



Committee of the Whole Report

For the Meeting of September 14, 2017

To: Committee of the Whole **Date:** August 28, 2017
From: Jonathan Tinney, Director, Sustainable Planning and Community Development
Subject: Fairfield Neighbourhood Plan – Emerging Directions

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. Approve, in-principle, the emerging directions as a basis for preparing the draft Fairfield Neighbourhood Plan, which directs:
 - a. some growth in and around Cook Street Village (buildings up to four storeys in height) and some growth directed to the northwest part of Fairfield (buildings from six to 10 storeys in height)
 - b. new heritage conservation areas for:
 - i. South Cook Street/Dallas Road (from Cook Street to Cambridge Street)
 - ii. Trutch Street (between Richardson Street and Fairfield Road)
 - iii. Durban and Kipling Streets (between Richardson Street and Thurlow Road)
 - iv. Memorial Crescent (portion of block between Fairfield Road and May Street)and consideration for new guidelines and permit exemptions that address feedback received from homeowners and the community.
2. Refer the proposed heritage conservation areas to the Heritage Advisory Panel for review and comment, with a focus on proposed boundaries, permit exemptions and guidelines.
3. Following further development of the proposed heritage conservation areas, direct staff to undertake additional consultation with affected homeowners and the community as part of the draft Fairfield Neighbourhood Plan engagement.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to present Council with emerging plan directions for the Fairfield Neighbourhood Plan, and seek direction on options for future growth and heritage conservation. The process to develop the plan began in the spring of 2016 through a phased approach, and has included extensive involvement and collaboration with residents, business owners and community groups. This process has resulted in a number of emerging plan directions, summarized for Council herein.

There has been strong community agreement and a shared vision for the majority of plan goals and emerging directions which cover topics including transportation, housing, parks, urban forest, environment, placemaking and community well-being. There has also been a range of different

community perspectives for a limited number of other topics, such as managing neighbourhood growth and heritage conservation.

A key item for Council's consideration is the proposed neighbourhood growth concept for Fairfield, which was developed and refined based on community feedback. In general, the proposed concept directs some growth in and around Cook Street Village, as well as within the northwest area of Fairfield. The concept also envisions future housing and commercial uses at Ross Bay Village, modest growth in small urban villages and infill housing dispersed throughout traditional residential areas. Given the different perspectives in the community about the future of Fairfield, staff believe this growth concept provides a balanced approach for achieving the community's goals and objectives. This approach was surveyed with the community and further refined in an intensive design workshop.

There has also been a mix of perspectives related to the concept of creating four new heritage conservation areas (HCA) within Fairfield, as described in Attachment 5. While there is strong support from the general community, the level of support from homeowners in these areas varies from support to strong opposition. Based on the historic context and existing heritage properties within these four areas, staff have proposed to establish HCAs to ensure that new development is appropriately designed for the historic context and to help conserve the heritage value, special character, and significant historic buildings, features and characteristics of these areas.

In order to proceed with preparing the draft neighbourhood plan, staff are seeking direction from Council on these matters, and have provided options and recommendations for consideration. Following Council's direction, staff will prepare a draft plan for review by Council and the community.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to present Council with emerging plan directions for the Fairfield Neighbourhood Plan and seek direction on options for future growth and heritage conservation.

BACKGROUND

In the spring of 2016, a process was launched to develop a new neighbourhood plan for the Fairfield neighbourhood.

The process has been undertaken through a phased approach which to-date has included the following milestones:

Phase 1: Pre-Planning (April – June 2016)

- community meeting to launch project (90 participants)
- collaboration with a working group to identify key values, confirm process and engagement approach and identify key planning issues that the plan should address.

Phase 2: Imagine (June – October 2016)

Numerous joint engagement events were held to identify planning issues for Gonzales and Fairfield and develop neighbourhood-specific goals and a vision for each neighbourhood. Opportunities for input included:

- on-line survey (354 responses)
- community workshop (100 participants)
- sounding boards (1190 ideas)
- citizen-led meetings (3).

Phase 3: Co-Create (October 2016 – May 2017)

A series of workshops were held in late fall of 2016 to further explore key planning issues and identify early direction for the neighbourhood plan. Approximately 275 people participated. Events included:

- Fairfield: Future of Housing and Urban Villages Forum
- Cook Street Village Forum (2 events)
- Renters Forum
- Meeting with Cook Street Village Business Association
- Parks, Trees, Open Space and Recreation Forum
- Transportation Forum
- Placemaking, Public Spaces, Arts and Culture Forum
- Heritage Forum
- Sustainability and Neighbourhood Resiliency Forum.

In addition, to seek broader participation and more clarity on community preferences for neighbourhood housing growth, infill housing and HCAs, two additional opportunities for input were added to the planning process in April-May 2017:

- on-line survey (770 responses)
- two information sessions (100 people)

Fairfield Design Workshop (June 12-13, 2017)

Building on the results of the on-line survey and earlier feedback, a two-day design workshop was held in June 2017 to develop guiding principles and design concepts for five different growth areas in Fairfield. This event was organized by the City and included 33 participants made up primarily of Fairfield and Gonzales Working Group members. The results from the design workshop were made available through a public “pin-up” (open house) that was attended by over 70 people on June 13. This event provided the opportunity for participants and members of the public to review the draft design concepts and guiding principles (key moves), ask questions and provide feedback.

The design concepts were refined based on the feedback received at the pin-up. The key moves have been incorporated into the emerging directions (Attachment 1) as the proposed policy directions for each geographic area. The design workshop results and a summary of the workshop are summarized in Attachment 2. A summary of the emerging directions are analyzed in more detail in Attachment 3 and relate to:

- growth for the Cook Street Village area
- growth in the northwest corner of Fairfield
- small urban villages
- Ross Bay Village
- infill housing
- retention of rental apartment buildings
- Fort Street corridor
- heritage conservation areas
- Cook Street Village streetscape design.

ISSUES & ANALYSIS

Neighbourhood Growth

While there has been strong community agreement on most plan goals and directions, there has been a mix of perspectives on how and where future housing growth and development should be accommodated. Although the Official Community Plan, 2012 (OCP), identifies a scenario for accommodating growth over the next 30 years, the community has identified a diversity of thoughts and opinions on this matter. Therefore, as a means to get broader input, the Fairfield community was invited to participate in an on-line survey and information sessions to provide feedback and identify preferences on options for neighbourhood growth that had emerged from previous visioning and workshop sessions. Three different growth options were developed based on earlier feedback, and each illustrated how growth could be accommodated in different ways while respecting some of the key concerns expressed by the community, such as maintaining the low-rise scale of older residential areas and supporting village centres, transit use and walking. All three growth options were designed to accommodate a similar number of residential units and retail floor area over 25 years.

The three growth options include:

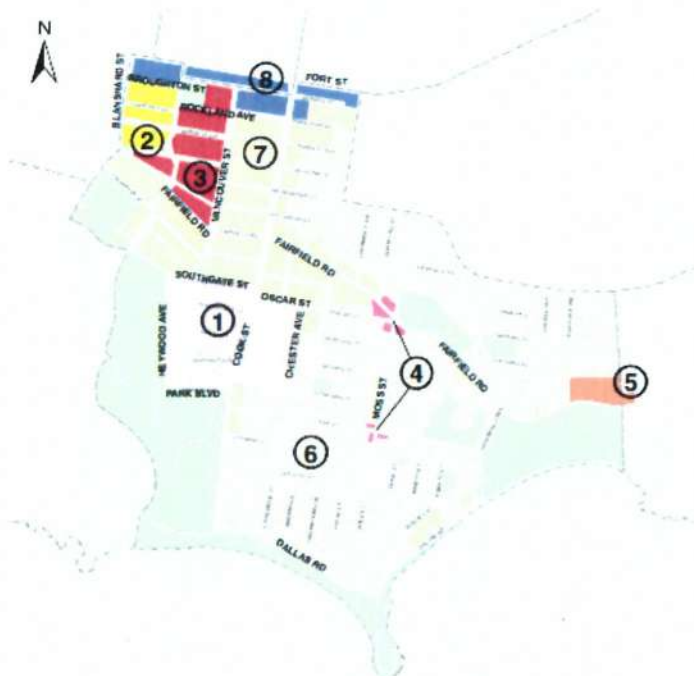
- **Growth Option 1:** Focus growth in Cook Street Village
- **Growth Option 2:** Focus growth in the northwest portion of Fairfield
- **Growth Option 3:** Focus some growth around Cook Street Village and some growth in the northwest area of Fairfield.

The strongest support was for Option 3 which directs some future housing growth to Cook Street Village in the form of four-storey mixed-use buildings in the village, and low-rise (three to four-storey) apartment buildings and townhouses in the surrounding blocks. Some growth is redistributed to the northwest portion of Fairfield.

More than 770 survey responses were received and more than 100 people attended information sessions, with similar feedback received in both formats.

While quite a few people expressed concerns about any changes to Cook Street Village and the northwest area, including concerns about parking, traffic and altering the ambience, many respondents felt that Option 3 struck the best balance for the neighbourhood. Those who opposed Option 3 were concerned about the potential loss of housing options, lower viability of redevelopment and lower likelihood of affordable housing from development. A summary of the survey and open house results is presented in Attachment 4.

Based on this public feedback, staff developed a growth concept based on Option 3 as follows:



1. Cook Street Village area: 4 storey mixed-use buildings in the village; residential buildings up to 4 storeys west of Cook Street and mix of housing forms east of Cook Street.
2. Northwest area: 8-10 storey commercial and residential buildings
3. Northwest area: 6-8 storey commercial and residential buildings
4. Small urban villages: 3-4 storey mixed-use buildings
5. Ross Bay Village: 3-4 storey mixed-use buildings with a central plaza space and townhouses on perimeter of site
6. Traditional residential area: Diverse infill housing through small lot housing with suites, houses with two suites and rowhouses/townhouses in some locations
7. Urban Residential Area: Residential and mixed-use buildings up to 6 storeys
8. Fort Street Corridor: Commercial and mixed-use buildings ranging up to 10 storeys (western end) and up to 6 storeys (eastern end)

Heritage Conservation

Retaining the historic character of buildings, streets and areas emerged as an important community value through early neighbourhood planning. The Emerging Directions for heritage propose a broad approach to retaining and celebrating Fairfield's historic character including consideration to establish new HCAs in the following four locations:

1. South Cook Street and portion of Dallas Road (between Cook Street to Cambridge Street)
2. Trutch Street (between Richardson Street and Fairfield Road)
3. Durban and Kipling Streets (between Richardson Street and Thurlow Road)
4. Memorial Crescent (portion of block between Fairfield Road and May Street).

A map, detailed description and rationale for these areas is provided in Attachment 5. The south Cook Street/Dallas road area was identified as an area to explore for a future development permit area or heritage conservation area in the OCP and the City of Victoria Strategic Plan. The other areas were identified through a community workshop on neighbourhood heritage held in October 2016.

Following the workshop, City heritage staff assessed the heritage value of all areas and proposed boundaries for the four areas. Feedback from the broader community and property owners is summarized below.

a. Feedback from Broader Community

Strong support from the broader community was received through the on-line survey and at the information sessions for establishing HCAs in these areas, as demonstrated by the survey results:

- 87% support for Cook Street and Dallas Road

- 86% support for Trutch Street
- 81% support for Durban and Kipling Streets
- 77% support for Memorial Crescent.

b. Feedback from Affected Property Owners

Property owners affected by the proposed HCAs were invited to a focused meeting to find out more information, what this may mean for their property, ask questions and provide feedback. The feedback and correspondence from homeowners produced mixed results. Some homeowners saw benefit to the establishment of HCAs as a means to ensure that new development is designed appropriately for the historic context of the area; however, there were also concerns expressed, which include:

- potential negative impact on property values;
- infringement on property rights
- lack of certainty about when a development permit would be required
- increased time and costs to upgrade properties
- lack of homeowner choice to be included in an HCA
- inappropriate boundaries for the proposed area (requirements would apply to a limited area)
- uncertainty about sustainable retrofits such as solar roof tiles
- HCAs are not the only tool to encourage heritage values.

A summary of feedback on HCAs (Attachment 6), and correspondence received from property owners (Attachment 7), are attached to this report.

OPTIONS & IMPACTS

1. Neighbourhood Growth Options

Option 1: Direct staff to proceed with the development of the draft Fairfield Neighbourhood Plan based on the emerging directions and associated neighbourhood growth concept described in Attachment 1. **(Recommended)**

Pros:

This growth option received the highest level of support in the community survey. It has been refined with Working Group members, design professionals, community members and City staff through a design workshop. This option introduces opportunities for diverse housing such as townhouses near Cook Street Village, as well as more multi-unit housing near Downtown. In the northwest part of the neighbourhood, this option would expand the area where taller buildings are supported. Proposed building heights in the northwest area are more likely to be financially viable for redevelopment, which will support additions to the City's housing stock.

Cons:

Redevelopment is less likely to be financially viable if heights are limited to four storeys, resulting in less likelihood of additions to the housing supply, as well as related amenity contributions for affordable housing and public realm improvements desired by the community.

Option 2: Focus growth in Cook Street Village, consistent with the OCP.

Pros:

This option would support new housing in mixed-use buildings up to six-storeys in height in Cook Street Village including the provision of smaller units. By focusing growth within the village, it would retain the character of the surrounding residential neighbourhood and maintain the character of the northwest area.

Of the three options, this option is most likely to result in new housing and commercial spaces in Cook Street Village, and associated amenity contributions due to increased viability of redevelopment. Financial analysis suggests that some 1-2 storey commercial properties in the village will likely be attractive for redevelopment if allowed to build to a height of six-storeys. Redevelopment may still be limited; however, most properties would require more than six storeys in height to be financially viable for redevelopment.

Cons:

For those members of the community that value Cook Street Village's current building form and character, this option would result in more significant changes.

Option 3: Focus more growth in the northwest part of Fairfield.

Pros:

This option would introduce more multi-unit housing closer to downtown including taller building heights that are more likely to support redevelopment opportunities, renewal of housing stock and potential amenity contributions.

Cons:

This option received only moderate support in the community survey and would result in a significant change to the character of the northwest area through higher density multi-unit buildings.

With growth directed to the northwest area of the neighbourhood, limited development would be expected in Cook Street Village due to the four-storey maximum limit on building height. This option would provide less support for Cook Street Village businesses and transit due to fewer residents living in the immediate area.

2. Heritage Conservation Options

Option 1: Pursue establishment of HCAs for south Cook Street/Dallas Road, Trutch Street, Durban/Kipling Streets, and Memorial Crescent to guide future development in these areas that is compatible with the historic character. Confirm HCA boundaries, develop specific permit exemptions and/or guidelines that address homeowner concerns, and undertake additional engagement with homeowners and the community during the draft plan stage. **(Recommended)**

Pros:

This option recognizes the support expressed by the broader community and some property owners for conserving the heritage character of these areas, while also acknowledging specific concerns from many property owners. Several concerns could be addressed by creating HCAs specifically designed for Fairfield, such as:

- reconsidering HCA boundaries to achieve neighbourhood objectives (e.g. considering broader areas)
- clarifying development permit requirements and creating additional exemptions when a permit is not required (e.g. only requiring permits for non-heritage properties when major development is proposed, such as a new house or an addition over a certain size)
- considering permit exemptions and guidelines to balance sustainability upgrades (e.g. energy-efficient windows, solar panels) with heritage conservation principles.

When the Fairfield-specific HCAs noted above are created, staff would further consult with property owners and the broader community during engagement of the draft plan.

Cons:

Some affected property owners in the areas of south Cook Street/Dallas Road and Durban/Kipling Street are not in support of HCAs for a variety of reasons as described in this report and attachments. However, Staff are currently working to address these concerns through a more detailed review of the perceived impacts.

Option 2: Pursue the establishment of HCAs for Trutch Street and Memorial Crescent only. Identify south Cook Street/Dallas Road and Durban/Kipling Street in the neighbourhood plan as areas to be considered for HCAs in the future.

Pros:

Although not unanimous, there was a stronger level of homeowner support for HCAs in these two areas. Heritage conservation objectives would be achieved for Trutch Street and Memorial Crescent areas with support by homeowners and the public. Future development in these areas would be guided to ensure compatibility.

Cons:

Advancement of heritage objectives would be delayed for the south Cook Street/Dallas Road and Durban/Kipling Street areas. In the meantime, development could occur in these areas without design control that may not be compatible with established character.

Option 3: Identify south Cook Street/Dallas Road, Trutch Street, Durban/Kipling Streets and Memorial Crescent in the neighbourhood plan as areas to be considered for HCAs in the future.

Pros:

This option would allow time for additional homeowner and community engagement and education on HCAs. Candidate areas would be identified in the neighbourhood plan but would be considered for establishment at a future time.

Cons:

Advancement of heritage objectives would be delayed, likely as a medium-term implementation item given resource limitations and commitments over the short-term. Additional community engagement may not result in increased support by homeowners. Development could occur in these areas without design control that may not be compatible with established character.

Accessibility Impact Statement

Several early policies in the emerging directions aim to improve the accessibility of Fairfield's public spaces. More details will be contained in the draft plan.

2015 – 2018 Strategic Plan

This project supports *Strategic Plan, Objective 3: Strive for Excellence in Planning and Land Use* which contains actions and outcomes to undertake local area planning focused on urban villages and transportation corridors, and to create a development permit/heritage conservation area on Dallas Road between Cook Street and Clover Point.

Impacts to Financial Plan

Impacts to the Financial Plan will be outlined when the neighbourhood plan and action plan are presented to Council for consideration.


Official Community Plan Consistency Statement

Preparation of a new Fairfield Neighbourhood Plan is consistent with the OCP which provides planning direction for ground-oriented housing, small urban villages, a transportation network, heritage and other policy areas. In particular, policy 21.6.8 (Neighbourhood Directions for Fairfield) states to explore the creation of a heritage conservation area for south Cook Street and Dallas Road.

CONCLUSIONS

While there has been strong community agreement on most plan goals and directions, there has been a mix of perspectives on how and where future housing growth and development should be accommodated, and on the creation of HCAs. In order to proceed with preparing the draft neighbourhood plan, staff are seeking direction from Council on these matters, and have provided options and recommendations for consideration. Following Council's direction, staff will prepare a draft plan for review by Council and the community.

Respectfully submitted,

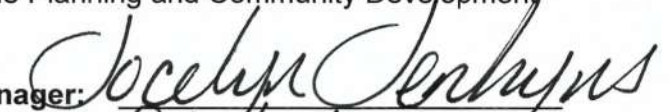

Kristina Bouris
Senior Planner
Community Planning

Alt.


Jonathan Tinney
Director
Sustainable Planning and Community Development

Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager:

Date:


Sept 8, 2017

List of Attachments:

- Attachment 1: Emerging Directions for the Fairfield Neighbourhood Plan
- Attachment 2: Summary Report Fairfield Design Workshop
- Attachment 3: Key Emerging Directions Matrix
- Attachment 4: Future of Fairfield Survey: Neighbourhood Growth and New Housing Engagement Summary
- Attachment 5: Description of Areas Being Explored for Heritage Conservation Areas
- Attachment 6: Areas Being Explored for Heritage Conservations Areas Engagement Summary
- Attachment 7: Correspondence Received from Property Owners Regarding Heritage Conservation Areas