



July 17, 2012

File: 5280-10-04

Dear Property Owner/Occupant:

Re: Community Meeting regarding the Sumas Mountain Environmental Management Study

The City recently began work on a Sumas Mountain Environmental Management Study (SMEMS). The SMEMS is in the early phase of development and the City is looking for input from the residents of Sumas Mountain. The study will identify sensitive habitat and strategies to address environmentally sensitive lands.

The City will be holding two Community Meetings at Straiton Hall (4698 Upper Sumas Mountain Road) for rural property owners of Sumas Mountain. The meetings will allow residents to dialogue with the City regarding the SMEMS and share their knowledge of environmental and recreational values on the mountain to inform the SMEMS. The first Community Meeting will be on July 31, 2012, and the second will be on September 11, 2012. Information boards will be set up from 6:00-9:00pm, and a presentation will start at 7:00pm with a dialogue session to follow. A public open house will be held in September for the general public. The City is very interested in working together with the Sumas Mountain community on this study and the more comprehensive Official Community Plan (OCP) review set to start later this year. The OCP will address broader land use issues. It is intended that the SMEMS contribute important information to be used in the OCP review.

The City values your input. If you are unable to attend either of the Community Meetings and want to receive more information on the project, please feel free to contact me. Alternatively, you can provide comments online via the Community Sustainability Planning Initiative (CSPI) Comment Form, which you can find a link to under the SMEMS website at www.abbotsford.ca/smems.

For more information on this project, please read the attached FAQs. These FAQs will be added to the SMEMS website along with additional information as it becomes available.

Yours truly,

Jay Teichroeb
General Manager
Economic Development and Planning Services

Enclosure: Frequently Asked Questions

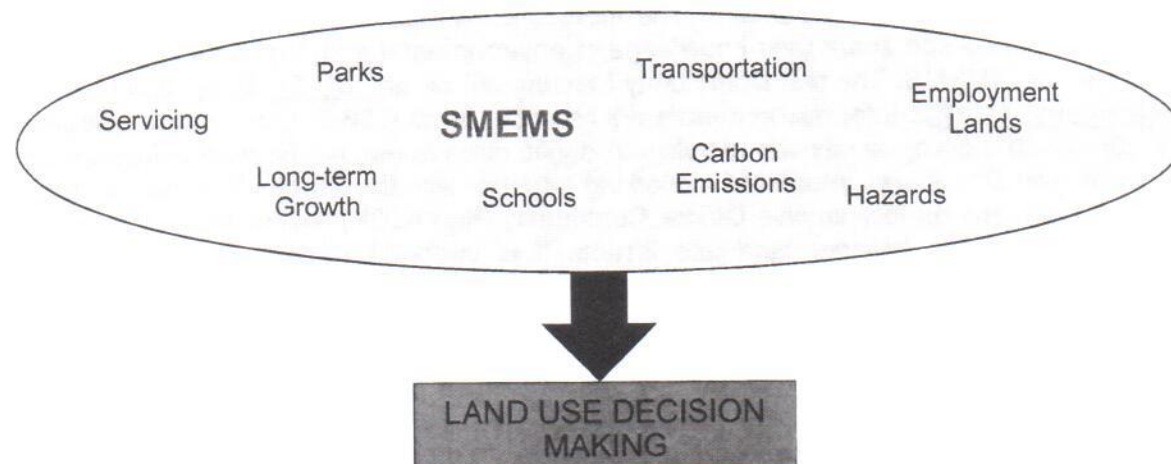
cc: Mark Neill, Manager, Community Planning
Tanya Bettles, Environmental Coordinator

SUMAS MOUNTAIN ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT STUDY: Frequently Asked Questions

Date: July 17, 2012

Is this a land use plan?

The Sumas Mountain Environmental Management Study (SMEMS) is a background study that may inform a future land use plan. As illustrated below, the SMEMS is only one layer of information used to inform land use decision making, along with other considerations including transportation networks, servicing requirements, soil extraction areas, etc.



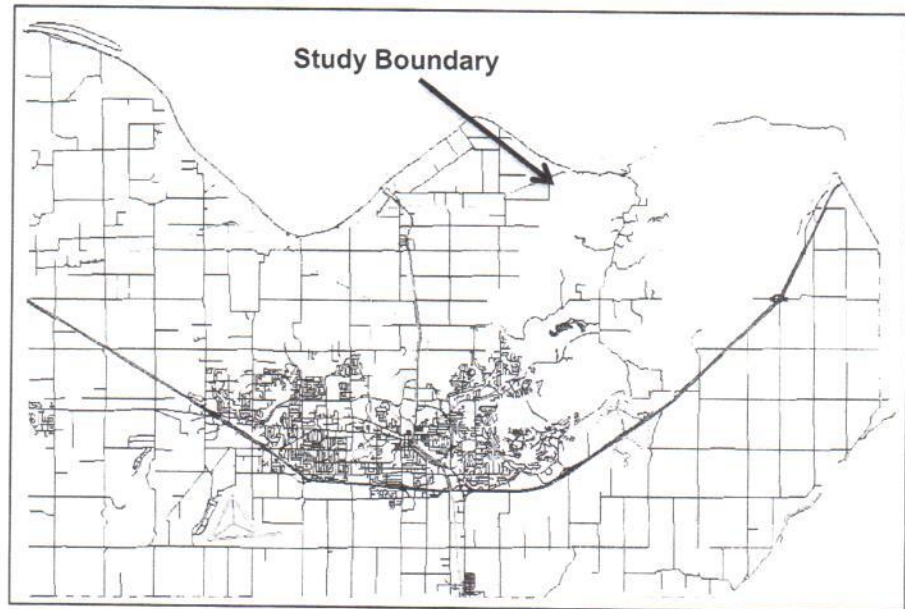
Why is the City undertaking this project?

As part of the City's ongoing efforts to support and implement Official Community Plan (OCP) policy, staff have been coordinating work to identify valuable ecological and recreational resources on Sumas Mountain. It is recognized that there is a desire among City residents to ensure that our future revised Official Community Plan (OCP)¹ incorporates a comprehensive landscape level plan for development on Sumas Mountain, including McKee Peak. To inform that plan, the City needs to have a clear understanding of what ecological and recreational values presently exist on the mountain and how they can be connected together to create a continuous network of green space. This information can then become one of the layers of information used to create a comprehensive land use plan through the OCP review process.

¹The OCP is the planning tool where land uses are identified. The OCP takes into account many different factors such as servicing, transportation networks, sensitive habitat, land hazards, sustainability, and the need for various land uses (i.e. industrial, commercial, residential, agricultural, aggregate extraction, schools, parks, etc.).

What is the study boundary?

The Study Boundary is outlined in yellow and includes the majority of the green space on Sumas Mountain (including McKee Peak) within the City boundary. It does not include FVRD Area G, woodlots within the city boundary, or First Nation reserve land.

**What do the current City and Area H Official Community Plans say?**

The City and Area H OCPs recognize the immense recreational and ecological value of Sumas Mountain to our citizens and the region. While both OCPs contain visions for a connected system of parks, protected areas, and recreational trails neither incorporates this vision into its land use plans. Starting in the fall, staff will begin the process of revising the City OCP to incorporate Area H. The SMEMS will provide ecological and recreational information to this OCP revision so that the OCP vision for connected green space can be incorporated into its land use plans. By including this information into a landscape level plan, the City will avoid piecemeal development that does not retain the rural character that Sumas Mountain residents value.

What are the main components of the project?

The SMEMS includes the following tasks/deliverables:

1. Identify Environmental Management Areas (EMAs):
Use biophysical data to identify where sensitive habitat exists on Sumas Mountain. Employing a science-based approach, further refine this information to develop a network of environmental management areas (EMAs) (i.e. cores and corridors). EMAs are characterized by similar environmental and recreational values.
2. Summarize implementation options for the City and its partners:
Identify strategies to address EMAs (i.e. cluster development, density bonusing, working with land trusts, etc.), specific actions that are required to make these tools possible, and next steps.

What work has been done to date?

The City undertook a biophysical inventory from 2005 to 2010. The work began with watercourse mapping and most recently included habitat mapping. Work on the SMEMS began in the winter, when this biophysical data was examined in conjunction with other data (i.e. slope, aspect, elevation, species at risk occurrences, etc.) in order to identify areas of land that have high ecological and/or recreational values. During the spring, potential implementation options were investigated. Some preliminary work was conducted on identifying preferred and

acceptable land uses, but it was decided that recommendations on land use should be left for the OCP review, when all other land use issues can be reviewed at the same time.

An advisory group¹ was established to provide preliminary input into the EMAs and develop guiding principles for the project. The resulting conceptual EMA map was presented in April to the Community Sustainability Steering Committee (which consists of one Councillor, the City Manager, and the four City General Managers). During the spring it was also presented to the following committees of Council:

- City Industry Development Advisory Committee
- Parks, Recreation and Culture Commission
- Area H Committee
- Environmental Advisory Committee

In April, the advisory group met a third time to discuss the implementation strategy. An external stakeholder workshop was held in May to discuss the whole project². Subsequently, the Community Sustainability Steering Committee reviewed the project, where it received support.

Notes:

¹The SMEMS advisory group is comprised of members from organizations/initiatives including the Abbotsford Mission Nature Club, Fraser Valley Conservancy, Bear Aware Network Fraser Valley, Community Futures South Fraser, local development community, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Ministry of Forest, Lands, and Natural Resource Operations, Metro Vancouver Regional District Parks, Ministry of Environment, Environmental Advisory Committee, City Industry Development Advisory Committee, and Area H Committee.

²Workshop attendees included representatives from: Ministry of Forests, Lands, and Natural Resource Operations, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Metro Vancouver Regional District, Fraser Valley Regional District, Fraser Valley Watersheds Coalition, University of the Fraser Valley, Tourism Abbotsford, Kinder Morgan, Abbotsford Fish and Game Club, Abbotsford Mission Nature Club, Trails BC, the aggregate industry, Abbotsford Soil Conservation Association, and the Fraser Basin Council.

Why didn't we contact the Sumas Mountain landowners earlier?

The project team engaged City staff and key stakeholders to assist in the development of a conceptual plan to lead a discussion with Sumas Mountain landowners. The project team wanted to present the Sumas Mountain landowners with a conceptual plan that was well thought out. However, the project evolved into a discussion about specific compatible land uses, which should involve extensive consultation with landowners. Since then the project team has recognized that discussions on compatible land uses should occur as part of the OCP revision instead, when the broad range of land use issues can be examined comprehensively. As such, the city is removing that component of the project from the SMEMS and instead focusing on the project deliverables noted above. The City is very interested in working together with the Sumas Mountain community on this study and the upcoming Official Community Plan (OCP) review that this study will inform.

Can I continue with my existing land use?

Yes. All existing land uses will be allowed to continue without any interference from the City, provided land uses comply with relevant City bylaws, existing zoning, etc.

How definitive are the boundaries of the Environmental Management Areas?

The boundaries of the Environmental Management Areas (EMAs) are imprecise, since the data that the EMAs are based on is high level overview data. The precise location of the EMA boundaries on the actual parcel will be defined by the site-level wildlife assessments that are required as part of the Environmental Development Permit, which is required for development applications.

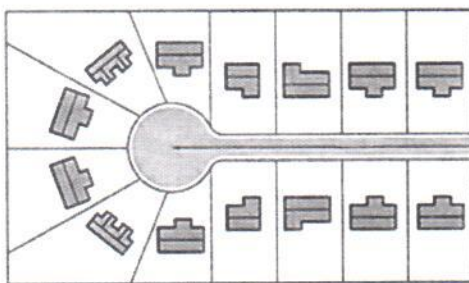
Where will development occur on the mountain?

This question will be answered through the Official Community Plan (OCP) review process that will begin in the fall. The OCP is a long-term vision for the community that includes objectives and policies to guide decisions on planning and land use management. It considers a wide range of items such as servicing, transportation, land hazards, sustainability, and the need to accommodate various land uses (i.e. industrial, commercial, residential, agricultural, aggregate extraction, schools, parks, etc.). The OCP is the primary planning tool that the City utilizes in reviewing rezoning applications. An OCP can also designate Development Permit Areas (DPA) to achieve some of the objectives identified in an OCP. A DPA can be designated to protect agricultural land, protect the natural environment, and guide the form and character of development.

The SMEMS is a science-based study that is meant to help inform the more comprehensive OCP review set to start later this year, which will address broader land use issues. It is intended that the SMEMS contribute important information to be used in the OCP review. The SMEMS is meant to be a very high level plan that outlines where the ecological and recreational values occur, how they might be connected to one another, and what options are available to help preserve the green space. Future development will be encouraged in the low to medium sensitivity lands and previously disturbed lands. In lands identified as being highly sensitive, the City will look to work cooperatively with land owners to identify ways of developing that are mutually beneficial (i.e. both land development and habitat protection are achieved).

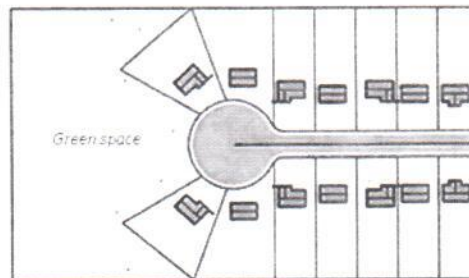
What might future development look like?

The intent of the project is to inform the establishment of a connected network of protected land within the OCP's land use plan. This land will only be protected in conjunction with a development application. The City will work with the property owners to develop a plan for their property that has the mutually beneficial goals of land development and habitat protection. For example, this might occur through clustering development into one portion of the property with smaller lot sizes than allowed in the zoning bylaw, and then leaving a portion of the property undeveloped. This arrangement would allow for the same lot yield as conventional development, but has the positive outcomes of maintaining green space around the development. See the following image for an example of this concept:



Conventional Lot Layout:

- 40 Hectares
- 14 Lots
- 2.5 Hectare lot size



Cluster Development Lot Layout:

- 40 Hectares: ~30 Ha developed and ~10 Ha in green space
- 14 Lots
- 1.9 Hectare lot size

What are the next steps?

Over the next two months, City staff will continue to have meetings with stakeholders, including McKee Peak and Sumas Mountain rural property owners, community residents, aggregate industry, First Nations, Metro Vancouver Regional District, and Fraser Valley Regional District. Staff will continue to incorporate feedback into the draft report, which will be presented to Council for their consideration in the fall.

The draft report will be brought out to wider public consultation in the fall, including online surveys and a public open house. The draft will also be brought back to the committees of Council that reviewed it during the spring. It will then be forwarded to Council for their consideration.

For more information, please contact:

Tanya Bettles
Environmental Coordinator
City of Abbotsford
Phone: 604-851-4186
Email: tbettles@abbotsford.ca
Website: www.abbotsford.ca/smems