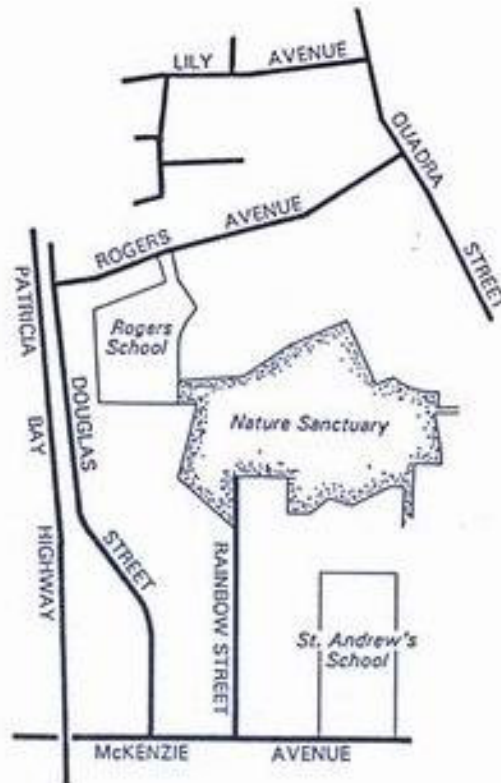


CHRISTMAS HILL SLOPES ACTION AREA PLAN

Schedule 1 to the North Quadra Local Area Plan
Includes amendments to August 11, 1997



Prepared by: District of Saanich
Planning Department

July, 1995

THE CORPORATION OF THE DISTRICT OF SAANICH

BY-LAW NO. 7486

A BY-LAW

TO AMEND BY-LAW NO. 7044, BEING THE "OFFICIAL
COMMUNITY PLAN BY-LAW, 1993"

The Municipal Council of The Corporation of the District of Saanich enacts as follows:

- 1) By-Law No. 7044, being the "Official Community Plan By-Law, 1993" is hereby amended as follows:
 - (a) By adding to Appendix "K" - North Quadra Local Area Plan a new Schedule 1 - Christmas Hill Slopes Action Area Plan dated June 2, 1995 and which is attached hereto as Schedule "A".
- 2) This By-Law may be cited for all purposes as the "OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN BY-LAW, 1993, AMENDMENT BY-LAW, 1995, NO. 7486".

Read a first time this 5th day of June, 1995.

Public Hearing held at the Municipal Hall on the 14th day of June, 1995.

Read a second time this 14th day of June, 1995.

Read a third time this 24th day of July, 1995.

Adopted by Council, signed by the Mayor and Clerk and sealed with the Seal of The Corporation on the 31st day of July, 1995.

"T. R. KIRK"

.....
Clerk of The Corporation of
the District of Saanich

"M. R. COELL"

.....
Mayor

AMENDMENTS

<u>Bylaw</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Details</u>
7578	June 11, 1996	Revised wording to clarify intent of density policies for mixed residential areas.
7875	August 11, 1998	Pages 3, 8, 9 to provide for office use - 4050 Douglas Street

THE CHRISTMAS HILL SLOPES ACTION AREA PLAN

In March, 1994, Council endorsed a review of the North Quadra Local Area Plan and directed Planning staff to address it in two phases: firstly, to examine the Christmas Hill Slopes area in an Action Area Plan within North Quadra, and secondly, to review the balance of the local area. The development of the Action Area Plan began in June, 1994, with preliminary public discussions and creation of the Christmas Hill Slopes Advisory Group to generate guiding principles to be used by the Planning Department in creation of the Action Area Plan. The report from the Advisory Group was presented to Council on November 28, 1994, and received for information. Council specifically requested that consideration should be given to the guiding principles and supporting rationale comments noted in the report to ensure fairness to all stakeholders.

Advisory Group Recommendations

The report of the Christmas Hill Slopes Advisory Group contains the framework for planning the area. The report is available under a separate cover. Ideas were presented in the form of 40 guiding principles and supporting rationale. For the purpose of the next step, these were further refined into 15 basic criteria upon which a plan should be developed. Care was taken to include all principles and rationale statements, with the exception of those that related to implementation or those that could be combined. A series of land use scenarios were developed and ranked on a simple scale in an attempt to define a preliminary profile of the area relative to the issues identified. This in turn generated several key points related to implementation of each scenario and led to the development of land use concepts which form the basis of the Plan.

A. WHAT SHOULD WE PRESERVE OR PROTECT?

A major thrust of the Advisory Group recommendations was to recognize the natural and scenic value of the Christmas Hill Slopes and protect areas deemed to be significant in terms of environmental uniqueness, views, topography, open space value, linkages to amenities and open spaces, possible heritage value, or where land adjacent to the Nature Sanctuary should be considered as buffer areas to reduce impact from incompatible uses. Seven refined criteria were identified:

Criteria

1. Preserve Garry oak ecosystems and maintain rocky character and other environmentally significant features.
2. Recognize viewscape potential.
3. Consider buffers.
4. Preserve hilltops and high ground locations.
5. Preserve Greenways.
6. Secure additional open space.
7. Protect heritage resources and landscapes.

B. SHOULD DEVELOPMENT OCCUR AND, IF SO, HOW?

A basic recognition of the Advisory Group was that, short of full acquisition of the entire Slopes area, some development will inevitably occur, whether in the form of the limited development potential under the existing zoning or following from rezoning of land to more intensive uses. Nevertheless, development in any form must conform to the guiding issues related to Section A above. In other words, development may be possible provided consideration is given to Garry oak ecosystems, viewscales, open space, hilltops, possible Greenways, and heritage buildings and landscapes. In this context, compatible, innovative, and well-managed higher-density housing forms were identified as a possible option which, given a proper density and design, could respond to the need to protect on-site amenities and the general need for housing.

Criteria

8. Acknowledge the potential for development.
9. Recognize the need for housing.
10. Consider housing that is innovative/high density and preserves open space.
11. Consider compatible institutional/commercial development.

C. WHAT ARE THE TRANSPORTATION CONCERNS?

Several concerns were identified which relate to transportation in the area, both vehicular and non-vehicular forms. Traffic circulation and safety, disturbance of residential areas by new through-traffic, the need for pedestrian and bicycle linkages, and development of safe access routes to school were among the key issues discussed. The thrust of the recommendations was to ensure that linkages through the area for non-vehicular transportation forms are maintained, while mitigating the impact of the automobile wherever possible.

Criteria

12. Traffic and safety are critical
13. Interlinking of vehicular traffic [through established residential areas] should be avoided.
14. Bicycle and pedestrian paths are supported.
15. Provide safe access to school property.

ANALYSIS

Figures 1 to 5 outline the background information on the Christmas Hill Slopes Area including existing land use, zoning, applicable policies, site vegetation, topography, and views. The combination of these factors for each study area form the existing conditions outlined on Figure 6. Land use scenarios for each study area were developed using a spectrum of possible uses and densities. These ranged from subdivision under the existing rural zoning to numerous subdivision options requiring rezoning to urban lot sizes. Stemming from these, each study area was analyzed individually based on the fifteen guiding criteria developed from the principles outlined by the Christmas Hill Slopes Advisory Group. Consideration was given to the current designations in the North Quadra Local Area Plan, and these formed the context for the new designations.

The context of the Christmas Hill Slopes is defined by several notable factors: the dominance of the Nature Sanctuary and the need to protect it; the effects of the highway interchange, both in terms of impact and scenic access opportunities; and the environmental value of the area, particularly relating to Garry oak ecosystems. Opportunities for development in the area must reflect a coordinated and controlled approach which recognizes the existing neighbourhood

context and long term goals related to open space and environmental protection. The proposed Concept Plan reflects the optimal combination of results relative to the criteria identified, and remains consistent with the existing designations in the Local Area Plan.

CONCEPT PLAN

Figures 7 & 8, and Table 1 summarize the Christmas Hill Slopes Concept Plan and provide a comparison of the Concept Plan with the guiding criteria. The main features of the plan are as follows:

1. Substantial Land Acquisition - The plan proposes a total public acquisition of 6.7 ha and supports further acquisition adjacent to Pat Bay Highway by the Provincial Capital Commission.
2. Preservation and Protection of Garry Oak Areas - In addition to land acquisitions that contain significant Garry oak areas, the plan establishes protection areas within developments to retain Garry oaks and associated ecosystems.
3. Protection and Expansion of The Nature Sanctuary - The Plan calls for 4.0 ha of land to be added to the Nature Sanctuary, which is a carry-over from the Local Area Plan, and the provision of buffer areas in the form of a 2.7 ha natural park to the west and development protection zones to the north and south.
4. Controlled Development that retains Amenities - The plan responds to the conflicting interests in the area by striking a balance between development and protection. Mixed residential use which provides a reasonable balance between a variety of house types and/or single family dwelling lot sizes is support, where appropriate, to allow design flexibility, protection of important natural features, and unit clustering to protect views and trees.

Potential densities for areas designated for mixed residential use range from 12-18 units per gross hectare. The low end of the range reflects the surrounding context and the current permissible density under the Local Area Plan policies but assumes the provision and/or protection of more amenities than would be the case with traditional, single-zone, single family subdivision. The high end of the range enables density bonusing to occur, where appropriate, for the protection and/or provision of substantially more amenities. Amenities could include, but are not limited to, open space provision, protection of vegetation and natural areas, and heritage preservation. Innovation in housing form is seen as desirable as a means to protect additional amenities.

Depending on the size of the parcel and the amenity provided, even higher densities may be achieved in specific areas, however, other areas must be reduced accordingly to meet the prescribed range. The only exception to this is on sites along McKenzie Avenue and adjacent to the proposed commercial centre, where higher densities will be considered to enable the preservation of important vegetation areas and/or open space.

Policies

- Consider acquisition of ± 4.0 ha of land to extend the Nature Sanctuary as shown on the Concept Plan.
- Endorse acquisition of ± 2.7 ha west of the Nature Sanctuary by Saanich to create either a natural park or an extension to the Nature Sanctuary.
- Adopt a density of 12 units per gross hectare *(4.86 upga) for all areas shown in the Concept Plan for mixed residential development where more amenities are provided than would be the case with traditional, single-zone, single family subdivision. Amenities could include, but are not limited to open space provision, protection of vegetation and natural features, and heritage preservation. Innovation in housing form is seen as desirable as a means to protect additional amenities.
- Consider density bonusing in areas designated for mixed residential use, to a maximum density of 18 units per gross hectare (7.29 upga), where a development proposal provides substantially more amenities than would be provided at 12 units per gross hectare.
- Support single family development on the westerly portion of the Rogers/Lily area to match adjacent development.
- Support mixed residential development on the easterly portion of the Rogers/Lily Area, that preserves significant vegetation, provides a public linkage from Rogers Avenue to Lily Avenue, and directs traffic to Lily Avenue.
- Support mixed residential development on the Rogers South, McKenzie/Douglas (SIDC) and Rainbow East areas, having consideration for significant vegetation and other environmentally important features.
- Support purchase by the Provincial Capital Commission or the School Board, of the L-shaped parcel adjacent to Pat Bay Highway, to protect important vegetation, scenic access qualities and the viewscape to Rogers School.

- Consider developments adjacent to McKenzie Avenue, in the McKenzie/Douglas (SIDC) and Rainbow East areas, that exceed 18 units per hectare only if they preserve Garry oaks and other important vegetation.
- Support institutional or multi-family development on land between Pat Bay Highway and Douglas Street subject to preservation of the heritage English Oak and other important scenic vegetation.
- Endorse creation of a vegetation buffer on the southerly portion of the Ministry of Transportation and Highways property, at the corner of Patricia Bay Highway and McKenzie Avenue, to reduce visual and noise impact and provide relief from adjacent development.
- Support development of a small commercial centre on Douglas Street north of McKenzie Avenue to serve local needs.
- Establish a safe-route-to-school from Rogers School through the SIDC property to the Swan Lake neighbourhood south of McKenzie Avenue.
- Carefully consider the impact of new development on traffic circulation and pedestrian safety through the rezoning and subdivision approval process.

* "gross hectare" - means the area of the site including internal roads, individual lots, common open space, and dedicated parks, but excludes land purchased or to be purchased by the municipality or other government agency for public open space or road rights-of-way.

ANALYSIS

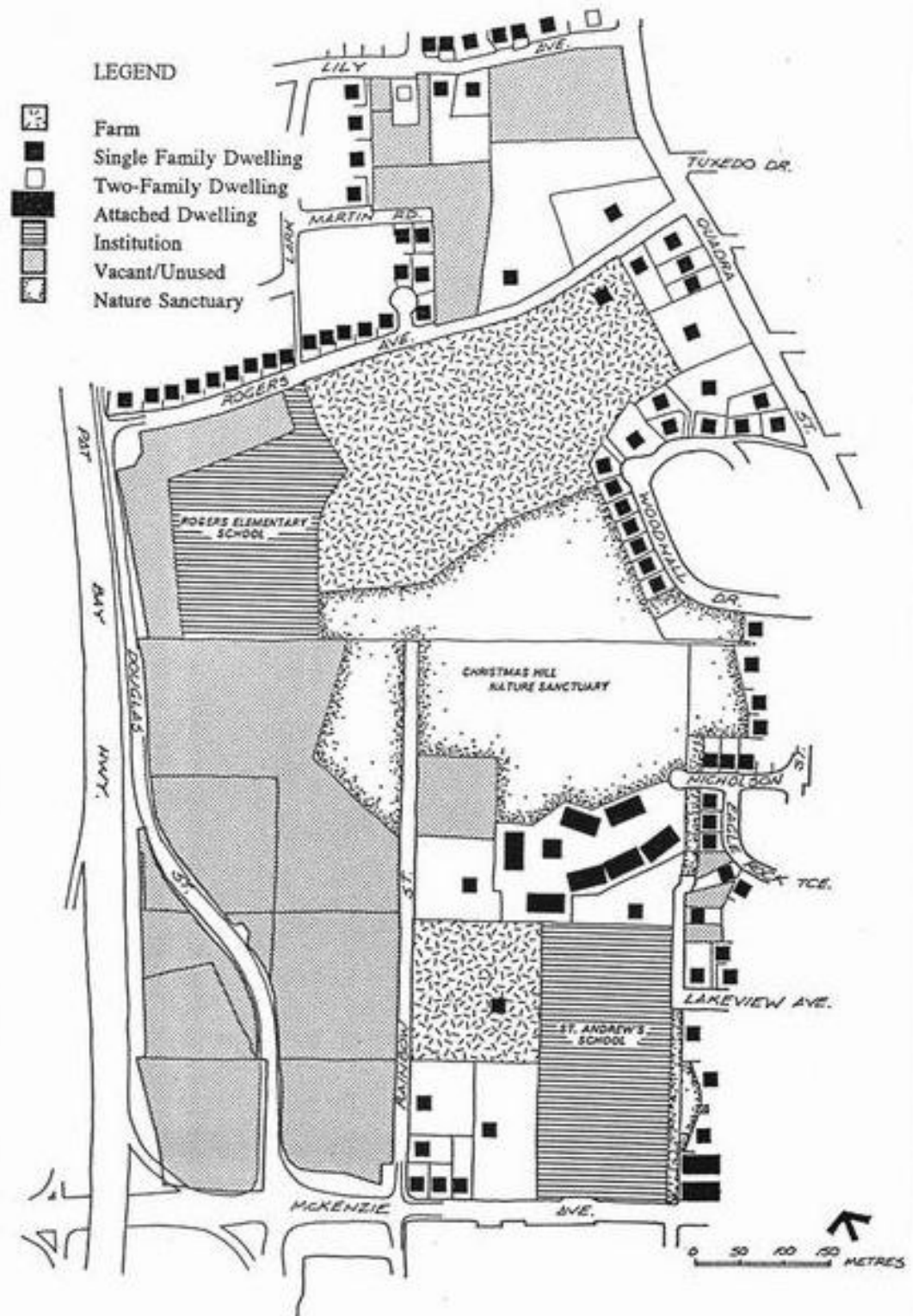


FIGURE 1
EXISTING LAND USE - January, 1995

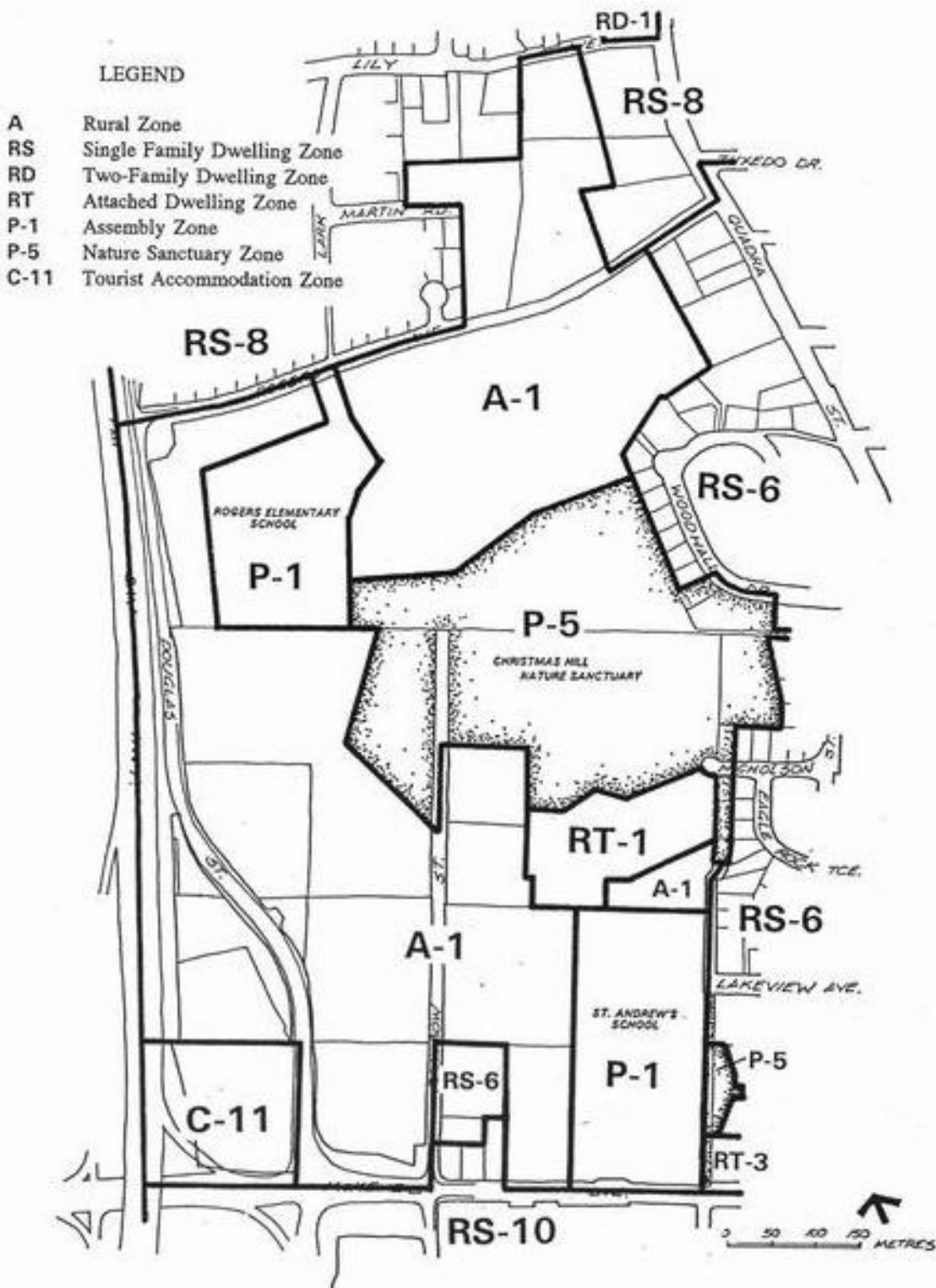


FIGURE 2
EXISTING ZONING - January, 1995

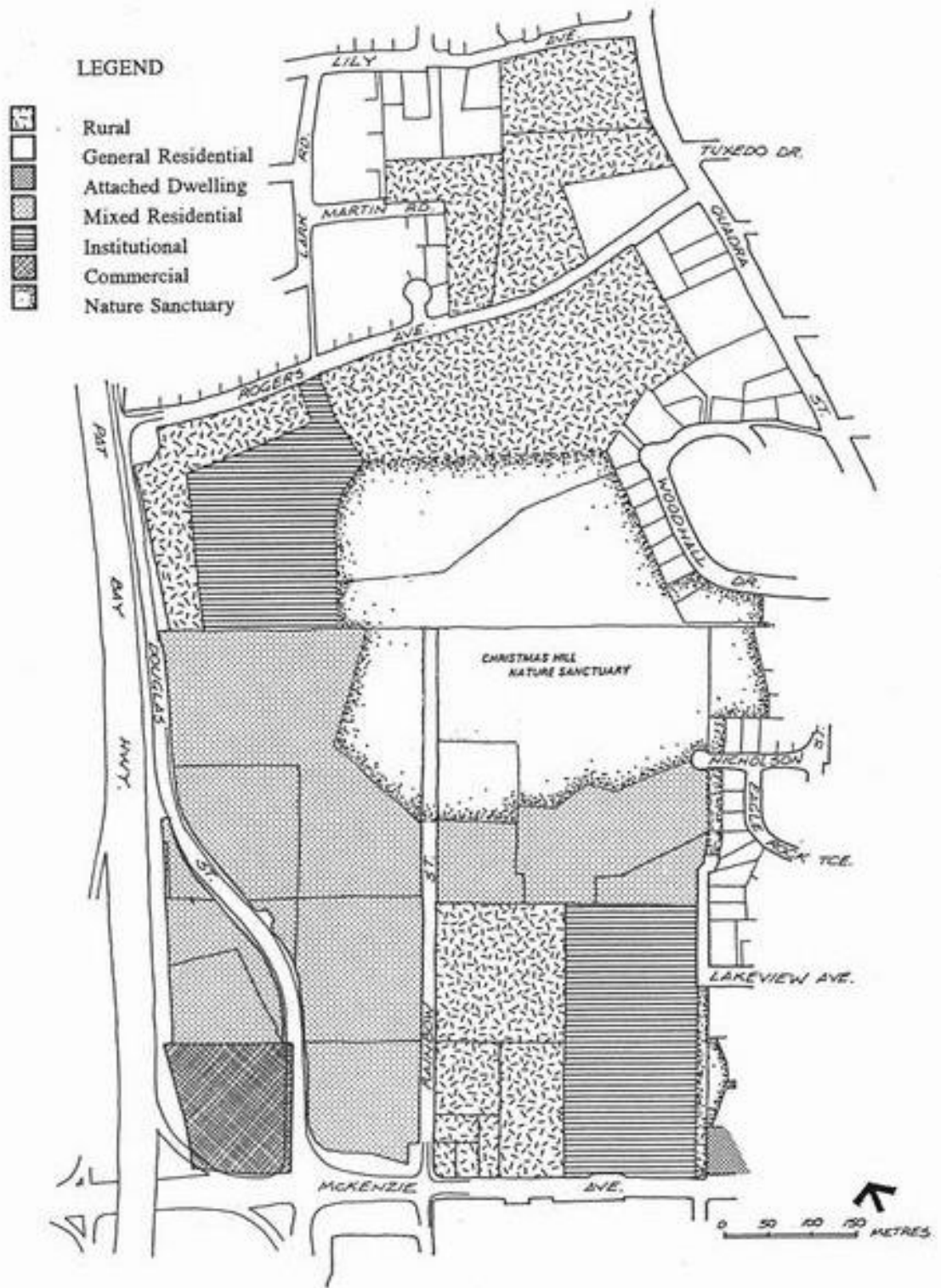


FIGURE 3
LOCAL AREA PLAN - LAND USE POLICIES

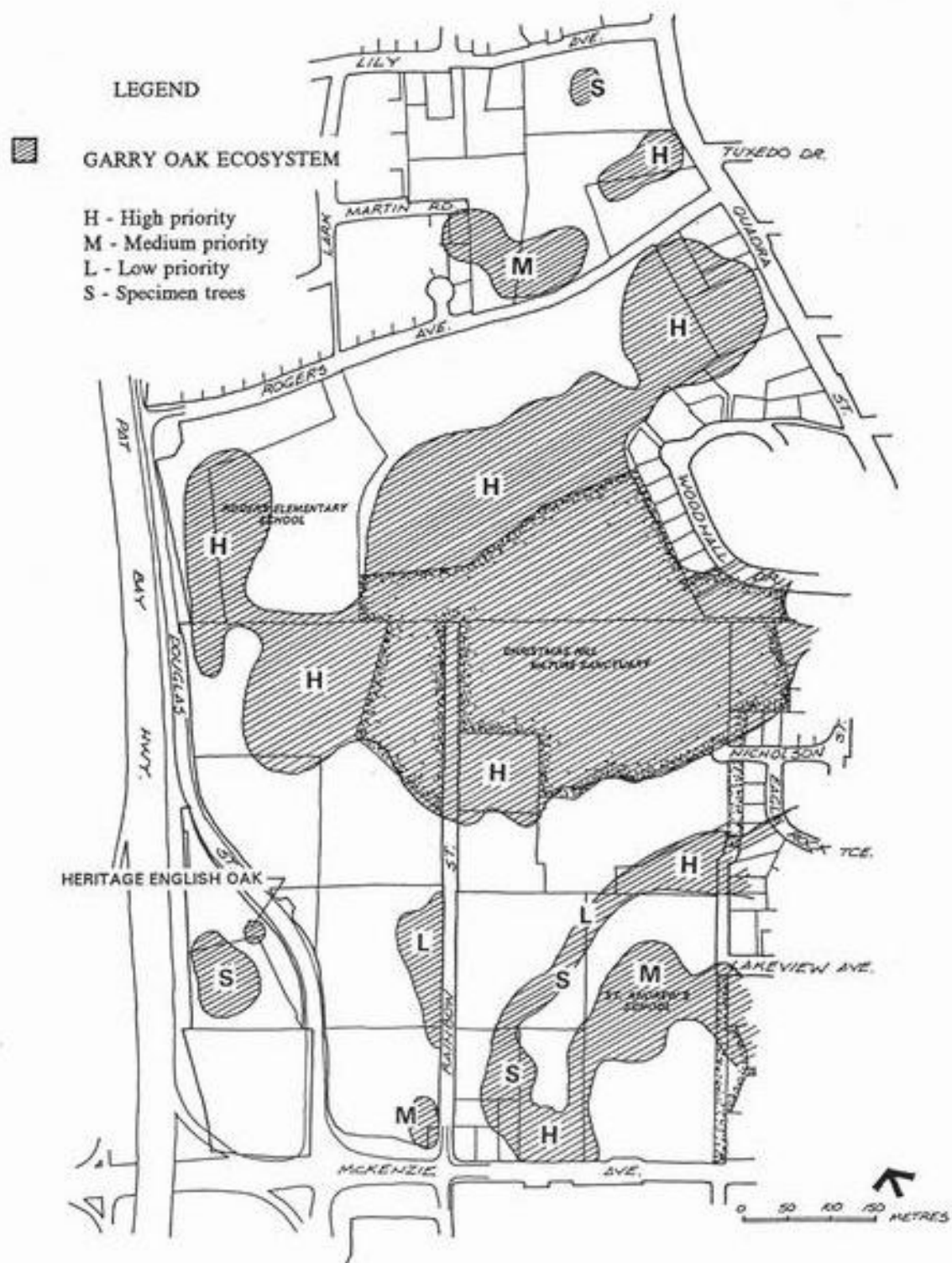


FIGURE 4
SITE ANALYSIS - VEGETATION

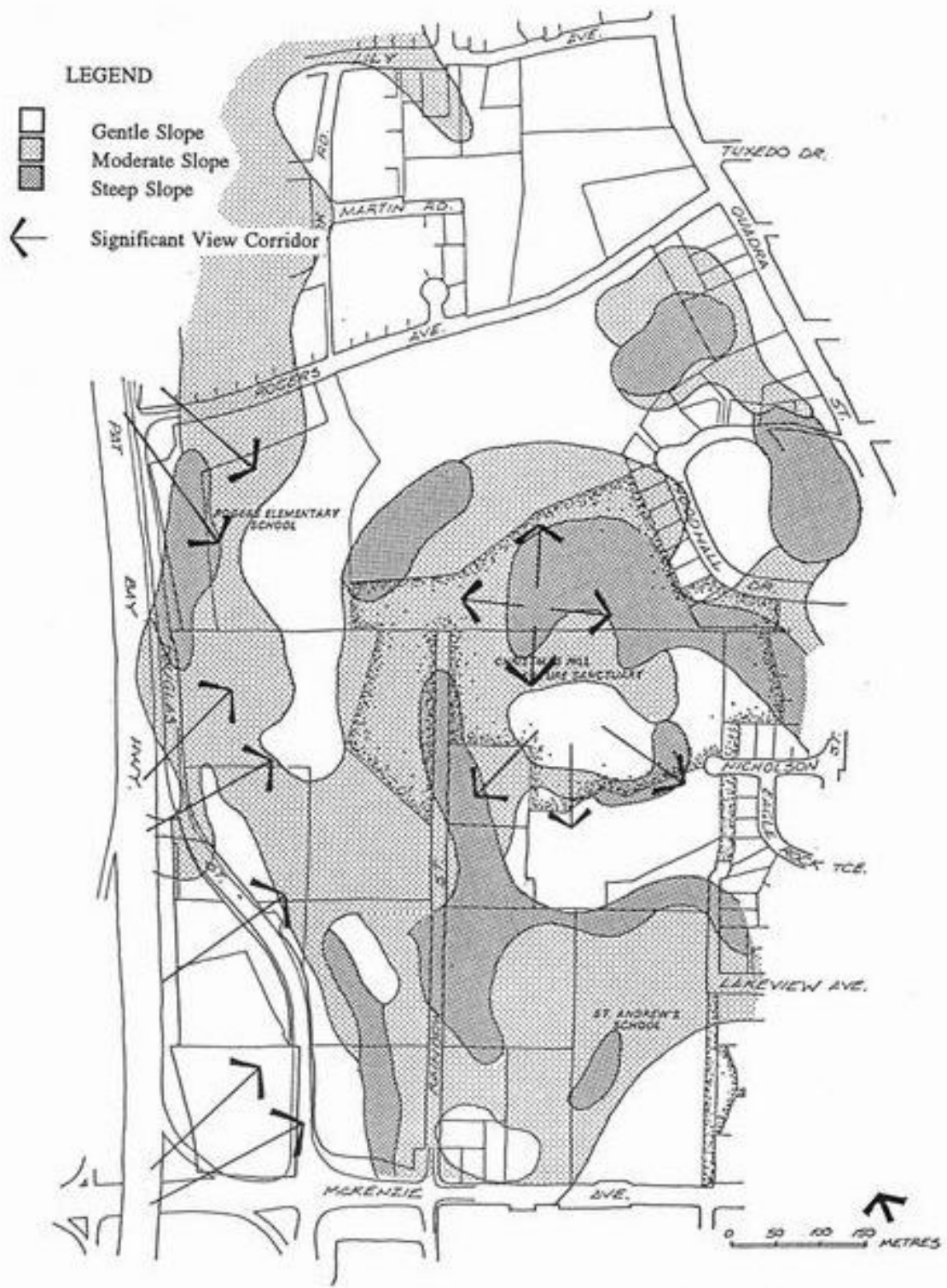


FIGURE 5
SITE ANALYSIS - TOPOGRAPHY and VIEWS

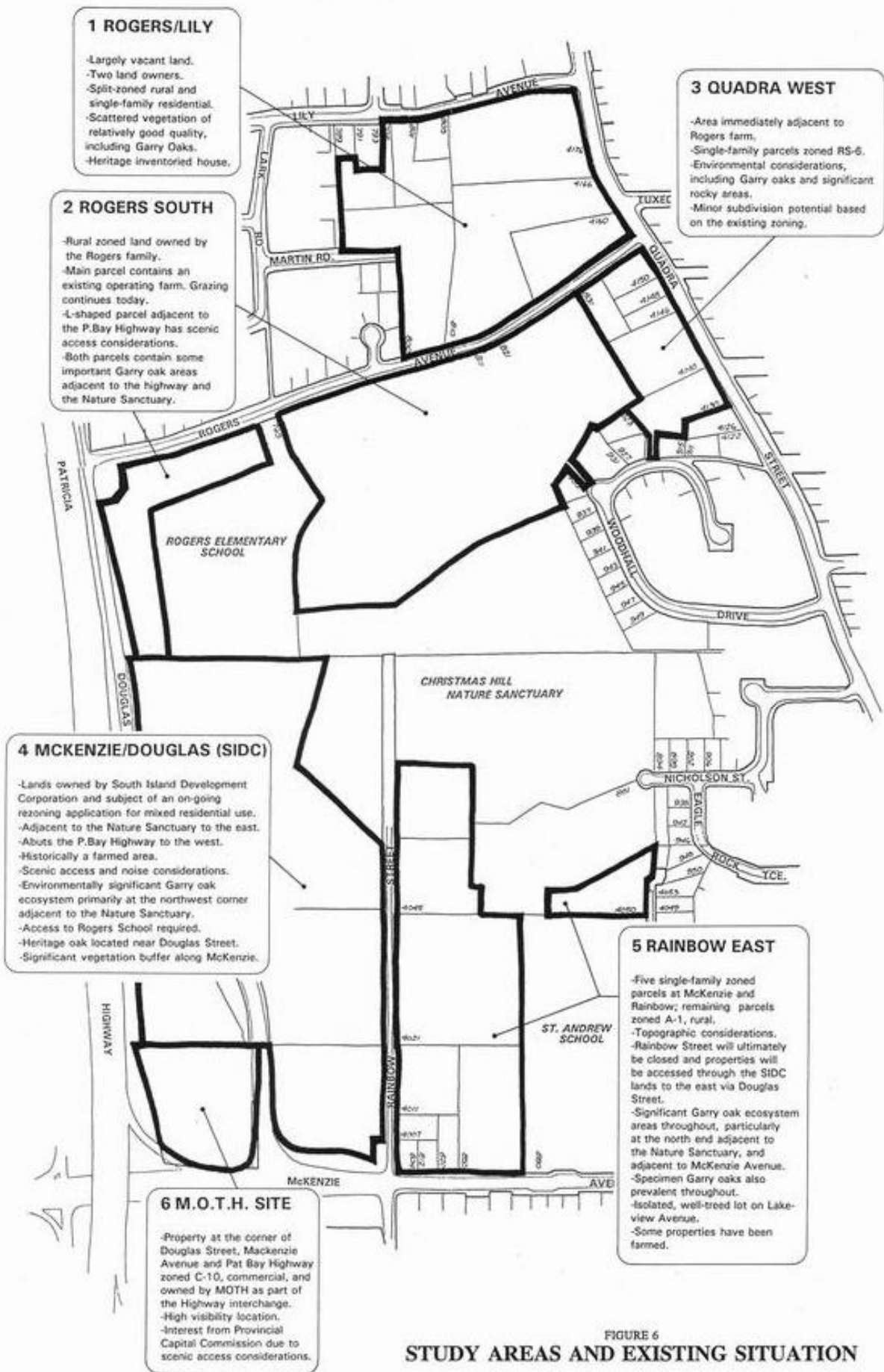
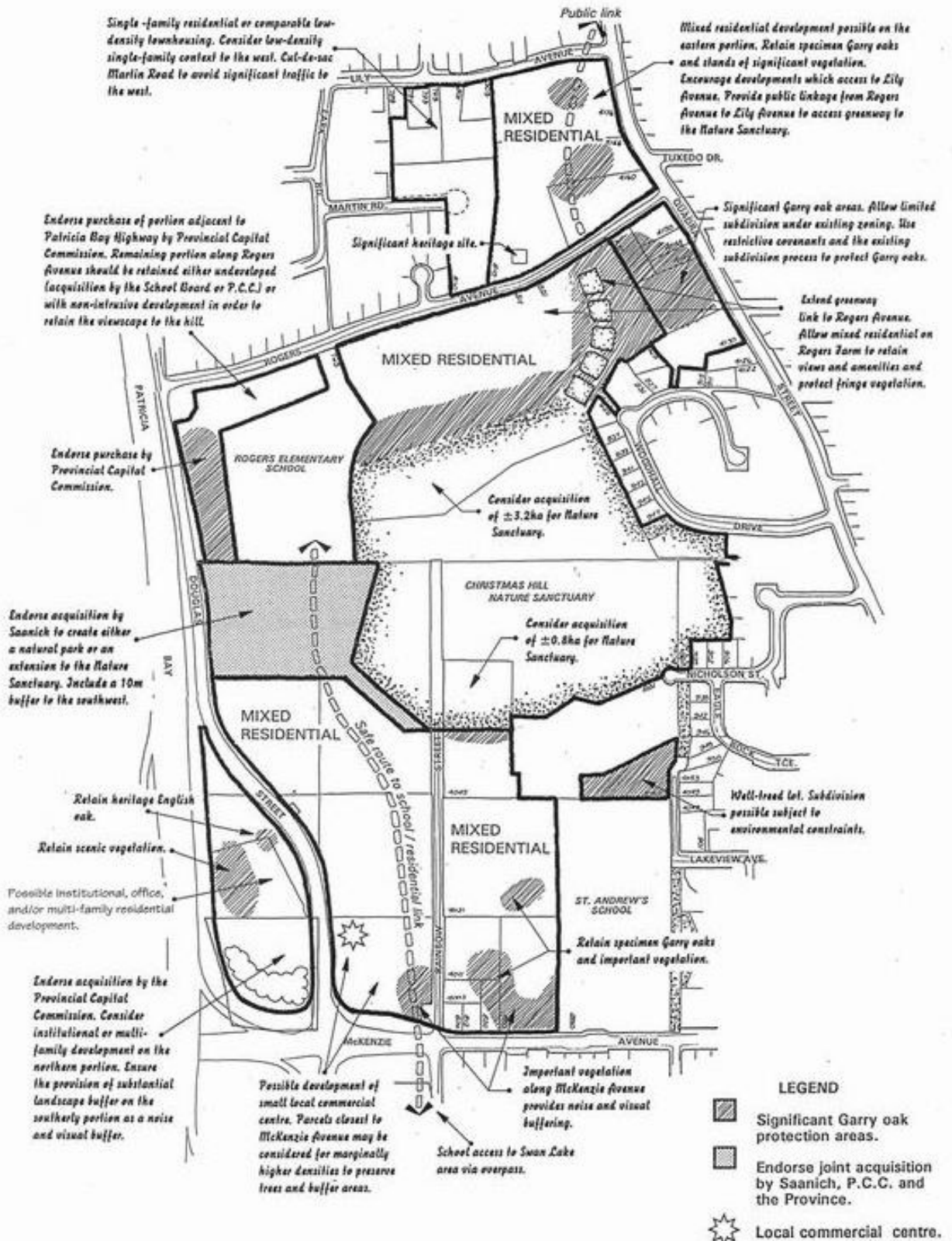


FIGURE 6
STUDY AREAS AND EXISTING SITUATION

CONCEPT

FIGURE 7



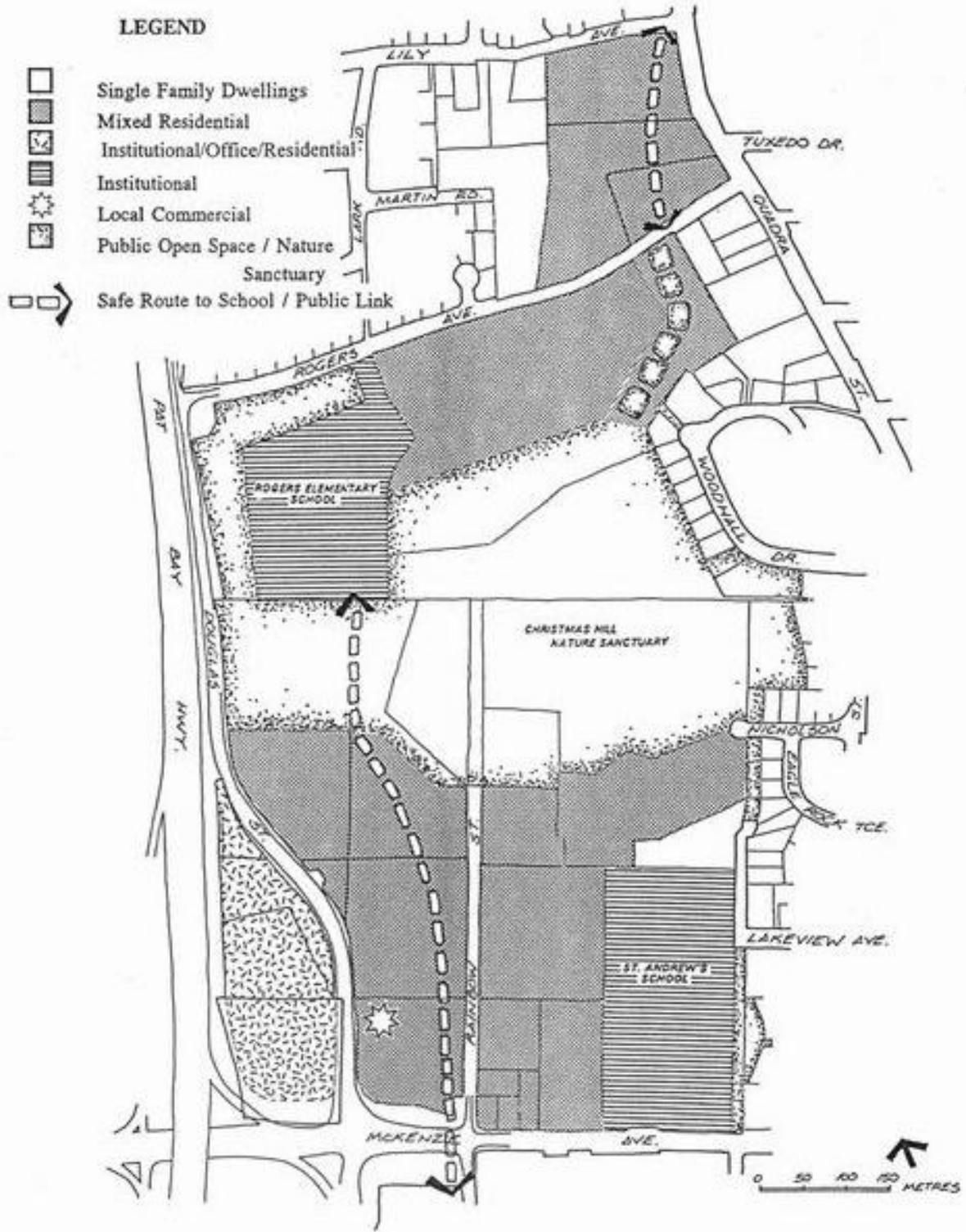


FIGURE 8
PROPOSED LAND USE

TABLE 1
COMPARISON OF CONCEPT TO GUIDELINES

CRITERIA	CONCEPT PLAN
1 Preserve Garry oak ecosystems and maintain rocky character and other environmentally significant features.	Garry oak ecosystem areas have been identified and ranked in terms of significance, based on quality of vegetation and ecosystem, size, overall environmental and aesthetic value, connectedness to other ecosystems, etc. This information was used to designate three levels of action: 1) acquire and preserve outright; 2) designate for protection within private lands through the use of Development Permit Guidelines and Restrictive Covenants; or 3) Allow development to occur. The Plan addresses the critical need to retain the Garry oak ecosystem by proposing substantial land acquisition, much of it containing Garry oak areas and other significant features.
2 Recognize viewscape potential.	Viewscape potential is generally defined as existing views and vistas to and from the hill, including scenic corridors from Patricia Bay Highway. Features identified as being visually significant include Garry oak areas, the top of the hill, rocky upland areas and the viewscape to Rogers School. The Plan has attempted to retain these through substantial land acquisition which includes large Garry oak areas, minimizing development in front of Rogers School, limiting subdivision along Quadra, and retaining large portions of Garry oak areas within developments. The limited view corridor from the P.Bay/ McKenzie intersection to the hill, while important, could not be retained without prohibiting nearly all development on the SIDC property. The partial loss of this view corridor is compensated by the retention of views further to the north.
3 Consider buffers.	The concept of buffering the nature sanctuary was identified as a possible measure to reduce the impact of new development in the long term. While the actual definition of a buffer is subject to debate, the concept has merit. Nevertheless, it is clear that buffer areas must be included <u>within</u> the Nature Sanctuary to avoid the incremental expansion of the same and to ensure the costs of providing buffers are equally distributed and not borne solely by the adjacent properties. The Concept Plan includes substantial land acquisition, including land along Douglas Street, which essentially forms a buffer area. A 10 m buffer strip is proposed along the southwest boundary of the Nature Sanctuary. Design controls along the fringe of the Sanctuary also support the buffer concept.
4 Preserve hilltops and high ground locations.	The only significant high-ground location identified is near the intersection of Rogers Avenue and Quadra Street on private property. The land forms part of the belt of Garry Oak ecosystem that continues westward and links up the the Nature Sanctuary. The Plan designates properties fronting on Quadra as having potential for limited development, but subject to design control, to ensure preservation where possible. A large portion of the rocky outcrop on the Rogers Farm property is designated for acquisition.

CRITERIA

CONCEPT PLAN

5	<p>Preserve Greenways.</p>	<p>The concept of a Greenway, as put forward by the Provincial Capital Commission (PCC), involves the acquisition or preservation of "green" linkages towards a network of aesthetically and environmentally significant spaces and corridors. Such a corridor could extend through both public and private space, and may allow public access or could simply preserve land in an undeveloped state to provide a scenic corridor. The Colquitz Linear Park is an example of a Greenway. The Plan addresses the issue by proposing land acquisition to the north, south and west of the Sanctuary, thereby augmenting the connections to the surrounding area. The configuration of the proposed acquisition along Rogers Avenue reflects an attempt to provide a direct link to lands to the north. Further acquisition proposed along Pat Bay Highway by the PCC also represents a Greenway extension.</p>
6	<p>Secure additional open space.</p>	<p>The Concept Plan supports acquisition of 9.5 ha of open space around Christmas Hill. This includes 4 ha of additional Nature Sanctuary land; 2.5 ha to be acquired jointly between Saanich, the PCC and the Province which may be designated not as part of the Nature Sanctuary but as a natural park; and additional property at Rogers Avenue and Douglas Street and at the corner of Douglas, McKenzie and Pat Bay Highway which is supported for acquisition by the PCC.</p>
7	<p>Protect heritage resources and landscapes.</p>	<p>The protection of heritage resources is considered as a key goal. Heritage resources are defined as both structures of heritage significance and landscapes such as the Garry oak meadow or Rogers farm which define the historical context of the area. The Concept Plan addresses the issue of heritage through the protection of Garry oak areas. The protection of Rogers farm as a heritage landscape is not recommended in favour of preservation of adjacent natural areas. The protection of heritage inventoried structures, such as the Hutchison house, will be considered by the Heritage Advisory and Archival Committee at the development stage.</p>
8	<p>Acknowledge the potential for development.</p>	<p>A basic issue which emerged from the Advisory Group analysis was the potential for development. It is recognized that pressure for development will increase, and although the final decision on whether to allow development rests with Council, some development is likely to take place, even if it means limited subdivision under the current rural zoning. It is unreasonable to expect retention of the slopes area in an undeveloped manner given the limited resources for land acquisition. The optimal solution as proposed by the Plan is to establish acquisition priorities and allow limited, appropriate, and controlled development on the remaining land. This will ensure protection of important resources and recognize the value of developable land in the area.</p>

CRITERIA

CONCEPT PLAN

9	Recognize the need for housing.	The local and regional demand for housing are considered to be factors which should have bearing on the land use strategy for the area. However, new housing should be consistent with the neighborhood in terms of form and density. If development is to occur, residential development is considered a reasonable land use.
10	Consider housing that is innovative/ high density and preserves open space.	Hand in hand with the idea that housing is an appropriate use in the Slopes area is the notion that development must preserve important amenities and be innovative. Numerous housing development options were examined, keeping in mind that development must also be consistent with the general low-density character of the area. The Concept Plan proposes substantial land acquisition and development forms that enable some open space to be provided within developments. A basic assumption is that, in general, mixed, low-medium density residential development (cluster housing, townhousing, small lot subdivision) is a favourable alternative to the conventional subdivision. A base density of 12 units per ha (gross; equivalent to RS-6) has been established throughout the hill, however, this may be increased to 18 upha in specific locations provided amenities are provided. This density range for mixed housing will enable clustering of units, preservation of view corridors and other amenities, such as important vegetation adjacent to the Nature Sanctuary, and allow design control which is not possible under a single-family subdivision. On the south side of the hill, a graduation of density is proposed, with a potential for higher densities near McKenzie Avenue and the lowest adjacent to the Nature Sanctuary. Consideration may be given to developments that exceed the prescribed density range only along McKenzie, where they would preserve important vegetation areas and are sympathetic to the area. On the north, the plan advocates a uniform density on the Rogers South and Rogers/Lily areas, with an even lower density required along the westerly edge of Rogers/Lily to match the existing single-family development. Lots fronting Quadra south of Rogers and the well-treed parcel on Lakeview Avenue are considered significant in terms of environmental value; development here should be limited and occur only subject to environmental controls under the existing development process.
11	Consider compatible institutional/ commercial development.	There are few locations within the Slopes area where institutional or commercial development would be compatible with the neighbourhood. In fact, these are supported only in the form of a small local convenience centre within the SIDC development and a church site in the triangle-shaped parcel at McKenzie/Douglas.

CRITERIA	CONCEPT PLAN
12 Traffic and safety is critical.	A central issue related to land use change is the overall traffic generated by new development and the cumulative impact on safety. The Concept Plan is based on several assumptions: 1) Douglas Street has the capacity to adequately handle new development on the SIDC property and the Rainbow East area; 2) Development of a road from Rogers to Lily through the Hutchison Lands may be desirable to direct new traffic from the Rogers area to the traffic light at Lily and Quadra, while impacting only three properties on the north side of Lily; Alternatively, developments in the Rogers/Lily area may be designed to direct a portion of traffic to Lily in order to reduce traffic demands on Rogers Avenue; 3) Overall density designations are low enough to preclude significant transportation impacts beyond what could be generated by single-family development. Despite this, it is important that traffic issues be monitored closely as development occurs to ensure impacts to the neighborhood are minimized.
13 Interlinking of vehicular traffic is not supported.	The Concept Plan does not designate interlinking of new development within an existing neighborhood, although a continuation of subdivision development on Martin Road is possible. Overall, there is no direct intrusion into a developed area.
14 Bicycle and pedestrian paths are supported.	The establishment of pedestrian paths is considered easier when dealing with multi-family projects rather than individual property owners. The acquisition of substantial open space in the Plan enables pedestrian linkages to be established throughout the area. Bikeways are proposed for Douglas Street and designation of future bikeways may be considered if warranted. Public linkages are proposed through the Rogers/Lily area and through the SIDC property.
15 Provide access to school property.	Establishment of a safe access route to Rogers School was identified as a priority by the School and parents in the area. The Concept Plan envisions a route through the park adjacent to the Nature Sanctuary, although this would be subject to approval from the School. While it is recognized that there are concerns about the safety aspect of walking through a park, an effort would be made to ensure the safest route possible. Access from the north would not change. Given the School's concerns, it is unlikely that any land use option would be optimal without jeopardizing the proposed land acquisition adjacent to the school.