



Esquimalt Village Project

Ultimately, decisions about the Esquimalt Village Project are going to be made by the public. That's why we need information. Incomplete information leads to incomplete consultation.

Over the years, a number of studies have been done in Esquimalt in an attempt to revitalize the town core. The desire to create a more thriving local economy is not new. However, there are a few things that set the Esquimalt Village Project (EVP) apart from previous studies.

The EVP's scope is larger. It covers the municipally owned lands of the Archie Browning Sports Centre, Bullen Park, The Esquimalt Teen Centre, the Old Municipal Hall and the Town Square. It also provides concepts for lands that are privately owned. It provides suggestions for all the lands along Esquimalt Rd from Joffre to Constance...a concept that is termed the "High Street".

Please visit the Esquimalt Village Project on the township's website at: http://www.esquimalt.ca/bus_development/esquimalt_village_project.htm You will find some slides and panels that give important information about the "options" that are being suggested for our town core. I strongly suggest reading through the information before the next public consultation. That date is still to be announced. It was tentatively scheduled for June 2008 but that date has passed. I promise to post it on my blog and my facebook page as soon as I hear a date. Your voice is important and I hope to see you at that meeting whenever it might take place.

The public has given a lot of feedback. Results show that there is strong support for retaining all of the services and amenities at Archie Browning Sports Centre. There is support for additional civic facilities like theatres and arts/cultural venues and there is support for more retail in the area. I certainly agree with these broad statements. Some of the community feedback is posted on the website mentioned above.

The EVP's first Open Houses were presented in June of 2007. In October 2007, an update was provided. There was another opportunity to provide feedback in March of 2008. At that time, the public was presented with 5 options to choose from.

In March of 2008, I was interviewed about the EVP on CFAX with Gary Boyer, President of the Victoria Cougars and the Friends of Archie Browning Sports Centre. I spoke passionately about the number of unanswered questions I still have.

- I feel it's vital to know whether or not the publicly owned lands will be sold or not. I'm not comfortable choosing a preferred option until I know the repercussions of how it might be implemented.
- In the options that include a new Archie Browning Sports Centre, we need to know more details on that building's use. We need to know a rough number of how many seats it will include for spectators. We need to know the size of the ice surface. We need to know if

- it eliminates curling. We need to know if it eliminates the Food and Beverage Service. The building's function is an important piece of the puzzle that we cannot ignore. We need to be clear on what we will be losing or gaining with a new Sports Centre.
- If "Option 4" is to be considered http://www.esquimalt.ca/bus_development/documents/Esquimalt_Panels_March25_7.pdf then a clear explanation of the legal status of Bullen Park should be provided to the public. In October 2007, Council received a legal opinion on the status of those lands. It needed to be included with this Option. The public needs to know that Fitzherbert Bullen Memorial Park was donated to the municipality by the Bullen family for use as park land in perpetuity. The intention for this park was and is clear. It was not intended to house a new facility. It was intended for use as a park. Choosing Option 4 would involve trying to break a covenant protecting the park. If successful, it would require a referendum.

On May 22nd 2008, a further update was provided. Our next chance to give feedback has not been announced yet. Please do take the time to participate in the next community consultation. The EVP touches on many important issues for residents: Residential development, business development, parking, greenspaces, divestiture of municipal land.... Please make your voice heard!

I strongly endorse:

- Engaging the public in full and complete consultation. We need information about the costs/benefits of these plans and we need to know how they will be implemented.
- Engaging our youth in this consultation process. We are looking at municipal lands that they use, including the teen centre. We need to look back at our recently completed *Youth Strategy* and consult with our youth. These decisions will impact them greatly. Where does the Esquimalt Teen Centre fit into the EVP? The land it currently sits on is suggested for an ice rink or for residential or mixed use development. Is there a plan for where this facility will go?
- Retaining control of public lands. We don't need to sell off our assets to revitalize our town core. It is my opinion that the short term profit would negate long term gain. The public feedback suggests that we want to promote additional cultural and civic facilities. We can make better use of this land, but we can't buy it back once it is gone. We need public spaces. Open space is not "surplus" space.
- Keeping the parking lot at Archie Browning Sports Centre. It is a community asset. We host the Hallowe'en Bonfire, Celebration of Lights and Buccaneer Days there. We can also look at other uses for this parking lot like outdoor movies in the summer. We even generate revenue on this site by hosting car sales. In addition to this, many Residents have been clear in their EVP that above ground parking is preferred.
- Promoting Green development that meets LEED standards and is in keeping with neighbourhoods.
- Encouraging a diversity of shopping experiences to promote a "complete" community
- Maintaining our recreation facilities to promote a "complete" community
- Working towards pedestrian and cyclist improvements.

In addition to those EVP comments, I also endorse:

- Establishing Development Cost Charges to make certain that our community can accommodate the growth in residences within our existing infrastructure.
- Using public feedback to develop a long term plan that incorporates the amenities that residents want to see in Esquimalt like arts and cultural facilities, theatres and added recreational opportunities.
- Developing a plan for use of any "density bonusing" funds.
- Pursuing grant opportunities for desired amenities and infrastructure.

Village plan options unveiled

Anonymous. Victoria News. Victoria, B.C.:Apr 2, 2008.

As Esquimalt trumpets its five plans to pump new life into the downtown core, the Esquimalt Residents Association is questioning some of the proposals' integrity.

Last week the municipality presented preliminary plans for its village core, a revitalization project covering 2.8-hectares of municipally owned property along Esquimalt Road. The area includes Archie Browning Sports Centre, which has raised questions about the future of the 47-year-old facility.

At an open house last June, the majority of the 78 participant-completed forms indicated strong support for retaining the sport services and amenities of the centre. But of the five presented proposals, only two kept the facility intact, while another rebuilt an arena in the southern end of the facility's current parking lot and one presented an arena adjacent to Esquimalt Recreation Centre.

The options that include reconstruction of an arena elsewhere can be whittled down to one, Ali Gaul, Esquimalt Residents Association said, as rebuilding a facility beside the recreation centre is not possible. Such a project would make it necessary to construct a building on Bullen Park, which was donated to the municipality by the Bullen family and later voted by council to remain as park.

"The problem is it's an alternative that a lot of people are thinking is viable," Gaul said. The lack of information at the open house made it difficult for people to know what they were really looking at, Gaul added.

With no cost estimates attached or information on what the new facilities would hold, Gaul said it was difficult to envision what Esquimalt could potentially lose and gain.

"I just feel like there is not enough information and yet we are being told to choose," she said. Cost estimates will be presented once the municipality has narrowed the plans down to two, Barbara Snyder, Esquimalt's director of development services said.

Putting a price tag on all five plans would add a large bill to the project's planning phase, she said.

As for building on Bullen Park, it is not a write off, Snyder added. The municipality would have to go to court to allow for a different land use and then take the question to the public via referendum.

All plans promote a walkable community heart, something Coun. Lynda Hundleby applauded. Parking in each of the five concepts is underground. Hundleby said she has no qualms with waving goodbye to existing parking behind Archie Browning Sports Centre, as studies show that lot is not used often.

As for the sports centre itself, Hundleby said she is not sure if it is the best use of land. As a councillor, she said, it is her job to look at everything as a whole and how it interlinks.

Rec centre backed in village project plan

Anonymous. Victoria News. Victoria, B.C.:Apr 16, 2008.

Revitalization proposals subject to change, says mayor

Archie Browning Sports Centre is here to stay, according to preliminary results from Esquimalt's downtown revitalization plan open house.

Of the 191 comment forms completed at the March 25 public meeting, option one, which favoured keeping the sports centre intact, topped the five Esquimalt Village Project proposals.

"We did receive a range of comments about Archie Browning," said Jennifer Kay from Landeca Planning, which has partnered with Hotson Bakker Boniface to draft options for the municipality. Although not all the questionnaires applaud leaving the 47-year-old facility as is, the majority of replies did request that some form of recreation facility stay in Esquimalt's downtown core.

Coun. Barbara Desjardin said the early tally indicates council needs to support recreation as a big part of the re-vamp's focus. Having the facilities downtown and close together promotes an active lifestyle, she said.

"We don't want to get rid of a good thing," she said.

Option five, which eliminates Archie Browning and offers no arena or curling facility, received the least amount of votes. Public comments included queries on the merit of relying on neighbouring municipalities to open facilities similar to the one being lost.

None of the options are set in stone, Mayor Chris Clement said. The municipality is able to pick and choose popular ideas from all five options.

"Essentially it will be the public that will make the ultimate decision," Clement said.

Council has already heard from a community member with an alternative proposal.

Brian Gray presented a plan to council April 7 which combine components from drafted options one and two. He also introduced the idea of utilizing rooftop space for public areas.

Coun. Don Linge is encouraged by the public interest in the project. He hopes it continues as proposals are refined.

The architectural firms are analysing feedback and adjusting proposals. Once the information is compiled another open house will be held, likely in June.