.

5 acre park serves as a place for the community to come together to connect with biodiversity and community diversity.

The Five Acres Farm can be a community gathering place that promotes and educates the public on food security issues through hands on learning.

PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

As part of the public engagement for this project, a guided site tour and community charrette was held in August 2022 at 933 Park Avenue (the project site) and Park Avenue Elementary School. The intent of the community charrette was to gather input on guiding principles and site recommendations from the surrounding community and organizations which currently utilize the site. In addition, City Staff were consulted and background research was reviewed to support the Park Avenue Concept Plan Options (Figure 3).

Supporting documents included:

- City Plan,
- Harewood Neighbourhood Plan,
- Five Acres Farm Project: Land Use & Environmental Planning (MABRRI, 2018)

What did we hear?

31

Participants

- 17 Neighbourhood Residents
- 1 from Nanaimo Association for Community Living
- 2 from Growing Opportunities Farm Community Co-op
- 3 from Vancouver Island University
- 2 from Nanaimo Foodshare Society
- 1 from Nanaimo Community Gardens Society
- 1 from Snuneymuxw First Nation
- 3 from Harewood Neighbourhood Association
- 1 from Nanaimo and Area Land Trust

PARK RECOMMENDATIONS

1

Protection of Natural Environment - The site's natural assets are highly valued by the community.

- The existing wetland on site should be protected and enhanced to preserve habitat and hydrological functions
- Arable land is an important site feature that should be protected to allow for continued agricultural activities
- Heritage fruit and nut trees are significant to the agricultural and cultural heritage of the site

2

Passive Recreation - Participation in physical, social, intellectual, creative, and spiritual pursuits that enhance individual and community wellbeing. The following are desirable features to support passive recreational opportunities for the site:

- Trails • Boardwalks • Viewing Platforms • Educational Tours • Educational Signage
- Public Washroom • Public Gathering Space • Public Seating • Nature Play

3

Food Security - Agriculture will continue to be a key pillar of this site. Agriculture plays a central role in the site's identity and benefits of agriculture are highly valued by the surrounding community.

Continue to cultivate agricultural activities on site by providing education and supporting infrastructure for the following:

- Small-scale mixed farming
- Community Plots
- Edible landscapes and food forests
- Innovative farm initiatives
- Permaculture
- Demonstration growing plots
- Indigenous food systems
- Small-scale food processing
- Growing heritage breeds (fruits, nuts, vegetables, livestock)
- Workshops and programs
- Market

4

Affordable Housing - The property at 933 Park Avenue is designated 'Suburban Neighbourhood' in the City Plan: Nanaimo Relmaged. In 'Suburban Neighbourhood', ground-oriented multi-unit dwellings are supported including triplex, fourplex, and townhouses to a maximum of three stories. Residential units are proposed, on a reduced footprint to preserve arable land and to preserve the site's natural assets. The design of the residential development should offer opportunities for interaction with activities in the park, and provide linkages to the park and surrounding community. The building design should complement the neighbourhood, and amenities such as a common kitchen and common work areas should be considered.



5

Education - The site is intended to provide opportunities for community engagement education, and to expand existing initiatives that seek to improve access to local food knowledge. Infrastructure to support workshops, programs, tours, and community gatherings should be considered as key aspects of the site design.

Common educational themes or ideas this site has the potential to explore

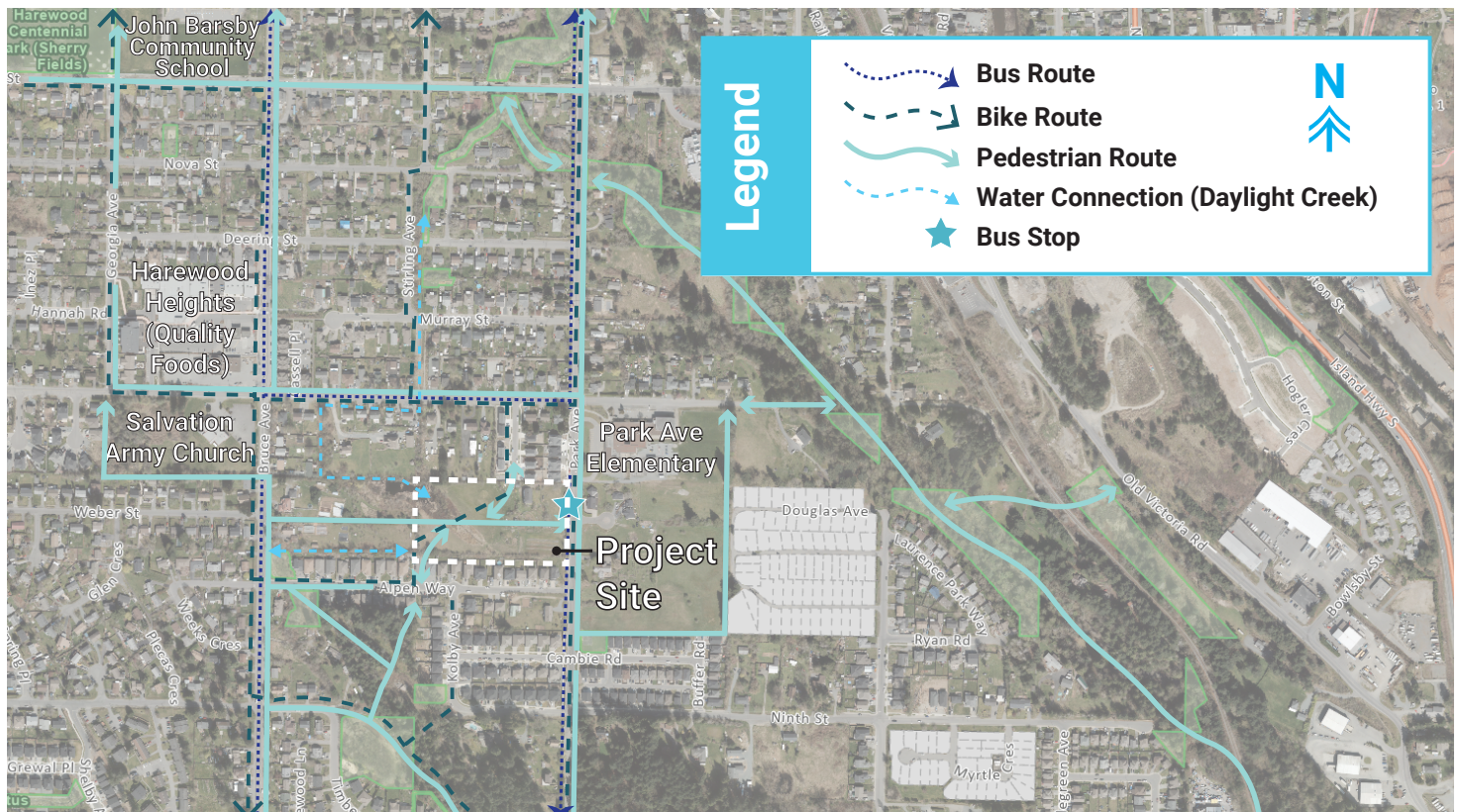
- Soil Science
- Ecological Restoration
- History of Harewood
- Heirloom Plants
- Indigenous Histories
- Biodiversity
- Indigenous Food Systems
- Gardening
- Heritage Breeds
- Pollinators
- Photography and Art
- Farming Best Practices (water & soil conservation, crop rotation, cultivars, water management)
- Integrated and Sustainable Housing
- Salmon Habitat Protection
- Animal Husbandry
- Wetland Ecology and Hydrology
- Community Network and Partnerships
- Seed Saving and Libraries
- Nutrition
- Programming (food shares, food stays, classes, workshops, tours, daycamps, field trips)
- Food Processing and Preparation (cooking, canning, pickling, curing)

Connectivity - The site provides an opportunity to improve neighbourhood connectivity for ecological and active transportation systems.

Improve ecological and active transportation-based forms of connectivity and accommodate varying transportation modes (i.e. car, bike, pedestrian travel), including:

- Provide site connections to existing bike lanes and existing trails
- Ensure perimeter sidewalks connect to existing walking routes
- Provide public access to the site at Boardwalk Ave and Allies Place
- Examine opportunities to acquire land adjacent to the Chase River and Cat Stream to form a more robust ecological network that connects to the existing wetland on site
- Provide connectivity to shopping, schools and nearby parks











Figure 2: Site Connectivity



PARK AVENUE CONCEPT PLAN

A concept plan with four options was designed to capture the Park Goals and site recommendations identified by Nanaimo Foodshare Society and city staff when the property was initially purchased and by the neighbourhood residents and interest groups during Phase One of the engagement process.



- | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|
|  | Grand pedestrian entrance to park |  | Park Ave sidewalk & parallel parking |
|  | Potential agriculture area |  | Conceptual Pavilion & Washroom Building |
|  | Boardwalk with view deck, signage & benches |  | Nature playground (all ages) |
|  | Trail with signage & benches |  | Existing heritage fruit & nut trees to be protected & preserved where possible |
|  | Agricultural area |  | Affordable housing site |

Option One













- Grand pedestrian entrance to park
- Potential agriculture area
- Boardwalk with view deck, signage & benches
- Trail with signage & benches
- Agricultural area

- Park Ave sidewalk & parallel parking
- Conceptual Pavilion & Washroom Building
- Nature playground (all ages)
- Existing heritage fruit & nut trees to be protected & preserved where possible
- Affordable housing site

Option Two



- | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|
|  | Grand pedestrian entrance to park |  | Park Ave sidewalk & parallel parking |
|  | Potential agriculture area |  | Conceptual Pavilion & Washroom Building |
|  | Boardwalk with view deck, signage & benches |  | Nature playground (all ages) |
|  | Trail with signage & benches |  | Existing heritage fruit & nut trees to be protected & preserved where possible |
|  | Agricultural area |  | Affordable housing site |

Option Three



1 acre
Affordable
Housing Site
(Conceptual)

- Grand pedestrian entrance to park
- Potential agriculture area
- Boardwalk with view deck, signage & benches
- Trail with signage & benches
- Agricultural area

- Park Ave sidewalk & parallel parking
- Conceptual Pavilion & Washroom Building
- Nature playground (all ages)
- Existing heritage fruit & nut trees to be protected & preserved where possible
- Affordable housing site

Option Four