



September 2010

## **VACC submission on the Albion Flats Special Study Area**

The Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows Chapter of the Vancouver Area Cycling Coalition would like to request the design team of the Albion Flats Special Study Area to consider the following.

The Vancouver Area Cycling Coalition advocates for cycling infrastructure suitable for cyclists of all ages (8 – 88) and all abilities. More and more communities are coming to the realization that in order to get more people to use their bikes for transportation, separation from car traffic is needed on higher volume- and higher speed roads. In view of the fact that, depending on the uses decided upon for the Albion Flats, as well as further expansion of the residential areas to the east, traffic demands on the roads feeding into this development could easily surpass capacity in years to come, there is a great opportunity to provide first class cycling infrastructure for this area.

Whatever uses will be decided upon for the Albion Flats, we feel that the District should ensure that this opportunity to provide its residents with safe and environmentally friendly transportation options between the Special Study Area and the surrounding neighbourhoods as well as the Town Core should be fully optimized.

Generally, the cycling/walking connections in east-west direction are few and far between, especially in east Maple Ridge, due to the various gulleys, and lack of pedestrian/cycling bridges to cross these. The only way to bike from downtown Maple Ridge to the Albion Flats without at least doubling the distance, is via Lougheed Highway. Not many people are comfortable biking on a shoulder along a major highway. This makes the area very car-dependent. A separated bike path along Lougheed Highway, from 240<sup>th</sup> St. to the downtown, will greatly improve safety and accessibility for all cyclists.

Without taking a position as to recommended uses, we would like to point out that generally mixed use zoning and densification benefits walkability and cyclability of a community or neighbourhood, which in turn greatly enhances livability. Many communities that improve cycling and walking opportunities in their neighbourhoods see property values rise significantly.

It would seem wise, however, to rely on the recommendations of experts in the field of agriculture, as well as experts on soil stability/earthquakes as to whether or not certain types of development should be allowed, or would be feasible for this area, instead of relying on ordinary citizens expressing their opinions about these issues.

In a broader community context, we feel that distribution of certain similar uses, e.g. sports fields and parks, over different neighbourhoods is important from an accessibility point of view. This ensures the accessibility at reasonable walking or biking distance for most residents to those types of amenities. If most sports fields in a community are located in one area, most people will drive their cars to get there. If there is going to be one large grocery store in the Albion Flats, as opposed to various smaller neighbourhood grocery stores that they could bike or walk to, people will be driving to do their grocery shopping.

Thank you for considering the wishes of the Vancouver Area Cycling Coalition!

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