

CITY OF PRINCE RUPERT
DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM STUDY
SEAL COVE

W.J. BLAKELY AND ASSOCIATES
TOWN PLANNING CONSULTANTS LTD

September 1968

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September 26, 1968

Mayor P.J. Lester and
Members of the Council
City of Prince Rupert
City Hall
Prince Rupert, B.C.

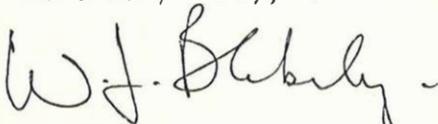
Your Worship and Gentlemen:

Development Programme Study of Seal Cove

Under the 1967 Planning Programme we were asked to commence a study of a development programme for the Seal Cove area, and we reported our tentative views on this in August of last year.

This present report embodies changes arising from discussion at that time and from subsequent examination.

Yours very truly,



W.J. Blakely and Associates
Town Planning Consultants Ltd.

WJB/mr

CITY OF PRINCE RUPERT

DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM STUDY

SEAL COVE

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I L L U S T R A T I O N S

(Maps bound on back cover)

LAND OWNERSHIP

SLOPE OF LAND

OPTIMUM USE PATTERN

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

AIR PHOTOGRAPH

Under the 1967 Planning Program, we were asked to initiate study on a "Development Program for the Seal Cove Area". Initially, we endeavoured to gain an appreciation of the special problems and positive features of Seal Cove and relate them to a "first cast" plan indicating optimum land use. From this work and from discussions arising from it with Council and officials, we obtained a much closer appreciation of the problems of cost and land tenure impairing the realization of an optimum use of the land. Thus our present proposals differ from the draft report submitted by us in August, 1967. The accompanying "Proposed Development Program" shows a limited development of the Seal Cove basin, which although not the optimum use of all the land, is nevertheless felt to embody a workable solution to the problems posed by the situation in the Seal Cove basin.

Features of the Area

Seal Cove has the following positive features:

1. It is favourably located to serve as a seaplane terminus.
2. It was concluded by the "Report on a Harbour Development Survey for Prince Rupert, B.C." by C.B.A. Engineering in 1965 for Canadian National Railways, that Seal Cove was a suitable location for small boat uses considering the overall objective of obtaining the best use of the whole waterfront.
3. B.C. Packers' site, the one major industrial plant in the area, is well served by rail and water, and yet is visually isolated from the remainder of the area.

There are, however, a number of problems to be faced.

1. The severe topography surrounding the Cove, drastically limits site grading and appropriate arterial road connections.
2. Seal Cove has poor local road access. Industrial traffic must wind its way through residential neighbourhoods and down a steep, narrow hill.
3. Within the area, there is poor access to individual leaseholds, because the existing network of dead-end roads has been an outgrowth of many separately conceived solutions to access problems.
4. Residential land use has begun to encroach a potential industrial land.
5. Much of the area is out of City control, being under aegis of senior governments and Crown Corporations.
6. Because of the extreme tide variations obtaining in Prince Rupert, the inner water area of Seal Cove is useless, being too shallow for water uses and too deep for economic filling.
7. Although much of the land is under leasehold, there are three landlords, The City, the Dominion Government and the C.N.R., as shown on the accompanying Land Ownership map.
8. Little apparent effort has been made to see that leases expire close to other lease expiry dates.

The result of these problems is to make development of the area inexpedient for uses other than those which can utilize directly some of the positive features of the site.

Residential Use

In and around Seal Cove there are several pockets of residential land use.

1. The Sourdough Bay area, accessible only from Seal Cove, has some residences for federal employees working there.
2. Department of Transport has, within the last year or two, built three single-family houses on the waterfront. This action is regrettable since it makes a very low intensity use of precious waterfront property.
3. Both B.C. Packers and McLean's Shipyard have residences near their plants. The Zoning By-law permits buildings on lots used for industrial purposes to be used as living quarters by employees of the industry whose residence on the premises is essential by reason of some peculiarity of the principal land use concerned. It is highly unlikely that all these residences are essential.
4. By far the biggest congregation of residential units near Seal Cove is the new apartment complex on the hill above the C.N.R. tracks, overlooking the B.C. Packers plant and warehouse. It is doubtful whether this land use is compatible with the nearby fish processing. The question arises whether to permit more multiple-family housing nearby, such as across Seal Cove Road. We consider that the best policy would be to restrict further residential development in this area. To place new apartments across Seal Cove Road would lead to a great deal of pedestrian cross-traffic on this steep thoroughfare. If the development were built with an adequate lot (which the

existing development was not) it would lead to children crossing an industrial road on foot. If, on the other hand, the development had no lot-lot, children would be tempted to play near the road. We, therefore, recommend development of this parcel to non-residential uses. In short, we recommend the discouragement of any further residential development at Seal Cove, and of the continued use of some of the existing residential development.

Industrial Development

Our August 1967 draft plan indicated use of the outer part of Seal Cove for marina use, with emphasis on pleasure craft, and use of the D.O.T. peninsula for a common seaplane terminal building. These recommendations are valid, regardless of the use to which the remainder of the area is put, as they will ensure optimum use of the harbour, keeping seaplane landings more to Shawatlans Passage and out of the way of pleasure craft in the outer cove.

Most of the remainder of the Seal Cove area is suitable for small industrial concerns without a need to attract business from the highway, and who do not require large sites. Very little, however, can be done to develop new industrial sites at Seal Cove. It is true that the best use of the inner part of Seal Cove would be for industrial sites on filled land, with a possibility of providing rail trackage. In order to provide these sites, however, the City would have to obtain 150,000 cubic yards of fill material, quite apart from what will be needed for filling other locations in Prince Rupert, such as Hays Cove. Since large sites with highway access will soon be available near Highway 16, we suggest use of the margins of Seal Cove for small sites complementing the larger highway sites.

Road Patterns

In order to provide convenient access to all parcels and a good circulation of traffic through the area, it would be desirable to undertake a number of road re-locations. For example, if the waterfront west of McLean's Shipyard is to have practical road access, a new roadway near the railway tracks would have to be constructed. In order for traffic to get onto this roadway without undue detour, it would be desirable to re-locate Seal Cove Road on the north side of the old RCAF warehouse. In this way it would better serve the site of the B.C. Packers plant and by re-routing the main road across Seal Cove immediately in front of the Curling Club, another small site with rail trackage could be gained, across the tracks from the existing warehouse.

Re-routing of roads would be one way of obtaining optimum land use in Seal Cove. (See the accompanying map, "Optimum Use Pattern.") The benefits of optimum land use, in this case, however, would accrue principally to C.N.R., and its tenants, whereas the cost of re-routing would fall on the city. We consider that the City's policy in this matter should be that if the C.N.R., wishes to initiate a program of road construction and redevelopment of its property, the City should stand ready to encourage and assist, but that the City itself need not provide the initiative.

A new road access to Seal Cove from Highway 16 would help ensure a higher quality development while at the same time keeping heavy industrial traffic out of the Section 7 residential area. Various routes

are possible, but there is only one we can recommend and this only as a long term project. A route to Eighth Avenue is not worthwhile, as it would channel traffic past an elementary school. A route up the cliff alongside the old hangar and thence south of the Eleventh Avenue area to the southern highway exit, as shown on the map, "Optimum Use Pattern", is probably best for optimum development of Seal Cove, but would be prohibitively costly. Thus, the best compromise seems to be a route on an alignment very close to the one shown on the 1967 draft, proceeding up the draw towards Eleventh Avenue North. This route appears to be the most economical and it can be built in three stages, with the section between Eleventh Avenue and the highway being left until it can serve property in the undeveloped area it is to traverse. For the time being, it should be sufficient to reserve a right of way for most of the road, with the lower part within Seal Cove basin being constructed first. Actual construction of the upper portions can wait for a specific need, at which time it might be possible to arrange senior government assistance.

Proposed Development Policies

It is recommended:

1. That the best course of action is to continue the policy of leasing industrial sites, but that they should be laid out so as to fit in with the road layout proposed.
2. Rights-of-way for the future road pattern should be reserved soon, with the roads themselves being built as required and as possible.

3. Marina development should be encouraged.
4. Development of a seaplane terminal has, since our 1967 draft, been announced.
5. C.N.R., lands should be left as they are until the C.N.R. can further plans of their own.
6. City land not required for industrial or road development should be retained by the City to preserve greenclad slopes which preserve the attractiveness of Seal Cove despite the quarrying, fish processing and open storage which take place there.