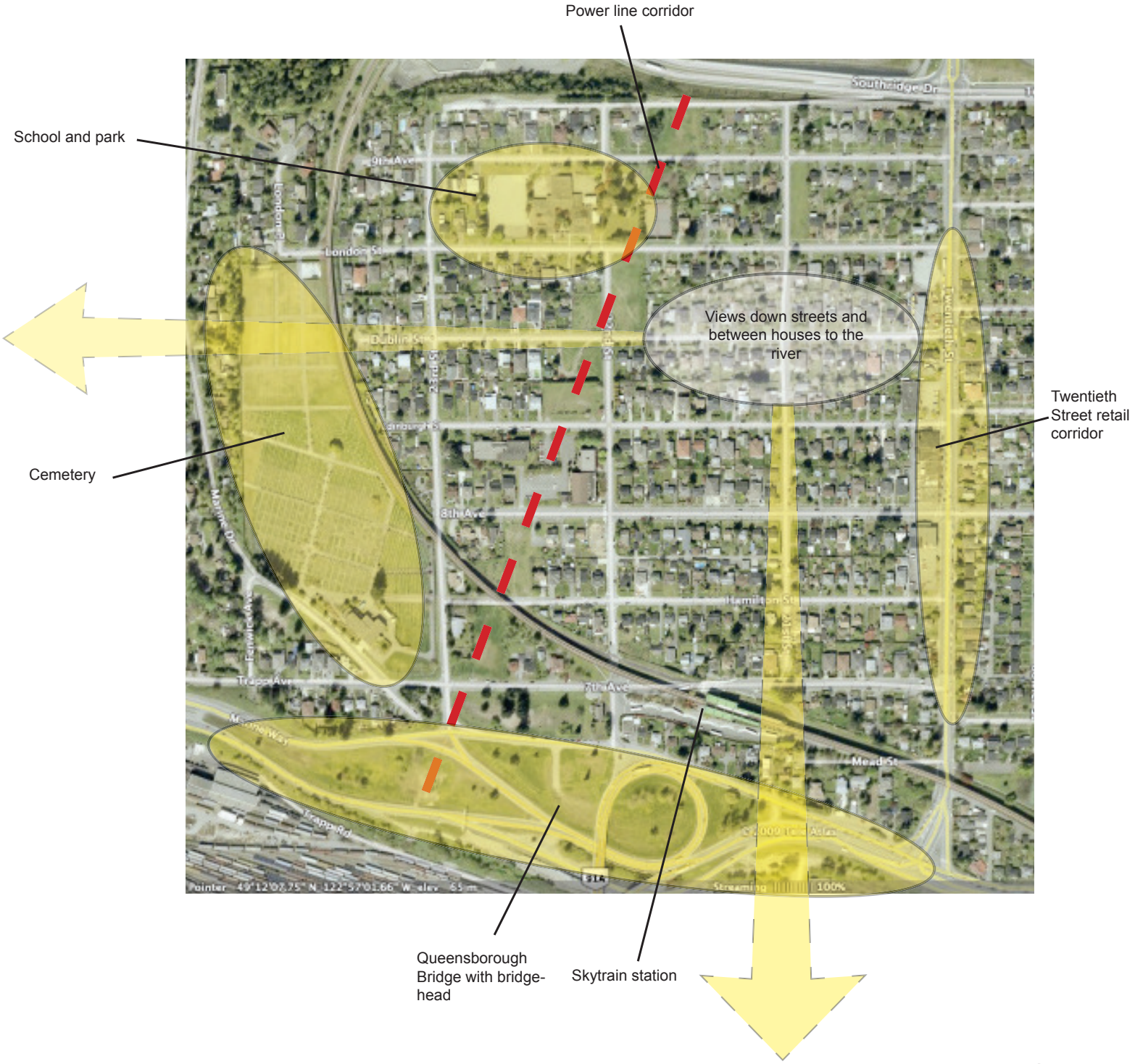


Connaught Heights





Connaught Heights Values



Connaught Heights is a late comer as a New Westminster neighbourhood, the area becoming part of the city only in 1965. Bounded on the east along 20th Street by the West End, Connaught Heights is like its neighbour bounded by 10th Avenue on the north, but by Marine Drive to the south and Fenwick to the west. The heritage management plan prepared for the City of New Westminster in 1993 notes that, by virtue of the neighbourhood being located at the bend of the North Arm of the Fraser River, Connaught Heights residents are afforded panoramic views of the river flats to the south.

Connaught Heights is valued for semi-rural character, dominated by views south and west to the Fraser River, and for feeling somewhat removed from the influence of the busier, more central parts of the city. Its traditional, modest houses were in contrast to the more established neighbourhoods to the east, and speak of a time before the commodification of views.

The neighbourhood is of historical value as a physical record of a provincially administered residential area, only becoming part of the City of New Westminster in 1938 in order to enjoy increased servicing of the properties. That early history of being outside the city with its formal requirements can still be seen in remnants of untamed rural landscapes in the area. The landscape still marks its original situation on the fringe of the city adjacent to industrial areas: the string of open spaces, now parks, running up and east through the area marks the route of power lines.

The neighbourhood is valued for its socially and culturally independent roots that is an aspect of its existence outside the control of the City. The presence of Schara Tzedek Jewish Cemetery on adjacent property is another indication of the cultural independence afforded by being removed from the centre of the City.



Beginnings



Despite being surveyed by the Royal Engineers in 1859 as District Lot 172, nothing much happened until 1909 with what was a provincially administered area. That year a 50-foot right-of-way was pushed through for a bypass route for the British Columbia Electric Railway line. The same year a north-south 150-foot right-of-way was created to contain four rows of wooden power poles.

One of the largest institutional land usages was the Schara Tzedek Jewish Cemetery opened in 1929.

Although the first house was built in the area in 1910, residential construction only began in earnest during the 1930s. Sixty-three houses were constructed over the decade, mostly small bungalows along gravel streets with grass boulevards. In 1938 the area's administration passed from the province to New Westminster, and the next year a water system was installed at the behest of residents.

DL 172, as it continued to be known, was long its own place. A woman born in 1913 described how "Native Indians would pull their boats up on the banks of the North Arm of the Fraser just upstream from Poplar Island, where Westminster Quay is now, and go from house to house trading their hand-made baskets for other goods, especially clothing" (Dorothy Beach in Rudolph: 64). Through the interwar years New Westminster's northern boundary of 10th Avenue was not even graveled, much less paved. By the time it reached DL 172, it was reduced to a walking path used for picking huckleberries and other such adventures. "When we first bought our lot here in 1940, 'D.L' had a country air about it, that's what we really enjoyed" is how one woman put it (Norma Taylor in Rudolph: 12). A family moving there two years later opened Dogwood Market which became the neighbourhood institution for four decades on the northwest corner of 20th Street and Dublin. Into the 1950s across from the interurban tracks was "a large patch of bush that was full of pheasants" that used to forage there and in nearby backyards (Lou Treslove in Rudolph: 14).



Challenging times

It took some time for the long term status of the area to be determined. A village was proposed in 1940, by which time there were 200 houses, but nothing ensued. In 1948 the area was named Connaught Heights Regulated Area, which resulted in stricter building regulations, a zoning plan, and street lights. A decade later, in 1959, residents petitioned to join New Westminster, but opponents ensured nothing ensued. A plebiscite two years later garnered 56% in favour, just short of the required 60%. Three years later, in 1964, another petition passed with 90% for amalgamation, and on January 1, 1965, Connaught Heights was annexed to New Westminster. A new elementary school was built about this time.

Revitalization



A study undertaken by the city's Planning Department in 1965 for the purposes of urban renewal divided the city into nineteen areas requiring further study. Newly annexed Connaught Heights was 51% residential, 11% cemetery, 2% other social amenities (school, church), 10% industrial, and 27% vacant land (74). The 1965 study spared no punches in describing Connaught Heights as "a blighted and substandard area by City standards." The reasons were spelled out in some detail:

"With minor exceptions there are no sidewalks, curbs or sewers, and pavements are deteriorated in most instances. Watermains and street lighting are inadequate. There are no park facilities and only one or two community facilities of any kind. Recently, there are 5 level railway crossings in the residential area, but if the remaining dedicated but undeveloped streets were to be opened there could be as many as 10 crossings….Power lines cut diagonally across [Connaught Heights] leaving a swathe of vacant land, some of which is the best view land in the City. The rehabilitation of this area will require the combined efforts of the residents of the area, the City, and other public and private agencies". (61)



The imperative for "rehabilitation" spelled out in the 1965 study got underway in earnest in the next decade. A large capital works program was initiated in 1972 to upgrade basic services, including sewer, water, and paving. Recreational facilities and a neighbourhood park also followed.

The neighbourhood continued to be impacted on by larger capital projects. The Annacis Highway and Skytrain both significantly affected Connaught Heights. A new interchange road system was constructed, and 20th Street on the neighbourhood's eastern boundary was upgraded to handle twice the previous traffic capacity. The elevated Skytrain paralleled the rail line cut through in 1909. In 1985 a Skytrain station opened at the southern edge of Connaught Heights on 22nd Street, which became a terminus for various bus routes. One consequence was regulations to prevent commuter parking in the neighbourhood.



In 1993 in the course of the city preparing a heritage management plan, several community open houses were held to identify resources and their best management. Over 30 persons attended the joint open house held in May 1993 for adjacent West End and Connaught Park. According to the summary of the meeting:

"People defined heritage resources as being "something of value in the community worth keeping" and "a link to the past" and "things evoking images of time past." …As a way of defining what they meant by a "heritage resource," participants offered examples ranging from renovated house, back always, landscapes, streetscapes and views. Reflecting the rural nature of the West End, many people noted that views, gardens, parks and open space were relevant heritage resources. One person notes that the original layout of the area itself was a heritage resource. People thought the definition of heritage should be expanded to include more recent resources. Key management issues relating to heritage involved the retention of views, access to the Fraser River and lack of green space. People also mentioned the need to preserve the continuity of the streetscape and regulate the scale of new development to ensure compatibility with the



existing neighbourhood". (np)

By 2000-01 Connaught Heights residents had to some extent caught up with their New Westminster counterparts. The average household income of just over $57,000 was comparable to that of Moody Park. Home ownership at 60% was higher than the city average of 48%, the proportion with a university degree somewhat lower at 11% compared with the city average of 17%. The neighbourhood had the highest proportion of immigrants of any New Westminster neighbourhood excepting Queensborough. As with Queensborough, most of them, whether longtime residents or recent arrivals, were from India or the Philippines.

Perceptions from within the neighbourhood

An open house for the Connaught Heights neighborhood was held on November 25, 2008. There were no attendees to the workshop.



Connaught Heights Thematic Framework

Suburban development:

- Later settlement in a location away from Downtown
- History of provincial jurisdiction

Late development of housing - 1910, with more in the 1930s

Transportation corridor:

- Interurban route along the Fraser foreshore
- Highland Park cutoff
- Skytrain

Industry and social infrastructure:

- Location near industry along the Fraser River
- Schara Tzedek Jewish Cemetery



Neighbourhood Features

Landscape Characteristics

- An interwar suburban landscape with comparatively little urban infrastructure

Natural Systems and Features

- southwestern corner of benchland overlooking Fraser River

Spatial Organization

- extension of street grid from earlier suburbs of New Westminster
- no through traffic, being at the end of the benchlands
- now ringed by Skytrain rights-of-way

Land Use

- Suburban housing

Cultural Traditions

- independence as farthest-flung residential area
- newest piece of the city (latest to be incorporated into City)



Circulation
- vehicular and pedestrian ways out primarily via its eastern edge
- major regional arterial on its southern edge (down the slope)
- Skytrain station at its southern edge, with accompanying terminal

Topography
- western edge of benchlands overlooking the Fraser River
- slopes down south and west

Vegetation
- suburban planting from the interwar period

Buildings and Structures
- interwar suburban houses, and recent new larger houses

Views and Vistas
- grand views of the Fraser River, bridges, and the delta lands both south and east

Water Features
- none