

Norquay Residents Submission to 2012-2014 Draft Capital Plan

The following comment is based on and may reference:

- [1] Attendance at the Capital Plan information session of 21 July 2011
- [2] 2012-2014 Draft Capital Plan Public Information Sessions – July 2011
< <http://talkvancouver.com/document/show/108> >
- [3] 2012-2014 Capital Plan: Draft Plan [28 June 2011 report to Council]
< <http://talkvancouver.com/document/show/103> >
- [4] City of Vancouver 2011-2021 Capital Strategic Outlook – Draft (May 2, 2011)
[28 June 2011 report to Council]
< <http://talkvancouver.com/document/show/103> >
- [5] Norquay Village Neighbourhood Centre Plan [approved by Council 4 Nov 2010]
< <http://vancouver.ca/ctyclerk/cclerk/20101104/documents/penv2.pdf> >

This comment addresses the 2012-2014 Capital Plan **only from the perspective of Norquay expectations** arising from the near-term and medium-term requirements established in conjunction with approval of the Norquay Village Neighbourhood Centre Plan. These commitments, made to the already dense and underserved Norquay community in return for accommodating even more density, must be realized in a timely fashion.

The Norquay Plan [5] asserts: “A more detailed public benefits strategy will be developed as part of the implementation of the Neighbourhood Centre Plan” (p. 15). Eight months onward, at the 12 July 2011 public hearing on rezoning 2667-2703 Kingsway, planners did not appear to have done much work on such a strategy – perhaps having focused far more on the *taking* associated with mass rezoning than on the promised *giving* that was partially supposed to compensate and mitigate? It is extremely disappointing to see **nothing at all specified for Norquay in capital planning for the next three years.**

To the nine “investment principles” listed [3] (p. 6) for the 10 year capital strategic outlook should be added this tenth principle:

Honoring policy commitments made to local communities that are subjected to deliberate growth acceleration.

Reference only this policy statement in the Renfrew Collingwood Community Vision:

Each proposal for a new housing type has been made conditional not only on an increase in community facilities and programs needed to serve any population growth generated by the new housing type but also on an assurance that parking and traffic impacts would be addressed. (p. 30)

Norquay concerns with the 2012-2014 Capital Plan are detailed below as four separate sections, in a decreasing importance that reflects the ordering of anticipated benefits and amenities as outlined in the Norquay Plan [5] (p. 15).

A. 2400 Motel Site at the Core of the “Neighbourhood Centre”

The commitment made to Norquay [5] at the city-owned 2400 Motel site has two primary components:

- An indoor community gathering space, at least 15,000 square feet in size and flexible in use for youth, arts, seniors, and other community services and events;
- A major outdoor public gathering space that is south-facing and activated by the ground floor uses of the indoor community gathering space and surrounding retail uses; (p. 13)

The Existing Community Facilities map [4] (p. 21 of 40) demonstrates the utter absence of general public amenity in Norquay, a fact already revealed to Norquay Working Group at Workshop 4 on 28 April 2009. A version of this graphic, augmented with the boundaries of Norquay, is provided as Appendix. Note in particular that **the 2400 Motel site seems ideal for the location of an arts-oriented facility**, when the location distribution of other such facilities in Vancouver is taken into account.

The current draft capital plan [3] proposes a well-deserved “\$17 million for Marpole Community Facility” (p. 11). However, it must also be observed that Marpole is in a far less advanced stage of its local area planning, with approval to begin that planning dating only from 28 July 2011; whereas the Norquay planning initiated in March 2006 reached conclusion in November 2010. Likewise, a major uncoordinated spot rezoning is already under construction in Norquay at 2300 Kingsway; meanwhile Marpole has only just experienced a similar uncoordinated spot rezoning on 17 May 2011 (Safeway site) and a second at its eastern boundary on 19 July 2011 (Marine Gateway). **Comparison between Marpole and Norquay shows clear discrepancy in the sequencing of planning / construction / provision for major amenity.** It is to be hoped that this anomaly does not stem from a systematically differing treatment of neighborhoods that lie east and west of Main Street.

Planners have indicated a 3 to 5 year period as likely for development to occur on the 2400 Motel site. It does not seem appropriate that site development alone would be required to generate the entire financing of a major amenity intended to serve the 10,000 surrounding people in Norquay who already exist, not to mention the population that recent planning intends to add to the already comparatively dense area.

For the sake of comparison consider the Southeast False Creek development at Olympic Village: much smaller in area (9 acres compared with hundreds of acres) and far smaller in current population, it was graced with a new full-scale community centre at a cost of approximately \$35 million plus a nearby renovated Salt Building at perhaps \$15 million. It is not clear that these rough figures include any land cost, either.

Back of the envelope calculation thus suggests that **a \$50 million capital injection into Norquay would be minimally appropriate**, especially when relative scales are taken into account. If 30,000 sq ft are appropriate for the Creekside facility, at least that amount seems appropriate for Norquay. The 15,000 sq ft mentioned in the Norquay Plan, openly qualified as minimum, seems quite a lowball figure, and clearly deserves a doubling. The lower figure would only amount to overdue catch-up – not planning for the future.

It seems unlikely that any financial planning on this major project for Norquay can be achieved at this stage of the 2012-2014 Capital Plan. In consequence:

- Any disposition of, or planning for, or building out of, the 2400 Motel site should accordingly be deferred until appropriate concurrent capital planning can be undertaken
- Priority must be assigned to these Norquay facilities in future capital planning, with properly scaled interior and exterior community spaces, and a reasonable semblance of equity must be achieved

B. Park Land for Renfrew Ravine Linear Park and General Brock Park

Under the heading for parks [3] is listed this item:

- New parks (acquisition of land) and mini-parks (converting street space) (p. 12)

When it comes to land acquisition, \$33.9 million for parks obviously does not go far, and there are other items of concern. However, this does seem to be an area in the current capital plan where a start can be made on fulfilling existing commitments to Norquay [5] (p. 15), especially since these opportunities arise only over an extended period of time. To be specific, there are 10 separate parcels of land that need to be acquired. Two are needed to complete basic continuity for Renfrew Ravine Linear Park, the item of second priority. The third priority –

“To extend General Brock and Slocan Parks to increase their street presence and park accessibility”

– ultimately involves 4 parcels along Gladstone for General Brock Park, 4 parcels along Wenonah for General Brock, and 4 parcels along Slocan for Slocan Park. Since Slocan Park now falls outside of Norquay boundaries (as redrawn very late in the planning), it should be accorded a lower priority. Some of these are substandard / irregular parcels and would therefore cost less. In both of these two parks, city land now devoted to lanes and a street end could be reclaimed for park after the elimination of border housing, and thus multiply considerably the impact of land acquisition.

C. Improvements to Walkability

Under the heading for transportation [3] is listed this item:

“Improvements for walking and cycling: \$13 M for ‘active transportation corridors’ (bikeways and greenways), 12 new pedestrian/bike signals and 2 km of new sidewalk“ (p. 15)

Perhaps some of this funding can be directed toward improving the “walkability” that is supposed to be a salient feature of the “neighbourhood centre” that has been imposed on Norquay. Among the priorities that Norquay Working Group identified to planners are these two items:

(1) Continuous sidewalk along at least one side of Brock Street between Wenonah Street and Nanaimo Street. To have people continue having to walk in the street after the addition of considerable new density at 2339 Kingsway, and behind that along Galt Street, seems even more irresponsible. Note further that this is a walking route for school children at both Norquay Elementary and Gladstone High.

(2) A pedestrian crossing for Nanaimo Street is needed midway between the current crossings at Brock Street and at East 24th Avenue. The logical point appears to be where East 27th Avenue joins Nanaimo Street from the west. Much additional foot traffic crossing to the Nanaimo SkyTrain station can be anticipated with the impending redevelopment of the huge Canadian Tire site on the SE corner of Kingsway at Gladstone. This could become one instance where Norquay infrastructure planning actually gets ahead of the curve?

D. Daycare Not a Priority

When compared to other amenity facilities, as graphically illustrated by the Appendix map, Norquay is well-served with daycare – especially when another lavender star is added in for the new daycare that is coming with the 2300 Kingsway development. Although Norquay Working Group told planners that future amenities needed to allocate to other categories – more visible categories that would benefit more than a handful of persons – the July 2011 rezoning of 2667-2703 Kingsway brought only a minimal CAC allocated to ... daycare. Further amenities for Norquay must be something other than daycare to rectify obvious imbalance.

Unlike comments A–C, comment D is not an “ask,” but instead a balancing response to a 2012-2014 Capital Plan report to Council [3] that seems to manifest a general skew to prioritize daycare. For example, early prominence is given to the phrase:

“such as the need for incremental affordable housing and childcare” – City Manager’s Comment (p. 2)

Note further here that “affordable” housing – which Norquay in fact enjoyed in relative terms prior to imposed mass rezoning – should never be proposed as a “benefit” to Norquay, since it likewise has no visibility, makes little reach into the broad existing community that requires in-step-with-development compensating amenity, rests on dubious assumptions, and was never proposed to Norquay Working Group.

Submitted by Joseph and Jeanette Jones – 5 August 2011

Existing Community Facilities

- ★ Childcare
- Social
- ◆ Recreation
- ▲ Library/archives
- ▼ Cultural
- Entert./exhib.

