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Date: October 25, 2012 No. of Pages: 4

To: Community Sustainability Strategy Steering Committee

From: Tanya Bettles, Environmental Coordinator, Economic Development & Planning Services

Re: Sumas Mountain Environmental Management Study Update

PURPOSE

1. Discuss shifting staff's focus away from the Sumas Mountain Environmental Management Study in order to prioritize the development of a city-wide Green Community Plan
2. Review the draft framework for a Green Community Plan
3. Discuss the options to conclude the Sumas Mountain study

BACKGROUND

The City has met with the Sumas Mountain residents on three occasions over the past four months. Despite efforts to convey the message that the study is simply an analysis of the current environmental conditions, residents still have many misunderstandings about the project. As such, negative feedback has been received on the Sumas Mountain Environmental Management Study (SMEMS). In response to that feedback, staff recommend shifting the focus away from the SMEMS and instead creating a city-wide Green Community Plan.

ANALYSIS

City-wide Green Community Plan (GCP)

There are many parts of the SMEMS report that are applicable to the entire city, not just Sumas Mountain (i.e. scientific principles, implementation options, legislation overview, species at risk information, etc.). As such, staff recommend developing a broader city-wide approach to developing a green community. The GCP would include all of the SMEMS information that is relevant city-wide and also include information that is applicable to the urban areas. The focus would be expanded to include not only cores and corridors, but also other green infrastructure such as green streets, raingardens, green roofs, greenways, urban trees, etc. In this way, the GCP would be a reference document applicable to development occurring anywhere in the City, not just on Sumas Mountain. This approach would allow the City to develop an overarching plan that aligns with other City documents such as the Integrated Stormwater Management Plans, Master Parks Plan, Official Community Plan, Bike Master Plan, etc.

MEMORANDUM

Once complete, the City could develop more detailed studies for each of the unique areas within the city (i.e. Sumas Mountain, Vedder Mountain, the urban core, urban residential areas, etc.).

Draft Framework for a Green Community Plan

A conceptual draft framework for the GCP is attached in Appendix 1. This was presented to the Sumas Mountain residents at the Town Hall meeting on October 24, 2012. Some additional items to consider including in the GCP are included in Appendix 2.

Options for concluding the SMEMS

There are three main options for concluding the SMEMS, including:

1. Include the SMEMS as an appendix to the GCP
2. Create a standalone SMEMS report to be developed after the GCP is complete
3. Finalize the SMEMS into an internal document for future reference only. This would not be approved by council or released for additional public input. It would serve to record the public review process, the methodology used, and the resulting green network data.

NEXT STEPS

Over the coming months, staff will prepare the Draft Green Community Plan and bring it back to the Steering Committee for review in late December or early January. The draft report will then be brought to council in January with a request to undertake public consultation on the draft. This consultation will occur in late February, in the format of a public open house and online posting of the draft report. Feedback will be incorporated into the draft and a final report will be brought to the steering committee and council in March.

STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT REQUIRED

Staff is looking for input from the Steering Committee on the following issues:

1. Opinion on the shift in focus to developing a Green Community Plan.
2. The content of the Green Community Plan.
3. Direction on how best to conclude the Sumas Mountain Environmental Management Study.