

Britannia- Woodland

Synopsis of Sub-Area Workshop



May 2015

Introduction

The following document provides a synopsis of the ideas generated in the Britannia-Woodland sub area workshop (December 6, 2014). This event was among several held between November 2014 and March 2015 for the Grandview-Woodland Community Plan process.

The document contains a short overview of the workshop, a discussion of sub-area context and character, and an overview of the key areas of focus identified by workshop participants. These areas of focus are then explored in greater detail under the following headings:

- Public realm & transportation
- Housing & built form
- Local economy
- Services, amenities and other planning themes

In each of these four areas, Planning staff have identified the *general* areas of convergence and divergence amongst workshop and focus group participants. This material was distilled from small-group discussion table notes and maps that were produced by participants, as well as from the ‘report out’ sessions that occurred throughout the day.

It is important to note that this document provides an *overview* of the dialogue. Given that each of the small-group tables discussed a wide variety of items (and often in a very lively and free-flowing manner), creating a summary that incorporates every idea discussed is impossible. Instead, the Planning team has taken every effort to present the material in a fashion that does justice to the spirit of the conversation. Those wishing to review the complete set of notes from the events are invited to download them from the vancouver.ca/gw webpage.

A draft version of this summary was published in April 2015. Workshop participants were also encouraged to submit any corrections or clarifications to the Grandview-Woodland Community Plan team. A total of two pieces of correspondence were received by community members who were not at the workshop. No edits to the present document were made. The synopsis document is now finalized as of June 1, 2015.

Workshop Details

The Britannia-Woodland workshop was held on Saturday, December 6, 2014, at the Vancouver Opera Centre - O'Brien Rehearsal Space (E 3rd and McLean Drive).

Workshop participants undertook four key activities:

1. Creating neighbourhood character statements - reflecting both present day and future (aspirational) character for the sub-area;
2. Reviewing proposed policy from the *Emerging Directions*, as well as the community feedback that was received;
3. Assessing possible areas of change or no-change in the sub-area (policy geography);
4. Generating ideas around possible built-form typologies and conditions connected with sub-area geography.

A total of 60 individuals registered to attend (28 residing inside the sub-area, and 32 residing outside of it). On event day 50 individuals participated in the session.

At the conclusion of the workshop, 30 participants completed an evaluation form (60% response rate). The following table provides an overview of the demographic profile of those participants that completed the evaluation form.

Of the 30 respondents:

AGE	#	%	SEX	#	%	TENURE	
> 20	0	0	Male	12	41.4	Renter	2
20-24	1	3.45	Female	17	58.6	Owner	19
25-34	1	3.45				Co-op	3
35-44	3	11.5					
45-54	7	24.1				Work in B-W	3
55-64	10	34.5					
65-74	7	24.1					
75+	0	0					

On average, workshop participants had lived in Grandview-Woodland 19.1 years ($n=25$) and in Vancouver for 29.6 years ($n=24$).

Sub-Area Context and Character

The Britannia-Woodland sub-area is located to the west of Commercial Drive and south of Hastings Street. It is bounded by Clark Drive and the Grandview Cut.

The present day sub-area reflects the idea of diversity in many forms, including: architecture/building type (various architectural traditions, single family homes, duplexes, townhouses and apartments), tenures (non-market housing, renters, co-op residents and homeowners) and people (a variety of incomes, cultures and ethnicities are represented).

At its western edge, the Britannia-Woodland is home to a number of important light-industrial businesses - and the area therein contains garment manufacturers and wholesalers, food and beverage companies, artists, automotive services, and many other sectors. The 'seam' between the industrial and residential areas follows an irregular sawtooth pattern along McLean, Odlum and Woodland. A prominent "finger" of industrial also runs east/west along Venables.

Much of the shopping and service needs for residents of the area are met via Commercial Drive - ensuring that this part of Grandview-Woodland is particularly walkable.

The sub-area is also home to - or adjacent to - a number of key community assets. Foremost amongst these is Britannia Community Centre, which provides a variety of recreational, social and cultural programming to residents of the neighbourhood (and other community members). In addition, there are an array of health, settlement and social services located nearby, as well as several non-market and Aboriginal housing sites. The area is also home to two elementary schools and one secondary school.

Britannia-Woodland has four parks (Grandview, Woodland, Alice Townley and Mosaic) and one plaza (Britannia greenway) within its boundaries. The sub-area is also home to a City-defined greenway route (running N/S along Woodland Drive). At its south end, the prominent Grandview Cut serves as a 'green finger' - providing a habitat corridor for birds and other species.

While Britannia-Woodland is defined by a number of quiet residential streets, it is also shaped by a number of busy arterials. The sub-area is bisected by E 1st Avenue, while Clark Drive serves as a major truck route. Noise and traffic volumes on these streets, for better or worse are part of the present day character of the area. As a counterpoint, residents are well-served by bus and SkyTrain transit, and the area is home to a high proportion of cyclists.

Key Areas of Focus

Public Realm & Transportation

Key ideas

Key areas of focus for workshop participants were Woodland Drive (related to proposed improvements to the Mosaic Greenway), E 1st Avenue, Clark Drive and Venables Street (for proposed public realm and transportation related improvements). Additional attention was given to the possibility of improving sub-area parks and greenspaces (including Grandview Elementary).

Areas of general convergence at workshop

Participants were in *general* agreement about the following public realm and transportation matters:

- a) There is a need for pedestrian infrastructure improvements across the sub-area, especially for wider sidewalks, particularly along Woodland and McLean Drive, and elsewhere in the sub-area. Workshop participants put considerable focus on the possibility of improving the Woodland Drive (Mosaic) greenway.
- b) As part of this, there is strong support for improving sub-area laneways, making them more inviting and safer for pedestrians and cyclists.
- c) Improved traffic-calming and pedestrian-priority measures are needed - and there are concerns regarding speeding and short-cutting throughout the area.
- d) There is considerable community interest in pedestrian improvements to Venables Street- and for considering Venables as a future greenway.
- e) General concern about 1st Avenue being a 'barrier' that divides the sub-area. This is related to traffic conditions on 1st Avenue - in particular, congestion and traffic speeds. There is concern that new development could increase congestion.
- f) There is support for improvements to Clark Drive's public realm - trees/greenery, lighting, safer pedestrian and cycling crossings. Related to this, there is also support for improving the 'seam' where industrial and residential areas meet (e.g. along Odlum and McLean).
- g) Woodland, Alice Townley and Mosaic Parks are all valued community assets. Participants expressed support for park renewal and improvements (including new equipment, seating, a greater variety of uses/activities).
- h) Grandview Elementary (and aspects of the Grandview Cut) were identified by a number of participants as a possible 'hub' for the community - with some discussion regarding public realm improvements in this area.
- i) There was general interest in additional community gardens, fruit trees, and a dog park.
- j) Mountain views are highly valued - preserve these wherever possible. Use sub-area's slopes to maximize views and minimize 'wall' effect.
- k) Strong support for preserving the brick surface of Francis St as an aspect of local heritage.

Areas of general divergence at workshop

While not specifically points of disagreement, there were some divergent opinions noted regarding public realm & transportation:

- a) Participants are interested in an additional east-west bike route across the sub-area. Charles Street is one possible new route, though there were some concerns noted that this street might be “too hilly.” No particular agreement on routing options.
- b) Differing levels of support for a “woonerf” treatment around Woodland Park. Woonerfs and pocket parks were regarded as attractive options for adding greenspace - but there was no consensus about the best locations for these.
- c) There is some interest in the possibility of future transit on E 1st Avenue, though there were some concerns that transit on this street could impact traffic flow.
- d) Additional discussion took place with regard to Georgia & Dunsmuir Viaducts, and rapid transit along Broadway - related to the potential impact of changes in these areas on Britannia-Woodland.

Housing & Built Form

Key ideas

Participants offered general support for housing forms that would help to maintain the current character and affordability of housing in the neighbourhood. Discussion around new housing centred on the role of E 1st Avenue, Woodland Park, and the south end of the sub-area. There was some divergence of opinion around appropriate allowable heights in these opportunity areas.

Areas of general convergence at workshop

Participants were in *general* agreement about the following:

- a) There was strong support for the creation of policy that could protect sub-area heritage housing (including homes that do not have heritage designation.) Related to this, there is interest in seeing more options/incentives for additional density that retains heritage houses (including building retrofits, infill/laneway homes, modest additions, secondary units, duplexes, stratification of multiple suites within a single house.)
- b) Strong support for policies to ensure the protection of existing affordable rental units.
- c) General agreement that additional density should be targeted to new rental units, as opposed to strata/condos (ownership). In addition, participants noted agreement that more seniors-oriented and family-oriented housing is needed in the sub-area
- d) Strong support for providing support for existing co-ops, and seeking opportunities to construct new co-op development as a means for affordable home ownership.

- e) With regard to areas of focus: there was general support for the idea of focusing new housing on E 1st Avenue, at the southern end of the sub-area (including around Grandview Elementary), and around Woodland Park, though opinions were diverged as to the nature of acceptable change.
- f) Where buildings above 4-stories in height were discussed, there was conversation around the importance of design, in particular the need to ‘step back’ heights above 4 storeys to minimize street wall effect.
- g) In general, participants were supportive of introducing new development (up to 4-storeys) around Woodland Park. There was also some support for adding townhouses/rowhouses as an option near Grandview and Alice Townley Parks.
- h) Key concerns remain around protecting housing affordability. Widespread concern that any new development - even with rental units replaced on a 1:1 basis - will not be affordable for existing residents.
- i) There was discussion about the potential pace of change once a new Community Plan is adopted, and a desire to ensure that there is attention to the idea of incremental change.

Areas of general divergence at workshop

There were a number of differing perspectives on housing issues in Britannia-Woodland. These are summarized as follows:

- a) There were varying opinions regarding the possibilities for new housing along E 1st Avenue. In general, participants felt it was an appropriate place for locating future growth; however, some noted concerns about the ‘lack of livability’ along a busy, noisy street. In response, there were some creative suggestions for new development, such as orienting the buildings towards the lane, or in a N-S configuration, instead of towards 1st Avenue. Some participants also suggested that E 1st Avenue should have transit service before being rezoned for higher density.
- b) With respect to the height of buildings along First Avenue, some participants were comfortable with additional height “up to 6” or “6-8 storeys.” One group discussed height at E 1st and Commercial “up to 12-storeys”. However, other participants noted concern about any buildings form “more than 4 storeys” in height.
- c) With regard to the location of new development on E 1st Ave: additional discussion related to locating higher buildings on the north side versus south side of the road, to mitigate shadowing effects. Some tables noted higher development should be at Commercial Drive and transition to lower towards Clark Drive, and some suggested the opposite.
- d) There was mixed support for adding higher-density residential at the intersection of 1st & Clark - and various considerations around slope, views, traffic, and lack of livability were expressed.
- e) While there was interest in looking at the south end of Britannia-Woodland as an area of opportunity for new housing, there was a divergence of opinion around new height. Opinions ranged between “up to 4”, “up to 6” and “6-8” storeys - with higher buildings generally focussed on the south end of the neighbourhood, near Grandview Highway.

- f) There was some consideration - though no consensus - around the introduction of family, senior, social housing at Britannia Community Centre and Grandview Elementary.
- g) There was some interest in seeing mixed-use/residential opportunities introduced into the industrial areas (particularly on Venables) - though a number of participants wanted to ensure that the I-2 area remained industrial-only.

Local Economy

Key ideas

Workshop participants focused mainly on questions related to the industrial (I-2) zoned areas at the west edge of the sub-area. Some additional discussion took place regarding smaller-scale retail and market opportunities.

Areas of general convergence at workshop

Participants were in *general* agreement about the following aspects of local economy:

- a) There is support for improving the seam/transition areas between industrial and residential areas (e.g. along Odlum and Mclean).
- b) Broad and general support was expressed for the sub-areas role in the cultural economy - with particular focus on the presence of arts studios in industrial areas.
- c) The topic of laneway infill was discussed by some groups, and there is interest the creation of a smaller laneway market space near the Drive - e.g. for artisans or other micro-businesses.
- d) There was some discussion about the introduction of commercial uses at Grandview Elementary or along Grandview Highway - connected with a broader focus on this site.
- e) There was also some discussion regarding the possibility of additional mom-and-pop scale retail in the sub-area (in the interior of the sub-area, or along Clark Drive). It was felt that this could promote the local economy and add options for groceries and services without always having to go to Commercial Drive.

Areas of general divergence at workshop

While not a point of disagreement, there was some divergence of opinion around the I-2 light industrial area. The difference of opinion revolved primarily around whether or not residential uses should be allowed and/or the range of commercial/industrial uses.

- a) General support for protecting existing industrial zones as important job space, with some participants exploring the idea of introducing mixed-use/residential opportunities. There was some focus, in this regard, on Venables Street.

- b) Some participants felt that industrial zoning in the area should be more flexible to allow a greater variety of uses in its space, particularly for the arts and culture/light industrial employment sector.

Services, amenities, other planning themes

Key ideas

Workshop participants expressed strong support for the Britannia Community Centre, and discussed a number of ideas pertaining to the renewal of the facility. Additional discussion concerned the need to protect local heritage, the possibility of new or enhanced social and cultural services, and the opportunity to better promote the area's Aboriginal culture.

Areas of general convergence at workshop

Participants were in *general* agreement about the following:

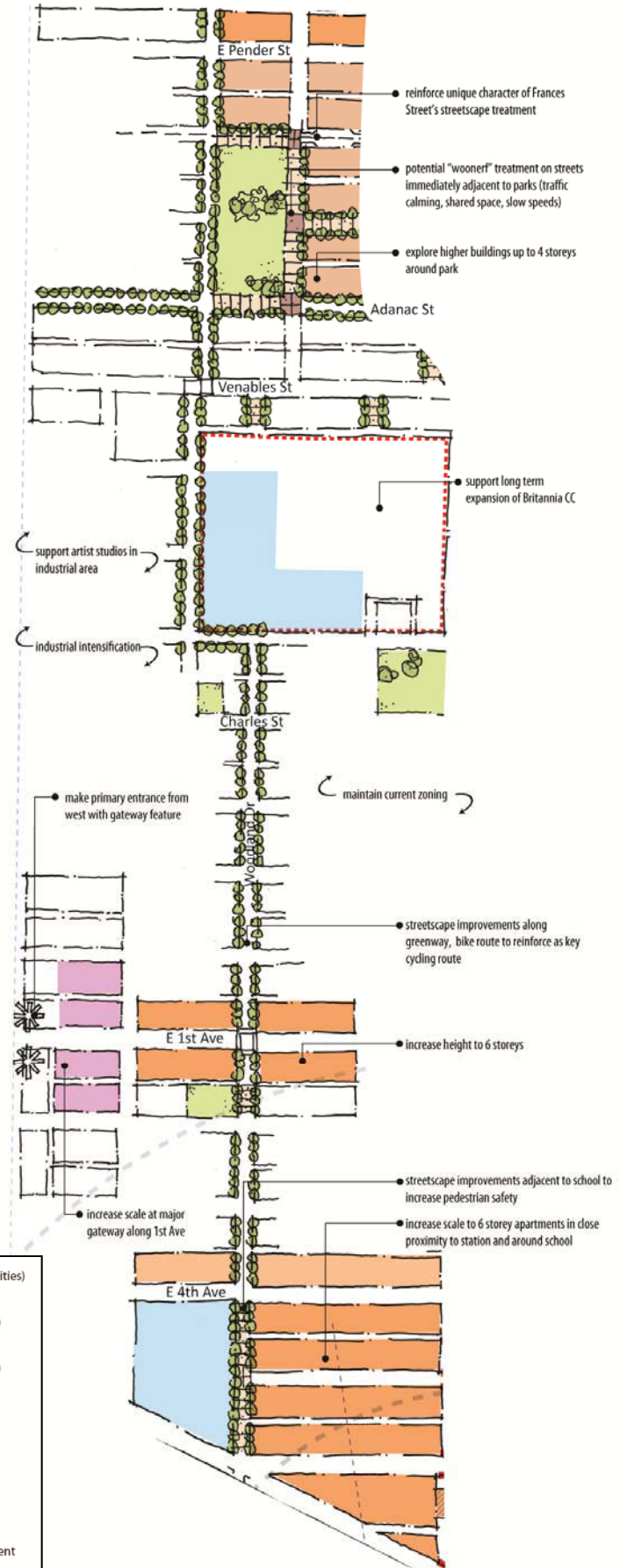
- a) There is strong support for revitalizing Britannia Community Centre - widely regarded as the 'heart' of both the sub-area and Grandview-Woodland. In general, participants were very pleased that BCC has been identified for receiving renewal funds in the next Capital Plan.
- b) Participants identified many opportunities for upgrades to the complex - particularly around way-finding, safety (particularly at night), need for newer/modern facilities, 'greening' of the facility, and better integration with the surrounding neighbourhood. "All roads should lead to Britannia."
- c) Some participants noted suggestions around the addition of (social, seniors, family-oriented) housing to BCC as part of facility renewal.
- d) Heritage is highly valued in this sub-area - both with heritage homes (registered and non-registered), but also heritage views, streetscapes, public realm.
- e) Many participants noted concern about future of Grandview Elementary. Variety of suggestions provided on how to revitalize - including locating other social services here to make it more of a community hub, or constructing additional family-appropriate housing nearby (market or social housing.)
- f) A number of participants suggested that recognition of First Nations culture, and history are needed in the area. In addition, there is strong support for improving local First Nations services and programs.
- g) There is support for additional cultural production space - studios, etc. - in the industrial areas.

Areas of general divergence at workshop

While not points of disagreement, several specific ideas were proposed around key sites and their possible role(s) as future social and cultural areas

- a) Grandview Elementary was seen as a potential new 'hub' by some participants - who noted its prominent location and present day programming (food security, greenspace, etc.). The site was seen as a potential area for new cultural programming (e.g. performance space), and social infrastructure (library, childcare, social service hub).
- b) Woodland Park was identified as an area for cultural programming, and in particular an area for youth-driven arts/culture.

Appendix: Emerging Directions - Britannia-Woodland policies (June 2013)



	commercial required at Grade		commercial drive: opportunities
	apartment (up to 12 storeys)		mixed-use (up to 12 storeys)
	apartment (up to 8 storeys)		mixed-use (up to 10 storeys)
	apartment (up to 6 storeys)		mixed-use (up to 8 storeys)
	apartment (up to 4 storeys) stacked townhouse		mixed-use (up to 6 storeys)
	townhouse/rowhouse (3-4 storeys)		mixed-use (up to 4 storeys)
	duplex		industrial / mixed employment

Draft Policies - Emerging Directions (p.29)

- BW-1: Protect existing affordable rental stock and non-market housing by moderating the allowable pace of change. In cases where existing rental stock is redeveloped, seek to increase the amount of rental housing and/or maintain the level of affordability.
- BW-2: Allow for modest increases in height for buildings south of E 3rd. Retain current multi-family zoning for the remainder of the sub-area.
- BW-3: Encourage conservation of designated heritage resources.
- BW-4: Allow additional height for multi-family housing along E 1st Ave (up to 6-storeys) with higher buildings at the western edge (near Clark Drive).
- BW-5: Retain Industrial land-use in current “I” zoned areas.
- BW-6: Complete proposed Mosaic (Woodland) Greenway
- BW-7: Seek additional artists’ production space in Industrial-zoned areas

Additional *Emerging Directions* Policy Ideas - Land Use Map

- Explore higher buildings (up to 4-storeys) around Woodland Park
- Increase scale to 6-storey apartments in close proximity to station and around school
- Mark primary entrance from west (E 1st) with a gateway feature.
- [Introduce] potential “woonerf” treatment on streets immediately adjacent to parks.
- Streetscape improvements along greenway to reinforce as a key cycling route.
- Streetscape improvements adjacent to school to increase pedestrian safety.
- Reinforce unique character of Frances Street’s streetscape treatment.