

ATTACHMENT A

933 Park Avenue Concept Plan

January 2025



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1.0 PLAN OVERVIEW

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Concept Plan represents the collective vision for the property at 933 Park Avenue, and guides the park use and improvements for the benefit of the immediate and wider community.

1.2 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 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.

1.3 SITE CONTEXT

The property at 933 Park Avenue (see Figure 1) is located in the Harewood neighbourhood, and has an area of ~20,221 m². The neighbourhood is comprised of ground-oriented residential homes and an elementary school to the northeast.

Figure 1: Site Map | 933 Park Avenue



1.4 CITY PLAN CONTEXT

City Plan: Nanaimo Reimagined and its associated Integrated Action Plan were developed between 2020 and 2022 to guide strategic priorities over the next 25 years. Food security, protection of natural assets, health and wellness, accessibility and inclusion, and the development of partnerships, are all identified priorities. Furthermore, the integrated action plan identifies finalizing the 933 Park Ave Concept Plan including consideration of affordable housing (Priority 77), supporting infrastructure required for food production (priority 85), and implementing food production at 933 Park Ave through partnerships (priority 90).

1.5 GOALS

The 933 Park Avenue Concept Plan is built on five goals that were identified by neighbourhood residents, and interest groups as community priorities.

- 1 Protection of the Natural Environment
- 2 Food Security
- 3 Passive Recreation
- 4 Education
- 5 Connectivity

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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 and enhanced to allow for continued agricultural activities
- Heritage fruit and nut trees are significant to the agricultural and cultural heritage of the site

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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

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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

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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/natural asset knowledge. Infrastructure to support workshops, programs, tours, and community gatherings should be considered as key aspects of the site design.

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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





2.0 ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

The concept plan was informed by two community engagement processes. The purpose of the first community engagement process was to identify the park goals for the conceptual plan. A guided site tour and charette was held to gather input from community members and organizations that utilize the site. The results of the engagement, which are outlined in the Phase 1 Park Avenue Engagement Summary, included recommending the five park goals listed in Section 1.4.

The second community engagement process sought feedback on five concept plan options. A collaborative meeting, online survey and open house were held. The results included the community identifying the preferred 933 Park Avenue Concept Plan shown in Section 3.0. For more information, refer to the Park Avenue Phase 2 Engagement Summary.



3.0 PARK AVENUE CONCEPT PLAN

The 933 Park Avenue Concept Plan (see Figure 2) represents the community's collective vision for how the land will be used. The concept plan was designed to capture the goals and site recommendations identified by the neighbourhood residents and interest groups during the engagement process.

Key features of the plan include a grand pedestrian entrance to the park with a sidewalk and parking along Park Avenue. A trail with signage and benches weaves through the park connecting the grand entrance to Boardwalk Avenue and Allies Place. A conceptual pavilion, educational area, washroom building and nature playground is proposed to be located in the centre of the parcel. The western portion of the property includes two potential agriculture areas nestled on either side of the protected wetland and connected by a boardwalk with view deck, signage and benches. Existing heritage fruit and nut trees found on the site are proposed to be preserved where possible. A potential future road is anticipated along the northern half of the property to improve mobility connectivity. See Schedule A for a large version of the Park Avenue



Figure 2: 933 Park Avenue Concept Plan



Legend

- Grand pedestrian entrance to park
- Potential agriculture area
- Boardwalk with view deck, signage & benches
- Trail with signage & benches
- Existing heritage fruit & nut trees to be protected & preserved where possible
- Park Ave sidewalk & parking
- Potential Pavilion and Washroom
- Nature playground (all ages)
- Agricultural area and/or future recreation/open space



4.0 IMPLEMENTATION

Implementing the concept plan will take time and require both capital and operational funding. The actions identified below are organized into three categories based on the anticipated level of funding that will be required. They include: ongoing, immediate and future. It is anticipated actions will be brought forward annually during capital planning processes.

Ongoing Actions (ongoing and repeated)

Relationship Building

Timeframe	Ongoing
Rationale	To meet plan goals in collaboration with community partners. The City will require community partners to farm the site, maintain some site elements and provide education programs.
Scope	Market opportunities at the site to various non-profit, community groups, Vancouver Island University and School District 68 to develop programs for site activities and programs. Activities could be carried out under the Partners in Parks program and through various other partnership and funding agreements.

Education

Timeframe	Ongoing
Rationale	To meet plan goals of education, the site will provide opportunities for community engagement, education, and expand existing initiatives that seek to improve access to local food/natural asset knowledge.
Scope	Continued development of partnerships and programs to involve the community in continued education regarding natural assets and urban agriculture.

Immediate Actions (0 - 4 years)

A series of early implementation projects (within 0 – 4 years) are recommended and detailed below (in no particular order). These early implementation priorities are identified for their ability to:

- Proceed in the short-term;
- Provide quick action on community priorities identified in the consultation process;
- Facilitate public access to the site; and
- Order of magnitude costs are lower.

Redesignating and Rezoning the Site

Timeframe	Within 2 years
Rationale	To align the use with City Plan: Nanaimo Reimagined and the Zoning Bylaw.
Scope	Redesignating the Future Land Use Designation from Suburban Neighbourhood to Parks and Open Spaces and rezone the site from R1 to a park zone.

Arrival Signage

Timeframe	Within 2 years
Rationale	To encourage safe public access and clarify that it's City owned site rather than private property.
Scope	Place arrival signage at entrances off Boardwalk Avenue and Allies Place. This will help to create a grand entrance and indicate that this is a public site.

Growing Partnerships Agreements

Timeframe	Within 2 years
Rationale	To increase urban agricultural productivity of the site and achieve the plan goal of urban agriculture and food security.
Scope	Develop and procure expressions of interest within the urban agriculture and non-profit community to secure operators for urban agricultural activities as identified on the concept plan – Figure 2.

Water Infrastructure Expansion

Timeframe	Within 2 years
Rationale	Site water infrastructure is not adequate to support expanded urban agricultural activities.
Scope	Install and enhance site water infrastructure needed to support successful urban agriculture and food security site activities.

House Removal

Timeframe	Within 2 years
Rationale	Housing is not a recommended site goal and no forms of housing are shown on the concept plan map.
Scope	Demolish existing house to open up additional area for urban agriculture activities and passive recreation.

Site Preparation

Timeframe	Within 2 years
Rationale	To open the site to the public in a safe manner that also improves crime prevention through environmental design and facilitates urban agriculture.
Scope	Remove scrub vegetation on the expanded 2 acres of land slated for urban agriculture. Grade and ameliorate soil as needed for future growing activities. Perimeter fencing may be needed in some locations.

Public Trail Access through the Site (Pedestrian)

Timeframe	Within 2 years
Rationale	To open the site up to the public in a safe manner and achieve plan goal of passive recreation.
Scope	Install trail (200m soft surface trail and 50m boardwalk) from Park Ave to Allies Place including the grand pedestrian entrance. Site furniture, and split rail fencing will be integrated and universal accessibility will be prioritized.

Public Access to the Site (Multi-Modal Transportation)

Timeframe	Within 4 years
Rationale	To open the site to the public in a safe manner and achieve plan goal of passive recreation and food security.
Scope	Design and create safe parking along Park Avenue for vehicles and bikes. Ensure safe pedestrian access to the site from the school and neighbourhood.

Info Kiosk and Interpretive Signage

Timeframe	Within 4 years
Rationale	Create gathering and informational spaces and achieve plan goal of education.
Scope	Develop and install signage about the site, its history, physical and unique features, natural assets, and food security activities and issues.

Natural Asset Management Plan

Timeframe	Within 4 years
Rationale	To protect the natural environment as identified in the plan, operational activities and monitoring must be planned out. This is especially important as more public access occurs and more development happens in the surrounding neighbourhood.
Scope	Develop a management plan and operation activities to ensure continued preservation of the wetland and it's important habitat and hydrologic functions

Significant, Heritage and Fruit/Nut Tree Plans

Timeframe	Within 4 years
Rationale	To protect the natural environment and key site features.
Scope	Complete an inventory and tree management plan to protect significant site trees, direct operational tree activities, and ensure long term tree health. Plan will include inspection, pruning and gleaning requirements and responsibilities.

Future Actions (beyond 4 years)

Long-term actions are those requiring greater capital investment and detailed design. These items will likely be implemented over a longer timeframe (beyond 4 years) and include:

- Completion of the trail and boardwalk through the wetland to complete loop connection to Boardwalk Place. Boardwalk may include viewing deck, signage and benches.
- Consideration of site renaming in accordance to the City of Nanaimo's Naming Parks and Facilities Policy Statement.
- Consideration of market and community education areas.
- Consideration and design of a washroom/pavilion.
- Consideration and design of nature play area.
- Consideration of an outdoor classroom area.
- Contemplation of off-site connectivity opportunities as identified in the plan.
- Consideration off-site natural asset connectivity in future acquisition strategies.