

New Westminster's Neighbourhoods
Identifying Historical Contexts

Glenbrooke North

- 1950s subdivision character along much of Eighth Avenue and east of Fourth Street
- Older fabric along Fifth Street south of Eighth Avenue
- Renovated original houses
- Surrounded by traffic
- Walkable streets
- Close to major centres
- Nearby recreation and schools
- Neighbourhood trees

Fifth Street: wide boulevard, with garden median at south end

Tenth Avenue: major regional arterial road

Sinclair Avenue Park

Royal Square shopping centre

McBride Boulevard: major regional arterial road

Views into lowlands

Commercial develop-ment on historic lowlands

Irregular pattern of back lanes

Shaded area indicates low land associated with Glen-brooke Creek bed

Variation in lot and block sizes

Commercial development on Sixth Street

Terry Hughes Park on historic lowlands

Early farm; old barn still remains

Original location of Glenbrooke Creek

Views into lowlands

Glenbrooke Ravine Park and bridge over ravine

Cherry trees lining these blocks of Second Street

Natural character of the north end of Queen's Park



Glenbrooke North Values



Unlike most other New Westminster neighbourhoods, the origins of Glenbrooke North lie in the natural environment. Glenbrooke North is, like the West End and Moody Park, located between 6th and 10th Avenues on the south and north. Sixth Street bounds it on the west and McBride Boulevard on the east. A heritage management plan prepared for the City of New Westminster in 1993 explains how Glenbrooke Creek and its ravine were once the prominent features of the topography, the former creek bed cutting across the neighbourhood's northeast corner with the ground rising away in either direction of its banks.

Glenbrooke North is valued in part for sharing some of the formal stateliness of the Queen's Park neighbourhood to the south, particularly seen in the extension of the major Second and Fifth Street boulevards into Glenbrooke North. The neighbourhood also has an immediate connection with the Queen's Park parkland itself.

The neighbourhood is of aesthetic value for having a landward focus with near views rather than a focus on the Fraser River and delta lands south and west of the city - a difference that makes it unique among the city's neighbourhoods. Its aesthetic value lies in the meeting of the grid with the challenging topography of the old Glenbrooke ravine, and the variety of street dimensions, lot sizes, and land use that the accommodation of street to landform entails.

Glenbrooke North is aesthetically valued for showing a robust selection of housing spanning from the early--20th Century Edwardian boom years to the post-Second World War suburban bungalow boom.

The neighbourhood is culturally significant for having been the place for large-scale commercial development and post-war public housing on filled ravine lands, and its replacement with multiple-unit housing immediately north of Queen's Park.



Beginnings

Glenbrooke North's natural environment early on gave way to man. When the Royal Engineers surveyed the area sometime before their departure in 1863, they gave no consideration for its natural features. The consequence is a square grid overlaid on steep natural contours.

This area became part of the city in 1888. Despite many subdivisions being registered, few earlier houses were constructed, and it was only in the decade prior to the First World War that building activity began in earnest, this in the area south of 8th Avenue and along 5th Street. Likely due to the terrain, lots sizes varied, including double and split lots, which gave a feeling of spaciousness. Proximity to Queen's Park just to the south meant that some houses echoed styles there in their architecture and shingle use. In 1912 Herbert Spencer Elementary School opened to serve both neighbourhoods.



Challenging times

Larger civic and federal priorities repeatedly intruded on the development of Glenbrooke North. In 1914 the ravine was filled in with a combined sewer for the city constructed in the Glenbrooke Creek bed. By 1948 the New Westminster Public Works Yard and Substation had been constructed on Ovens Avenue. About the same time vacant land that had been acquired by the federal government for wartime purposes became a 133-unit apartment complex for returning veterans. An undeveloped part of the federal site was in 1956 leased back to the city to become Terry Hughes Park located between 7th and 8th Avenues adjoining the neighbourhood's eastern boundary of McBride Boulevard. Four years later an equal sized area just to the north was developed into the Royal Square Shopping Centre.

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. An area roughly equivalent to today's Queen's Park and





Glenbrooke North neighbourhoods was 61% residential, 21% park, 10% other social amenities (school, church, hospital, government services), 6% commercial, 2% industrial, and just 1% vacant land. The alarm the report sounded about the area's changing character appears to have applied more to Queen's Park except perhaps for drawing attention to "pockets of deteriorated buildings and mixed uses" (63).

Concern over the character of Glenbrooke North grew during the 1990s as infill housing began to be built on vacant lots in styles considered incompatible with earlier residences. 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.

In 2000-01 the average family income of Glenbrooke North residents was the lowest of any of the five neighbourhoods at $53,477, which was, however, considerably higher than in the Uptown and Brow of the Hill neighbourhoods. As in Moody Park, half of residents owned their own homes, while the other half rented. One in five were immigrants, principally from Britain, India, and the Philippines with the most recent being from South Africa. Glenbrooke North contains Terry Hughes Park which has a sports field.

Perceptions from within the neighbourhood

An open house for the Glenbrooke North neighborhood was held on November 18, 2008. Attendees described themselves as the poorer next door neighbour to Queen's Park. In line with this sentiment and echoing the joint Glenbrooke North/Queen's Park open house held in 1993, some of those present expressed less of a sense of community that did attendees at the Queen's Park open house held later in November 2008. It was queried when and how the city formalized neighbourhood boundaries in the way they have.

Glenbrooke North was described as primarily residential with a 1950s subdivision character. Attendees value the original homes with their distinctive architecture, some of which have been renovated,



and the relative stability of the neighbourhood's multi-generational families. They noted only a few back lanes with some blocks having them and others not. Attendees value the sidewalk boulevards, boulevards in the centre of the streets, and the old lamp standards. The independent retail pockets with smaller merchants are considered important. Attendees appreciate Glenbrooke North as a walkable neighbourhood close to recreation, schools, and shopping, but not how the neighbourhood is surrounded by traffic. They value the Canada Games Pool, Sinclair Park, and the trees both there and on the streets, especially the cherry trees.



Attendees have a strong sense of the history of Glenbrooke North, which it was pointed out could be spelled with or without the final 'e.' In line with their viewing the past as essential to understanding the neighbourhood, they explained that 5th Street is so wide because the foot of it was going to be the location of the legislative buildings when New Westminster was the colonial capital, pointed out that although Glen Creek and ravine are now filled in there is still a bridge over Glenbrooke ravine, remembered the old farms and wooded areas of the 1940s, told about how 6th Ave used to be closed off in the winter so the kids could sled down it, recalled that Terry Hughes Park was earlier a marsh and possibly a dump, and remembered how there used to be a corner store in the De Haas house at 2nd Street and 9th Avenue. Also indicative of pride in community in their pointing out that much oral history is available on the neighbourhood.



Glenbrooke North Thematic Framework

Suburban development:

- Later settlement in a location away from Downtown
- Development during the boom years around 1912
- Mix of lot sizes and diverse building styles



Centre for City infrastructure:

- Infill of Glen Ravine and Glenbrooke sewer construction
- Location of Public Works yard and city substation

Post WWII boom and transformation:

- Commercial development on Sixth Street
- Consumers for new retail facilities uptown
- Royal Square Shopping Centre

Neighbourhood Features

Landscape Characteristics

- An range of suburban landscapes dating from early 20th Century to the 1960s, with comparatively little urban infrastructure
- focus is the old ravine landscape rather than the Fraser River vista

Natural Systems and Features

- buried Glenbrooke Creek
- ravine lands

Spatial Organization

- more or less regular extension of street grid from the earlier suburb of Queen's Park

Land Use

- Suburban housing
- regional park (Terry Hughes)
- recent redevelopment of public housing into high density multi-unit housing



- local and larger commercial

Cultural Traditions
- ready access to major City park: Queen's Park

Circulation
- bordered by major roads, particularly Tenth Avenue to the North and McBride to the east

Topography
- ravine land running southeast/northwest through the neighbourhood

Vegetation
- suburban planting from early 20th Century at its southern edge; newer suburban planting elsewhere associated with period of development - for example cherry trees in post-Second World War areas

Buildings and Structures
- suburban houses in the manner of the times they were built

Views and Vistas
- intimate views of the ravine landscape

Water Features
- none