

Historical Development

CityPlan

Riley Park/South Cambie RPSC

The Natural Environment

The area we now call Riley Park/South Cambie was once part of a great virgin forest of Douglas fir, cedar and hemlock, as well as pine, spruce, maple and yew. The forests were home to cougars, bears, wolves and lynx. Breaks in the dense forest cover were the result of infilling of lakes created by beaver dams, yielding "beaver meadows". This provided grazing material for deer and elk, and smaller mammals like skunk and porcupine. Several streams were located in the area, draining into False Creek. All have since been culverted.

Historic Development

The name South Cambie originates with Cambie Street, named after Henry Cambie, the engineer in charge of the western vision of the CPR. Riley Park district was part of the municipality of South Vancouver from 1892 to 1929, named after the former municipal clerk of South Vancouver, Clark Riley.

The district of Riley Park/South Cambie is dominated by Little Mountain, physically the highest point of Vancouver, occupying its geographical centre and commanding a 360 degree view of the whole city. In its earliest days, Riley Park/Soth Cambie's most distinguishing feature was the old "beaver meadows" at Douglas Park. The first modern settler was William Mackie, a logger who cleared off and claimed 65 hectares of Douglas Park in 1874.

1874 also marked the cutting of the first modern trail through Riley Park/South Cambie, running diagonally from what is now Marpole, past the foot of Little Mountain to Gastown. This north-south route was abandoned the following year when a "wagon road" was built along the

present Fraser Street. As a result, the centre section of Vancouver was mostly bypassed by those heading out Kingsway to the intersection of Fraser St. (then called North Arm Waggon Road") where the main thoroughfare followed higher ground southward.

In 1887 the first burial took place in Mountain View Cemetery, which has since grown from its original 5 acres to to over 100 acres today. In 1900 the first school opened on "upper Main Street". Many early residents of the area mined basaltic rock at Little Mountain Quarry, which was in turn used for the early surfacing of the city's roads.

During the 1920s and 1930s, Riley Park/South Cambie continued to serve its largely working class population, with the building of many smaller stuccoed homes in the eastern and northern parts of the district. The land immediately surrounding Little Mountain and extending south remained mostly brush land. After World War II, the southern slopes were developed on the east side with single-family homes and a series of apartments. On the west side, stretching to 41st Ave., was the development of 1950s ranch style housing. At roughly the same time, three area Parks - Hillcrest, Riley and Queen Elizabeth - were joined, to be followed by the development of Capilano (now Nat Bailey) Stadium and Percy Norman Pool. In 1969 the Bloedel Conservatory was built near the top of Little Mountain.

Existing Subdivision

Urbanization and the development of land requires subdivision. Subdivision legally separates property into two or more smaller lots in order to create a legal title and allow development on each of the new lots. The Subdivision By-law controls subdivision of single-

family lots and assigns minimum lot widths and area for lots in order to maintain the existing pattern of lots sizes. The majority of single family lots in Riley Park/South Cambie are 33 feet wide (37% of all lots). Lots in the 34 to 49 foot range (22%) are found throughout the area. Larger lots, 50 feet and greater (20%), are located mainly in the south-west portion of the area.

Physical Change

Physical change in the past involved chopping down trees and filling in streams for farming, housing, industry or new roads. Today physical change in fully developed areas such as Riley Park/South Cambie means primarily the demolition of existing buildings and replacement with new buildings. Since 1980, over 1,300 new single family homes were constructed in Riley Park/South Cambie, which represents a change of 22% of all single family lots. This rate of change is slightly below the overall City average of 27%. Virtually every block in Riley Park/South Cambie have seen new houses built over the past 20 years. The potential for future change can be forecast generally by observing the ages of current buildings. In Riley Park/South Cambie, about 43% of the single family dwellings were constructed prior to 1940, a higher proportion than in Arbutus Ridge/Kerrisdale/Shaugnessy (35%) and for the city as a whole (27%).

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