



Shared
ServicesBC

RIVERVIEW TREE COLLECTION VISION BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY REPORT

June 29, 2006

Introduction

As part of its commitments relating to the City of Coquitlam's approval of Cottonwood Lodge, Accommodation and Real Estate Services (ARES – formerly BCBC), Shared Services BC, Ministry of Labour and Citizens' Services engaged in a formal process to develop a vision for the collection of trees (the collection) on the Riverview Lands.

The goal of the vision is two-fold:

- To protect and enhance the status and value of the collection in perpetuity.
- To inform any future land planning or change in use processes.

The vision and principles presented in this report are to be considered as "working" until comments from the City of Coquitlam, the general public, government agencies and appropriate special interest groups, are considered.

The collection is defined as:

Trees as initially identified in the 2006 Tree Inventory on the Riverview Lands and, that are considered within the context of/relationship with forested areas, green spaces, watercourses, landscape features and buildings.

This document provides an overview of the process, key issues considered, the working vision statement, and supporting principles. It also provides an overview of core elements associated with the future implementation of the vision.

Background

One of the most spectacular and prized elements of the Riverview Lands is its collection of trees. There are more than 1,800 unique tree specimens, some dating back to the site's initial development in the early 1900s.

The collection's obvious beauty and grandeur is what attracts admirers and inspires advocates. However, to date, the value of the collection and its attraction have been largely anecdotal and championed primarily by community special interest groups. Plantings have been ad hoc and unconnected to any larger plan or vision.

This can be attributed in part to the fact that the collection is located on the Riverview Hospital site, an operational institutional facility and private property, owned and operated by the provincial government.

As the hospital has been downsizing and the future use of the land is unclear, the importance of formally addressing the collection and its future has increased. To date, advocacy work has been primarily focused on the health of the trees and their protection (and the land they live on) from development. ARES has responded to these concerns and has been working

to improve the health of the collection and assure its longevity, which includes its enhancement.

Key to protecting and enhancing the collection is the development of a vision statement and supporting plan to sustain the collection and preserve its value as it ages and evolves. To that end, ARES retained Dr. Julian Dunster, an International Society of Arboriculture-certified arborist, to begin this work in consultation with a community-based working group.

The first step in the process was to consider the collection in relation to others around the world within its historical context, its composition (e.g., rarity and specimen quality) and the regional, provincial and national significance of the trees.

Dr. Dunster's assessment determined the value of the collection to be rooted in the relationship of the significant trees to the site; its buildings (historical and others); the landscape and natural features, as well as to the patients who live there. This relationship is formally referred to as a working landscape.

Following the assessment work, a Tree Collection Vision Working Group was formed to create a draft vision for the tree collection and to consider the required supporting plans and tools.

The vision follows through on the findings of the assessment – working landscape – as it provides a niche and appropriate showcase for the collection, building on its value and allowing the evolution of the lands to unfold without compromising the collection.

Vision Statement

The Riverview Lands tree collection will be the North American premier representation of significant trees within a working landscape.

This will be accomplished by continuing the relationship of the trees with the surrounding landscape and buildings and by enhancing the tree collection's diversity, honouring its history, embracing its therapeutic values, and supporting its educational role, in perpetuity.

The following presents a discussion of the process, working vision and principles, and required supporting elements.

Methodology

The development of the vision statement was a collaborative effort between ARES and community-based special interest groups, supported by outside expertise. The vision statement development process began in October 2005 and was completed in June 2006.

The process was discussion-driven with an initial identification of issues, opportunities and desires/goals. Principles were developed based on input and the group worked to refine and define them in alignment with the values, goals and assessment findings. In tandem with the discussion of principles, some of the elements required to implement and achieve them were also identified. Development of these elements was not undertaken as part of this phase of work.

Working Committee Participants

- Members of the Riverview Natural Heritage Stewardship Advisory Group¹;
- Representatives from the City of Coquitlam, Parks & Recreation and the University of British Columbia; and,
- A private citizen (retired architect)

Process

Collection Assessment

This work was undertaken by Dr. Julian Dunster. It included an inventory and review of Riverview's tree collection, comparison with other major collections around the world, comparisons to collections found in similar settings and climates, and research of types of collections. A presentation of his findings was made to the Riverview Natural Heritage Stewardship Advisory Group in September 2005.

Issue Identification

In October 2005, the working group began by developing project parameters and capturing words, thoughts and statements by responding to three key questions:

- 1) What defines the trees as special?
- 2) What are your concerns related to the trees?
- 3) What key ideas would you like to be considered for the vision?

The words captured were grouped into four categories (determined by the words themselves) to assist with streamlining and focusing discussions. Categories: Collection Role; Protection (from); Governance; and, Land Use.

During this phase, the ultimate delivery of the vision was discussed and included format, audiences and marketing.

¹ Burke Mountain Naturalists, Riverview Horticultural Centre Society, ARES BC, WSI-BLJC.

Development of Principles

An extensive list of principles for the categories of collection role and protection were developed reflecting input from the issue identification phase. It was determined that principles for the categories of governance and land use could not be developed given that these two categories would be driven and determined by the final tree collection vision and future planning efforts. However, key issues and thoughts from these two categories were considered during the development of collection role and protection principles.

Over the course of three workshops, the working group refined the principles, discussed issues and opportunities, defined parameters and associated required elements (such as master tree management plan).

Vision Statement Development

Based on principles and their parameters, a working vision statement was developed for discussion and comment. It was approved by the working group at the final workshop in May 2006 and subsequently endorsed by ARES in June 2006.

Key Issues

As the working group meetings proceeded, a number of key issues were discussed and considered. They are reflected in the principles and associated parameters and elements, and will influence delivery and next steps, as appropriate.

The following provides a brief discussion of the core issues.

Open vistas and views are an important context point of trees.

Part of the collection's beauty is the environment in which they are showcased. This includes not only the immediate environment (such as buildings, slopes and roadways) but also the surrounding area, such as the mountains and the Fraser Valley.

Natural open-grown trees are important specimens.

Whether it is as the result of neglect or deliberate non-intervention, there are a number of specimen trees that have been allowed to mature in an open-grown setting. This has played a significant role in the value of the collection. Frequently, specimen trees in parks public & private settings elsewhere are pruned or manipulated to mimic what is considered to be the desired form.

Planting for sake of numbers is counterproductive to core principles.

Given the importance attached to the open-grown specimens, the relationship of the trees to buildings, landscape and natural areas, it was determined that planting for the sake of amassing volume could undermine

those relationships and the ability to retain open-grown specimens simply due to space constraints.

Need to enhance collection, not just protect it.

It is acknowledged that the collection is aging and, in some cases, the trees are nearing the end of their lifecycle. While it is important to ensure the collection is protected during changes in use, new construction and regular site activities, it is also key to ensure that it continues to evolve and improve.

Natural areas, while connected, will be addressed under a separate project.

Natural areas have been considered equal to that of buildings (heritage and other) and roadways. While the relationship between the two is considered and protected, it requires a separate piece of work/commitment to ensure the unique needs are addressed. The natural areas work will be influenced by and connected to the tree collection's vision and principles.

History and therapeutic values are key to the "spirit" of the collection.

Both the history and therapeutic values are not immediately visually recognizable to a visitor viewing the collection, but it is acknowledged that the collection itself was founded largely with the intention of providing therapeutic benefit to patients. The site itself is rich with history and the trees are fundamental to that. The spirit of the collection will need to be developed and portrayed as part of that delivery.

Trees need active management.

Trees are living things and they get sick, injured and age. Therefore, they require active management. Active management can range from a conscious decision to do nothing to providing extensive intervention. A decision-making matrix should be developed that considers the age and condition of the tree, its location, potential for other uses (e.g., wildlife habitat), costs and representation in the collection (e.g., singular or multiple specimens).

Doing what is best for the tree should be at the heart of the management plan.

As a tree ages or becomes injured (e.g., through windstorms) its management should be driven by what is best for the tree; whether it be partial or complete removal, minimal or significant intervention or no action. This issue is linked to the active management and the decision-making matrix discussed above.

Balance is required between public access and impact.

While the desire to share the collection with the general public is strong, it is recognized that the potential related negative impacts must be considered. Impacts include: increased risk to trees and people (need for increased intervention); pressure on root systems; and, effects on natural areas. Complete open public access was not considered optimal; it was agreed that any level of public access should be managed due to potential impacts (roots, sampling).

Baseline information and record keeping is of significant value.

Data – historical and current – has an important role in understanding the collection's value, determining how best to enhance it and to provide data to inform other collections in the region.

Collection is aging and succession planning is important.

Given the importance of views, open-grown specimens and building relationships, it is important to consider the location of plantings as well as the species.

Need to ensure understanding of "spirit" of vision/intent for future generations who may manage the collection.

At the heart of the vision is a passion for the collection of trees. The vision was developed largely by a working group of individuals who are intimately familiar with the tree collection and its relationship to the lands. It was felt that a statement alone cannot do justice to the spirit or intent of vision. Therefore, delivery of the vision will be as important as the vision itself.

Future use of lands unknown; vision needs strength and grounding to help contextualize or develop future use.

At present, the future of the lands is unknown. What is known is that there will be change. The vision statement must be attainable, reasonable and allow for some change to occur, or risk being set aside or ignored when it matters most.

The term "working landscape" is not well understood.

In some cases, the term, "working landscape" could be interpreted as forestry. The group enforced the need to be careful to always define and reflect the intent of the term. At the heart of the definition/positioning is the relationship of the trees to the site elements.

Vision Statement: Discussion

A vision statement presents the desired future state or ultimate goal. It is the destination that serves as a beacon. It should be attainable and have clear parameters and goals associated with it.

The Riverview Lands Tree Collection Working Vision is:

The Riverview Lands tree collection will be the North American premier representation of significant trees within a working landscape.

This will be accomplished by continuing the relationship of the trees with the surrounding landscape and buildings and by enhancing the tree collection's diversity, honouring its history, embracing its therapeutic values, and supporting its educational role, in perpetuity.

The issues presented earlier in this paper were considered in the development of the vision. It is recognized that, while the collection is seen as spectacular, it has not achieved the goal of being able to be referred to as “premier.” Future work will be required to ensure that not only does the collection reflect that vision but also that communications and marketing efforts provide support and create the “cachet” required.

Principles

Principles were prepared to help guide the creation of the vision. They represent the fundamentals that are to be considered and/or followed as work to further develop and deliver the vision is undertaken.

Following each principle is a brief explanation to provide the context and enhance understanding. There is no hierarchy associated with the principles.

Recognize and continue the site’s working landscape theme.

- Influence on placement of new trees.
- Influence on form, mass and placement of new buildings/structures.
- Influence on future uses.

Recognize that the composition of the collection and its relationship with site elements² creates a distinct sense of place with therapeutic and historical value, educational benefit and significant legacy.

- The collection and its relationship with site elements are what create a distinct sense of place.
- When on the lands, visitors “just know” they are somewhere different and distinct.
- It has presence.

Maintain historical integrity of the collection.

- Need to focus on the intent of the historical plantings.
- It is not solely about the age, type and form of the trees but their purpose and relationships.
- Data is key for future research and to help guide the collection’s evolution.

Collection is accessible for public viewing.

- Need to balance impact with access.
- Continued access level needs to be determined.
- Governance and land use decisions will influence the collection greatly.
- Collection should be viewed and enjoyed by the public.

Actively manage the tree collection following a comprehensive tree management plan (see Core Elements for more details).

- Planting should be planned and thoughtful: succession planning is required.

² Forested areas, green spaces, watercourses, buildings and landscape features.

- Use of the tree post life (e.g., wildlife habitat, education, social (woodworking)) should be considered.
- Quality and mature size of specimens to be considered.
- Trees and tree roots are actively protected at all times from potential damage – before, during and after any activity.
- Need to consider and plan for an evolving physical climate (e.g., climate, soil hydrology, infrastructure changes).
- Need to address Pest Management.

New plantings should complement site elements and continue the formal, gracious and working landscape.

- Keep open vistas for buildings (views to and views from).
- Take advantage of site topography + site views + scale.
- Consider/reflect historic record: factual and romantic, growth and evolution.
- Relationship to other site elements needs to be respected and continued.
- Encourage landscaping (new plantings) to open-grown status.

Enhance and diversify the collection.

- Think beyond protecting collection.
- Build on what is existing, driven by the vision statement.
- Add what is under-represented.
- Do not over maximize or plant for the sake of planting. Need to consider other principles.
- New plantings should consider a diversity of species and origin.
- Succession planning required. Should link with tree inventory to address gaps.

Core Elements

As the issues and details of the principles were being considered, a number of core elements required to support the delivery or implementation of the working vision were identified. The following provides a high-level presentation of these elements. This list should not be considered as complete.

Tree Collection Management Plan

This comprehensive plan will be the overarching, long-term plan that reflects the intent of the vision and will include such topics as:

- Baseline data (inventory, context, historical information, environmental conditions)
- Tree maintenance and protection plans/parameters (connected to baseline)
- Succession planning (philosophy (criteria of a significant tree) + detailed five-year recommendations on type, location, other)
- Decision-making matrix (related to level of active management, retention as wildlife tree, other)
- Five-year detailed plan (pruning, cabling, focus areas)

- Pest Management plan (philosophy + five-year plan)
- Other

General Public Consultation/Involvement

Consideration needs to be given to timing and level of involvement of the general public in relation to the draft vision. Preliminary discussion of the working group suggest that, while the public should be consulted to determine if there are significant issues or concerns related to the draft vision, the ability to provide detailed input is limited, given the depth of work required to develop the vision.

Specific plans to deliver the working vision publicly and to other stakeholders will be developed.

City of Coquitlam Consultation/Involvement

ARES will develop an approach to engage the City of Coquitlam to ensure understanding and support of the vision.

Vision Delivery Plan

Once final, the vision will need to be delivered and implemented. This plan will map out the initial delivery steps. Detailed support plans, including the tree collection management plan as discussed above, will be required. In addition, communication and governance plans should be developed. Additional plans, not identified as yet, may also be required.

Definitions

As part of the delivery of the vision, clear definitions need to be developed for:

- Working Landscape
- Landscape
- Therapeutic
- Other

Cultural Landscape Report Linkage

A report on the cultural landscape values of the lands is being prepared. Links and opportunities relating to that report should be explored and integrated into the vision delivery plan as appropriate.