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STARTS
HERE**

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HISTORY

The history of Garden City Lands has been influenced by changes in Richmond as an evolving city. The existing landscape is the result of both human activities and natural processes. Overtime the stories and memories of the land can quickly get lost.

The following is a brief history of some of the key events and milestones that have shaped the Lands and have influenced the development of the vision and concept plan for the site. A more complete history is outlined in the Garden City Lands Heritage Study July 2013.

Richmond as we know it is geologically young. The islands that make up Richmond formed after the retreat of the glaciers around 10,000 years ago. The first ancestors of the Musqueam Indian Band likely arrived here soon after to fish, hunt and harvest. The Lands are located within the Musqueam Indian Band's traditional territory, however, there are no First Nations archaeological features known to exist on the land.

The first recorded description was in 1859, when Joseph Trutch, the Royal Engineer responsible for surveying all of Richmond, wrote:

"...fine growth of red-top grass of the best quality, especially along the west boundary, and by the patch of willows in the centre of the block. The southeast portion is a cranberry swamp with low pine bush mostly deadened by fire".

In 1903, the Government of Canada acquired the Lands and became the single owner for over 100 years until 2010 when the City purchased the property.

The Vancouver Rifle Range was established on Garden City Lands in 1904 and operated until 1928. It was used recreationally and for tournaments. The land was cleared, drained and structures put in place to support the Rifle Range. During World War 1, Canadian soldiers used the range for training.



Pavillion 1905-1914. City of Richmond Archives

In the 1930's and 1940's, there were many peat fires of long duration recorded on the land. In an effort to manage and prevent the fires the Lands were mown and cleared. This management approach was continued through the following decades resulting in the landscape seen today.

From 1949-1994 communications and navigation towers were located on the land for Coast Guard purposes. Their concrete bases are still evident on the site.

In 1974, the Lands were included in the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR). This early provincial designation of the Lands strongly influences the development of the current vision and Legacy Landscape Plan.

For many years, the City has been interested in the recreational use of the lands. In 1986, Council established a Task Force to review the potential of a major sports complex on the Lands with the additional intent of hosting the 1993 Canada Games and the 1994 Commonwealth Games. In the end, the Games were held in another city.

When the Federal Government determined the Lands were surplus in 2001 a new era of negotiations and planning began. From 2005 to early 2009, the Musqueam Indian Band, the City and the Canada Lands Company worked together to share and jointly establish a plan for the site. Sixty-five acres of the site were to become a City park and open space.

A key condition, though, was the removal of the Lands from the ALR to allow for the proposed range of land uses. Two exclusion applications were made in 2006 and 2008 and were not supported by the Agricultural Land Commission.

Throughout that time there was an extensive public hearing process with many views heard by Richmond City Council. A number of community groups such as the Garden City Lands Coalition Society, Richmond Sports Council, Kwantlen Polytechnic University and the Food Security Society came forward with concept plans for alternative uses.

In 2010, Richmond City Council made a landmark decision to acquire all 136.5 acres of Garden City Lands for community use and the planning for the future legacy of the Lands began in 2012.



Participants in the international rifle match for the Walker Cup between the 6th Regiment, the Duke of Connaught's Own Rifles and National Guard of Washington 1907. City of Vancouver Archives



Communication Towers

1928

"It would be a pity to let it fall into private hands and ... hope to hear some day that Richmond has secured it." ~ J.S. Matthews

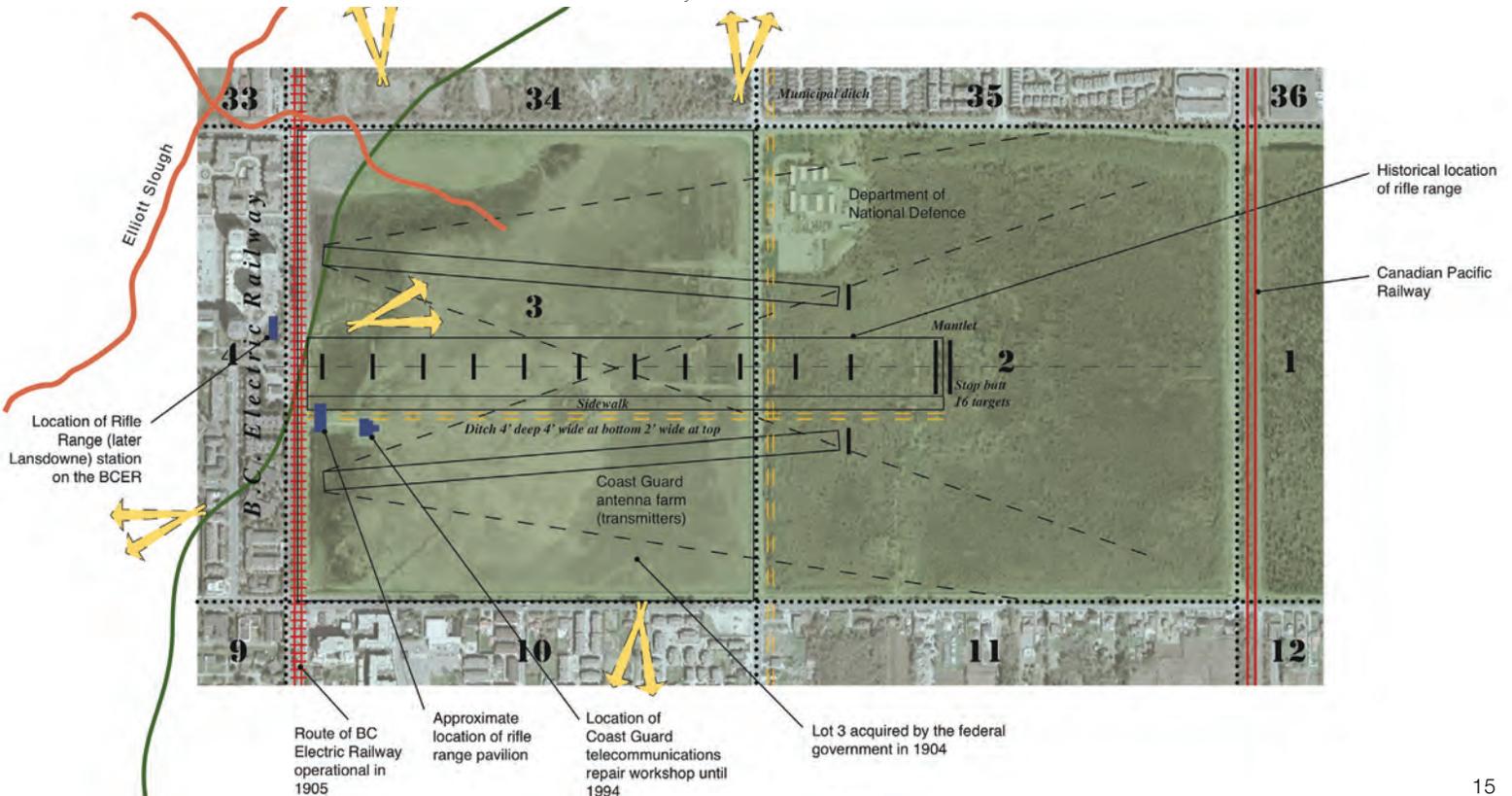
After 82 years, Major Matthews, later the Vancouver City Archivist and secretary of the Rifle Association, got his wish.



BCER Tram at Lansdowne and Garden City Road

CAREFUL CROSSING NO. 4 ROAD!

The rifle range on the Garden City Lands spanned 3.2 Km (2 miles) long and 0.8 km (0.5 miles) wide. Richmond City Council minutes in 1921 described a City Councilor's concern for pedestrians and vehicles being at risk from bullets crossing over No. 4 Road and Shell Road.



THE ENVIRONMENT

To some people the Garden City Lands may appear flat and seemingly vacant, however, a closer look reveals a web of complex ecological function and life. The subtle changes in the topography, the soil conditions, and 100 years of management have resulted in a unique and bio-diverse landscape.

In 2013, a biophysical inventory and analysis was undertaken to provide further understanding of the existing site conditions. The site ecology, soil profile, hydrology and agricultural capability were assessed in relationship to each other, the surrounding area, and potential land use scenarios. This work was undertaken through the winter, early spring and summer seasons of 2013.

All natural processes are complex and evolve over time. Further research and monitoring are required in order to establish long term management strategies. However, this preliminary overview provided a good foundation for identifying opportunities and challenges on the site.

EXISTING SOIL CONDITIONS



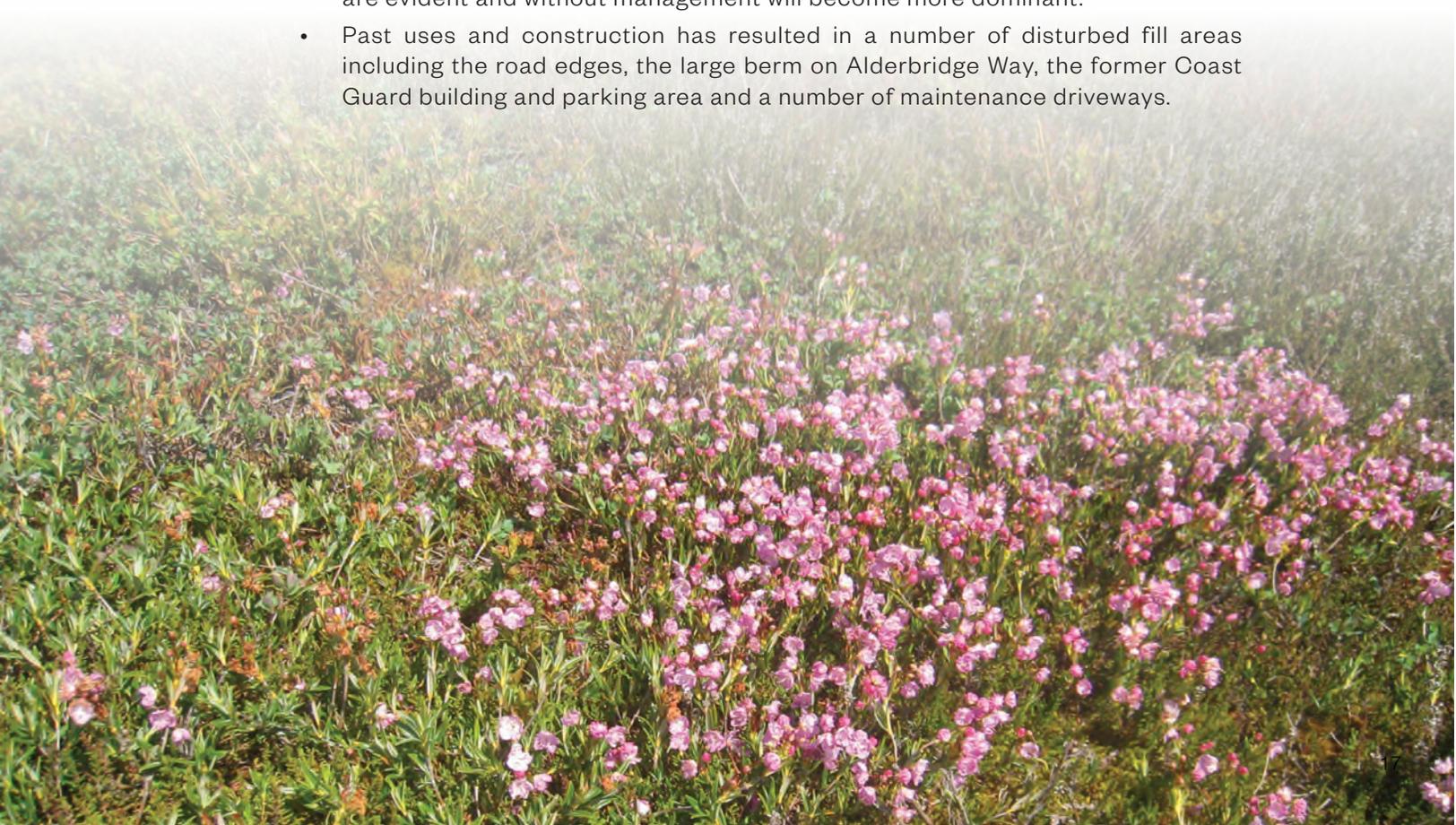
EXISTING PLANT ECOLOGY



EXISTING SITE CONDITIONS

The following is a summary of the key ecological and environmental features of the Lands. Further details can be found in the Garden City Lands Biophysical Inventory and Analysis July 24, 2013.

- Garden City Lands soil and vegetation patterns show that this was a transitional area between the pre-diking river tidal influences and the Greater Lulu Island peat bog area.
- The Lands contain the leading thin edge of a natural raised peat bog which once covered over 2000 acres.
- The bog peat in the Lands is 50-100 cm in depth and with its high acidity and unique hydrology supports plant and wildlife that are adapted to these specific conditions.
- Throughout the winter, the water is at or near the surface creating pooled water areas, specifically in the western half of the site. This is a result of the natural drainage patterns on the site and the higher surrounding road elevations that block movement of the water.
- The wetland areas provide nesting, perching, refuge, and foraging habitat for wildlife.
- Over the last 110 years, the Lands have been mown, cleared, and naturally and intentionally, set on fire which has slowed the natural succession to shrubs and trees evident on the adjacent Department of National Defence lands and Richmond Nature Park.
- The open site has a predominance of low-growing plants such as mosses, lichen, grasses, sedges, ferns, and small shrubs adapted to the bog environment.
- Invasive plants such as blackberry, reed canary grass and Japanese knotweed are evident and without management will become more dominant.
- Past uses and construction has resulted in a number of disturbed fill areas including the road edges, the large berm on Alderbridge Way, the former Coast Guard building and parking area and a number of maintenance driveways.



ECOLOGICAL NETWORK FUNCTION

The City promotes and supports an Ecological Network of natural areas that provide critical ecological services.

The eco-system services intrinsic to the raised peat bog and the wetlands include contributions to biodiversity, storing and filtering rain and storm water, sequestering and storing carbon from the atmosphere, and enriching the health and well-being of residents especially within the urban setting of City Centre.

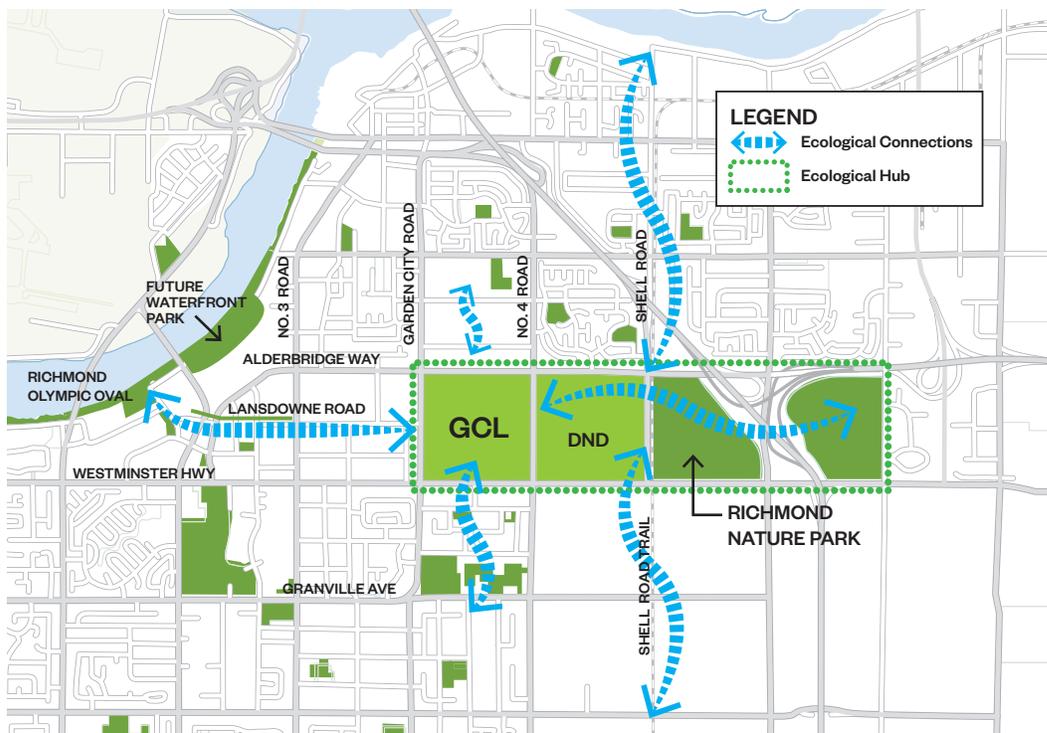
Bogs which are disappearing through land development have more recently become recognised for their environmental contribution as a carbon sink in helping to combat global climate change.

ECOLOGICAL CONNECTIONS

The east side of Garden City Lands has the greatest diversity of bog plants. The habitat value is also high due to the immediate connectivity to the naturalized Department of National Defence lands and Richmond Nature Park. Together these blocks of land create a significant 472 acre ecological hub within the City with Shell Road Trail providing eco-corridors to the north and south arm of Fraser river.

To the west, Lansdowne Road will be developed as a major pedestrian and ceremonial street with eco-service features that will connect Garden City Lands to the Oval and Fraser River Middle Arm.

To the south and north the Lands will link to a series of existing and future parks in the Alexandra and McLennan North areas.



KEY CONSIDERATIONS

The most important consideration in maintaining a healthy bog environment is the management of the sensitive water regime within the site. The bog relies on a high water table and as the site is developed with other uses this has the potential to impact the existing drainage patterns.

Active farming that may require management practices such as modifying the soil pH levels or adding nutrients, could impact the existing bog soil chemistry and associated plant communities. Buffering between the land uses will need to be carefully planned.

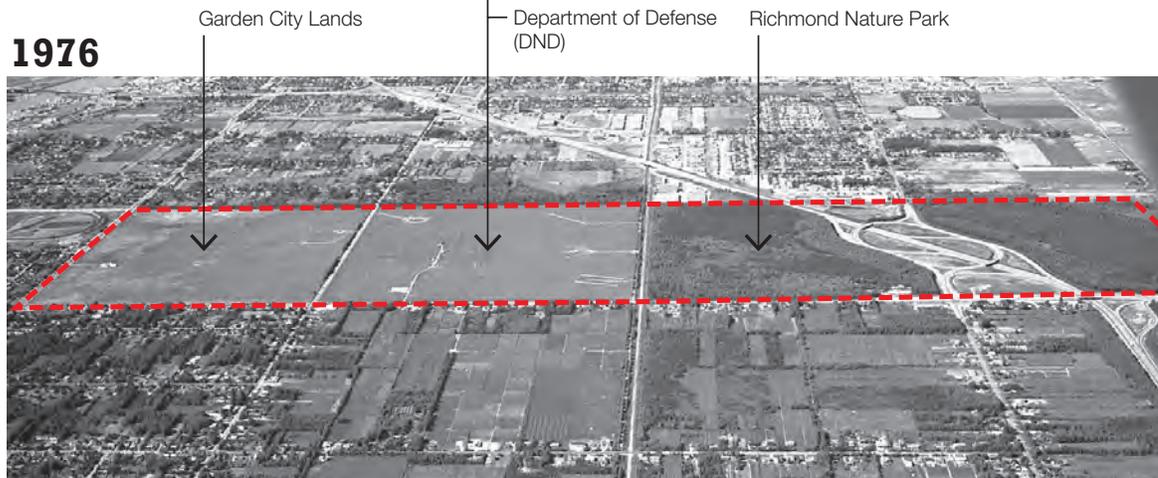
Garden City Lands has been a 'disturbed' site for over a hundred years. Management, in particular, mowing of the Lands has strongly influenced the openness of the site and the predominance of low growing plants. Continued mowing, as one type of management strategy, may be required to maintain many of these plant communities.

Impacts of climate change to the bog environment should be considered and monitored as the changing weather patterns may impact the site hydrology and vegetation over time.

PLANT SUCCESSION

In 1976, both Garden City Lands and the Department of Defense (DND) were actively managed and appeared to have similar landscapes. The Lands continued to be mowed whereas sections of the DND lands were largely left untouched.

In over 40 years natural succession on the DND lands has resulted in a dense wooded area of native and invasive species.



AGRICULTURE

The Garden City Lands are within the provincial Agricultural Land Reserve, a designation established in 1974 to protect British Columbia's supply of agricultural land. According to historic land records, there is no evidence that Garden City Lands has ever been actively farmed.

The City recognizes the importance of agriculture as a food source, an environmental resource, a heritage asset and an important contributor to the local economy. The Agricultural Land Commission has two key mandates: to protect the land supply and to promote active farming of the land. Richmond has established many policies within the 2041 Official Community Plan (OCP) to also protect agricultural land and increase farm viability.

Some of key objectives and policies within the 2041 OCP Section 7.0 Agriculture and Food that can be applied to Garden City Lands include:

- "Continue to protect the City's agricultural land base in the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR)
- Maintain the existing ALR boundary and do not support a loss of ALR land unless there is a substantial net benefit to agriculture and the agricultural community is consulted
- Increase public awareness of farming practises, farm products and support educational programs that provide information on agriculture and its importance to the local economy and local food systems
- Encourage environmentally sound agricultural practices
- Continue to seek out opportunities to collaborate with others to increase urban agriculture, the number of community gardens, edible landscapes and food-bearing trees
- Strengthen the local food system to contribute to the economic, ecological and social well being of the City
- Support locally grown food
- Increase access to affordable, healthy food for residents
- Develop an educational program to promote awareness around food production, health, and impacts on the community."

AGRO-ECOLOGY

Agro-ecology has many definitions, however, it is universally considered a multi-system or disciplinary approach to creating a truly sustainable food system. It applies ecological principles such as working within an existing landscape and its biodiversity. Some farmers have taken on the role of environmental stewardship as part of a sustainable farm practice. It also looks at the relationship between all aspects of food production, the consumer, and society.



AGRICULTURAL LAND RESERVE (ALR)

The ALR Act sets out land uses which are permitted in the ALR. In addition to farming (the cultivation of crops and animals), other types of land uses are permitted such as:

- Ecological reserves
- Passive recreation
- Open Parkland
- Horticulture and nurseries
- Education and Research
- Construction of buildings necessary for farming
- Storage and farm retail sales of agricultural products if they are produced on the farm on which the storage and sale is taking place
- Agri-tourism

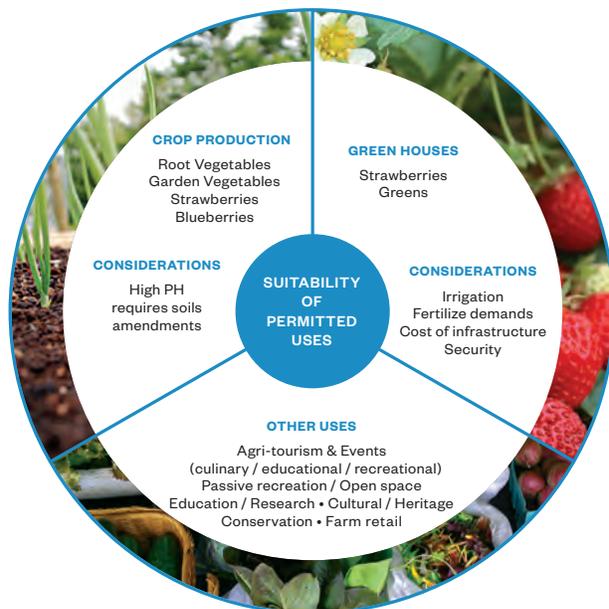
Permissible uses with the ALR have evolved over the years. For example, golf courses, once considered an acceptable use within the reserve, are now considered unacceptable. These uses continue to evolve subject to new rulings and direction from the Agricultural Land Commission, the provincially-appointed agency that oversees the land reserve.

AGRICULTURAL CAPABILITY

As part of the Garden City Lands Biophysical Inventory and Analysis study, an agricultural and soil assessment was conducted on-site with soil samples also sent to a laboratory to determine soil fertility for agricultural capability.

The Agriculture Capability rating system, a national standard used by the Agriculture Land Commission, was used to identify crop suitability and note challenges to the farming on the site. The soils are grouped into Seven (7) classes of which Class 1-4 are considered capable of sustained agricultural production of most crops.

The Garden City Lands soils were assessed to be Organic(O) Class 3 and Organic(O) Class 4 and with improvements could be higher at O Class 2 and O Class 3. All of GCL is therefore rated as high value for agriculture. This is aligned with the ratings provided by the Agricultural Land Commission in 2009.



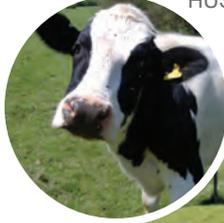
EXISTING USES IN THE ALR IN RICHMOND



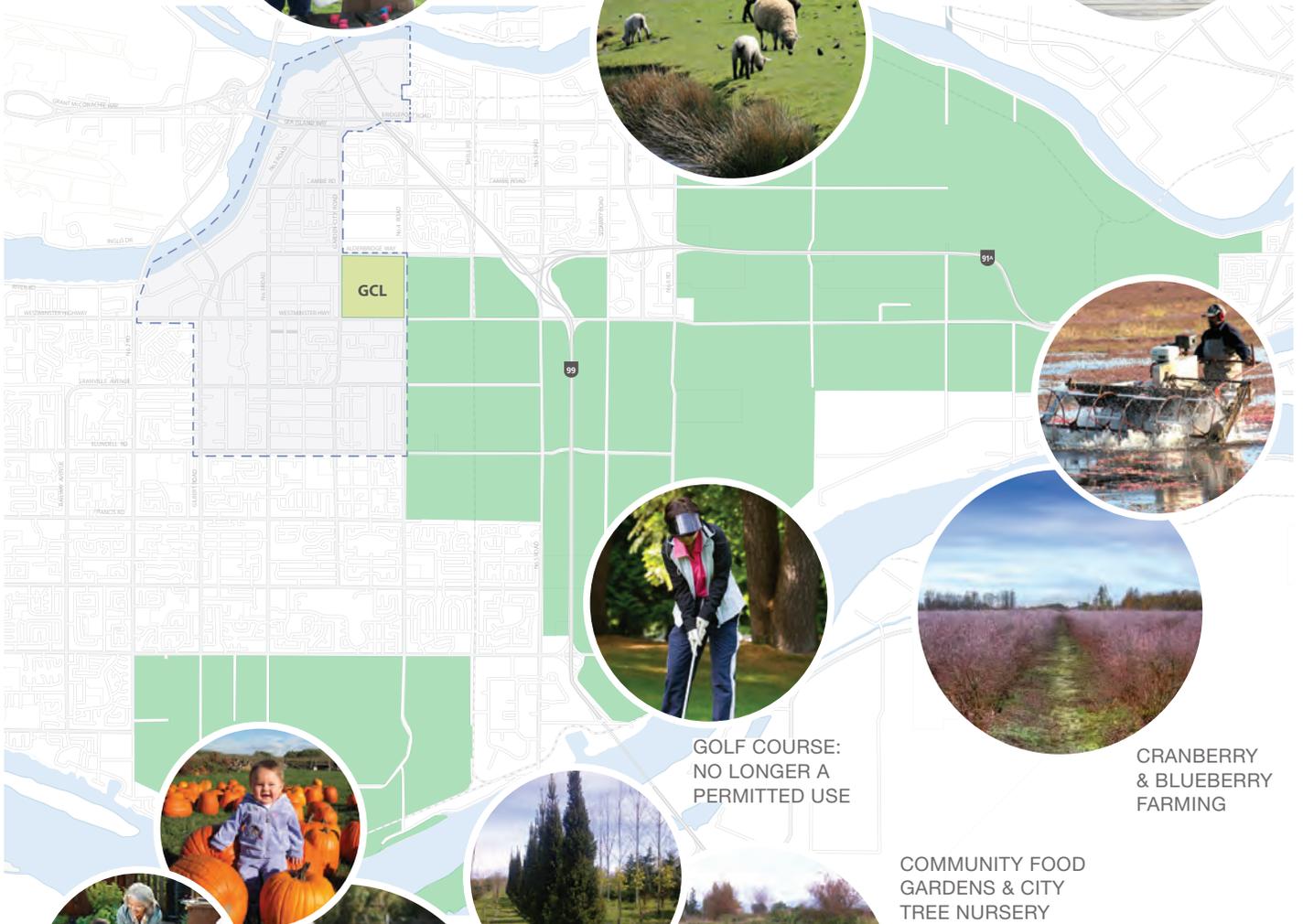
AGRI-TOURISM & EDUCATION



ANIMAL HUSBANDRY



NATURE PARK



CRANBERRY & BLUEBERRY FARMING



GOLF COURSE:
NO LONGER A PERMITTED USE



COMMUNITY FOOD GARDENS & CITY TREE NURSERY

LEGEND

- Agriculture Land Reserve
- City Centre Boundary

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

The Agricultural Capability rating system makes a number of assumptions such as water being available for irrigation and that it will be managed typically as a largely mechanized private system. The City Centre location and community ownership of Garden City Lands requires an innovative and creative way to look at agriculture.

The overall challenge will be how to make farming productive and sustainable on the Lands. Some of the key site challenges are:

- A high water table requiring drainage to bring water table below crop rooting depth
- The reverse need for water sources in the drier summer months for irrigation
- Quality of water e.g. unfiltered storm water can carry pollutants
- Cost of metered city water if required
- Cost of making improvements as there is no existing farm infrastructure
- Economic viability of farming given the lack of infrastructure
- Loss of peat soil over time as drainage and cultivation brings aeration resulting in faster decomposition of the organic material

Another impact of amending the soil and importing outside sources of water is the potential change in the unique and sensitive bog soil chemistry and nutrient levels which in turn will impact the existing bog plant communities. Also, metered water is not permitted to enter into the City's storm water system.

Determining what is suitable and viable for agriculture on these lands, balancing an active farm site with preserving natural features requires innovative and creative ways to look at agriculture.

The City owns a number of other sites at Terra Nova Rural Park, the Gilbert Road City Nursery site, and the Gardens (the former Fantasy Gardens) that currently or will soon support farming programs and partnerships. Consideration will need to be given to how Garden City Lands complement these other existing City lands and programs.

THE SURROUNDING COMMUNITY

Growth in the City Centre is booming. It has a strong business and employment base, convenient transportation access, rapid residential growth, waterfront setting, and proximity to natural areas.

Goals for the growth and development of the City Centre include:

- *Build a vibrant, healthy, and inclusive community;*
- *Build a “green” and sustainable downtown;*
- *Build economic vitality; and*
- *Build a proud legacy for today and future generations*

The Garden City Lands are uniquely located within the City. The Lands are in an area of transition between a rapidly growing urban environment on three sides and the large natural and agricultural area to the east.

It is highly visible being surrounded by four major arterial roads that bring thousands of people in and out of the city every day. On a typical Saturday afternoon, at peak travel time there are 20,000 cars per hour travelling through the four intersections surrounding the Lands.

This degree of openness and visibility to the Lands is unique in Richmond's open space system. Other extremely popular city-wide parks such as Garry Point or Terra Nova Rural Park are at 'road ends' and do not have the same degree of visibility. With so many eyes on Garden City Lands, it acts as an important gateway into Richmond's City Centre.



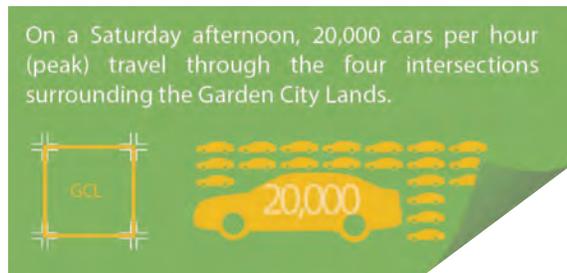
2016 PROJECTED POPULATION



Over the next 20 years, the City Centre’s residential population is expected to double, from 45,000 to 90,000 residents.

The majority of City Centre residents will be within a 2 kilometer distance of Garden City Lands. Over 33,000 people live in the adjacent quarter-sections, an easy walking distance to the Lands. With many people living in higher density dwellings, consideration must be given to how Garden City Lands will be used to meet the area’s growing park, public open space, and environmental needs.

Garden City Lands is also surrounded by commercial and institutional uses with Kwantlen Polytechnic University a short distance away on Lansdowne Road. These uses draw people to the area and also provide a potential opportunity for partnerships and stewardship programs.



In addition to the major roads surrounding the site, there is an opportunity for the Lands to have an important role as the terminus/entrance to Lansdowne Road.

Lansdowne Road is envisioned to become the City Centre's civic ceremonial spine: a unique, 2 kilometre-long ribbon of major, public open spaces, amenities, and institutions that links Richmond's downtown core, Richmond Olympic Oval on the river, and Garden City Lands.



GATEWAY INTO DOWNTOWN:
WESTMINSTER HWY LOOKING WEST TOWARDS CITY CENTRE

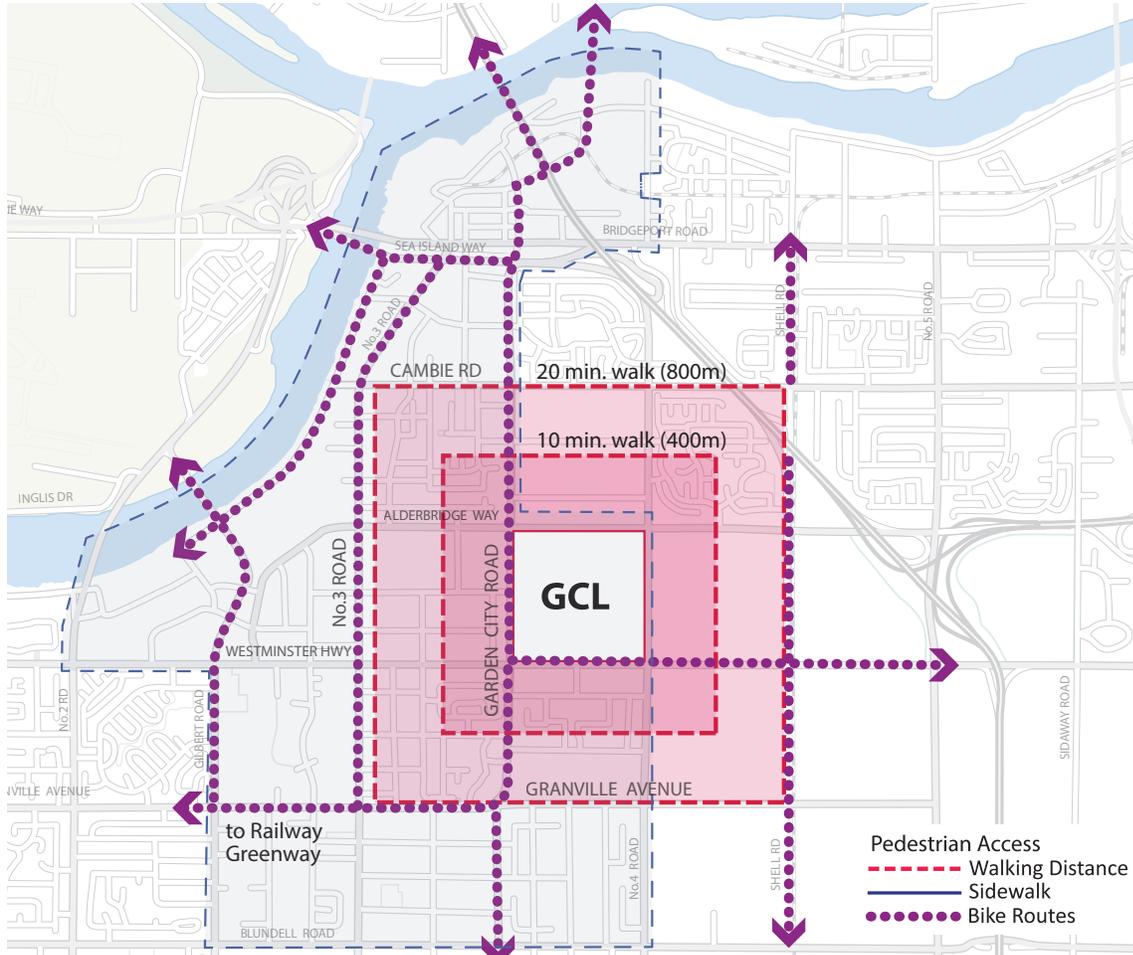
COMMUNITY WELLNESS AND ACTIVE LIVING

Providing a wide range of parks and recreation services and programs encourages residents to be physically active and healthy, nurture a commitment to wellness, and feel increasingly connected to their community.

Being physically active in many different ways from gardening to active sports can help increase overall fitness and increase the likelihood of adopting healthy lifestyles. In the 2010 Ipsos Reid Recreation and Physical Fitness Survey results Richmond citizens indicated that:

- 84% felt access to paths, trails and green spaces are important to their physical fitness
- The top three types of outdoor activities are walking, socializing outdoors and attending outdoor community events.
- In response to the questions “what do you like best about living in Richmond?” the strongest response was its “natural setting”.

GARDEN CITY LANDS





This reinforces the results from the PROS Community Needs Assessment (2009) in which the number one stated recreational activity in Richmond was walking.

Ensuring that there are excellent connections to and within the Lands will help promote a culture of walking and cycling.

Community wellness is strengthened by opportunities to engage in informal social contact, to play together, and by promoting shared experiences. Opening up Garden City Lands for community use will help support the following 2041 OCP and 2022 Parks and Open Space Strategy policies and outcomes:

- “Residents of every neighbourhood have equal access to safe, appealing places to engage in healthy, active lifestyles.
- Provide opportunities to connect with neighbours, feel a sense of belonging, and engage in lifelong learning.
- Ensure that people have opportunities to connect with the physical environment through stewardship and other engagement activities.
- Invest in parks and recreation infrastructure to support active and healthy living objectives.
- The parks and open space system includes a range of green spaces that support recreation, social interaction and psychological and spiritual renewal.”

PARKS AND OPEN SPACE NETWORK

At 136.5 acres, Garden City Lands is the largest public open space within City Centre and second largest in Richmond (the Nature Park is 212 acres). Very few cities have an opportunity to plan and implement such a large and unique space that links urban and natural settings.

The majority of Richmond residents have had little opportunity to access Garden City Lands. Owned by the Government of Canada for over 100 years, then left vacant for many years and only recently purchased by the City, its full potential has not been realized. The City Centre is the fastest growing neighbourhood in Richmond and with the changing demographics and increased density there will be a need for more parks and open space that the Lands can now help to address.

Both the 2041 Official Community Plan and the 2022 Parks and Open Space Strategy (POSS) provide policies that support developing the Garden City Lands as a major public amenity to service not only the City Centre neighbourhood but all of Richmond.

OPEN SPACE COMPARISON





With the appropriate development, Garden City Lands can support the following key outcomes identified in the 2022 Parks and Open Space Strategy:

- “The city’s unique landscape, food, arts, culture and signature events are supported and showcased.
- Richmond’s natural and cultural heritage are brought to life through active engagement, education and interpretation.
- There are well established pedestrian and cycling connections between every element of the city.
- The system provides a variety of diverse open spaces that are flexible and able to respond to changes and community need.
- Our Parks and open space system inspires shared stewardship among multiple stakeholders.
- The parks and open space system contributes significantly to the health of the ecological network.”

Garden City Lands will provide an opportunity for unique experiences that will be completely different and complementary to other public spaces in the City Centre and the City. It will be destination site and serve as open space for the surrounding neighbourhoods.

ARTS, CULTURE AND PLACE-MAKING

A great public space cannot be measured simply by physical attributes, it must serve people as a vital place. Richmond wants to strengthen its sense of place and distinct identity that generate, in residents and visitors alike, clear, unique images, exciting expectations and happy memories.

Place-making is a popular term used by many communities- for a good reason! It is about focusing on creating spaces that people enjoy, that are not only comfortable and safe but also memorable, vital, and build pride.

Here is how people have described place-making in *Project for Public Spaces*:

- “creating an environment that people gravitate to”
- “the process of giving space a story that is shared by many”
- “purposely creating character and meaning in a public space”
- “leaving a legacy for our children”

The opportunity for creativity and art can be integral to creating a great place. Creative design and Public Art can be incorporated into functional infrastructure such as benches or bridges, serve as landmarks and way-finding, interpret the world around us, and create a distinct identity to a place.

In a unique landscape like Garden City Lands, arts and culture can be expressed not only in permanent structures but also in seasonal and temporary programs such as festivals, land art competitions, mazes, plant based installations, and horticultural displays.





Programs and interpretation can be designed to connect people with each other, the unique site ecology, the City's agricultural and horticultural heritage, urban farming and culinary arts.

Located at the terminus/entrance to Lansdowne Road, there is an opportunity to extend the concept of being a ceremonial street and a dynamic civic space with an artwalk into the Garden City Lands.

Policies within the OCP Section 4.0 Vibrant City and the 2022 Parks and Open Space Strategy supporting the inclusion of arts and culture within the framework of Garden City Lands include:

- “create opportunities for people to experience art in everyday life
- enhance, preserve and celebrate the built, natural and cultural heritage of Richmond and ensure it is visible and accessible
- promote animated public spaces and places where people can gather and celebrate through: art friendly public spaces and facilities that connect communities
- recognize the importance of community festivals in the community's cultural life, and support and encourage their production through community groups and organizations
- work with the community to develop several unique signature festivals and events that become a tourist draw to the City”.