



Date: September 5, 2013

TO: Board Members – Vancouver Park Board
FROM: General Manager – Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: Renfrew Ravine and Renfrew Community Park Master Plan

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Board approves the long range master plan for Renfrew Ravine Park and Renfrew Community Park as described in this report and as illustrated in the appendices.

POLICY

The Board approves major changes in parks, including long-range master plans for parks.

BACKGROUND

In the fall of 2012, the Vancouver Park Board hired a landscape architecture firm to develop a long-range master plan to rehabilitate two adjacent Parks: Renfrew Ravine Park and Renfrew Community Park. The funding for this consultancy was committed in the 2009-2011 Capital Plan and was undertaken in collaboration with City Departments (Engineering - Sewers and Drainage Design, and Community Services - Regulations and Policy), Metro Vancouver Operations staff, community stakeholders, and residents.

This plan builds upon former studies for these parks: The Still Creek Rehabilitation and Enhancement Study (Lees, 2002), Still Creek Watershed Biodiversity Conservation Case Study (AXYS, 2005), Invasive Plants in the Still Creek Watershed (Raincoast, 2006), Still Creek Integrated Stormwater Management Plan (GVRD), and Renfrew Ravine Hydrology and Geotechnical Study (KWL, 2008).

The master planning process identifies community priorities, articulates a design programme, and results in a recommended master plan that provides guidance to prioritize future park improvement projects and fund raising efforts. The project objectives are to engage with the community in considering potential park elements and upgrades to increase recreational opportunities and the variety of park experiences, while preserving and enhancing the ecological function and benefit of the parks, ravine, and Still Creek.

Renfrew Ravine Park and Renfrew Community Park are located in Vancouver's eastside, and the intersection of E22nd at Renfrew Street physically separates the two parks. The

community embraces Renfrew Ravine and Renfrew Community Park as a venue for arts and cultural events as well as environmental education and recreational pursuits.

A treasured highlight of the parks is Still Creek. Still Creek is the longest of the few visible creeks remaining in Vancouver and 1 km of the creek can be seen flowing through a forested ravine in both parks.

Even as the Still Creek watershed originates in Burnaby near Central Park and flows into Burnaby Lake, a significant portion of the creek is located in Vancouver. Over the past several years there have been on-going City and community based initiatives to daylight sections of Still Creek and restore streamside biodiversity. A community based mapping and planning initiative called the Reflecting Still Creek Art and Stewardship project is happening concurrently with this project and the two projects are complimentary and coordinated. A map of the two parks, Renfrew Ravine Park and Renfrew Community Park, is attached as Appendix A.

Renfrew Ravine Park is a unique park type in Vancouver's park system, with the only creek in a natural ravine setting. Renfrew Ravine Park is nearly 6.0 hectares in size and is located north of the 29th Ave SkyTrain Station and south of E22nd Ave.

Primarily a nature sanctuary, Renfrew Ravine Park is very much appreciated by the community for its vegetation, wildlife, and fresh air. While the ravine supports limited use based on its environmental sensitivity, unstable slopes and challenging terrain, neighbourhood residents experience Renfrew Ravine Park by walking and biking along its perimeter at the top of ravine. An existing pathway bisecting Renfrew Ravine Park and crossing over Still Creek at E27th Avenue is a popular and pleasant east-west connection through the neighbourhood and affords views down to the creek.

The community celebrates the parks and the creek annually during the Still Moon Festival. This well supported community event is held in September and is organized by the Still Moon Arts Society. The event draws all ages together and the evening lantern procession begins at the south end Renfrew Ravine Park and meanders north along the top of the eastside of ravine past several community public art pieces and environmental restoration projects. The entire procession route, including its grand finale in Renfrew Community Park, is enlivened with ephemeral art installations, music, performances, and beautiful hand-made lanterns of all shapes and sizes.

Renfrew Community Park is 5.0 hectares in size and bordered by E22nd Avenue to the south, Nootka Community Elementary School to the north, Nootka Street to the east and Renfrew Street to the west.

Renfrew Community Park is an important community gathering space and the location of many of the neighbourhood's cultural and recreational amenities. The Renfrew Community Centre, Pool and Library are located in the southeast section of the park and a number of outdoor recreational opportunities including sports facilities (a lacrosse box

and natural grass playfield), a children's playground and wading pool, and the field house are located in the northeast quadrant.

Along the west side of the park, a wooded natural area follows and frames the length of Still Creek. Informal nature trails provide access to the creek from the park and a foot bridge over the creek links the west entrance of the Community Centre to Renfrew Street and is a great place to view the creek.

DISCUSSION

The Vancouver Park Board Strategic Plan vision *to be leaders in parks and recreation by connecting people to green space, active living and community*, was considered and realized throughout the Renfrew Ravine and Renfrew Community Park Master Planning process.

The project goals, *to rehabilitate the parks' and ravine's ecosystem and to improve the recreational and educational opportunities of the parks through short and longer term management and programming strategies*, was articulated during community-based workshops and discussions with the neighbourhood's interest groups, organizations and committees.

The master plan for the parks is intended to guide priorities for the 2015-17 and future capital plan funding requests related to Park Board and Greenest City goals, recognizing that Still Creek runs through the parks and is part of a larger City rehabilitation project.

The master planning process included 4 public engagement events and several community-based focus group meetings, with a total of over 500 participants (Sept 2012-May 2013):

- Sill Moon Festival booth September 2012
- Open House #1 - visioning stage (Nov 2012)
- Open House #2 - review of concept plan options (March 2013)
- Open House #3 - review of draft master plan (May 2013)

Each public engagement event was coordinated with the Reflecting Still Creek Art and Stewardship Project and provided opportunities for community input, feedback and updates on both concurrent projects.

As part of the community-based focus group meetings, staff met with residents, local school educators, the Reflecting Still Creek Art and Stewardship Project's Advisory Committee, Renfrew Seniors Group, Renfrew Chinese Seniors Group, Renfrew Library's Teen Advisory Group, Nootka Elementary School's PAC, Renfrew Community Association's Board, Vancouver Football League - Trojans, and the Vancouver Lacrosse Association.

The public engagement process resulted in identifying community priorities, articulating a design programme, and community support for the recommended master plan.

The project's Steering Committee includes staff representatives from Park Planning and Development, Renfrew Community Centre, Park Operations, COV Community Services, COV Engineering, and Metro Vancouver.

The preferred master plan for Renfrew Ravine and Renfrew Community Parks are attached as Appendix B.

While Renfrew Ravine Park and Renfrew Community Park are used by residents in significantly different ways, common themes and values emerged during the consultation process. The community's great appreciation of Still Creek and strong support for environmental education, art, and restoration were voiced for both parks. The community articulated a vision and set goals focusing primarily on ecosystem restoration and stewardship. A number of restoration projects were suggested, including removing invasive species and replacing with native species; naturalizing the currently channelized creek banks in the Community Park; improving stream water quality and slope stability; improving rainwater absorption; increasing opportunities for nature education and interpretation through community and public art installations; increasing biodiversity; and increasing trail access to the less environmentally sensitive areas of the parks.

The Renfrew Community Park Master Plan also recognizes the park's role in the community as a hub of cultural and recreational pursuits, recommending two new playgrounds; additional seating, gathering and event spaces; a fenced dog off-leash area; communal gardening opportunities; and the wading pool's conversion to a spray park; long term co-location of storage, meeting and washroom facilities in the main community centre, and increased trail access to the creek. In keeping with the community's stewardship goals, the plan also recommends the addition of many new native trees; a number of rainwater management strategies; a reduction of impermeable surfacing and reforestation in part through relocation of the lacrosse box at the end of its service life; an outdoor classroom; removal of the existing stone walls and concrete channelizing the creek and naturalization of the creek banks; removal and replacement of invasive species with native plantings; and increased areas of native vegetation and biodiversity.

The Renfrew Ravine Park Master Plan recommends a number of environmental stewardship strategies to support the ecological restoration of the ravine and Still Creek. The removal and replacement of invasive plant species with multi-layered native vegetation, increasing biodiversity, bird and wildlife habitat, and rain water absorption and slope stability are among the strategies recommended.

The community supports maintaining the existing natural character of the ravine while providing limited increased access to Still Creek with the addition of an environmentally friendly nature trail along the eastside of the creek from the Boyd Diversion to the existing land bridge crossing at E27th Avenue. Three universally accessible viewing decks are proposed at the top of the ravine, providing opportunities for community art installations, interpretive signage and outdoor education.

The master plan also recommends day-lighting a below ground section of Still Creek in Renfrew Ravine, achieved by replacing the E27th Avenue land bridge crossing (a fill covered culvert) with a footbridge. Day-lighting this section of the creek will return the entire length of Still Creek in Renfrew Ravine Park to its original condition - flowing above ground through natural streamside vegetation.

In keeping with the Greenest City Goals and the Park Board Strategic Plan Vision, the Renfrew Ravine and Renfrew Community Park Master Plan includes recommended locations for the highest priority actions for 2011-2014, communal gardening opportunities and naturalized habitat as well as strategies to manage and improve storm water quality, improve access to nature, increase bird habitat and biodiversity as well as a number of ecological restoration activities focused on maintaining natural ecosystem composition, structure, and function.

With a view to expanding and enhancing Vancouver's urban forest, over 100 trees will be planted in the parks contributing to the Greenest City targets while increasing habitat and decreasing storm water run-off.

SUMMARY

More than 500 residents have worked collaboratively with the Park Board, the Reflecting Still Creek Art and Stewardship Project's Advisory Committee, and an inter-governmental Steering Committee, to ensure that the Renfrew Ravine and Renfrew Community Parks Master Plan and the Reflecting Still Creek Art and Stewardship's Ecosystem-based Stewardship Plan are coordinated and complimentary.

Feedback from the respondents on the recommended master plan was overwhelmingly positive, indicating a strong preference to prioritize improving the ecological integrity of the parks, enhancing native forest and natural areas and increasing the number of paths to access the parklands. These preferences are aligned with the Greenest City Goal to provide Access to Nature, and the Park Board's goals of Green Stewardship and Green Education as well as ensuring upgrades are universally inclusive and accessible.

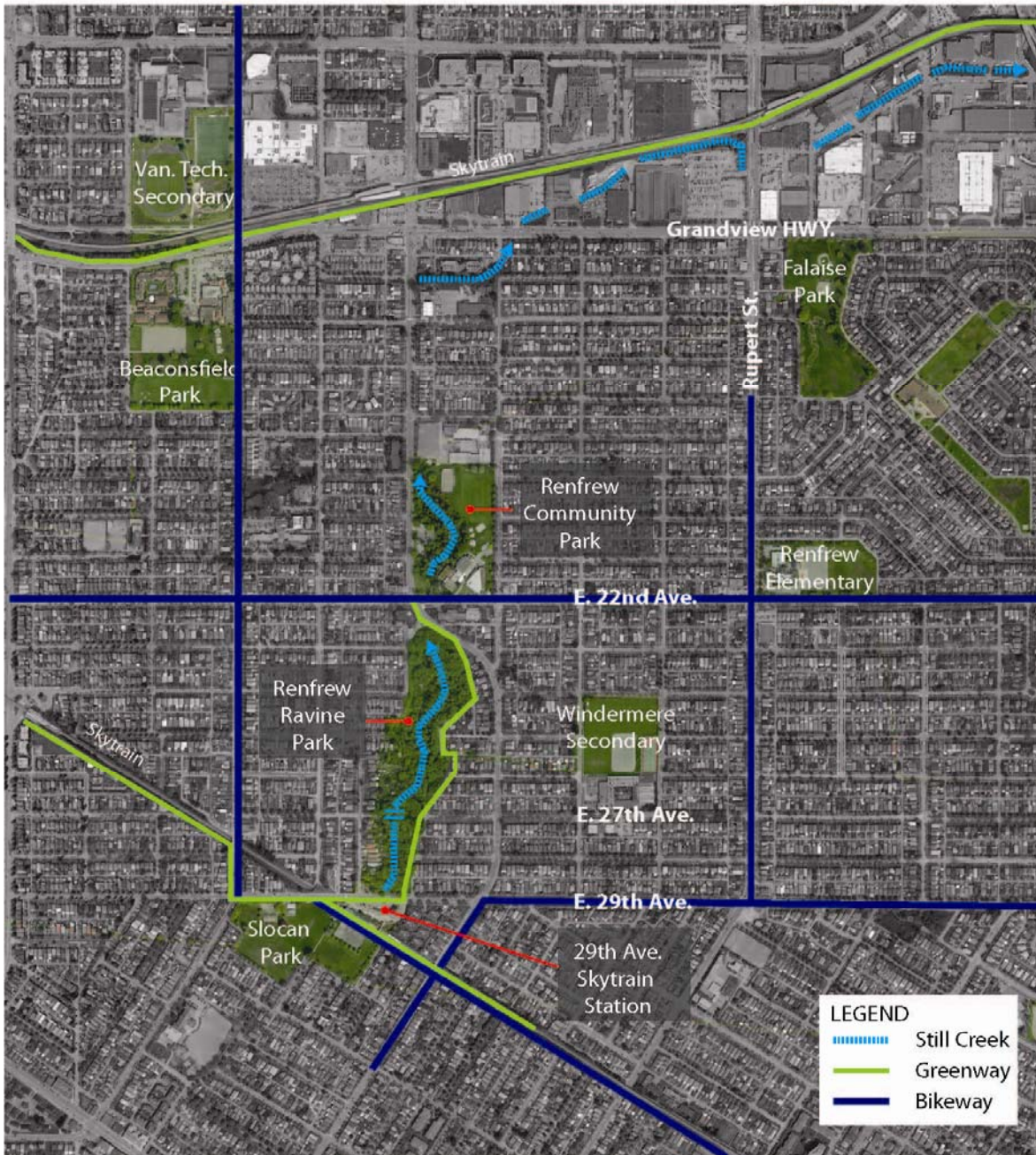
Staff recommends that the proposed Master Plan for these two parks be adopted to guide future capital planning and restoration projects.

Prepared by:
Director of Parks
Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation

DB/TM/BH/

APPENDIX A – LOCATION

APPENDIX B – PROPOSED MASTER PLANS FOR RENFREW COMMUNITY PARK
AND RENFREW RAVINE PARK



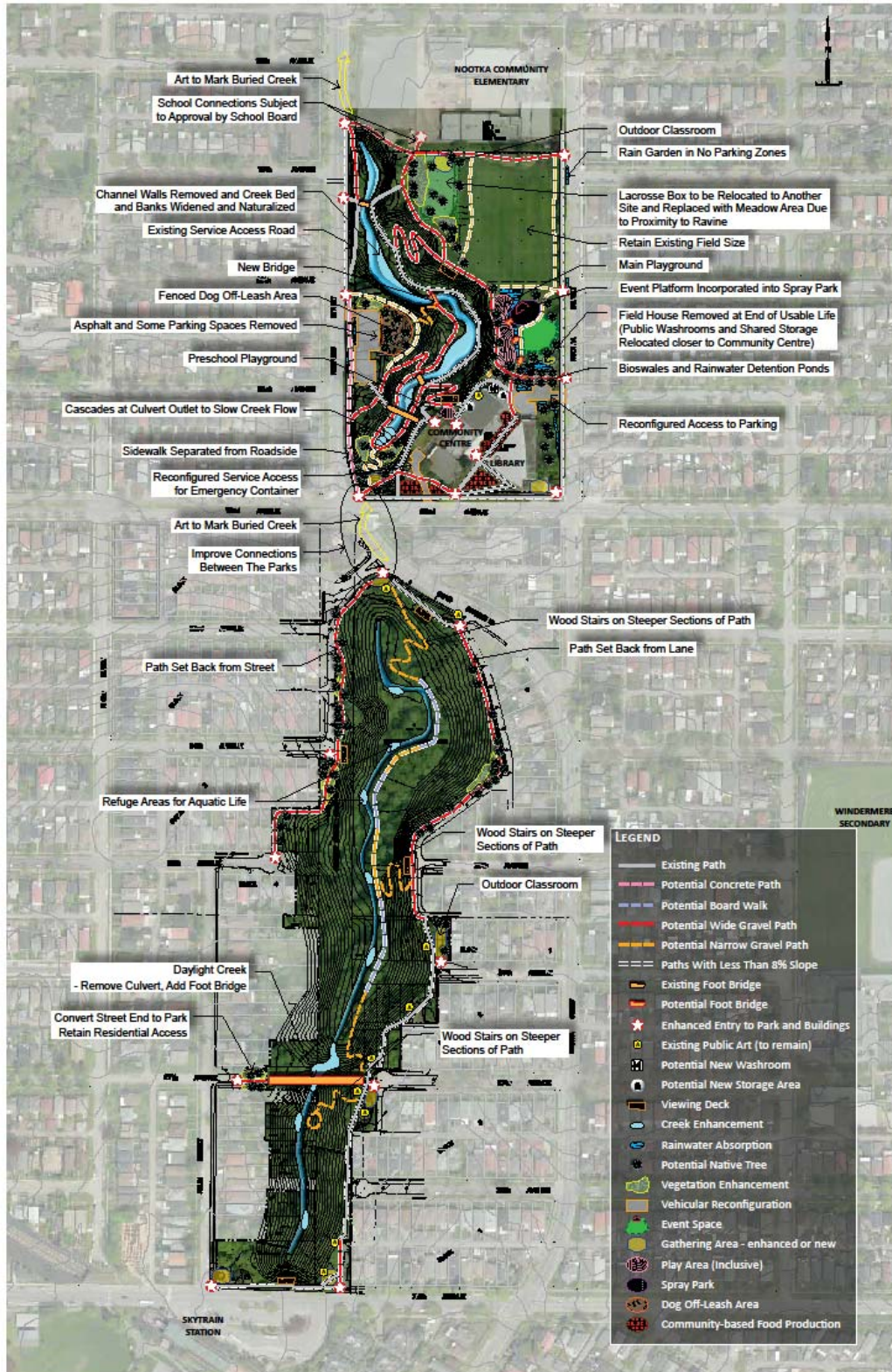


Renfrew
Community
Centre

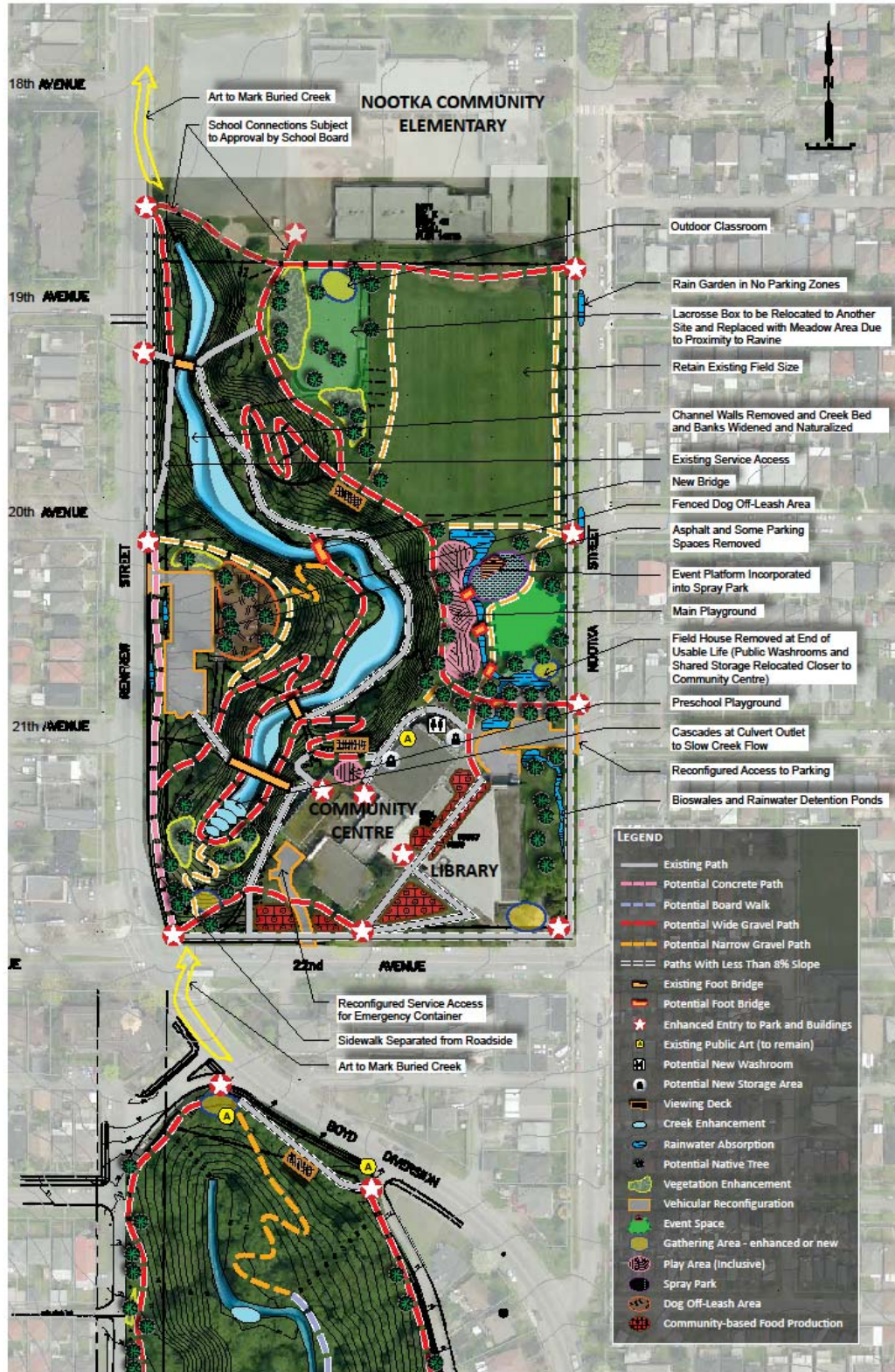
Renfrew
Ravine
Park

29th Ave
Skytrain

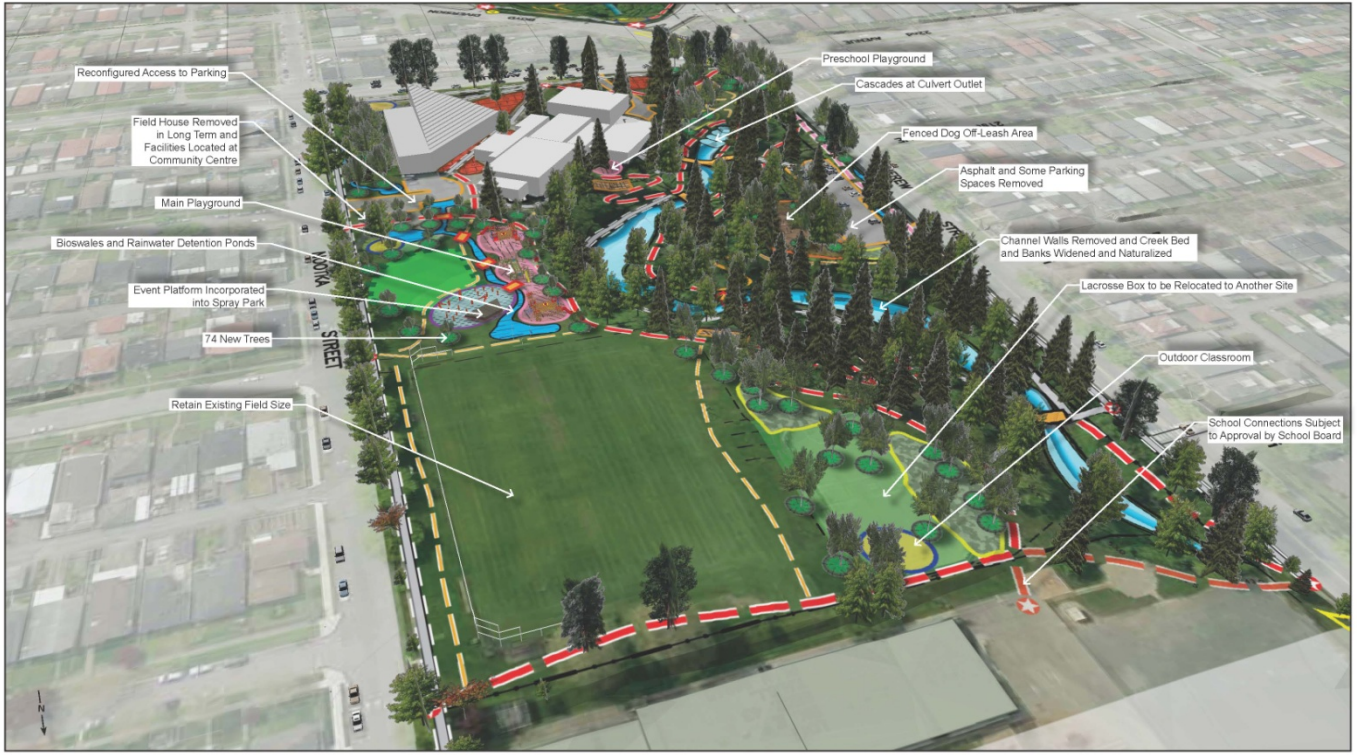
APPENDIX B – PROPOSED MASTER PLAN



RECOMMENDED CONCEPT PLAN

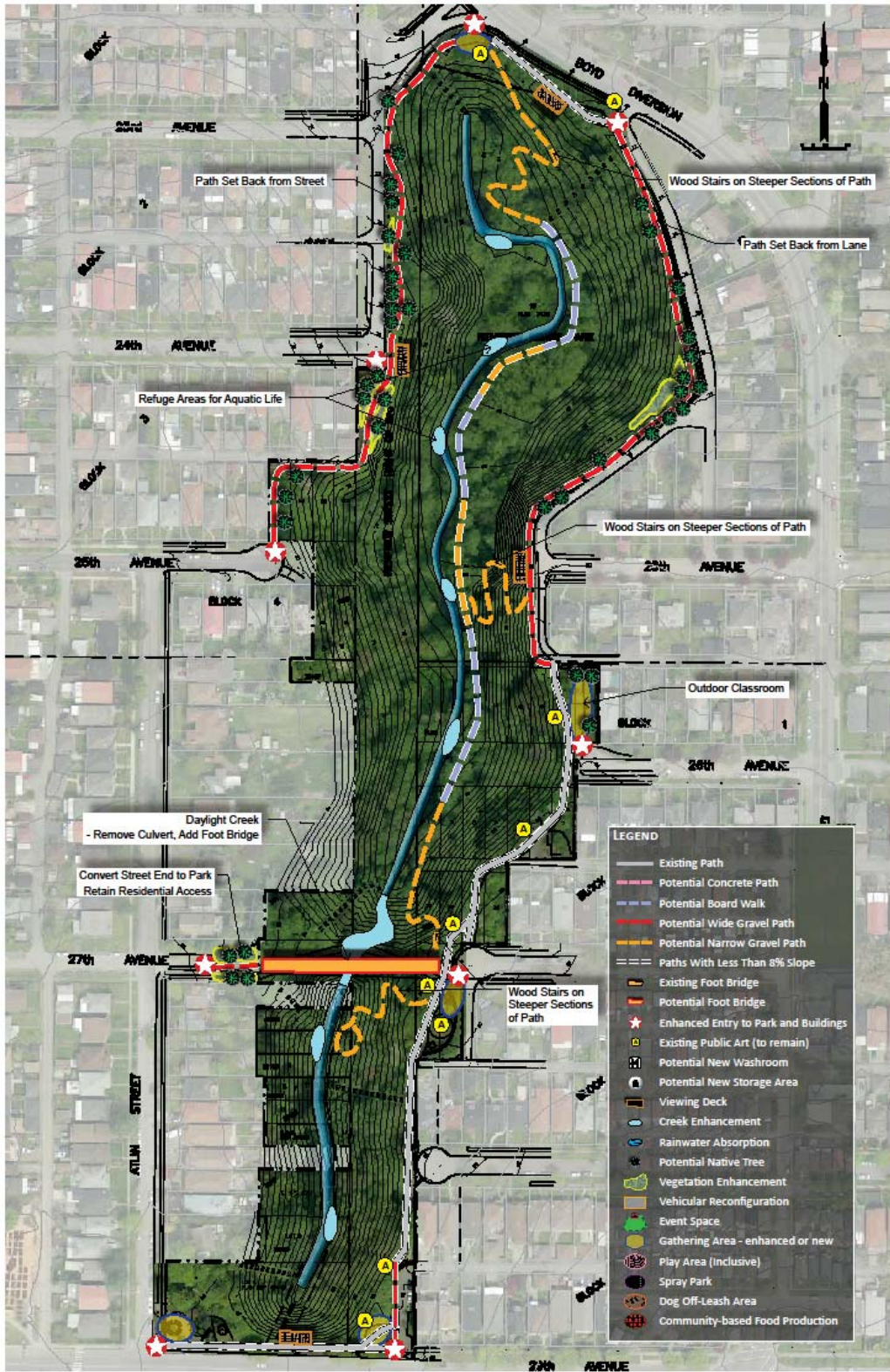


RENFREW COMMUNITY PARK
RECOMMENDED CONCEPT PLAN



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|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Existing Path | Existing Foot Bridge | Creek Enhancement | Event Space |
| Potential Concrete Path | Existing Potential Foot Bridge | Rainwater Absorption | Gathering Area - enhanced or new |
| Potential Wide Gravel Path | Enhanced Entry | Potential Native Tree | Play Area |
| Potential Narrow Gravel Path | Viewing Deck | Vegetation Enhancement | Spray Park (Inclusive) |
| Paths With Less Than 8% Slope | | Vehicular Reconfiguration | Dog Off-Leash Area |
| | | | Community-based Food Production |

**RENFREW COMMUNITY PARK
SITE OVERVIEW**



**RENFREW RAVINE PARK
RECOMMENDED CONCEPT PLAN**