



5.3 PARKS, OPEN SPACES, TRAILS & GREENWAYS



Richmond's farming heritage



Minoru Park

ISSUE:

A Garden City Legacy

Richmond is known as the Garden City owing to its agricultural heritage. Natural environmental resources have helped to reinforce that image and, in a broader sense, so have our waterfront amenities. As parts of the City become more urban, it is increasingly important to maintain and preserve these valued attributes of Richmond's Garden City character. Richmond can also build on that legacy to create a "park-like city" by strengthening its parks, open spaces, trails, and greenways system with complementary and innovative strategies which extend the look, use, and enjoyment of park-like amenities beyond the system to all parts of the City.

Parks and Open Spaces

Richmond's park network targets three distinct groups: the neighbourhood, the community and the city-wide user. This basic park hierarchy has worked well in a mainly single-family community. However, new and different initiatives are needed to respond to the emerging needs of a diverse and growing urban community, to higher land costs, and to differing user demands.

Trails and Greenways

Trails and greenways play a key role in the open space network by providing recreational benefits, and by connecting and beautifying open spaces, as well as other parts of the City. These linkages will continue to grow in importance. As the population ages, the desire for more passive recreation, such as walking, will increase. Trails and greenways are a strategic investment, increasing the usability of existing open space and natural resources. Greenways are also an environmentally friendly transportation alternative.

OBJECTIVE 1:

Build on Richmond's Garden City legacy to achieve a "park-like city" by making strategic use of natural amenities and landscape resources, and by fostering civic pride and partnership.

POLICIES:

- a) Take advantage of Richmond's extensive shoreline by:
 - Completing a continuous waterfront trail which balances public amenity with industry needs;
 - Connecting the waterfront trail to key destinations;



Waterfront trail



Salmon Festival

Richmond's cultural traditions include the salmon festival and cranberry harvests. Additional farming festivals, such as cooking contests, and dinners prepared by prominent chefs using local produce, coinciding with major harvests, would celebrate farming heritage.

- Combining and preserving view corridors along the trail;
 - Encouraging opportunities for public viewing of water-based industries, where compatible with existing industry needs and safety objectives;
- b) Celebrate the City's waterfront character; where appropriate, incorporate maritime design themes and complement existing heritage structures in parks and trails; develop complementary park programming, such as festivals, performances and other events;
 - c) Promote community gardens as an authentic way of reflecting Richmond's farming heritage, particularly in more urbanized areas;
 - d) Celebrate agricultural activity in partnership with local farming and business groups through festivals, contests, and other events;
 - e) Encourage public participation and civic pride in greening and beautifying the City, through initiatives such as the Garden Contest, the national Communities in Bloom contest, and Adopt-A-Park programs.

OBJECTIVE 2:

Maintain the natural base of Richmond's Garden City legacy by ensuring parks, open space, trails and greenways are created and maintained in an environmentally sustainable manner.

POLICIES:

- a) Demonstrate environmental stewardship by adopting environmentally-friendly park maintenance and development practices;
- b) Promote the retention of natural and unique features, such as trees and vegetation, in the development of parks and open spaces, where feasible and appropriate; where trees cannot be retained, encourage their relocation to another area;
- c) Enhance public awareness of Richmond's unique natural features, and provide opportunities for passive recreation, such as birdwatching and nature viewing; and provide related educational information, as appropriate.



OBJECTIVE 3:

Develop and maintain a high-quality open space system on the foundation of the existing park network hierarchy and standards, and continue to respond to changing user needs in innovative ways.

POLICIES:

Existing Hierarchy of Parks

- a) Establish and maintain city-wide parks that provide special facilities, promote unique landscape and cultural features, and act as major destinations for all Richmond residents and visitors, such as:
 - Accessible natural habitat areas, e.g. the Terra Nova Natural Area and North East Bog Forest;
 - A large athletic facility;
 - A series of riverfront parks and water-based recreational opportunities;
 - b) Work in partnership with specific interest groups and clubs to continue maintaining and creating special purpose parks and amenities that appeal to different cultural interests and age groups, e.g. the Scout / Guide camp, and a youth-oriented park, such as a skateboard park;
 - c) Continue to establish and maintain visible, accessible community parks which:
 - Provide a range of passive and active recreational opportunities;
 - Typically range in size from 12ha to 20ha (30 acres to 50 acres);
 - Are sited and designed for residents within a 10 to 20 minute walk (1.5km (0.9 miles) or less);
 - Are preferably associated with community centres, major high schools, or area destinations;
 - d) Provide green space for social and recreational use by individual neighbourhoods or even smaller local areas, ranging in size from 0.4ha to 12ha (1 to 30 acres) and sited within a 5 to 10 minute walk (0.5km (0.3 miles) or less) of neighbourhood residents;
- Adding to the Parks Hierarchy**
- e) Encourage development of urban plazas that create a focus for social gathering, celebrations, unique identity, urban relief, and tranquillity in areas such as the City Centre, or in special destinations, such as Steveston;

The present hierarchy of parks includes:

- *City-wide and specialized parks;*
- *Community Parks;*
- *Neighbourhood Parks.*



A neighbourhood park



An urban plaza

Park amenities can include such things as:

- *Sports fields;*
- *Children's play equipment;*
- *Park trails;*
- *Natural habitat areas;*
- *Formal gardens.*



Responding to changing needs

- f) Encourage creation of privately-owned publicly-accessible (POPA) open spaces through the development process in the form of urban plazas, walkways, or small parks; ensure these parks are accessible and designed in a manner that makes them easily identified as part of the public realm; integrate these spaces, where possible, into the open space network, through connecting trails and other measures;
- g) Review the inventory of city-owned lands to identify opportunities for incorporation of leftover parcels, such as road ends, into the open space network, where feasible;

Adjusting Park Design to Respond to Changing Needs

- h) Adapt to changing park user needs, through regular reviews of the existing parks inventory to identify and adjust uses and types of park amenities which do not fit adjacent and surrounding uses or emerging demographic patterns;
 - i) Provide for parks with unique character to help strengthen the identity of the surrounding community while providing for a greater range of experiences, through such measures as:
 - Building on existing unique landscape features, or creating new ones;
 - Providing seasonal interest through choice of plant material or amenities, such as water-play features;
 - Use of materials, textures, colours, site furniture, and public art that reflects or integrates with the surrounding area, in terms of its history, its current status, and its future;
 - Appropriate signage to locate and identify park spaces;
 - j) Enhance safety and a sense of security without compromising user needs or comfort, through appropriate park design.

OBJECTIVE 4:

Strengthen the network of trails and greenways, using innovative approaches to provide improved linkages to key destinations and between components of the network itself.

POLICIES:

- a) Develop a strategic approach for the acquisition of new trails and greenways:
 - Integrate off-road trails with cycling routes, greenways, and existing park walkways where feasible and as opportunities arise;



Sharing trails with bikes

- Investigate the feasibility of adapting existing linear corridors for trail use, e.g. drainage corridors, subdivision walkways and fire lanes, hydro corridors, and unused road rights-of-way;
 - Bridge gaps within the existing trails network through partnerships and other measures, e.g. shared access agreements, supplying alternative routes, and trail dedication through the development process;
- b) Enhance connections with other municipalities and between communities within Richmond:
- Facilitate east-west connections within Richmond by providing safe opportunities for non-vehicular users to cross Highway 99;
 - Provide corridors for trails, greenways or connecting routes along strategic north-south alignments, such as Railway Avenue, Shell Road, No. 7 Road, Boundary Road, and other locations as appropriate;
 - Integrate Richmond’s trail system with those of adjacent municipalities and jurisdictions, such as the trails developed by the Airport Authority on Sea Island, and New Westminster’s trail system in Queensborough;
- c) Establish greenways as special multi-purpose corridors in more urbanized areas, such as the City Centre and Steveston; greenways may be developed on a combination of public lands and rights-of-way, or on private lands that are publicly accessible;
- d) Develop the dyke trail system as a loop around Lulu Island, taking into account the needs of industry, and the opportunity to protect and provide educational information about environmentally sensitive areas.



Greenways introduce nature into urban areas

OBJECTIVE 5:

Design and develop trails and greenways to accommodate multiple users and enhance the appearance of adjacent areas.

POLICIES:

- a) Minimize user conflicts on trails by developing appropriate standards for widths and surface materials and, where appropriate, provide alternative trail opportunities for specific users;



Greenways are like linear parks

- b) Recognize the special role of greenways in defining community character; create special standards for greenways to provide for easy identification of routes, appropriate landscaping, complementarity with adjacent land uses and design themes, as well as ease of use by pedestrians, wheelchair/scooter users, and cyclists.