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Residents look for support creating new park in Vernon

By Charlotte Helston



Local residents want to see 48 acres of land in the Foothills preserved as a park. Image Credit: Contributed

June 09, 2016 - 10:30 AM

VERNON - It's an iconic view of Vernon often used to illustrate the beauty of the city, and many people would like to see it preserved indefinitely for public enjoyment.

Residents of the Foothills, located at the base of Silver Star Mountain, want to see a bluff above the subdivision turned into a roughly 50-acre sub-regional park. Wynn Polnicky, with the Foothills Community Association, says hundreds of that community's residents support the idea.

"It's a spectacularly beautiful viewpoint," Polnicky says. "It's the view from that bluff that Vernon puts on things like its Official Community Plan because it provides the best view of the city and its environment. You can see Okanagan Lake and Kalamalka Lake spread out below you."

But the land is currently private property and those who hike up to enjoy the view are technically trespassing.

"People treat it as if it's already a park," Polnicky says.

Users have formed a modest trail through the unique wooded area and up to the bluff.

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"In addition to being a spectacular viewpoint, it's also rare in that it's an old growth forest existing in an urban environment. It's uncommon to find that inside the boundaries of a city," he says.

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The land is held by three separate owners, and Polnicky is encouraging Greater Vernon to be prepared when, and if, the properties go up for sale. He believes the land is too steep for development, but isn't ruling out the possibility.

"I think it's worth thinking about now and being prepared when that opportunity comes up," he says.

Polnicky will present to the Greater Vernon Advisory Committee June 9 and director Mike Macnabb says they will hear him out.

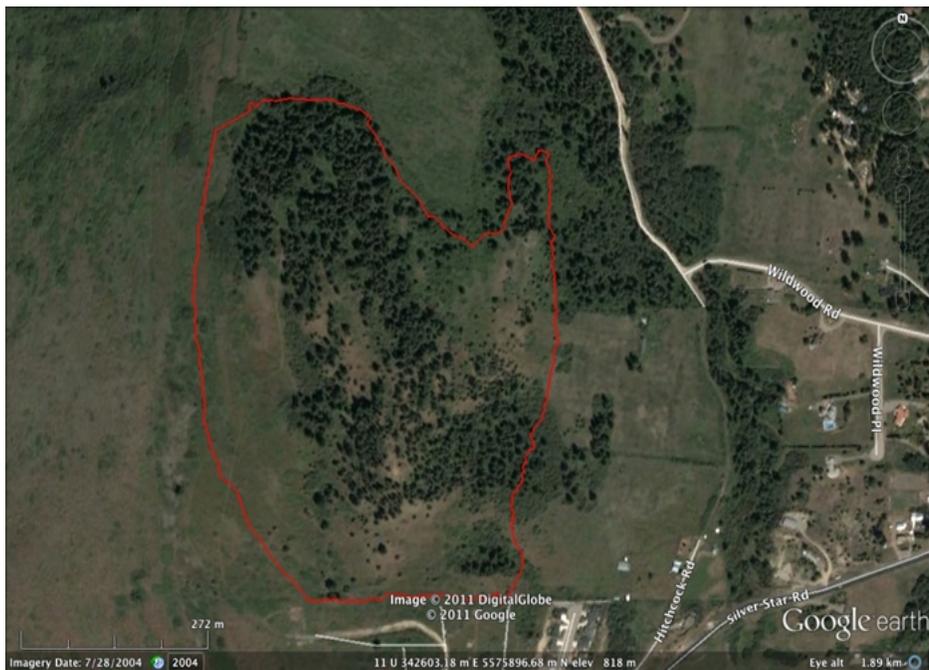
"The big stumbling block there is the land itself is highly prized and expensive," Macnabb says. "We'd love to buy everything, but we can't."

Greater Vernon has created several new parks lately, including the former Camp Hurlburt site, the park at Swan Lake, and a park atop Middleton Mountain.

"It's not without precedent," Macnabb says.

He's interested in finding out if the community association would be willing to help raise money.

"In my view the priority is determined by how willing the public is to get behind it," he says.



The area of the proposed park.
Image Credit: Contributed

To contact a reporter for this story, [email Charlotte Helston](#) or call 250-309-5230 or [email the editor](#). You can also submit [photos](#), [videos](#) or [news tips to the newsroom](#) and be entered to win a monthly prize draw.

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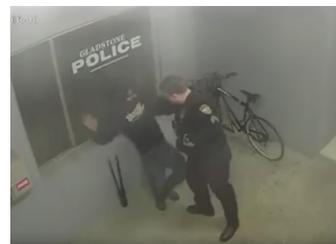
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Foothills park promoted

Residents urge Greater Vernon Advisory Committee to purchase land

RICHARD ROLKE / Oct. 6, 2017 5:00 a.m. / NEWS

Pressure is growing to establish a park in a Vernon neighbourhood.

Representatives from the Foothills Community Association appeared before the Greater Vernon Advisory Committee Thursday to once again lobby for 19.5 hectares of private land to be purchased for park.

“It’s decision time,” Wyn Polnicky, Foothills association member.

ADVERTISEMENT



The association has been seeking a park since 2010, but the issue is being raised again because an adjacent piece of land recently sold to developers for \$1.3 million.

It’s believed the park site could cost about \$1.4 million.

“We propose a reasonably expansive natural park. It has tremendous recreational and scenic assets,” said Polnicky of the views of Vernon, Coldstream and the electoral areas.

“It’s centrally located in the midst of Greater Vernon.”

A park would protect steep slopes and allow for environmental integrity, according to ecologist Brian Arquilla.

“You have a tremendous resource there. It’s under-utilized,” he said.

Jim Garlick, GVAC director, says the recent sale of park of the property may be a catalyst for a park, such as occurred on Middleton Mountain.

“With development, open space was taken,” he said.

GVAC is also trying to determine if a Foothills park would be its jurisdiction or the responsibility of the City of Vernon.

Foothills Park Gets Preliminary Support

Vernon, BC, Canada / 1075 Beach Radio Vernon

[Pete McIntyre](#)

November 02, 2017 11:16 am



Several dozen residents supporting a sub-regional park in Vernon's Foothills neighborhood, packed today's Greater Vernon Advisory Committee meeting.

It may have made a difference as the committee agreed to include the idea in its parks plan, meaning it will consider it.

Wynn Polenicky from the 300 member Foothills Community Association says it's a step in the right direction.

"It's a step that had to be made. The Greater Vernon Advisory Committee had to accept that this park was going to be part of their planning process and under their agency," Polenicky told Kiss FM.

Polenicky was pleased that supporters came out for the meeting.

"I'm particularly pleased with the large turnout of supporters. There was a little round of applause when the decision was made. I certainly didn't ask for it, or prompt it, but I was glad to hear it."

GVAC chair Juliette Cunningham says there are no guarantees of the idea proceeding, but they will consider it.

"That's all that the sub-regional parks will include in the future, is trails and natural spaces, so that's why it will be considered in the DCC (development cost charge) bylaw."

Cunningham says using DCC's are one way the land could be purchased, if the committee decides to move forward.

She is not sure how long it will take for the board to make a decision on the 48 acre site which is currently not developed and owned by three different parties.

"I think it will be really important for the regional district to communicate with the City of Vernon because I know there's some development occurring in that area, so there will have to be that conversation."

GVAC director Mike Macnabb suggests a consultant could look at the proposal and develop a strategy.

"Then we can decide if it fits into the plan."

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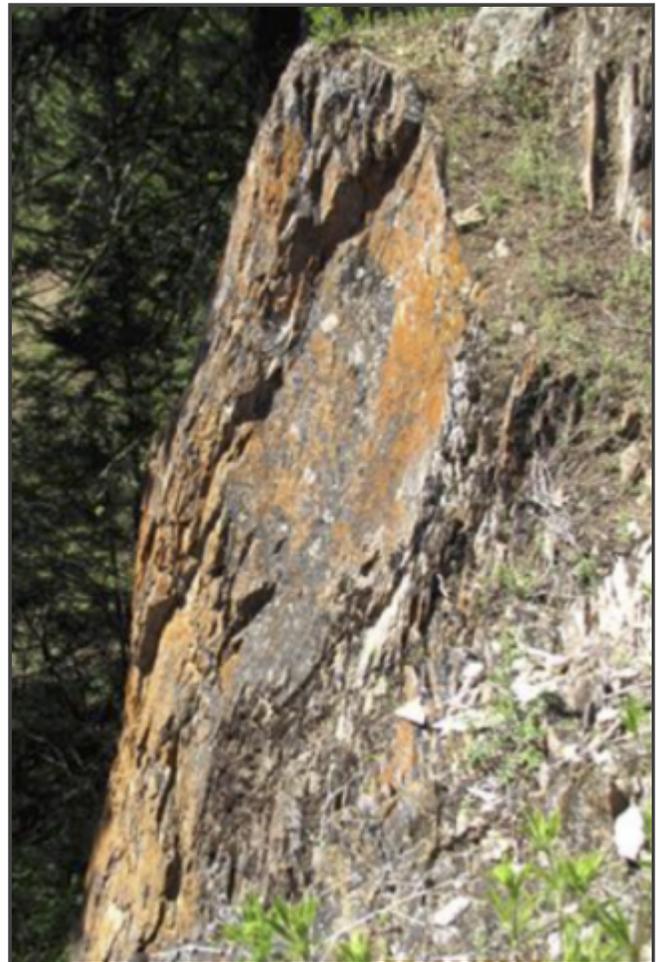
Foothills Park

[View](#) [Repeats](#)

The Foothills Community Association seeks your [endorsement](#) for the creation of a natural park to be situated above the developed part of Foothills (Please be assured that any endorsement in no way entails financial commitment.)

Such a park would provide spectacular views over all of Greater Vernon, preserve habitat in an area formally identified as ecologically sensitive, and link to the Grey Canal Trail and thus add to a necklace of parks and trails that serve as a gateway to Silver Star. The area under consideration has spectacular rocky bluffs and already has rough trails which provide access to viewpoints via a nearly flat route, as well as offering more physically demanding paths to access them. It would provide a restful place for peaceful personal renewal where one could enjoy the panoramic views, wildlife in its natural setting and be a destination for tourists.

All of these attributes, we believe, make the park (see proposed outline illustrated below) significant enough to be deemed Sub-Regional, i.e. under the aegis of Greater Vernon (Vernon, Coldstream and Areas B and C together). The proposed footprint is covered almost entirely by wildlife



corridors or High Sensitivity zones as identified in the 2014 Environmental Management Areas Strategy produced for governmental guidance. We encourage you to walk the area in question and would be happy to host walkabouts for any interested individuals or groups.

We will present the case for such a park at a meeting of the Greater Vernon Advisory Committee on 5 October. We are doing this now since some of the lands which are vital for this park have been sold recently and may be considered for development. While we are absolutely not opposed to development, we wish to have a portion of these lands preserved for future generations. Your attendance at that meeting would be most welcome as would your endorsement of the idea prior to that date.

Thank you for your consideration!

[Wynn Polnicky](#)

Foothills Community Association Parks and Trails Coordinator

P.S. We have been kicking around prospective names for the park – all suggestions are welcome!



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News

KEEP

5 Nov. 2017

Foothills park process in play

Richard Rolke
Morning Star Staff

Tentative steps are being taken towards a potential new park in Greater Vernon.

The Greater Vernon Advisory Committee has decided to include the concept of a Foot-

hills park in the development of an overall parks plan.

"It's worth considering as an area for a park," said director Bob Fleming.

"But it depends on how it happens. It can certainly be a goal."

The parks plan process could be completed by the end of 2017, but there is no timeline as to when a decision on an actual Foothills park could be made.

The Foothills Community Association has been lobbying for 19.5 hectares of private land to be purchased for park.

"It's a step in the right direction," said Wynn Polnicky, association member, of GVAC's action.



Bob Fleming

The association has been seeking a park since 2010, but the issue is being raised again because an adjacent piece of land

recently being sold to developers for \$1.3 million.

It's believed the park site could cost about \$1.4 million.

THE CIRCUS

Dear Mr. Peter Fricke, do you and the Vancouver Humane Society alarm bells ring just when a circus performs in Vernon?

It appears your sensitive alarm is in need of repairs, according to Wikipedia.

"Racehorse injuries and fatalities are a side effect of training and competition." These side effects must be real minor in your opinion? Not worth you and the VHS investigating

Alfred Kuehn

FOOTHILLS PARK

Thanks for Richard Rolke's Foothills Park article in the Oct. 8 *Morning Star*.

This is a perfect piece of property to keep public. It deserves to be a park.

The views showing off Vernon and the lakes down through the Okanagan Valley are outstanding.

There are unique and impressive rock bluffs. This property has one of the last old growth, Douglas fir forests remaining in an urban setting. It is potential habitat for rare and endangered birds, bats and other wildlife.

Please support this area to be protected as

a park. It's a healthy, recreational asset for Okanagan residents and the environment, and an attraction for tourists in Vernon and Silver Star.

Roseanne Van Ee

25 Oct. 2017

CONSERVATIVE POLICIES

Conservative MP Mel Arnold is sponsoring a bill to increase the punishment for stealing forest fire fighting equipment. Is this his best response to the worst forest fire season in B.C.?

Should we be grateful? Isn't he part of the Conservative Party of Canada that helped get us into this mess?

For example, Stephen Harper's government muzzled scientists who tried to warn Canadians of these problems.

During the last election, Mr. Arnold was the only candidate who couldn't be bothered to attend the public meeting organized by constituents concerned about flooding and fires.

He clearly isn't interested in the problems we face due to unpredictable weather. Instead, Mr. Arnold's bill is an attempt to manipulate the public into thinking the CPC is relevant in this discussion when

they aren

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18 Aug. 2017

News

Foothills land preserved

Morning Star Staff

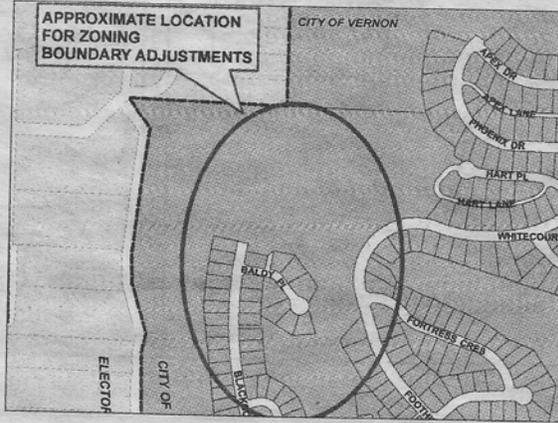
Additional parkland is being preserved in the Foothills.

The City of Vernon, working in conjunction with Foothills Development Ltd., has initiated a zoning boundary adjustment in the Foothills neighbourhood for areas near Blackcomb Way, Baldy Place and the water reservoir site on Foothills Drive. Zoning boundaries are proposed to be adjusted to refine future parkland areas and residential development areas. The proposal includes creating an increased amount of parkland in more desirable locations, including protection of a significant view point along Foothills Drive.

The large open space ravine between Foothills Drive, Silver Star Road and Blackcomb Way is to be dedicated to the City as parkland as part of a subdivision process, much like other ravine areas in the neighbourhood. Some small areas had been zoned for residential development that are now intended to form part of a park ravine area, and other areas that had been zoned for park are now intended for residential development. Foothills Development Ltd. is working with the City to protect a significant view corridor along Foothills Drive south of the water reservoir, which would form part of the future ravine park lot.

"The ravines in the Foothills Neighbourhood play an important role in the overall drainage system for the area, provide habitat protection and wildlife corridors and are intended to provide a connected community trail system with links to the Grey Canal," said Cleo Corbett, long range planner.

Four lots along Baldy Place are currently zoned, partially or entirely, for parks and open space. The proposed zoning adjustment will rezone these lots for hillside residential single- and two-family homes. There are currently plans for construction of single family homes on Baldy Place. Council passed a policy resolution Aug. 14 stating that the



CITY OF VERNON GRAPHIC

The City of Vernon has initiated a zoning boundary adjustment in the Foothills.

City will not be enforcing the zoning or building bylaws on park zoned lots while the rezoning adjustment is being considered, allowing land owners to start construction, at their own risk, without a building permit.

The zoning amendment process is estimated to take approximately four weeks.

It does not include the sensitive habitat, which is the subject of a petition to save Western screech owls, as recently featured in *The Morning Star*.

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JUST

and interest in our city to voice an opinion. After all, this what a democracy is and why we wish to live here.

Garry Haas

CITY PRAISED

Bravo to the City of Vernon for the recent completion of a short walking trail through a gully between Copper Mountain Court and Whitecourt Place.

The trail is well-designed and constructed, and has met with the widespread approval of the 300 members of the Foothills Community Association.

A hearty thank you goes to the mayor and council as well as the city planning staff who were involved, and in particular Vernon's parks planner, Kendra Kryszak.

It is with great satisfaction that we see substantive, albeit limited, progress towards the trail network envisioned in the Foothills neighbourhood plan, a network for which the Foothills Community Association has been lobbying for some years.

We Foothillers anxiously await the next steps towards the fulfillment of that plan.

Connections from this newly constructed trail to both Foothills Place and Foothills Drive through the same gully will make it many times more useful, and the planned connection to the Grey Canal trail through Blackcomb will be most

welcome.

23 Nov, 2016

Ultimately, of course, the establishment of a large natural park on the top of the Foothills bluff, with its magnificent views of the North Okanagan, will be the jewel in the crown and will be enhanced enormously via walking trail connections.

We in the Foothills Community Association are pleased to be working with an engaged city staff and elected leadership that show a forward-looking willingness to act. Again, congratulations on the construction of a first class trail.

Wynn Polnicky,

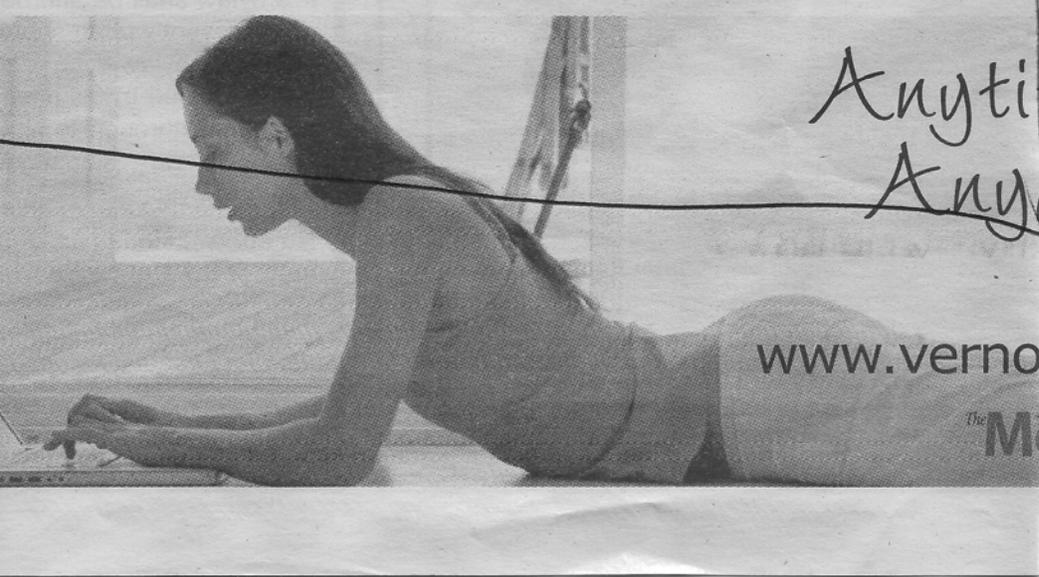
**Foothills Community Association,
Parks and Trails Co-ordinator**

LNG SPELLS TROUBLE

Does it strike anyone else as reckless behaviour that the day the United Nations Paris Agreement on Climate Change goes into affect, is the same day Christy Clark announces the go ahead of a LNG terminal at Woodfibre?

The LNG processing and export terminal will be a major emitter of greenhouse gases in B.C., making it harder to meet our binding commitments under the Paris agreement.

In addition, the province is cutting the price of our green hydro electricity so this dinosaur industry can use it to emit those



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Foothills plan stalls

Feb. 13,
2013

RICHARD ROLKE

Morning Star Staff

Land use planning for a Vernon neighbourhood is getting a rough ride.

City council was highly critical of a draft Foothills neighbourhood plan presented by staff Tuesday.

"There's too much of a gap between what the community wants and what the plan gives them," said Coun. Brian Quiring.

"We're not there yet with the plan. Residents are feeling that they haven't been heard as much as they felt they should have been heard."

Prior to Tuesday's meeting, council members received a letter from some Foothills residents expressing concerns about the draft plan.



Brian Quiring

"They think we have missed critical elements — a large park and one of the medium density areas being in the wrong location," said Coun. Patrick Nicol.

A primary concern is a shift from single-detached housing to multi-family units.

"With the community against row housing, is there another way to achieve density? We don't want to lose the look and feel of the community," said Coun. Mary-Jo O'Keefe.

Staff insisted that the draft plan was developed based on input from Foothills residents.

"Is it everything the public wants, no. Is it what we believe is the best compromise to provide services and amenities, yes it is," said Kim Flick, community development manager.

Staff says that residents have asked for transit and there is a need for sewer and water lines, but a higher population base is required to make those services financially viable for developers and city taxpayers.

Ultimately, council instructed staff to go back to the drawing board and hold another public input session before a bylaw process begins.

"Having one more meeting with the residents will be a benefit. If we don't, a public hearing could be a gong show," said Quiring.

O'Keefe believes more needs to be done to address residents' concerns.

"I'd like visuals to show how the density being proposed will fit into their community," she said.

PARKS PROCESS

The Foothills Community Association endorses the view supporting parks in natural areas in the context of the updating of the Greater Vernon Advisory Committee priority list.

The FCA has lobbied elected officials in both Vernon and at GVAC for a natural park in the treed area at the top of the Foothills bluff, which provides a magnificent view of the North Okanagan.

We believe this park would serve all of Greater Vernon, including in particular the nearby BX-Swan Lake, BX-Silver Star and Foothills. Connecting trails from it to the Grey Canal and Cools Pond, as well as in other directions, could serve as an alternate route to Silver Star Road for access to the Anderson Way shopping area.

Our initiative has been endorsed by a number of organizations in Greater Vernon, including the

Vernon Outdoors Club, the North Okanagan Naturalists' Club, the Allan Brooks Nature Centre, the Keddleston Community Association and the Ribbons of Green Trails Society.

We appreciate that creation of such a park is something of a long-term objective, since the land in question, is at present, in private hands. But we would hope that near-term designation of that land as a notional park would serve to start the process needed to make it happen in the future.

We look forward to the results of the GVAC parks prioritization and trust that our initiative will have support.

**Wynn Polnicky, Kees Versfeld,
Foothills Community
Association Co-Founders**

ICY WALKS

As Jennifer Smith remarks in her article "Please keep your side-

Feb. 3, 2013

NOVEMBER 1, 2012 - 12:16 PM

Foothills park pursued by groups

RICHARD ROLKE

Morning Star Staff

Politicians are making no promises that a chunk of BX wilderness will become a new park.

Three groups have asked the Greater Vernon Advisory Committee to take steps to preserve 50 acres of private land above the Foothills subdivision.

"We can't make it a park tomorrow," said Mike Macnabb, GVAC chairperson.

"Much discussion has to take place first."

Its anticipated GVAC's possible involvement will be discussed at its November meeting.

"It's a long-term project and restructuring of the parks and recreation service is underway," said Trafford Hall, Regional District of North Okanagan chairperson.

The groups pushing for a park are the Ribbons of Green Trails Society and the Foothills Community Association.

"Our vision is to retain it as a natural area," said Wynn Polnicky, with the Foothills association.

"We're not talking about building playgrounds and putting in picnic tables."



Mike Macnabb

The site is home to old-growth Douglas fir and a variety of plant and animal species.

"It's potentially a tourist attraction," said Polnicky of trails and the bluff's views of Vernon and Okanagan Lake.

Because of several steep slopes, Polnicky believes the site is better suited for park than housing.

"There are several ravines that make it expensive to develop," he said.

July 13, 2012

News

Foothills park promoted

RICHARD ROLKE

Morning Star Staff

A Vernon neighbourhood has now made the official pitch to preserve a special ecosystem.

The Foothills Community Association asked city council Monday to take steps to ensure 60 acres above the subdivision ultimately becomes park.

“A park on top of the bluff would be a jewel in the crown for Vernon and all of Greater Vernon,” said Wynn Polnicky, the association’s parks co-ordinator.

“The bluff area is of high conservation value. It is an area of old growth Douglas fir and in an urban setting, that is rare.”

The site is currently in the hands of three land owners.

“We’re not asking for you to spend funds right now,” Polnicky told council.

At this time, the association is asking the city to incorporate parks into the Foothills neighbourhood plan and to amend the official community plan so there



PHOTO SUBMITTED

The City of Vernon is being asked to ensure land is preserved for a park in the Foothills subdivision.

is reference to parks and trails.

It also wants the city to look at zoning issues and work with the Greater Vernon Advisory Committee — which oversees parks — on the matter.

The association will ask GVAC Sept. 6 to also ensure a park is created.

“It will provide a point of natural beauty for everyone in the North Okanagan,” said Polnicky.

The association also wants the city to create links between the Foothills and existing trail networks.

No decision has been made by council yet.

Foothills residents push for park

4 July, 2012 p. A10

Morning Star Staff

Lobbying for a new park is underway in one Vernon neighbourhood.

The Ribbons of Green Trail Society and Foothills Community Association recently toured city politicians around a proposed natural area above the Foothills subdivision on Silver Star Road.

"All of the area envisioned as becoming the park is privately owned, and while entirely within the City of Vernon remains designated as regional district non-urban, inherited from when it was incorporated within Vernon," said Wynn Polnicky, with the Foothills Community Association.

"Since the area is envisioned as being retained in its current



PHOTO SUBMITTED

Members of Vernon city council tour an area Foothills residents want officially designated as park.

state as a park, costs be minimal, hence the of maintenance would only expense of concern

would be that of initial acquisition of the land."

Trails connecting the area to the Grey Canal Trail, below Foothills, and to Silver Star Mountain were also discussed.

Polnicky was pleased with the interest shown by members of Vernon council, as well as city staff who attended the tour.

"The group then took a short walk to view an area of rugged cliffs and old-growth Douglas fir and Ponderosa pine proposed to be retained within the park," he said.

The Foothills Community Association and Ribbons of Green will present their vision for a park at the next Vernon council meeting Monday at 1:30 p.m. at city hall.

Group unveils vision

RICHARD ROLKE

Morning Star Staff

A Greater Vernon group is pushing for enhanced recreational facilities for the community.

The Foothills Community Association invited local politicians, planners and recreational groups to participate in a tour Saturday.

"We wanted to show them our area and vision," said Wynn Polnicky, the association's parks and trails co-ordinator.

"Some of these people maybe had never been to the top of the bluff and seen its spectacular view."

The Foothills subdivision is part of the City of Vernon but it is completely surrounded by regional district electoral area.

One of the suggestions has been developing a park on the bluff, which is currently private land.

"It's an old growth, mixed timber area," said Polnicky.

"It's unique because it's right in an urban area."



PHOTO SUBMITTED

Wynn Polnicky (centre), with the Foothills Community Association, discusses plans with politicians and others during a tour Saturday.

The association would also like to see Foothills connected to the Grey Canal trail, and other trails developed.

"What we're proposing is already in the city's vision and Greater Vernon's vision," said Polnicky.

Polnicky is convinced that such recreational enhancements could support the entire region.

"This isn't just Foothillers saying we want stuff all for us. It will be a benefit for all of Greater Vernon," he said.

"Because the view is so nice, it would become a destination."

The association's next step is to continue to

promote its plan.

"The FCA wishes to work collaboratively with all of the various stakeholders, including the city and NORD, as well as developers, real estate businesses, private landowners, and neighbouring districts such as BX/Swan Lake," said Polnicky.

Mayor Wayne Lippert attended the tour Saturday and he welcomes the association's involvement.

"We listened to the thoughts and concerns of people with the association," he said.

"They want to get buy-in so the community up there can have recreational facilities."

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**Wynn Polnicky, Kees Versfeld,
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