

COUNCIL MEMBERS' MOTION

*For consideration at the Standing Committee on City Finance and Services meeting on
October 8, 2025*

3. Protecting the Champlain Heights Forest Trail Network for Future Generations and Residents

Submitted by: Councillor Fry

WHEREAS

1. In the southeast corner of Vancouver, Champlain Heights is a masterplanned community built by the city in the late 1970's. The site, adjacent to a decommissioned city landfill and largely covered in forest was at the time of construction one of the last undeveloped greenfield sites in the city. The neighbourhood defies the traditional street grid model, as meandering streets and cul-de-sacs weave through ribbons of forest and trails, creating a pleasant, wooded, car-light environment;
2. Constructed on city-owned land, Champlain Heights was modeled as a contemporary of South False Creek with a mix of strata, social, and cooperative housing on leasehold land, with terms ranging from 60-99 years. Mostly constructed of low-rise wood frame structures, the community hosts diverse incomes and demographics;
3. Champlain Heights is greatly enhanced by its forested pathways. Named after native flora: Birch, Fir, Orange Dogwood, Grey Gum, Blue Elderberry, Black Cottonwood, and Red Alder Trails form an extensive network of greenspace winding through the neighbourhood (North to South from Matheson Crescent to S E Marine Drive and West to East from Champlain Crescent to Boundary), providing ecological benefits, robust tree canopy, natural cooling, stormwater mitigation, and access to nature for residents and visitors;
4. The trail network is maintained by the Engineering's Green Streets Program and Park Board, and stewarded by local environmental non-profit, Free the Fern Stewardship Society. With over 1,500 volunteers and thousands of hours Free the Fern have removed 233.64 m3 of invasive plants, planted over 3,500 native plants, and organized over 100 community events;
5. The Champlain Heights trail system provides a variety of benefits to both the environment and the surrounding community, including: as a bird flyway, an ecological corridor, mitigating air quality, and contributing to physical and mental

wellbeing, in a part of the city where there is otherwise and historically a relatively limited amount of tree canopy adjacent to residential development¹;

6. As part of the Vancouver Plan implementation, the City's Social Housing Initiative² seeks to accelerate the delivery of non-profit-led social and co-operative housing by streamlining the development process across the city. The report recognizes that the Champlain Heights neighbourhood presents an opportunity to deliver more housing and social housing options at the time of lease renewal, but also recommends "conservation of the existing Champlain Heights forest and trail system", and urging that "development proposals under this initiative must consider the existing trails, including a buffer and interface with any new buildings"; and
7. Currently, none of Champlain Heights' verdant trail network is protected or designated as park.³ The forested pathways exist on City owned rights-of-way where they are variously labeled as street horticulture, "Large landscaped area," and Garden ID 3500 (Fraserview Community Garden).

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

- A. THAT Council direct staff to report back with considerations for the protection of the Champlain Heights trail network variously under the *Vancouver Charter* provisions for park designation, along with any implications of doing so and any alternative options for preserving the trail network.
- B. THAT Council recognizes the critical importance of maintaining the trail network along with any future redevelopment as complimentary to density, livability and urban resilience.
- C. THAT Council direct staff to engage with Free the Fern Stewardship Society and others to support complimentary resident-led stewardship of the Champlain Heights trail network.
- D. THAT Council requests the Mayor formally acknowledge and thank Free the Fern Stewardship Society for their stewardship efforts to date and ongoing.

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¹ Free the Fern, Allison Luke | Growing Together: How the Champlain Heights trail system benefits the local community and environment in Vancouver (PDF)

<https://freethefern.ca/755-2/>

² City of Vancouver January 2025 | Vancouver's Social Housing Initiative engagement report

<https://syc.vancouver.ca/projects/social-housing/vancouver-social-housing-engagement-report.pdf>

³ City of Vancouver | Memo to Mayor and Council - Parks Designation Update 2024

<https://vancouver.ca/files/cov/2024-04-19-memo-to-mayor-and-council-parks-designation-update.pdf>