



## Considerations for Location of Park Space at Former Viscount Bennett Site (LOC2023-0359)

An application to redevelop the former Viscount Bennett Site (proposing a number of low, medium and high multi-residential buildings along with a 4,700 square metre public park in the north-west corner of the site) was submitted on November 17, 2023.

Through application review, we have heard from the Richmond Knob Hill Community Association that there is interest in utilizing the SW corner of the site as the designated park space as it is currently being used as a toboggan hill. This feedback was heard and a detailed analysis of potential park locations on the site was undertaken. Through the detailed analysis of potential park locations on the site, many additional factors for consideration were also highlighted through the review.

Although the SW corner provides an existing space for tobogganing, additional factors were also considered when looking at the best location for a park space on the site. For example:

- **Grade change:** Due to the grade of the land, the NW corner offers increased opportunities for year-round programming through various seasons.
- **Proximity to other parks and communities:** Locating the park space in the NW corner would create more distance from existing park on 30 Ave SW and therefore, improve access to park space for more people closer to the NW corner (including Richmond Road which is envisioned for increased density in the future). As more people are envisioned to live in closer proximity to the NW corner of the parcel in the future, this location will ensure there is more park space in closer proximity to more people.
- **Visibility:** Having more people live near park spaces means there are more eyes on the park spaces, which helps increase the safety of parks. As higher densities are envisioned closer to the NW corner, along Richmond Road, visibility and safety would be increased in this location.
- **Connectivity:** Locating the park in the NW corner provides improved connectivity to transit and a proposed multi-use pathway that connects through to the SE corner of the site. Being able to access the park in different ways in all seasons will also likely lead to increased use of the park for more people.

Although creating the park space in the NW corner will mean that the current hill used for tobogganing in the SW corner will be removed, the addition of an enhanced park space that is more accessible, visible, safe and usable year-round for more people is seen as an overall increased benefit for the community in the long term. For children and families who would like to continue to toboggan in the area, a toboggan hill is available in the 500 metres away from the current toboggan hill on this site, so there are still options for tobogganing close by.

For additional rationale and detail on each of the considerations bolded above, please review the detailed email below that was sent to the Richmond Knob Hill Community Association by the File Manager who is leading the application review.

**File: LOC2023-0359 (former Viscount Bennett site)**

**Date: November 11, 2024**

**RE: Response from File Manager to the Richmond Knob Hill Community Association on the location of proposed park space**

While we have provided our rationale for the location of the park at the in-person meeting on August 27, through an email dated September 12, as well as the on-site meeting this past Wednesday, please see below the summary of our rationale for the proposed park size and location.

We have heard and acknowledge your strong opinion on the park space location, and have taken your comments into consideration. We understand your perspective, and I'm hoping this email, at the very least, allows you to understand ours, even if we may disagree. Through our review, we have determined that the NW corner is the more suitable location for the park space through lengthy internal discussions that weighed the advantages and disadvantages of each corner, in the context of our policies and the CA and other residents' comments during the process.

### **Size of Park Space**

The maximum amount of land that may be required to be provided as municipal reserve (i.e. park space) as part of a subdivision application is 10% of the total land. This is stated in S.666 of the Municipal Government Act (MGA). The MGA is a statute that establishes a governance framework for Alberta municipalities. In this instance, the total size of the site is 4.7 hectares, which equates to a park space of 0.47 hectares. [Here](#) is a link to the MGA.

### **NW Location Rationale**

#### Grade Change

The entire site has elevation changes, including the NW corner. However, the SW corner would have the most intense elevation grade changes within a park parcel if located here. These portions of the SW corner with the elevation changes would cover a significant portion of the 0.47 park space. We have heard and understand your point of view that the SW corner is used as a toboggan hill and is a valued community feature. However, accepting park space with such a slope creates programming and accessibility challenges. While the SW may be used as a toboggan hill during parts of the winter, for the rest of the months it is challenging to integrate a toboggan hill into a park space that could be used year-round. Designing parks and open spaces that can support opportunities for people in all seasons is referenced in Westbrook Communities Local Area Plan (LAP) Policy 2.2.3.2.(c)i.

The Open Space Plan (2003), available [here](#), encourages multi-purpose park facilities wherever possible. Single use or limited use parks tend to have a relatively short use life as the community demographics change over time. By ensuring multi-purpose parks, we can ensure a broad range of users can utilize the park and its amenities over time. I will also note that in 2019, Calgary City Council passed Bylaw [11M2019](#) which restricts tobogganing to sites that are designated as appropriate and safe for the use. The City has identified a network of toboggan hills throughout the city and there is a designated toboggan hill located at 2539 33 Ave SW, which is approximately 500 metres from this site.

Additionally, the slope would require stairs and an accessibility ramp (at a maximum elevation of 8%) as per Westbrook Communities LAP policy 2.2.3.2.(b)vi, which would again, occupy a portion of the park space that could otherwise be used for programming.

#### Proximity to other parks and communities

The NW corner would provide more distance between the existing park at 30 Ave SW between 26 St. and 25a St. SW. A park in the SW corner would be approximately 100 metres from the existing park, while a park in the NW corner would be spread out to approximately 280 metres from the existing park.

In addition, the NW corner is located closer to Richmond Road SW, which the Westbrook Communities LAP has identified for greater building heights and more variety in uses (as per Map 3: Urban Form and Map 4: Building Scale). Locating the park space closer to areas where greater density is anticipated will make the park more accessible to a larger portion of residents. Locating the park space to areas where non-residential uses may be permitted also allows the opportunity to take advantages of synergies between park uses and retail uses (i.e. having an ice cream shop or coffee shop face the park).

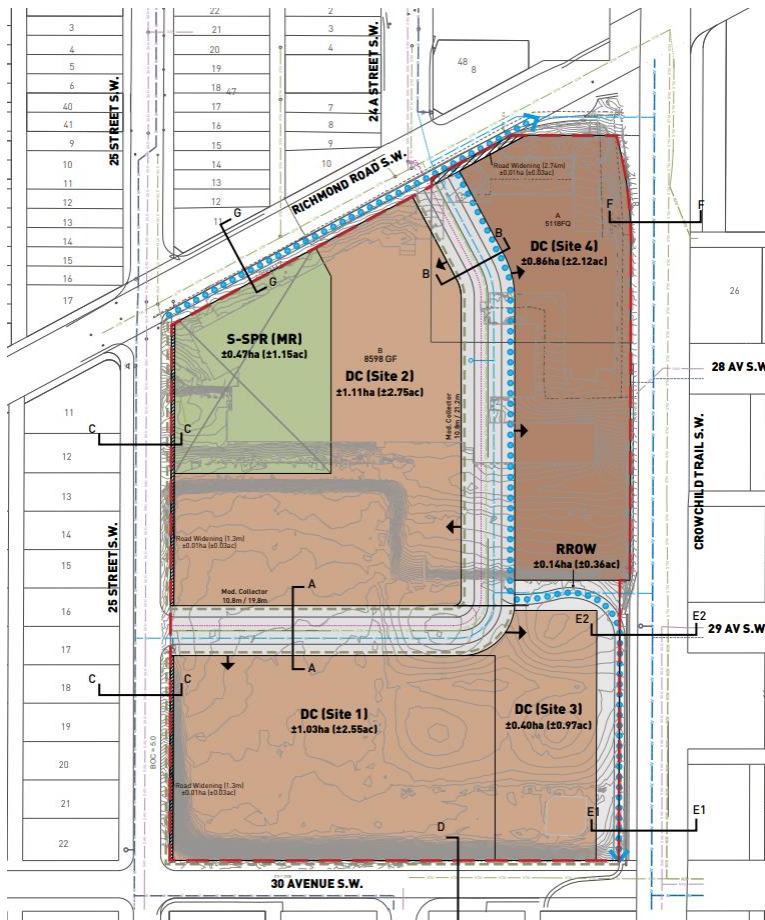
#### Visibility

As per Westbrook Communities LAP Policy 2.2.3.2.(b)v. parks should account for visibility in and around the site. Locating the park in the NW corner would provide greater visibility because it would be located in an area where the Westbrook Communities LAP envisions the highest densities and variety of uses. Additionally, the park would be at an elevation that's closer to grade than the SW corner, meaning it would be more visible than if it was located at the bottom of the hill. This visibility contributes to safety of our park spaces.

The NW intersection of Richmond Road and 25 Street SW would have higher traffic volumes than the SW corner, which would also be ultimately managed through off-site traffic improvements as discussed in the Traffic Impact Assessment. However, the traffic volumes would still be well below the roads' capacities, and would contribute to the park's visibility.

#### Connectivity

Westbrook Communities LAP Policy 2.2.3(a)i. states that Developments within Parks, Civic and Recreation areas should connect to the community, including other parks and open spaces by active transportation and transit networks. The location of a park in the NW corner not only provides synergies with potential non-residential uses, but is also in close proximity to the BRT station. The latest iteration of the Outline Plan proposes a 3 metre wide multi-use pathway connecting the NW corner to the SE corner, and eventually to the broader multi-use pathway network (see dotted blue line in image below). Locating the park at the NW corner would create a more efficient connection to the multi-use pathway. Routing the multi-use pathway along 25 Street SW, instead of the 'new street' within the site, was explored but ultimately deemed to be unfeasible as the slope along 25 Street would be too great for comfortable cycling and wheeling.



## Population

The latest population figure we have for Richmond Knob Hill is 5,250, of which the wedge is a portion of. This number is based on the census data that was released in 2021. The census data is the most accurate population estimate that is available to municipalities. The census data is updated every 5 years. The 2021 census data is the latest census that has been released, as such, that's the one we're using.

## Allocation of Open Space

One thing has come up a few times that I would like to provide clarity on. In the Municipal Development Plan 2.3.4 Parks, Open Space and Outdoor Recreation Policy h is provided:

- h. Ensure sufficient community open space in Inner City and Established Areas using 2.0 hectares of open space per 1,000 residents. Calculations should be applied to logical community clusters where parks and recreation amenities are accessible and shared between communities. Community open space includes areas dedicated for schools; community centres; playfields; outdoor performance spaces; community gardens;

Because the measure of 2.0ha/1000 people is a relatively fluid measure, and the limitations of 10% of subdivided land dedicated as open space is a relatively rigid tool, the distinction of 'logical community clusters' is an important distinction. Logical community clusters will typically incorporate regional park open space assets which help to account for any surplus or shortfall in any one individual community or neighbourhood.

The boundaries for the logical cluster that we typically use, when available to us, are the boundaries of the applicable Local Area Plan. Viscount Bennett is located in the Westbrook Communities LAP, as such, those are the boundaries we use.

The stats for the Westbrook Communities boundary are:

Total Parks Open Space (does not include Viscount Bennett, Richmond Green or environmental reserve areas): **87.65 ha**

Total population (2021 census): **35,745**

Providing **2.45ha/1000 people**.

Despite these numbers, we need to emphasize that this is a broad MDP policy target and is not applied to specific sites or communities. In instances where communities are severely deficient in park space, our primary response is to improve the quality of the existing park space, and the access to such park spaces.