

Received Jan 4, 2015:

Dear Citizens' Assembly,

RE: Ecological values and the Grandview-Woodland Area Plan

I am very concerned that ecological values are still not being explicitly addressed in the planning process for Grandview-Woodland. Environmental sustainability is included as a draft value in a document distributed at the public roundtable on 26 November 2014, and energy and climate change are addressed as a goal with emerging policies in the Grandview-Woodland Community Plan - Open House Information Booklet of June 2013. These values and goals pertain primarily to our existing and future relationship to our built environment. To date, the planning process does not address the broader ecological context in which Grandview-Woodland and Vancouver exist.

Although Grandview-Woodland is located in an ecological setting that has been extensively modified with considerably diminished biodiversity, we rely heavily on local and regional ecological services to support our quality of life. As humanity's ecological footprint grows bigger, we have an ethical obligation to consider ecological values in all human endeavours. Ecological values including ecological conservation and restoration must be an integral part of the planning process for Grandview-Woodland. For instance, from an ecological perspective, an urban green space that is suitable for jogging, frisbee, picnics and dog-walking may be of little or no ecological value to native species of plants and animals that once thrived in the area. Opportunities to enhance ecological values and biodiversity on public and private property exist, but research indicates that relatively little planning for the conservation of biodiversity is undertaken at the local level (1). The ongoing process of developing a new community plan for Grandview-Woodland offers an opportunity to address ecological values and biodiversity at a very local level.

Human well-being is related to a sense of connection to nature (2), and research in the social sciences provides strong evidence supporting the importance of ecological values and biodiversity to the well-being of cities and their residents (3). Cities around the world are working to conserve species and protect habitat (4). Ecological values can be restored, protected and enhanced on public and private property through planting of native species of trees and vegetation, but as Grandview-Woodland densifies through redevelopment of housing, laneway houses, conversions from single family to duplex housing, etc., the amount of the community that is paved will increase, and biodiversity, vegetated areas and green space will decrease. The Grandview-Woodland Community Plan needs to identify these trends and plan to mitigate or reverse them on public and private property through community-wide (and city-wide) initiatives.

Relatively few properties in Grandview-Woodland are large enough to support even small patches of habitat with high ecological value (e.g. mature Douglas Fir, Western Red Cedar and associated understory vegetation) over the long term. Thoughtful planning and creative thinking will be required to restore, protect and enhance ecological values. Possible initiatives could include:

- acquisition of property for ecological restoration, protection and enhancement
- incentives for property owners to protect and ecologically enhance green space
- inventory and ecological assessment of existing green spaces in Grandview-Woodland and identification of opportunities for ecological restoration, protection and enhancement
- review of approaches taken to massing and siting for new building projects on

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consolidated properties (e.g. cluster buildings in a portion of a property to create space for areas of habitat with higher ecological value)

- collaboration with ecologists and other professionals to identify specific techniques for ecological restoration and enhancement (5)
- relaxation of off-street parking requirements for redevelopment and conversion projects to maintain green space

I urge you to include ecological values in your values that will guide change in Grandview-Woodland. I hope that you will also consider the broader ecological context in which Grandview-Woodland is situated in all of the visions and recommendations you develop for the future of our community.

Literature Cited

- (1) Miller, J. R., M. Groom, G. R. Hess, T. Steelman, D. L. Stokes, J. Thompson, T. Bowman, L. Fricke, B. King and R. Marquardt. 2009. Biodiversity conservation in local planning. *Conservation Biology* 23(1): 53-63. (copy attached)
- (2) Luck, G. W., P. Davidson, D. Boxall, and L. Smallbone. 2011. Relations between urban bird and plant communities and human well-being and connection to nature. *Conservation Biology* 25(4): 816-826. (copy available at [http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/\(ISSN\)1523-1739](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/(ISSN)1523-1739))
- (3) Louv, R. 2006. *Last Child in the Woods*. Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, North Carolina. x + 334 p. (VPL 155.418 L89L)
- (4) Blaustein, R. 2013. Urban biodiversity gains new converts . *Bioscience* 63(2): 72-77. (copy attached)
- (5) Root-Bernstein, M. and R. J. Ladle. 2010. Conservation by design. *Conservation Biology* 24(5): 1205-1211. (copy available at [http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/\(ISSN\)1523-1739](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/(ISSN)1523-1739))