Summary

This working paper is the first in a series of background papers for developing Richmond's Industrial Strategy. This summary covers: current and future prospects for specific industries; facilities and locational needs; local City services; and next steps in developing the Richmond Industrial Strategy.

Current and Future Prospects for Specific Industries

The City of Richmond's industrial base is strong and has tremendous potential for future growth. The analysis contained in this working paper has identified key issues and opportunities for the City to address in assisting industry to remain a dynamic economic engine.

At present, Richmond's industrial employment is still concentrated in the traditional activities of wholesale / distribution and traditional manufacturing. Other key activities include industrial services (welding, auto repair, etc), high technology, and business services.

Overall, local industries are optimistic about their future prospects, particularly in the high technology and business services areas. The outlook for wholesale and traditional manufacturing varies according to the type of specialisation within the sector. While film is not a significant Richmond activity, its growth prospects are also strong, and the City should seek to enhance its presence locally.

Most industrial firms (65%) expect to remain in Richmond over the next five years, and of those planning on moving, most are doing so to expand operations and most (61%) hope to stay in Richmond.

The City should anticipate the continued presence of its existing industrial specialisations; recognise the importance of waterfront industry; and boost its efforts to attract the film industry. Some specific issues and opportunities exist in ensuring a continued presence for these sectors (described in the body of the report, and summarised in Attachment 8).

Facilities and Locations Desired by Industry

This information helps the City anticipate the types, sizes and amenities of new development which will most benefit desire industry.

Most industrial businesses have small staff sizes and facilities, and rent instead of own. Therefore, it will be important to ensure availability of spaces within larger completed buildings with flexible leasing terms.

This will be challenging given Richmond's high industrial land costs relative to other parts of the region.

As high technology and related light industry are particularly desired sectors, special efforts should be made to understand and meet their unique requirements, some of which include: flexible space; good transportation access; inexpensive land for those operations which include more manufacturing activities; hotel facilities nearby; and the availability of recreational and open space opportunities, along with affordable housing.

Local services the City Can Help Provide

In addition to ensuring opportunities for appropriate land and building to house industry, the City also has a role to play in providing key services to industry.

Based on survey responses, transportation is of great importance to local industries, with half of those commenting on City services requesting transportation enhancements. Specific concerns relate to road / highway access and public transit. An overwhelming majority (92%) have some reliance on truck / car transportation for goods/service provision and, while most employees still travel to work by car, there is an increasing recognition of the need to provide enhanced transit service to industrial areas, both from within Richmond and points outside the city.

Other areas of concern identified by businesses include crime prevention, taxes and fees, ditch in-fill, and good customer service. Efforts will be made to address these and other major service concerns through various work programs and operations.

Next Steps

Issues and opportunities from this and other papers in the Industrial Working Paper series will be combined to form the basis for Richmond’s Industrial Strategy. An interim progress report will be presented to the Planning Committee of Council in late July, 1999; and a more detailed final report will be presented in the Fall of 1999. Implementation of endorsed recommendations will continue through 2001.