

# **Cedar Hill Corner Management Plan – December 7, 2010**

## **Introduction**

The Cedar Hill Corner property (previously referred to as the CJVI property before it was renamed in 2006) is the large open field and parcel located at the south east side of the campus adjacent to Cedar Hill Cross Road.

The Campus Plan refers to the Cedar Hill Corner parcel as the primary area reserved for the future development of the university. It provides for a master plan for the property to be prepared prior to any permanent development taking place.

Current uses of the parcel include soil storage and processing by the Facilities Management Department and the Research Field Compound of the UVic Centre for Forest Biology. The balance of the parcel is utilized informally by the public as a dog walking and run area. Some information on the history of the property, since its acquisition by the university in 1964 is included in the Appendix.

Given the parcel's importance to the university and the increased levels of use and activity in recent years, specific attention in the Plan has been given to developing an approach to the university's ongoing management of the area.

## **Purpose**

The purpose of the management plan for the Cedar Hill Corner parcel is to set out management principles, directions and actions for the next decade that will provide a framework and planning context for the future use of the parcel. It is intended to assist in managing and guiding existing uses, evaluating new development proposals of an interim nature, and in setting a foundation for a future master planning process.

Primary attention is given to addressing current issues related to the use of the parcel. The plan also provides direction for the ongoing management of the parcel and for the consideration of new proposed uses and activities that have been advanced as part of the plan consultation process.

## **Property Overview**

### **Description**

The Cedar Hill Corner parcel is a 11.8 hectare (29.1 acre) area of open space land at the southeast corner of the campus. It is located within the District of Oak Bay. The parcel is part of a larger lot 16.8 hectares (41.5 ac.) in size that includes the forested area and upper Hobbs Creek on its west side. It is legally described as Lot 1 of Section 31, Victoria District, Plan 7682.

The parcel is defined on the west by the edge of the forested area and ravine that includes the upper parts of Hobbs Creek. On the south, it is adjacent to Cedar Hill Cross Road, with the Crestview Avenue residential neighbourhood to the east and the District of Saanich boundary and the Chelsea Place residential neighborhood to the north.

The parcel is largely an open field area with remnants of a former orchard in the middle portion of the site and some trees around the north and east perimeters. The map at the back of the Plan provides an aerial view of the parcel and the adjacent land.

## **Characteristics**

Currently separate internal parts of the parcel are fenced and used for soil storage and forest biology research while the balance is accessed by the public for walking, with its most popular use as a dog run area. Except for the two fenced areas, the parcel is largely open with limited restrictions on its use as people can access most of the parcel and walk around its perimeter.

The remnants of an old apple orchard occupy a large part of the south end of the parcel. Approximately 133 trees are located in the area on the east side of the service vehicle road and 107 trees are on the west side of the road. The orchard was past its prime at the time of acquisition and until recently received limited maintenance. A class from the Pacific Centre for Horticulture has systematically pruned the entire orchard twice a year since 2006. This has resulted in improved tree vigor and productivity potential. There are seven Garry oak trees located in the south area of the parcel, with the majority of them located in or near the orchard area. Eight other Garry oaks are located at the northern perimeter of the parcel along the fence line.

A gate for pedestrians and a separate vehicle entrance and gate for university use is located along the property line fence adjacent to Cedar Hill Cross Road. Signs identifying the parcel as part of the university are located near the two gates.

## **Plan Process**

The plan has been prepared under the Terms of Reference received by the Campus Planning Committee (CPC) at their December 7, 2009 meeting. It is one of the follow-up implementation items from the Sustainability Action Plan for Campus Operations 2009 - 2014. Background research and campus stakeholder consultation for the plan was undertaken between January and April 2010. In May, the CPC received the draft plan and provided for it to be circulated to campus stakeholders and interested parties for further review and comment. Input on the draft plan was formally received in the October – November period.

Various studies that included information on the parcel were reviewed. They included the University of Victoria Natural Features Study. The parcel is referenced in the Phase Two study which was completed in 2007. The study highlighted that the area includes few native plant areas for its size and that development would have the least impact on this property in comparison to any others examined in the report.

The 2004 Integrated Stormwater Management Plan also references the upper Hobbs Creek area adjacent to the parcel and more recently the draft Hobbs Creek Upper Watershed Assessment Report-December 2009 examined issues related to the functioning and long term health of the creek system. The elevations of the Cedar Hill Corner parcel tend to provide for site drainage in a westerly direction to Hobbs Creek, except for the far east side of the parcel.

With respect to consultation, as a management plan exercise, the focus was on communication with on-campus interests. The future development of a master plan for the property, as a large scale planning initiative, would require the use of a more collaborative and extensive model of consultation.

Various proposals for the use of the land have also been advanced over the years and significant attention has been given to addressing various land use conflicts and issues at various times that have arisen on the property. At the current time, no formal management or planning framework is in place to

address how various uses of the parcel are handled or how proposals for interim or temporary uses are evaluated.

Input and perspectives from the various stakeholders and others with an interest in the parcel that were consulted as part of the plan preparation process is outlined in the Appendix.

## **Planning Framework**

### **Campus Plan**

The Campus Plan identifies the Cedar Hill Corner parcel as the primary area reserved for future development. Two policy directions are outlined:

1. Potential Uses - The property has potential for temporary uses and permanent development, including academic expansion, faculty and student housing, sports and recreational facilities, parking and any other special opportunity uses that may arise.
2. Master Planning Study - Prior to any permanent development taking place, a master plan for the property will be prepared with these caveats:
  - The plan will be guided by the vision and principles of this plan, as it may be amended from time to time;
  - Permanent development will provide landscaping and visual buffering to minimize its impact on nearby neighbours and on the adjoining forested areas of the university; and
  - Creative thought must be given to the best ways to provide links and connections from these lands to other areas of the campus.

Other sections of the Campus Plan also refer to the parcel. Section 2 Natural and Landscaped Open Space references the importance that these areas play as one of the key defining characteristics of UVic. The wooded area on the west side of the Cedar Hill Corner parcel that includes the Hobbs Creek ravine is included as one of the natural areas of the campus. The plan refers to its environmental importance and along with other similar areas provides for a moratorium for ten years (2003 – 2013) on any form of development.

In the Outdoor Recreation and Athletics section of the Plan it indicates that “provision for additional outdoor recreation areas will require a combination of strategies, including the renovation of Wallace Field, additional land purchases and the possible use of sections of the Cedar Hill Corner property.” One policy in the Housing section of the Plan also references the parcel as a potential site for student housing in the long term.

### **Regulation**

The Oak Bay Official Community Plan Bylaw No. 3943 designates the parcel as University. Zoning Bylaw No. 3531 provides a P1 Public – General Institutional Zone for the parcel, along with the other parts of the campus within the District. It includes regulations for building lot coverage (30%), setbacks (7.62m or 25ft.), building heights (14m or 45.9ft) and parking stall requirements.

Oak Bay’s Tree Protection Bylaw No. 4326 regulates the removal of trees that are defined as protected such as Garry Oaks on private property. Records from the province’s Archaeology Branch (Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts) indicate that there are no registered archaeological sites on the parcel.

# Management Principles, Directions and Actions

## 1. Management Principles

Management takes place within operational frameworks that establish principles or guidelines for action. For the Cedar Hill Corner parcel, the key operating frameworks are the directions set out in the Campus Plan. Various policies and procedures also provide direction related to the activities that are carried out on the campus, along with the Strategic Plan which reinforces the vision and mission of the university.

### Primary Role

The primary role of the Cedar Hill Corner parcel is to function as a holding parcel to accommodate the future development needs of the university. While it is recognized that the area will ultimately be developed in some form, it is premature to specify individual land uses given its size and the level of information that is currently available. A restrictive approach is required in the interim to avoid activities and patterns of land use and development that could detract from future opportunities and master planning processes. The Cedar Hill Corner parcel is especially important as it is the only large undeveloped land area without significant development constraints left on campus.

### Secondary Role

The secondary role for the parcel is to provide for temporary or interim land uses and activities that serve university interests and needs and are aligned with the university's mission. These uses would need to be undertaken in a manner that does not compromise the use of the parcel in the longer term for possible development and activities of a more permanent nature.

## 2. Management Directions

Management directions are intended to ensure a custodial type approach to the management of the parcel until such time as a master planning study as set out in the Campus Plan is undertaken. At that time significant decisions regarding development and permitted uses that will impact the long term use of the parcel will be made.

- 2.1 The parcel shall be retained as a 'land bank' and maintained as a key major campus site and special opportunity area that could be utilized and planned for in a comprehensive manner to accommodate some future beneficial use that serves the mission of the university.
- 2.2 Temporary type uses of the parcel that meet the policy direction set out in the Campus Plan will be reviewed and evaluated on a case specific basis and take into consideration Management Plan principles and directions.

### 3. Actions

The following actions relate to planning for new developments of a temporary nature on the parcel and for ongoing property management activities.

#### **3.1 New Development Proposals**

**Action:** The consideration and approval of any new activities on the parcel should take into account the following classification framework and performance criteria.

##### Classification of Uses

Temporary uses that are categorized relative to their projected duration and level of impact that have a short term and low impact on the parcel shall receive more favourable consideration than activities that have high impacts relative to existing uses or future permanent uses that may occur on the parcel.

##### Performance Criteria

Development proposals for temporary uses may be considered if it can be demonstrated that they can comply with the following performance criteria:

1. The activity or use supports the mission of the university;
2. The activity will not adversely impact the current university use of the parcel by the Facilities Management Department and the Centre for Forest Biology or other approved temporary uses;
3. The amount of land devoted to the activity includes only the minimum necessary to support the activity;
4. The activity will have no adverse environmental effects on the parcel or surrounding properties resulting from noise, vibration, discharges, air pollution, glare and odour, unless such impacts can be mitigated in a manner that meets university standards;
5. Visual impacts are minimized;
6. Any storm water drainage impacts are addressed in accordance with the direction provided in the Integrated Stormwater Management Plan for the campus;
7. No new vehicle or pedestrian traffic movements are created that conflict with the current use of the parcel by the Facilities Management Department and the Centre for Forest Biology or other approved temporary uses;
8. The activity does not directly or indirectly contribute to environmental degradation of the upper Hobbs Creek forested area at the west edge of the parcel;
9. Compliance with applicable District of Oak Bay regulations and requirements can be achieved;
10. Any temporary buildings or structures should be compact in form with simple efficient designs; and
11. The use should be of a nature that allows for the costs and arrangements that may be ultimately required to dismantle or remove the use from the parcel to be minimized.

The above framework is intended to assist in identifying and classifying temporary land uses and to define the circumstances under which such uses may be approved. Approval processes include recommendations from the Campus Planning Committee that are made to the university President. They should assist in providing a consistent basis or standard for evaluating the merits and impacts of temporary land uses.

### **3.2 General Property Management Activities**

The following actions will assist in addressing property management issues identified in the plan preparation process.

#### **3.2.1 Property Encroachment:**

Various gardening, composting and related type activities that encroach on to the north and east sides of the parcel have been undertaken by several adjacent residential property owners. The extent of the encroachment is limited and takes the form of some informal composting, minor fencing and the storage of branches and dead vegetation in piles. An estimated eight out of the twenty six property owners who back on to the parcel are using it in some form. Numerous property owners have also created gates in their back fences to allow for access to the parcel. A clear view of the property line is limited in many places by the large trees that border the edge of the Cedar Hill Corner parcel.

**Action:** Individual property owners with encroachments shall be contacted and arrangements made to provide for a cleanup of the areas impacted.

#### **3.2.2 Risk management**

Improved signage is needed on the parcel to reinforce and profile the university's property ownership and to address risk management possibilities. The sign at the pedestrian entrance to the parcel needs to be updated and some additional signage could be placed Upper Hobbs Creek entrance point and at the service vehicle entrance.

**Action:** New signs shall be installed at the key public entrance points to the parcel that refer to limitations and responsible use of the property.

#### **3.2.3 Dog control regulations and measures**

University Policy BP 3105 Building Usage Section 4 specifies that "Persons must not bring unto the university grounds any animal that is not either caged, confined to a vehicle, or on a leash. As a popular informal off-leash dog walk area, the policy needs to be reviewed and more specific signage and information provided for dog owners and users regarding the appropriate rules of conduct when on the parcel. As new activities are introduced to the Cedar Hill Corner parcel, a strategy will need to be developed that helps to minimize conflict between dogs and other uses. Trail relocation and fencing in the Hobbs Creek – Mystic Vale area can also assist in keeping people and dogs out of the creek, in addition to communication of the dogs-on-leash rules, given that they are often not respected in that natural area.

**Action:** Update the regulations regarding on-leash requirements for dogs as it relates to the use of the Cedar Hill Corner parcel and the adjacent Hobbs Creek – Mystic Vale area and provide for appropriate communication of the requirements through notices and signage at key entrance points.

#### **3.2.4 Parcel frontage clean up – Cedar Hill Cross Road**

The current fence on the property adjacent to Cedar Hill Cross Road is in relatively poor condition and the fence line includes numerous shrubs and brush that is not very visually pleasing as an edge to the campus. The area is also well worn with extensive pedestrian activity near the main entrance. A clean up of the area would assist in enhancing the viewscape from passing traffic on the roadway and to the adjacent communities. It would also assist in identifying the area as part of the campus and would

reinforce that it is a university owned property. Coordination with the District of Oak Bay would be required for any vegetation removal work within the road right of way.

**Action:** Undertake an assessment and develop a plan to provide for fencing and landscaping improvements along the Cedar Hill Cross Road edge of the parcel.

### 3.2.5 Access from the upper Hobbs Creek area

Many people access the Cedar Hill Corner parcel from the west side of the campus and the trails in the forested area that makes up Mystic Vale and the Upper Hobbs Creek watershed. There are various informal trails in place and a more defined entrance point is at the location of the stairs and bridge that crosses Hobbs Creek at the northwest corner of the parcel. The wooden steps and structures were installed in 2002 and are in need of repair and/or replacement. In the past, no operating funds have been specifically allocated by the Facilities Management Department for the maintenance of structures, removal of waste and the monitoring of activity in the Cedar Hill Corner property or in the Hobbs Creek watershed. Given the sensitivity of the watershed and the amount of environmental damage that has occurred with bank and stream side erosion, efforts need to be made to keep people and animals to defined trails in the area and away from sensitive ecosystems.

**Action:** As part of the restoration plan for the upper Hobbs Creek area, attention needs to be given to improved signage and public information at the interface with the open field at the Cedar Hill Corner parcel, to assist in protecting the environmental values of the creek and the forested area.

## Plan Implementation

The Plan is comprised of a framework of principles, directions and actions to guide the management of the parcel. Implementation of the overall direction outlined in the plan will occur in different forms.

The Campus Planning Committee under its mandate would have a key role in assessing any proposed new uses on the parcel and providing for the implementation of the policy directions outlined in the Campus Plan. Other actions relate to regular property management activities and will need to be considered as part of the work program planning in the university operational areas of facilities management, grounds, campus planning, risk assessment and campus security services.

## Plan Monitoring and Review

It is important that management plan directions and actions are monitored and reviewed to allow for adjustments to be undertaken to respond to changing conditions and new demands. Actions should be assessed on an annual basis to ensure that they are aligned with the Plan's operating principles and management directions. At the highest level, the management plan outcomes must be consistent with the objectives outlined in the university's Strategic Plan. The management plan activities, at the next level, also need to be aligned with the direction and vision provided for in the Campus Plan for the physical development of the Campus. Actions must also support sustainable approaches that reflect social, economic and environmental interests as outlined in the university's Sustainability Policy and the Sustainability Action Plan for Campus Operations 2009 - 2014. The management plan will be periodically reviewed and updated as necessary to ensure that it remains a useful and effective guide for decision making.

## Appendix – Background Information

### A. History

The university acquired the parcel from the Island Broadcasting Company Ltd. in 1964. This was a short time after the initial land acquisitions in 1959 and 1961 that formed the main part of the campus within and adjacent to the Ring Road. A transmission tower had been previously located on the parcel and the field had been used for agricultural purposes. From 1965 until 1996 a house which was located on the property was rented out. It was later demolished. The balance of the open area was used for the growing of hay until 1978 when it was discontinued given residents' concerns with dust.

In 1968 proposals were received to develop two soccer fields and a baseball field on the west side of the parcel. It included part of the orchard which was considered to be in poor shape and non productive. From 1968 to 1974 arrangements were made with adjacent residents to leave the lands in their natural state in consideration of a financial contribution to support a university scholarship. Residents were permitted to maintain a 20 to 30 foot strip of land at the back of their lots.

A number of coniferous tree seedlings were planted at the north and east sides of the parcel in 1973 to create a buffer between future university uses on the property and the residences. A significant number of trees died due to lack of water but numerous large trees remain on the edge of the property. In 1974 the Department of Agriculture expressed an interest in leasing part of the parcel for allotment garden facilities. In that same year the Department of Biology used part of the parcel for research and the growing of corn. In 1997, a Crestview Avenue resident's petition protested the increased use of the parcel by dog walkers. Fencing, a gate and signage were installed to encourage a fair balance among competing values of the various users of the parcel.

A UVic Athletic Services student sponsored club established a disc golf course on the parcel in 2005. It was later dismantled in 2008 because of a lack of interest and membership. The Capital Regional District in 2009 referenced the property as one of three candidate sites for a social and environmental review related to their sewage treatment planning for the Saanich East – Oak Bay North area. In 2009, the Facilities Management Department installed additional signage on the parcel, created a separate pedestrian and vehicle gate and fenced in their soil storage area in response to the need for increased safety measures given the active use of the site by members of the public. In particular, it assisted in addressing issues related to safety and liability from BMX cyclists who had informally built jumps and tracks in the area. Parts of the parcel next to the road have also been used on a short term basis for overflow parking from a major golf tournament at the adjacent Uplands golf course.

At various times over the past forty five years, other proposals have been received to use the parcel for soil and rock storage from local private construction, housing, a cellular tower, a golf driving range along with other inquiries regarding its potential availability for purchase



## **B. Consultation and Input Summary**

Input and perspectives to be noted and considered in the preparation of the Cedar Hill Corner Management Plan were outlined through consultations with different departments and interested parties on campus. They are summarized below.

### Facilities Management Department

A fenced in area of the Cedar Hill Corner parcel is utilized by the Department to store and process soil as part of its operations and responsibility for the landscaping across the campus. Trucks access the compound from the service vehicle entrance off of Cedar Hill Cross Road. The use of the site has varied over the years and is related to the extent of construction activity and new building projects on the campus. The department also looks after the entire grounds and is involved on a regular basis with waste removal from the four bins that have been placed for people and dog walkers who access the parcel. Given the number of users of the parcel waste management is an ongoing activity.

The Department has plans in place to help manage the watershed issues with the Hobbs Creek portion of the parcel and has responsibility for stormwater management across the campus. Future needs by the department for the area are difficult to project. The Cedar Hill Corner parcel is located at some distance from the main department depot at the north side of the campus and is only directly accessible by vehicle by travelling from McKenzie Avenue and Ring Road to Cedar Hill Cross Road.

### Centre for Forest Biology

The Centre for Forest Biology supports a wide range of research activities for faculty, post – doctoral trainees, graduate students and undergraduates in Forest Biology with an emphasis on the adaptation of trees and their interactions with the environment. Since the mid 1990's the centre has operated a research area with a fenced in section of the Cedar Hill Corner parcel. The 0.8 hectare (1.9 acres) site includes various research plots, buildings, storage shelters and sheds that are used to support the research that is carried out. It is used for various research projects requiring the permanent planting of trees and shorter term (seasonal) experiments requiring a field setting. Work is undertaken by both graduate and undergraduate students involved with the Centre.

Since 1994 Environment Canada has operated an automated weather station on the site. The Facilities Management Department in 2007 also established a sod plot for campus turf replacement purposes within the Research Field Compound area

### Campus Security Services

Campus Security has responsibility for patrolling the area, although given its uses, it does not receive as frequent attention as the main parts of campus. Their types of involvement in the area often relate to vandalism, unsafe or risky activities by users, conflicts between dog owners and dog biting incidents. University policy provides for any dogs on the campus to be on leash. A sign is posted at the entrance to the area from Mystic Vale that specifies this requirement but it has been defaced.

When Campus Security comes across people with unleashed dogs they can asks owners to leash the dogs, or if necessary contact the Oak Bay animal control department to ask for assistance. Clarification of the regulations and approach to enforcement for the Cedar Hill Corner parcel would be helpful for both

users of the area that have dogs and for others who access the parcel. Enhanced signage could also assist in providing information to users and in reminding people that the property is part of the university holdings.

### Risk Management

Various issues related to the university's responsibility to manage the property in a safe manner to minimize exposure to liabilities were identified. They included the need for appropriate signage for all potential users of the site that would highlight any public safety issues and arrangements to ensure that conflicts between the travel movements of vehicles and pedestrians are minimized.

A review of the university's dog on a leash policy as it applies to the property could be considered. The introduction of any new uses on the parcel would result in the need to undertake updated risk management assessments and actions related to the specific nature of the activities.

### Athletics and Recreation

One area of interest to the Department is the potential opportunity to develop recreational facilities that could support current athletic programs and assist in generating revenue to support departmental programs and initiatives. A proposal that fits these criteria was the concept for the development of a golf driving range on the property that could serve students, the broader community and the golf course in the vicinity. As an interim use, it is expected that it would not compromise other longer term development considerations for the parcel. In 2007 a draft proposal was developed. It could be expanded upon and supported through the preparation of a more detailed proposal and a 5 to 10 year business plan by the Department.

Other interests in the longer term relate to the need to plan for and reserve areas for future sports field space to meet future growth and demands. More formal running and walking trails could also be developed in the area to expand the current network of trails on the campus.

### CanAssist

The CanAssist program at the university works to develop innovative technologies, services and programs to increase inclusion and accessibility for people with disabilities and special needs. Its history on campus dates back to 1999. Research and projects are undertaken by CanAssist in the areas of mobility and movement, human computer interaction, communication and control and training and employment.

CanAssist in the fall of 2009 advanced an initiative and proposal called CanGrow that requested the use of part of the Cedar Hill Corner parcel. The development of fully accessible gardens would provide recreational, therapeutic, social, learning and work opportunities for the disabled community and tie into CanAssist's capabilities to develop tools and technologies to allow those with physical disabilities to engage in all gardening activities.

The proposal refers to partnership opportunities, fundraising strategies, potential community partnerships and the need for an area within the Cedar Hill Corner parcel that is accessible to the roadway and available to the project for a length of time to allow for certainty in its development and evolution. Further details on the CanAssist initiative are included in the draft proposal developed in October 2009.

UVic Food Collaborative, Campus Community Garden Advisory Committee and the Campus Urban Agriculture Collaborative

Discussions have been held with various student groups on the topic of gardening opportunities on campus. They include meetings regarding the need to review the current site for the campus community garden given that the five year arrangement put in place in 2006 is set to expire at the end of 2011.

Other student-led initiatives for new gardening opportunities on campus have been discussed with students. Two of the most recent were the University Cedar Hill Corner Agriculture Facility Proposal by the UVic Food Collaborative (UVFC) in the spring of 2008 and the draft Strategic Plan of the Campus Urban Agriculture Collaborative (CUAC) in July 2009. In addition, in April 2010, a proposal for a Permaculture, Ethnoecology, Agroecology and Sustainability (PEAS) School and Research Centre at UVic was prepared by students with CUAC.

**Aerial Photograph – Cedar Hill Corner**