



"Walkable City" - The Trail System is a Transportation System



Bike Lane on Garden City at Granville Avenue providing alternative modes of transportation



City Centre - higher density living

2.0 Background Information

Building towards a Vision

2.1 Trends

What to Expect

The concept of trails has expanded greatly since 1979 and has become an integral part of urban, rural and environmental planning. As cities are growing the value of open space has never been higher. Major North American trends impacting the planning of open space include:

- An aging population and the move towards more passive recreation.
- The 'greening' movement and the concern for environmental sustainability.
- The popularity of eco-tourism and heritage tourism.
- The urban land use planning trend of New Urbanism: the concept of developing compact mixed use and pedestrian friendly neighbourhoods.

One of the most significant trends has been the popularity of multi-use (non-motorized) trails, greenways, and blueways. Urban trails and pedestrian friendly streets are considered vital to creating a 'walkable' city that is safe and vibrant.

From the tradition of purely off-road recreational nature trails, the new urban trail system is evolving and being viewed as:

- A network of interlinking corridors that can include traditional nature trails, city sidewalks, neighbourhood walkways, cycling lanes, undeveloped road and rail right-of-ways, and park pathways.
- An alternative transportation system for travel to work, shopping, and school.
- Greenways that allow people to experience the natural environment in the city, improve the streetscape and promote a more ecological approach to linking parks and open spaces.
- An avenue to promote tourism and a sense of community through the interpretation and understanding of the historical and natural assets of the city.

In recent years many of the Lower Mainland municipalities have been developing trail and greenway master plans. As part of the Livable Region Strategic Plan, the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD) Parks Department has also developed a comprehensive regional plan that works towards connecting the different municipalities through a greenways network. Richmond's trails form an integral part of that plan.

That trails play an important role in the livability of Richmond is evident from the results of the recent Richmond Community Needs Assessment. In keeping with national trends, over 88% of the survey respondents stated that they walk, jog or cycle. Linking the trails, more natural areas, and waterfront access were listed as the top three priorities for capital investment in new and improved informal and quiet use facilities.

The key changes over the years has been a redefining of the concept of a 'trail' and the recognition and acknowledgement of the value of trails beyond purely recreational benefits. Trails are now viewed as providing not only leisure and health benefits but also social, economic and environmental benefits for individuals and the community.



Heritage Tourism



Network of trails using parks, sidewalks, dyke trails



Eco-Tourism



Greenways

2.2 Relevant Documents, Studies and Reports

Understanding the Influences

A number of documents provide valuable background information and identify key issues and objectives that influence how the trail system is planned, designed and implemented. These documents are either internal City documents or are studies from outside agencies that impact or influence what the City is permitted to build in areas such as the environmentally sensitive foreshore.

A. Internal City Documents

1. Richmond Trails Plan, Department of Leisure Services, December 1979

This plan was developed through the Department of Leisure Services (now Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services) with input from a community based Trails Committee with representatives from different user groups as well as a Staff Technical Committee. The Plan was adopted by Council in March, 1980.

Many of the goals outlined in this Plan have either been met or are still valid goals that are expressed in newer documents and will continue to be reflected in the new 2010 Trails Strategy.

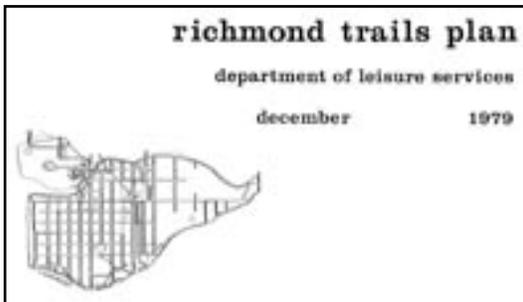
2. Corporate Plan 2003- 2005
Waterfront Development Strategy

A city wide Waterfront Development Strategy is currently being developed. The key objective of the strategy is to establish a vision for Richmond's waterfront that will foster vibrancy through public use and enjoyment, community economic growth, environmental stewardship and celebration of our heritage. A set of guiding principles and waterfront character zones have been proposed that will influence the design and character of trails around the perimeter of the island.

As many of the city-wide trails are along the waterfront and one of the major goals of the system has been to develop a continuous perimeter trail, the Trail Strategy will dovetail with the Waterfront Amenity Strategy.

3. Corporate Plan 2003- 2005
Community Mobility Strategy

This strategy will look at creating an integrated system of mobility that ensures that there are adequate mobility choices and networks in place to provide for community access, connectedness and the effective movement of people. This would include choices such as cycling, walking, rapid transit, and blueways all key to developing a livable, safe and vibrant community. An interdepartmental committee is assigned to facilitate the development of this Strategy.



1979 Trails Plan Cover



Official Community Plan

The recommendations in the 2010 Trails Strategy will support and promote the concept of creating the 'walkable' city. It will form the foundation for discussions and outline some action plans that can be implemented to improve the pedestrian and cycling environment and encourage people to 'leave their car at home'. These recommendations can then be coordinated with the other transportation plans that are developed as part of the Mobility Strategy.

4. Richmond Official Community Plan, March 15, 1999

The Official Community Plan is mandated by British Columbia's Local Government Act and is a legal document for planning and guiding the City's social, economic and physical future. It is a long range vision reflecting overall community values that have been determined through extensive public participation process. Many of the goals, policies and guidelines within this document have resulted in numerous trail opportunities being implemented over the last few years. Examples are the developments in Terra Nova, Dover Crossings and Imperial Landing which have been built with specific attention to making a pedestrian friendly neighbourhoods and maximizing views and access to the waterfront.

These official adopted policies, development permit guidelines and area plans establish a framework for development of the city and have specific recommendations related to trails that will be reflected in the new updated Trail Strategy.

5. Richmond Community Needs Assessment 2001, Parks and Recreation, Cultural Services Division

This comprehensive Needs Assessment identified the community needs, values and preferences in the community in order to establish priorities for meeting these needs over the next 5 to 10 years. Extensive public participation helped identify the gaps in service, programs and facilities such as the trails system and developed strategies for addressing these gaps. This document was adopted by Council in June 2002.

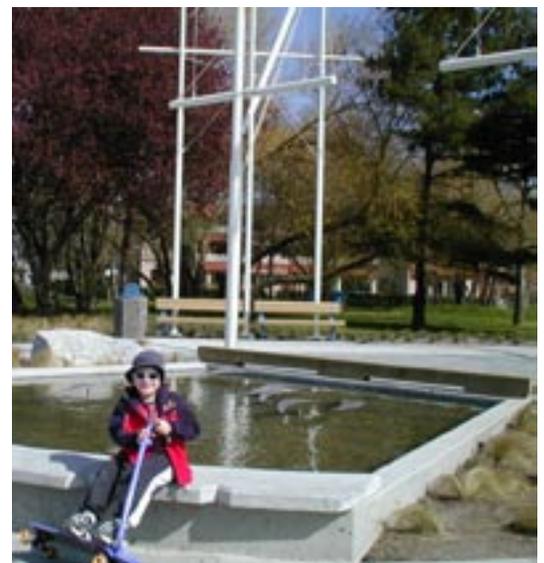
The community expressed strong support for trails as evident from the survey and focus group results. The development of a 2010 Trails Strategy will address the areas of concern expressed by the community and will ultimately form part of the larger Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Master Plan.

6. Steveston Greenways Waterfront Plan 1994, Leisure Services and Planning Departments

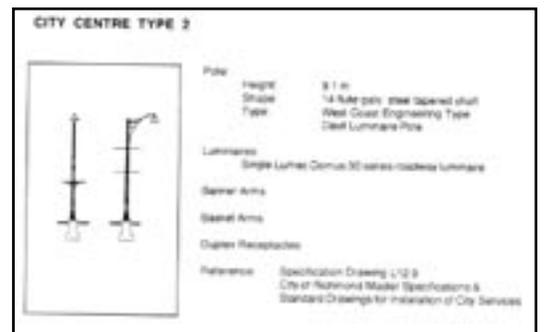
This study was jointly financed with Parks Canada and the Provincial Government through a Greenways/Waterfront Study Grant. A large Greenways Community Committee was formed to develop the Plan with the goal of maximizing safe and direct public access to the waterfront. The Plan that outlined goals, determined routes and established design guidelines and recommendations has been implemented over the years since



Community support for trails



Steveston Park corner: part of the Greenways Plan



Kit of Parts Design Specifications



1995 Cycling Network Plan



Agriculture Viability Strategy

its adoption by Council in 1995 and is still relevant today. One major change to the Plan was the opening of the waterfront along Imperial Landing which was not feasible while BC Packers was still in operation in 1994. Guidelines for this new area were included in the OCP - Steveston Area Plan.

The Plan will be reviewed and revised if necessary in the new 2010 Trails Strategy to reflect the changes that have occurred in Steveston. (Much of this plan has been implemented.)

7. City Centre Kit of Parts 2000, Strategic Management Program: Beautification Strategic Team

As part of the Strategic Management Program endorsed by Council in 1997, a Corporate Beautification Strategy was established that looked at policies, programs and guidelines to support the Vision of being a more livable and appealing City. The Kit of Parts was one project undertaken by the Beautification Strategic Team that provides design guidelines and specifications in the City Centre.

The design guidelines established in the Kit of Parts will be used as trails are developed in the City Centre. Included in the comprehensive document was a City Centre Greenways Plan. This will be reviewed and included in the new 2010 Trails Strategy.

8. City of Richmond Cycling Network Plan 1995, Transportation Planning Department

The Cycling Network Plan (CNP) was developed through the joint efforts of the City's Transportation Department and the Richmond Community Cycling Committee, a local bicycle advocacy group. The network identifies and helps prioritise selected corridors for future cycling improvements. These improvements are implemented via the City's capital programs or private development. Council approval of the cycling network also renders improvement projects eligible for provincial and regional cycling infrastructure grants. The CNP was formally endorsed and approved by City Council in 1995.

The City's trail system complements and extends the on-street cycling network by providing designated off-street multi-use pathways.

Coordinating the City's trail system with the cycling network will be one of the goals of the new 2010 Trails Strategy.

9. Agriculture Viability Strategy 2003, Urban Development Division

The Urban Development Division and the Richmond Farmers Institute in conjunction with a working committee that included representatives from the Provincial Agricultural Land Commission and the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries,

and other City departments, has developed a framework for managing and protecting agricultural land and resources in Richmond. One section titled Non-Farm Uses and Parks and Recreation Strategy has a number of recommendations that directly impact the planning and design of trails in agricultural areas.

The recommendations in the Study will be reviewed and addressed in terms of any proposed expansion of the trail system into the agricultural areas.

10. 1992 Richmond City Wide Facilities Task Force, Leisure Services Department

In 1991 City Council appointed a City Wide Facility Task Force to establish a 20 year plan for recreation facility development in Richmond. The Task Force carried out surveys and heard presentations from community groups to determine and prioritize specific areas of need. Recommendations were presented for Council Approval and the document was updated in 1997. Specific to trails are two recommendations stating that an annual contribution to trails be continued and enhanced and that trails continue to be upgraded and expanded in a systematic manner.

This document resulted in an annual budget ranging from \$100-250,000 being assigned to trail and waterfront development in the Parks Capital Budget Program since 1992.

B. External Agencies

There are numerous agencies and organizations that have produced either environmental, recreational, regulatory, economic and land use plans/ studies/reports about Richmond specifically the river and the estuary. Many of these studies have recommendations or guidelines for the City's consideration (e.g. GVRD's Burrard/Richmond Sector Recreational Greenway Plan; The Fraser River Estuary: A Guide to Interpretive Themes and Recreation Access). Other Plans and organizations have a stronger impact in terms of land ownership or regulatory powers. A few of these are described below.

1. Port North Fraser Land Use Plan

The North Fraser Port Authority developed a land use plan that outlined objectives and policies for the physical development of the properties that the Port managed, held or occupied along the North Arm and Middle Arm of the Fraser River. The Plan took into account environmental, economic and social concerns and assigned land use designations along the river. The vision and goals are designed to ensure the Port's continued economic role in the 21st century as a living, working river.

The Plan recognizes the value of recreational greenways along the waterfront while maintaining the goal to maximize the real estate value of their properties. The City is committed to working with the North Fraser Port Authority to strike a balance between the different potential uses of the waterfront and ensuring that the needs of all parties are met in the short and long-term.

2. Fraser River Estuary Management Program (FREMP)

FREMP is the coordinating body representing over 30 agencies in federal, provincial, local governments, and port authorities that make decisions on conservation and development in the estuary. In 1994, all the municipalities bordering the estuary endorsed a plan called the A Living Working River, a management plan for estuary that tries to balance the regions economic and biological productivity, cultural and recreational resources. Over the years FREMP has fine-tuned Area Designations Agreements with the City that identify habitat value along the river which in turn determines the type of development that would be allowed along the waterfront. FREMP is in the process of preparing a revised Estuary Management Plan.

All development occurring along the river or over the water is reviewed by FREMP. The City is responsible for applying to FREMP for approval to construct projects along the trails such as boardwalks and piers, dredging and dyke stabilization. At times a project may be approved in a location but habitat compensation may be required. These are costs that would need to be factored into the project.

3. Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) Habitat and Enhancement Branch

This branch of the larger federal agency focuses on the stewardship of the river environment to ensure that there is minimum impact to fish and fish habitat from activities occurring along the river and in streams. Recently, DFO has focussed their attention on Richmond's surface water management and have expressed concerns about the potential loss of habitat due to ditch maintenance practices and ditch infills. The Engineering and Public Works Departments are working with DFO to develop sustainable practices that recognize the environmental concerns while ensuring that flood protection is maintained.

The extent of the impact of DFO concerns is not known yet. There may be a time in the future that trails adjacent to ditches and canals may need to go through an approval process. This attention has also raised an opportunity to reassess the value of the open waterways both environmentally and recreationally.

2.3 Official Community Plan Policies

Laying the Foundation for a Trail Network

The successful implementation of a Trails Strategy is dependant upon ensuring that the appropriate policies are in place that would support the vision and key principles. This section outlines the existing policies in the Official Community Plan (OCP) that are related to trails and have already been adopted by Council.

It is evident that there already exists, in virtually every section of the OCP goals, key principles, objectives and policies that provide the rationale and need for developing and implementing a trails network. Area Plans and Section 5.3 in the OCP titled Parks, Open Spaces, Trails and Greenways also have very specific policies and recommendations related to locating and developing trails.

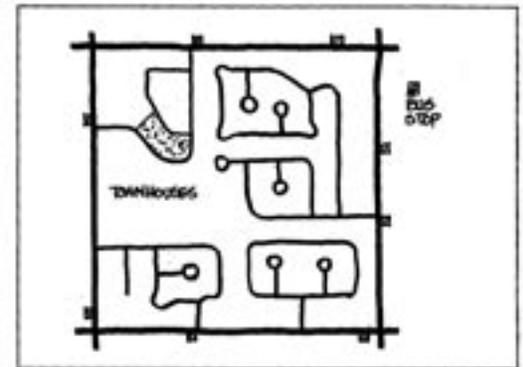
Existing policies related to trails can be grouped under a number of key themes that support trends in planning and express community goals and priorities.

A. Strengthen the sense of community in Richmond neighbourhoods by:

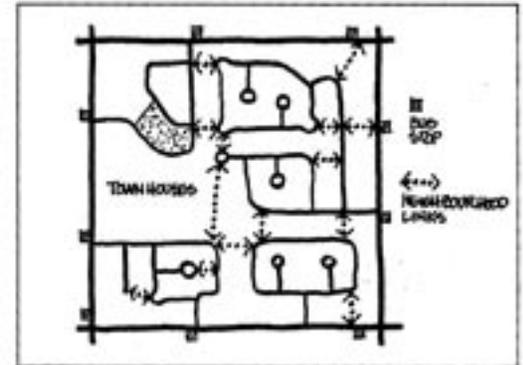
- “Having gathering places which are friendly and accessible whether on foot, rolling (wheelchair, scooter, etc.), bike or by transit”
- “Having connections which are attractive, convenient and safe to link the community together”
- “Using green to integrate nature into and enhance livability of neighbourhoods”
- “Landscaping walkways, trails and boulevards to increase greenspace in local neighbourhoods”
- “Improving physical connections to provide opportunities for safe, convenient and pleasant access within neighbourhoods”
- “Providing through routes that are direct, safe and pleasant for residents...”
- “Using available rights-of-ways within neighbourhoods as walking and cycling connections”
- “Ensuring safe, direct access to school sites”

B. Encourage walking and the use of alternative travel modes by:

- “Making walking the primary alternative for travel over short distances”
- “Placing high priority on implementing continuous and direct sidewalks, walkways and pathways to schools, neighbourhood service centres, recreational destinations, bus stops and other high-volume pedestrian areas”
- “Promoting cycling as an appealing and environmentally friendly travel choice”



Typical Subdivision With Limited Pedestrian Access



Example of Enhanced Neighbourhood

Official Community Plan



Gathering places



Encourage walking as a transportation alternative

- “Integrating the designated cycling network with the network of trails and greenways”
- “Strengthening the network of trails and greenways, using innovative approaches to provide improved linkages to key destinations and between components of the network itself”
- “Designing and developing trails and greenways to accommodate multiple users and enhance the appearance of adjacent areas”
- “Integrating off-road trails with cycling routes, greenways, and existing park walkways where feasible and as opportunities arise”

C. Build upon Richmond’s Garden City Legacy and celebrate Richmond’s Island Heritage by:

- “...making strategic use of natural amenities and landscape resources and by fostering civic pride and partnership”
- “Taking 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;”
- “..where appropriate incorporate maritime design themes and complement existing heritage structures in parks and trails...”
- “Enhancing 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”
- “Encouraging creation of privately-owned publicly-accessible (POPA) open spaces in the form of urban plazas, walkways, or small parks...integrate these spaces, where possible, into the open space network, through connecting trails and other measures”
- “Reviewing the inventory of city-owned lands to identify opportunities for incorporation of leftover parcels, such as road ends, into the open space network”
- “Supporting the awareness and recognition of heritage through... signage, e.g. trails...”



Celebrating Richmond’s Island Heritage

The 2010 Trails Strategy will build upon these approved City policies. It is not intended that the Strategy supercede or invent new policies unless there is a need determined through the process. The aim is to incorporate recommendations from the 2010 Trails Strategy into the OCP where appropriate in the future.

2.4 Benefits of Trails and Greenways

How trails can support community goals

In both the recent Richmond Needs Assessment and Official Community Plan, a number of specific trends and goals have been identified and verified by the community as being important to creating an attractive and livable city.

A well planned city-wide trails and greenways system can respond to these trends and provide many benefits to individuals and the community.

Some of the key benefits that trails and greenways can provide are:

- promoting a healthy lifestyle by ensuring that there are well designed, safe and accessible trail opportunities
- strengthening a sense of community and neighbourhood by creating safe pedestrian and cycling links between community destinations and designing opportunities for social interaction
- providing a sense of community pride by maintaining and enhancing the unique character of a neighbourhood and the community
- increasing awareness of Richmond's heritage and natural history by providing access, linking these resources and providing interpretive information
- encouraging environmental stewardship through interpretation and the appropriate plantings
- protecting the environment by providing alternative transportation choices and decreasing the reliance on automobiles
- supporting community involvement through partnerships
- generating economic benefits through increased tourism

These benefits are the goals to be strived for throughout the planning and implementation of the trails network.



Partnerships



Healthy lifestyles



Social interaction



Environmental stewardship



Decreasing reliance on automobiles



A new focus for the future

2.5 The New Focus

To date the focus of the existing Trails Plan has been on developing the physical infrastructure of the macro-scale of trails, our city-wide and regionally significant trail system.

In addition to focussing on these important city-wide trails, this updated 2010 Trails Strategy also looks at :

- ❑ ***The Users and the Individual and Community Benefits of Trails***

It's about people...

This recognizes that the many benefits to the users of trails as outlined in Section 2.4 (e.g. environmental protection, community wellness, community pride) form the overriding goals to be continuously strived for as the trail system is planned and developed.

- ❑ ***The Neighbourhood Links – the inside-out approach***

Leaving the car at home...

This recognizes that the neighbourhood is an important starting point to encourage people to walk and cycle as a way of life and that neighbourhood routes form an integral part of a comprehensive network of trails.

- ❑ ***The Coordination of City and External Initiatives***

Working together...

This recognizes that there are many opportunities to enhance the experience of trail systems, to form partnerships, and to provide efficiencies in developing the trails by coordinating with other community, city and external initiatives e.g. Public Works projects, Way to Go Program, and the public art program.

The Inside-Out Approach

