

# Environmental Protection and Enhancement: Pathways to Success



## How can land use planning contribute to Richmond’s natural areas?

Land use planning can significantly contribute to the management of natural areas and assets by balancing development with conservation to ensure that ecological integrity is maintained through City zoning, policies and plans.

## Why is this important?

As Richmond grows, natural areas are increasingly vulnerable to stress and fragmentation due to population growth, urban development and climate change. Protecting and enhancing natural areas and assets is critical to the long-term health and well-being of Richmond residents and the environment.

## What are we doing today?

A Natural Areas Conservation approach is employed to protect and enhance Richmond’s Ecological Network (EN) by promoting connectivity, prioritizing biodiversity and maintaining ecological health. This includes working to restore habitats, mitigate the environmental impacts of urbanization, and deliver environmental and socio-economic benefits to the community, together with continually advancing the City’s understanding of the complex dynamics governing the EN to better inform the development and implementation of short- and long-term policies and strategies.

Natural areas conservation is most effective when it is applied at ALL scales.

### Large



### Medium



### Small



What are the challenges?	What does 2050 look like?	How do we get there?
Urban growth contributes to habitat fragmentation. If not managed, community impacts from the loss of natural areas can include adverse health impacts, biodiversity loss and resource depletion.	Across the city, connected ecological corridors are a key feature of the landscape, contributing to healthy ecosystems, supporting species movement across habitats, and enhancing a livable, equitable, climate-resilient urban community.	<div>1</div> <div>Protect and enhance Richmond’s natural assets</div>
While municipalities are at the forefront of complex, environmental protection decision-making, senior governments hold most of the legislative authority and financial resources to safeguard local environmental quality.	Richmond is a leader in fostering partnerships – with residents, business, senior government and others – to steward the natural environment and minimize waste and pollution.	<div>2</div> <div>Foster environmental stewardship</div>
Climate change threatens City infrastructure with increased flooding, heat and sea-level rise, which can damage buildings and critical infrastructure, disrupt transportation, water systems and energy supply, and potentially cause significant economic and social consequences.	Across Richmond, green infrastructure integrates innovative, sustainable solutions into the built environment with measures that mimic natural processes, tackle urban challenges (e.g., pollution, heat) and support biodiversity.	<div>3</div> <div>Prioritize green infrastructure and innovation</div>



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## Pathway 1

### Protect and enhance Richmond's natural assets



1

Preserve, enhance, steward, and increase the quantity and quality of nature, ecosystems and biodiversity that contribute to community well-being.

#### What can we do?

- Improve our understanding of natural assets, ecosystems and biodiversity
- Strengthen protection and enhancement policies
- Strengthen connectivity between natural areas hand-in-hand with City and private development

#### OCP Update proposal

##### Prepare a Green-Blue Ecological Network Connectivity Plan to:

- Identify corridors and connections
- Enhance the urban forest
- Protect shoreline habitats while balancing flood protection needs
- Integrate ecosystem services and carbon sequestration into streetscapes
- Improve biodiversity city-wide

## Pathway 2

### Foster environmental stewardship



2

Enact and enforce environmental regulations, promote community stewardship and implement innovative solutions for resource management and waste reduction.

#### What can we do?

- Strengthen City regulations and enforcement regarding pollution, water quality, waste and environmental protection
- Foster awareness and sustainable practices with educational programs for residents, business and schools
- Partner with senior government, indigenous communities, academic institutions and others to leverage funding and resources

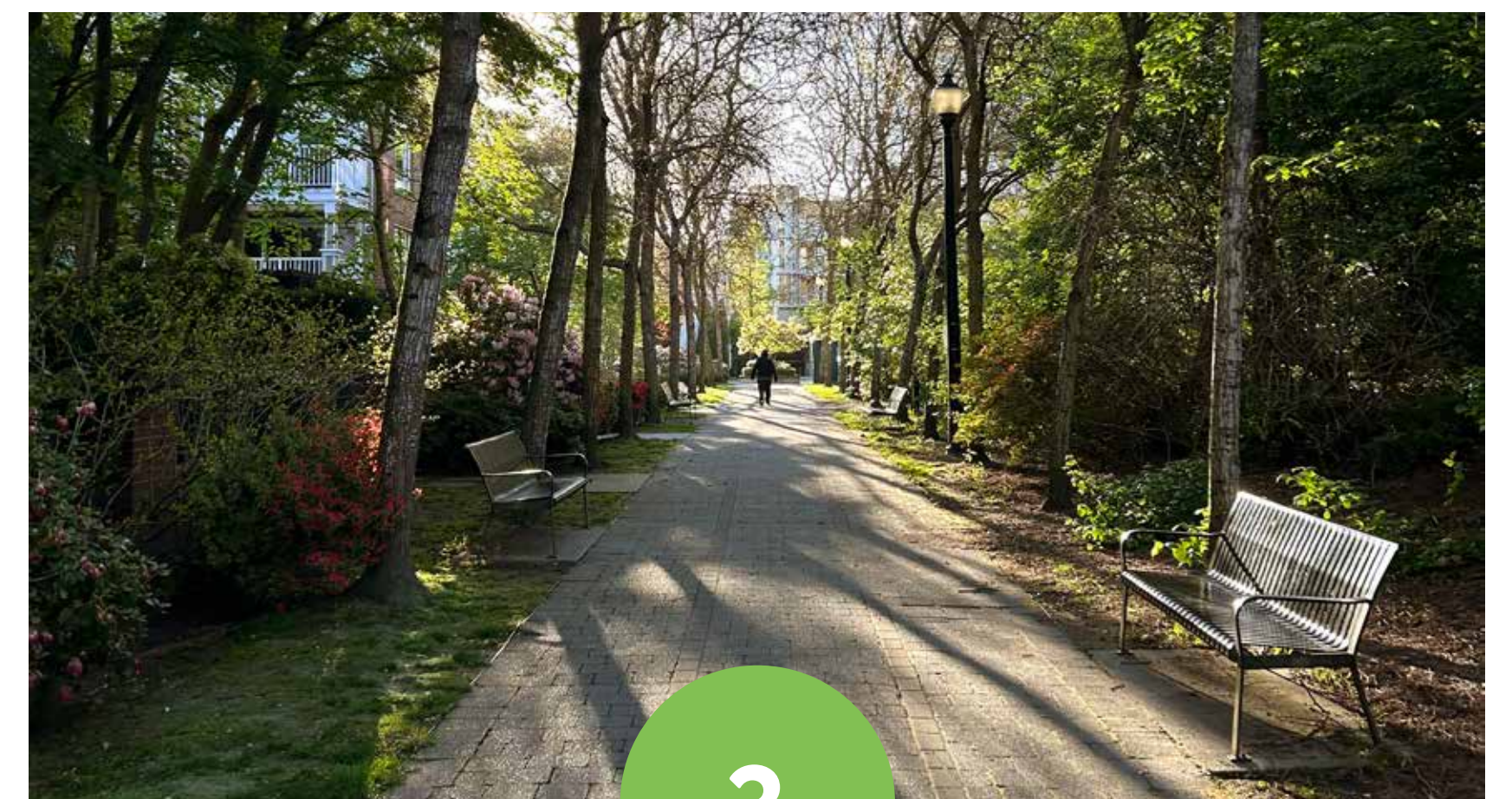
#### OCP Update proposal

##### Prepare a Biodiversity Assessment and Urban Design Action Plan to:

- Align urban design and ecological principles
- Deepen ecosystem understanding
- Generate high-quality data to guide planning and monitoring
- Foster collaborative stewardship

## Pathway 3

### Prioritize green infrastructure and innovation



3

Retain, expand and guide the development of equitably distributed green infrastructure that contributes to Richmond's livability, climate change resilience and community well-being.

#### What can we do?

- Reduce non-permeable surfaces that contribute to storm water run-off, pollution and flooding
- Increase tree canopy and vegetation to improve air quality and reduce urban temperatures
- Promote green spaces that support wildlife habitat, pollinators and urban biodiversity
- Provide green spaces and places that support recreation, social interaction and mental health

#### OCP Update proposal

##### Prepare an Urban Forest Action Plan to:

- Set measurable targets for tree planting and canopy cover city-wide
- Ensure the equitable distribution of trees and their benefits
- Promote climate-resilient tree species
- Align urban forest initiatives with climate, health and equity goals



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## What is an Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA)?

The City's ESA designation is a tool for protecting and enhancing areas of ecological significance and is applied to lands that are identified as having important ecological features and natural assets.

## How are ESA lands managed?

ESA lands are part of the City's Environmental Network (EN) and are designated as a Development Permit (DP) area. Development within an ESA may require ESA DP approval by Council and, where applicable, may require the protection, preservation and/or enhancement of sensitive ecological features (e.g., wildlife habitat, protected species and the foreshore). Some uses are exempt from an ESA DP process, such as development consistent with the City's Farming First Strategy and uses regulated by senior government.

## How does the OCP Update affect the ESA?

Updates are proposed to the City's 2012 ESA map. Aerial photography and ground investigation were used to identify existing ecological features and habitats. City lands added to the ESA map include the Richmond Nature Park, bog areas within the Garden City Lands, and the Bridgeport, Shell and Railway trails. Senior government lands added to the ESA map include the Sea Island Conservation Area, Sturgeon Banks and South Arm Islands.

