

Report September 2024

Viscount Bennett Community Planning Workshop

June 15, 2024

The Viscount Bennett School site is in the Richmond-Knob Hill Community south of Richmond Rd and immediately west of Crowchild Tr. The original High School site was closed in the 1980s and used as a continuing education centre until it was closed by the Calgary Board of Education in 2018. It was sold by the Board to Minto Communities Inc. in 2023. The site is 11.5 ac. in size.

Minto Communities applied to rezone the site in Fall 2023 to allow 2500 dwelling units. That would represent more than 5000 new community residents. The Community was not satisfied with the public engagement process undertaken by Minto and B&A Planning, their planning consultants. The Community Association decided to undertake a Community Planning Workshop to determine the area residents' thoughts, hopes and concerns about the possible site redevelopment. They felt it was important to do this engagement process because the developer, Minto Communities, was unwilling to do so. The workshop was planned and conducted by a group of 4 professional planners. The Planning team consists of: Philip Dack, Roy Wright, Jessica Kovacs and Pat Churchman (transportation specialist).

It was an all-day session held at the community hall on Saturday June 15.

The Community Association:

- undertook a comprehensive notification process to invite residents to the Workshop,
- invited the Ward Council member, Courtney Walcott, and representatives of the Minto (developer) to attend, and
- engaged several senior professional land use/community planners and transportation experts who had extensive Calgary land use planning experience.
- hosted the all- day workshop and provided pizza lunch

Attendance

There were 38 people registered for the event with 32 attendees. Of the 32 in attendance, 26 were from Richmond Knobhill. There were 6 attendees from 4 neighbouring communities.

The following were invited : Councillor Walcott, Minto Communities and City of Calgary Planning team. All attended. They were provided approximately 5 minutes to address the

group at the start of the workshop. Kathy Oberg spoke on behalf of Minto and Mladen Kucic (Viscount Bennett Planning Manager) for the planning team. All of them stayed around for a while and answered questions off to the side as the workshop proceeded.

Workplan

The first stage of the workshop was to work through questions posed on the nature of the site and its [potential redevelopment. Each group discussed and then presented its ideas and thoughts to the larger group. The final phase was group efforts to translate their ideas onto a map of the site identification scale and location of structures, access and open space.

Design Options

Three different designs options were produced at the meeting (Options 2, 3, 4) along with Option 1 was done in October 2023 for a total of 4 design options which are presented and discussed in the report.

Next Steps

The CA will follow-up this workshop with a session to condense the 4 options into 1 Design Option later this fall.

OPTION 2

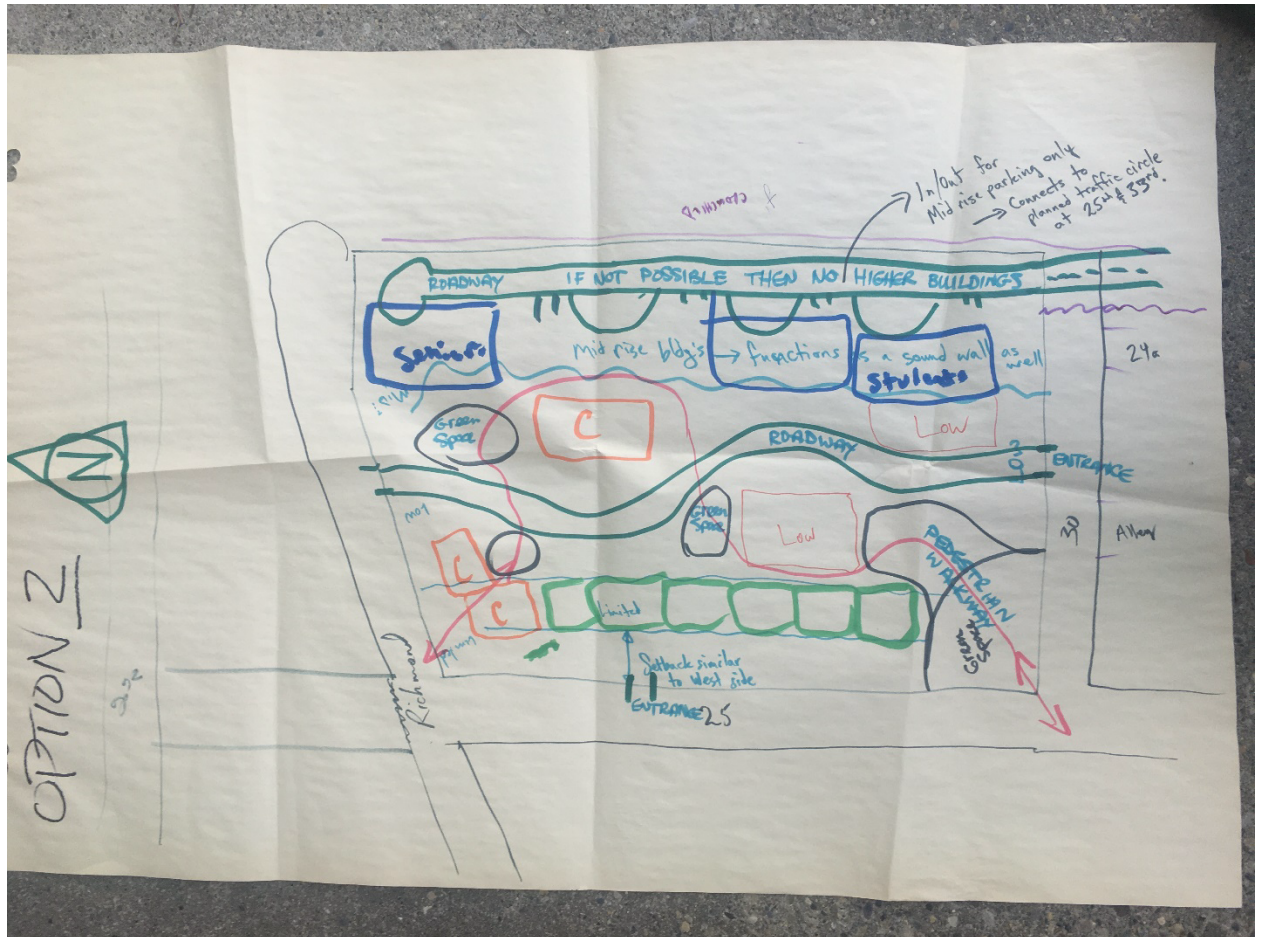
Summary

- Would continue to use the service road along the east side of the site. however, no Crowchild access – road would connect to proposed traffic circle at 25 St and 33 Av.

Uses and Configuration

- Possible seniors' facility in northeast corner (population/traffic generation not calculated)
- Midrise buildings abutting the service road. 4-8 storeys suggested
- Low density on western side of site with setback along 25 St similar to setback (front yards) on the west side of 25 St.
- Some commercial uses with access to Richmond Rd.

- Curving roadway from 30 Av. north to Richmond Rd. – would also act as a divider between lower density western residential area and higher density to the east.
- Green Space in several locations
 - o southwest corner of site as a pedestrian walkway into the site,
 - o Another green space entryway from 25 St into the core of the full development area
 - o In nodes (small spaces) on west side of the middle roadway
 - o Adjacent to seniors' facility and commercial



- **Developable Area :**
- Approximately 70% of the site would be developable = approx. 8 acres – however roads/surface infrastructure could require up to 1 acre minimum. Therefore, developable land is 7 ac available for redevelopment.

Approximate # of DU:

Assuming 5 ac apartments and 2 ac. single family/duplex

- **Single family** 2.ac x 8 upa = **16** single detached/duplex dwellings. Popn. 16 DU x 2.5 = 40 residents.
- **Apartments** 5. ac. x 85 upa = **420** units . Popn. would be 420 x 1.5 = 630 residents
- **Total Popn. (apt. and Single detached) 680 people**

OPTION 3

Summary

Land Uses and Configuration

- Most of the mid-higher density apartments would be located in the north-east portion of the site.
- The actual heights of the apartments weren't decided upon however a range of heights from 4-8 stories was contemplated
- The southern and western areas of the site would be predominantly open space (recreation, toboggan hill, sports park, treed areas, etc).
- The central and eastern areas of the site would rise in density/height from detached housing low density which would create a buffer between the existing community and the higher density to the east following an L-shaped configuration separating the western open space areas from higher densities to the east.
- To the east of the detached housing (estate housing/villas) low density multi-unit building would be sited.
- The north-east area of the site would be developed with medium rise apartments with a limited commercial component designed to serve the community along the west and northern edge
- A service road would be located along the Crowchild sound wall to provide access to this denser residential area (access for parking, commercial service, delivery vehicles)
- Suggestion of a covered walkway across Richmond Rd. to facilitate pedestrian movement with the higher traffic volumes and to create an attractive gateway into the northern part of the new development area
- **Developable Area :**
- Approximately 80% of the site would be developable = approx. 9.2. ac – roads/surface infrastructure could require up to 1 ac. minimum. Therefore, developable land is approximately 8+ ac.

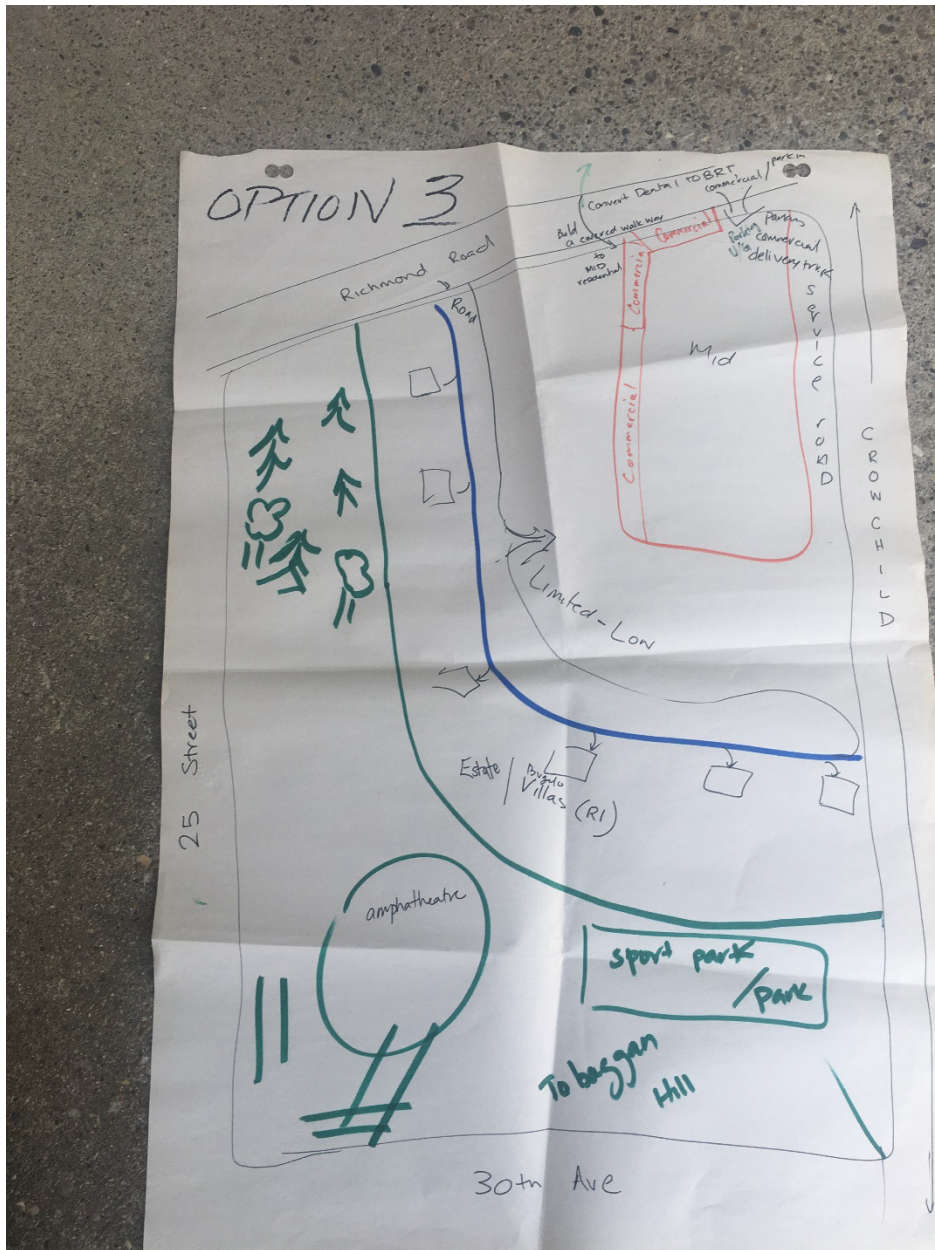
Approximate # of DU:

- **5.5 ac apartments (mid-rise 85 upa)**

- **2.5 ac. single family/duplex and some townhouses (limited amount)**

- **Single family** $1.5 \times 8 = 12 +$ single detached/duplex dwellings. **Popn.** $20 \text{ DU} \times 2.5 = 50$ residents.
- **Apartments** $5. \text{ ac.} \times 85 \text{ upa} = 420$ units . Popn. would be $420 \times 1.5 = 630$ residents
- **Total Popn. (apt. and Single detached) 680 people**

Workshop Drawing



OPTION 4

This option was the one which proposed the least change from the existing development pattern in the Richmond Community.

“ We propose that the new development be the same density and units per acre that exists in Richmond Park currently. “

Summary

-
- Workshop notes suggest a density of 30-36 upa although the existing single detached housing in the community is closer to 8 upa – which would represent only about 7ac x 6-8 upa= 50 DU.. Proposes 50 dwelling units – low density detached as in the current community
- a 4 ac park would be located in the SW corner of the site
- No buildings higher than 4 stories. Assume that this means that townhousing or stacked townhousing would be acceptable although the proposed densities would not allow this.
- Basically, an R-1 option – however as noted above 4 storey buildings would be acceptable
- There would be a 1-1.5 ac park readily accessible to the new and existing portions of the community.
- The proposed development would fit in very well with the existing community
- Concern over the impacts of higher density and rental housing
- Minimal changes would be required to the exiting road system
- Minimal changes would also be required to the site utilities due to low density

Option 4 Image



Option 1

This option was **NOT DONE** at the workshop.

This document was prepared by a handful of individuals which included RKHC Board Members, a senior planner and a resident. It was done in a short period of time after we were informed by Minto that they would be presenting an application for the site to the city, soon.

That happened on November 14 without any input or consultation with the CA or the community.

We felt it was important to put something on the table before they submitted their application to establish a basis for discussion.

We presented this document to Minto in late October to their 2 communication people. We asked that they have someone senior and a planner attend this meeting which didn't happen. We also asked for comments and feedback and never even received acknowledgement of the document from Minto.

Viscount Bennett and Community redevelopment List October 20, 2023

We believe it is extremely important that you hear from the community regarding what is important to them for the site and also what upgrades will be required offsite to accommodate this development.

This is by far, the largest undertaking in this community since its inception in the early 1950's. The site is problematic since there is really only one way in and one way out. We expect there will be 1000 to 1500 people or more, a huge increase in population and as important, major traffic issues particularly on Richmond Road. The project will create a lot of pressure on other areas such as green space. The community, with the population additions which have occurred since 2019 will be below the standard metric for green space per person.

We have worked with members of the community and consulted as a committee to produce the following list of community benefit items we wish you to consider proving to the community recognizing the impacts the increase in population will have throughout the community. We feel these items are important and constructive to the development. It is divided into ONSITE and OFFSITE categories with a view that some of the OFFSITE items are equally as important as what will be happening on the site.

ONSITE

1.Green Space

The Viscount Bennett site is 12 acres, 9 of which are included in our community (for all of Richmond Knobhill) green space count. This 9 acres accounts for 25% of the total green

space in the community. This space has always and continues to have high use both from within and outside of the community.

It will be important to provide significant park space recognizing that there will be a net loss in space countered with a major increase in population. This math runs contrary to the requirements of the MDP.

As such, we would like to see, at a minimum, 4 acre park on the south west corner of the site which will allow direct access from 25 Street and 30 Avenue. It will also retain some portion of the hill which is heavily used for tobogganing.

As we will indicate later in this letter, the location and area of this parcel would have to be guaranteed by a DC guideline or some other methods it occurs as promised.

2. Site access

We would like to see access to the site using the existing roadway adjacent to Crowchild and eliminate access from 25 Street. This should result in better traffic flow by having vehicles moving primarily on Richmond Road and eliminating a likely bottle neck at the intersection of Richmond Road and 25 Street.

3. DC Zoning

We'd like to have DC zoning for the site appropriate to what gets agreed to for land use and development guidelines on different areas of the site to ensure certainty and avoid the possibilities of unforeseen changes which might occur after the land use changes are approved due to claimed market conditions or resale.

4. Low traffic impact uses

We would like to see some buildings which would have a low traffic impact, In particular, we feel their should be a seniors complex, either as a stand alone building(s) or as part of another building(s).

5. Some form of small-scale food/beverage access for residents of the site and the adjacent community. Wonder about the possibility of a "club" type of arrangement with different ownership model.

OFFSITE

6. Richmond Road Redesign

One of the major issues and problems of the site will be traffic. Given the anticipated population, there will be lots of vehicle traffic and given there is only one way in and out, Richmond Road will be the roadway used. We want a redesign of this road from 29 Street. to Crowchild using a curvilinear (serpentine) format in order to manage speed and make it

a safe roadway by reducing speed by virtue of the design. The redesign should also include beautification and landscaping to make this a model, first-class thoroughfare.

7. Rink Roof

We have a rink complex (hockey rink, pleasure rink and pathway) which is an important element in the community. It is expected that the new residents of Viscount will be users of the rinks and community green spaces. It takes a lot of manhours to provide good ice. Significant time is spent shoveling snow. The RKHC board has identified that a roof would go a long-ways to reducing the time required to shovel snow off the rink (see Ramsay and Inglewood). It also helps maintain ice quality by keeping the sun off the rink. This would be a roof only, open on all sides. In conjunction with the roof, we are looking at the possibility of adding a couple of bleachers for spectators.

8. More green space

We would like to get control of the greens-space in the corner of Crowchild and 33 Avenue. This would add a few more acres of greenspace to a community which will be under the requirement due to your development. We know this property is controlled by City of Calgary Transportation Department (for any future transportation need at this location) but we would like to use it “temporarily”. This would include removing the fenced “garbage dump” and maybe relocating the gravel box. E would have Parks and Recreation suggest what could be easily done to make it useable.

9. Iconic signage

We would like to have a sign utilizing artwork with the community’s name, Richmond Park, on it. This sign would be located at 29 Street and Richmond Road, the main entry to the community. Maybe another one at 26 Avenue and 25 Street.

Also, a community sign (electronic) at the hall that is programmable for messages. This will eliminate the need for a bold sign advertising events at this location and make it easier to keep the community informed of what’s going on.

Option 1 Land use drawing



SUMMARY

This community sponsored workshop was designed to get input from the future neighbours as to their preferences around new development on this site. It was very successful in generating a great deal of discussion among area residents. We appreciate the attendance of Councilor Walcott at the event and representatives of the developer (although we wished the Minto and B&A Planning staff would have participated in the full discussion).

1. As is clear most of the residents who participated in Options 1, 2 and 3 were open to redevelopment and wanted it to become a part of the community instead of a new 'subcommunity' on its own separate from the existing community.
2. The community is very concerned about traffic generation from the new development and its effects on safety, congestion, and parking.
3. This site has had a varied traffic history as its first use was a high school, followed by a vocational school, then it was closed for many years. Different residents have much different experiences of the traffic impacts due to the variety of uses the site has gone through.
4. The community recognizes that a certain amount of medium to higher density (and 'higher rise') buildings could be built especially along the Crowchild edge of the property in recognition of Council's commitment to higher densities everywhere.

Option 1 Land use diagram

Additional material can be found in the Attachments document which is a transcription of material from the workshop. Also included is a link and the final design option for the RB Bennett site. This site is a look-a-like to the Viscount site and we have repeatedly referenced the process undertaken and the end result from this redevelopment project.

Attachments



Attachments to VB
Planning Workshop R