

7.0 Agriculture and Food



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7.1 Protect Farmland and Enhance Its Viability

Bylaw 10230
2021/04/19

Richmond agriculture: an important contributor to the local economy.

In 2011:

- no. of farm operators: 295
- no. of farms: 211
- amt. of land farmed: 3,072 ha.
- gross receipts: \$48.6 million
- jobs: 1,631
- paid labour: 26,197 weeks

Richmond agriculture is diverse:

- cranberries, blueberries, strawberries, raspberries
- other fruits, and vegetables, nut trees
- greenhouses and nurseries
- poultry and mushrooms
- honey bees and honey
- horses, hay and pasture
- oats, corn, alfalfa

Source: 2011 Census of Agriculture.

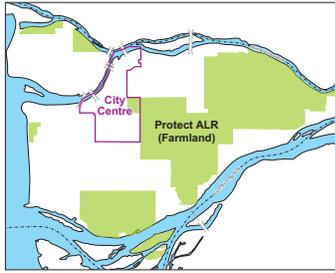
OVERVIEW:

Richmond has a rich agricultural tradition and history and today, it remains a vital component of land use in the City. Farmers have made use of the fertile soils to produce a wide variety of crops and livestock. As the fourth largest city in the Metro Vancouver region, Richmond is fortunate to have significant amounts of protected farmland within its boundaries. Nearly 39% (4,993 ha.) of its land base is protected in the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR). Additional protection and policy support is provided through Metro Vancouver’s Regional Growth Strategy’s goals, objectives and its agriculture land use designations intended to protect the agricultural land base in the region.





ALR and City Centre Map



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. Agricultural land and farming is sustained by long-term City policies that maintain an urban containment boundary that keeps residential growth outside of the ALR. As well, it is to be noted that the City owns and controls dedicated roads (except for Provincial highways) in the ALR.

Richmond residents have always placed a high value on the protection of the City's farmlands.

The City's Farming First Strategy includes themes, objectives and policies to guide decisions on the land use management of agricultural land, enhance public awareness of agriculture and food security issues, and strengthen agricultural viability in Richmond. The Farming First Strategy is a result of a multi-phase process, which included a review of existing policies and practices in Richmond, best practice research from other jurisdictions, and input from the City's Food Security and Agricultural Advisory Committee (FSAAC) and Richmond residents.

OBJECTIVE 1:

Continue to protect the City's agricultural land base in the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR).

POLICIES:

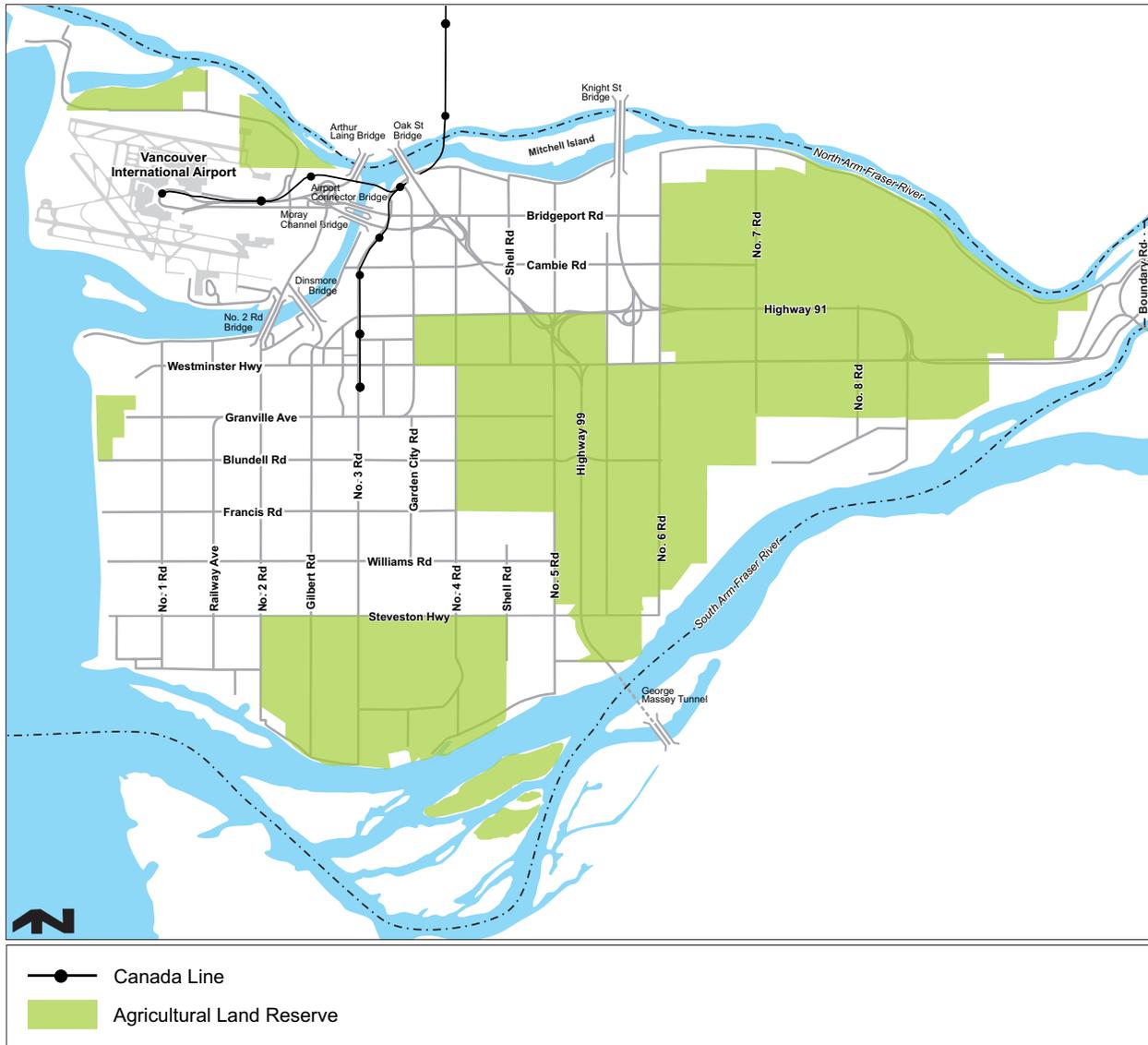
Farmland Protection

- a) Maintain the existing ALR boundary and do not support a loss of ALR land.
- b) Ensure that land uses adjacent to, but outside of, the ALR are compatible with farming by establishing effective agricultural buffers on the non-agricultural lands.
- c) Designate all parcels abutting, but outside of, the ALR boundary as Development Permit Areas with Guidelines for the purpose of protecting farming.
- d) Limit the area used for residential development on properties in the ALR. The following policies are to be regarded as guidelines which may be applied by Council, in a flexible manner, individually or together, on a case-by-case basis, when considering rezoning applications, to increase house size in the City's agricultural areas:
 - the need to accommodate a variety of cultural and intergenerational family needs and farm situations;
 - verification that the site has been or can be used for agricultural production;
 - verification that the applicant has been farming in Richmond or elsewhere, for a significant period of time, or if they are a new farmer, they can demonstrate that they are, or will be, capable of farming;
 - demonstration that there is a need for a larger farm house, to accommodate existing and / or anticipated workers on the site, through the submission of a detailed report from a Professional Agrologist indicating such, or through other information;
 - submission of a farm plan which is acceptable to Council that may include justifying any proposed on-site infrastructure, or farm improvements including providing financial security to ensure that the approved farm plan is implemented.



- e) Limit the number of dwelling units to one on lots within the ALR. Any proposal for additional dwelling units would require approval from both Council and the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC).
- f) Seasonal farm labour accommodation, as an additional residential use, may be considered so long as the accommodation is accessory to the principal agricultural purpose and helps to support a farm operation in the Agricultural Land Reserve.

Agricultural Land Reserve Map





OBJECTIVE 2:

Ensure agricultural production remains the primary use of agricultural land.

POLICIES:

Land Use Considerations

- a) Continue to encourage the use of the ALR land for farming and discourage non-farm uses (e.g., residential).
- b) Limit the subdivision of agricultural land into smaller parcels, except where measurable benefits to agriculture can be demonstrated as per the policies and regulations of the *Agricultural Land Commission Act*.
- c) Consider agricultural projects which achieve viable farming while avoiding residential development as a principal use.
- d) Encourage soil-based farming by regulating the amount of hardsurfacing in agricultural buildings, structures and greenhouses.
- e) Ensure agricultural production (e.g., growing of crops and raising animals) remains the primary use of agricultural land and ancillary uses (e.g., farm retail, storing, packing, preparing and processing of farm products) are secondary uses and consistent with the scale of the farm operation.
- f) Ensure soil deposit and removal proposals enhance agricultural capabilities (e.g., greater range of potential crops) and are consistent with City bylaws and policies, and Provincial requirements.

OBJECTIVE 3:

Enhance long-term agricultural viability and opportunities for innovation.

Long-term Viability

- a) Build relationships with farmers and the agricultural community through the City's Food Security and Agricultural Advisory Committee (FSAAC) to address issues impacting agricultural viability and food security.



- b) Increase public awareness of City and other initiatives related to agriculture by disseminating information on farming practices, farm products, and educational programs through the City's website, social media or other forms of communication.
- c) Provide information for new farmers and property owners of agricultural land, including property owners who own small parcels (e.g., less than 5 acres), to encourage active farming or lease the land for farming (e.g., Provincial land matching program).
- d) Encourage value-added agricultural related business initiatives consistent with City and Provincial regulations, while ensuring agricultural production remains the primary use of land.
- e) Develop agriculture-specific signage guidelines in order to support seasonal farm retail activities, including any necessary amendments to the City's Sign Bylaw.
- f) Continue to develop relationships with non-profit, academic and government organizations which promote local agriculture, organic growing, climate adaptation, carbon management and reductions in pesticide use.

OBJECTIVE 4:

Support the use of agricultural land for local food production and encourage a local food network to increase local food supply and consumption.

Local Food Network

- a) Continue to collaborate with Metro Vancouver, the Province, food producers, Vancouver Coastal Health, other municipalities and stakeholders to advance the goals in the Metro Vancouver Regional Food System Strategy.
- b) During the development application process, encourage applicants to consider urban agriculture into development projects outside of the ALR, including rooftop gardens, community gardens, vertical farming, backyard gardening, indoor farming, edible landscaping and the planting of food bearing trees.
- c) Raise public awareness, in coordination with the FSAAC, of local farming, farmer's markets, and local food products, produce and programs.
- d) Support food tourism initiatives, in coordination with Tourism Richmond, the FSAAC, and other local stakeholders to highlight local food production.
- e) Strengthen relationships with external organizations that provide agriculture-related educational opportunities and promote local farming.



OBJECTIVE 5:

Continue improvements to irrigation and drainage infrastructure in support of agricultural production.

Servicing and Infrastructure

- a) Continue improvement of irrigation and drainage infrastructure to provide secure and suitable water supplies and functional drainage systems that support the agricultural sector while protecting environmental assets, in consultation with the agricultural community and relevant City departments.
- b) Consider separate water meters for the principal dwelling and the farm operation and ensure adequate service connections are installed for the farm operation.
- c) Update and implement the East Richmond Agricultural Water Supply Study.
- d) Encourage sustainable farm practices that utilize on-site water drainage, storage and use, and result in the reduction of potable water use.
- e) Continue to monitor the impact of the Fraser River 'salt wedge' on agricultural land and support improvements to supply salt-free irrigation water to affected areas.

OBJECTIVE 6:

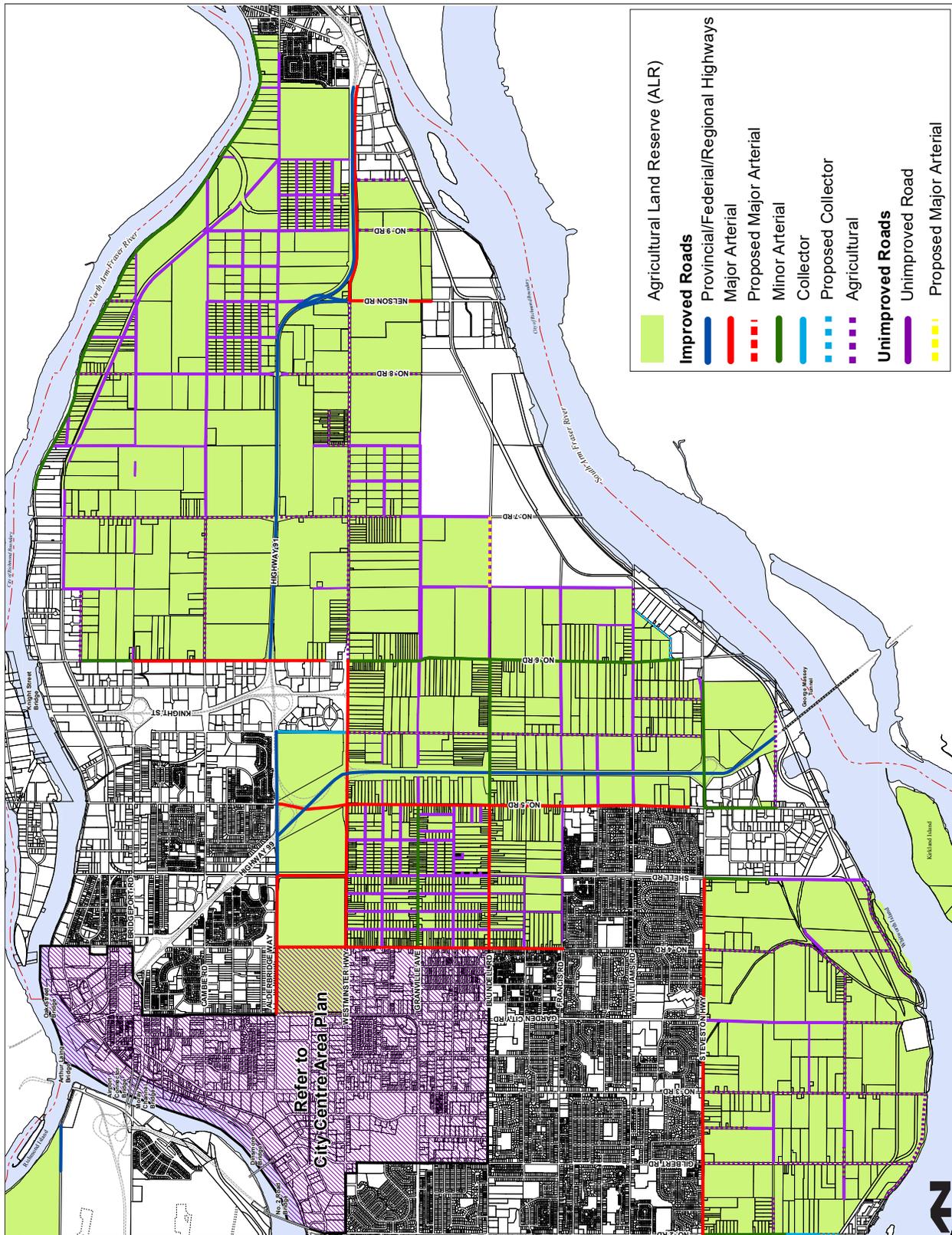
Support farm access to properties located in the ALR.

Farm Access

- a) Discourage, wherever possible, roads in the ALR, except as noted on the Existing Status of Road Improvements in the ALR Map.
- b) Consider how proposed road improvements (e.g., road widening) on existing City roads may impact farmland.
- c) For agricultural operations on agriculture sites with no direct road access, the City may facilitate farm access only (no new or improved roads) through unopened road allowances (via licensing agreements with the City).
- d) Regulate all soil deposition and removal, including for farm access roads, as permitted by Provincial regulations, through a City permitting process to ensure impacts are mitigated (e.g., adjacent properties, City property, Riparian Management Areas, and Environmentally Sensitive Areas).



Existing Status of Road Improvements in the ALR Map





OBJECTIVE 7:

Mitigate the impacts of climate change on agricultural production.

Climate Change

- a) Coordinate with Metro Vancouver, ALC, and the Ministry of Agriculture to assess the long-term impacts of climate change on agriculture and develop a coordinated response and tools to protect agricultural production.
- b) Continue to protect agricultural land and agricultural production, while supporting the City's Dike Master Plan, Flood Protection Management Strategy and climate action initiatives to address sea-level rise.
- c) Encourage sustainable farming practices, in coordination with relevant City departments, the FSAAC, ALC and Ministry of Agriculture, including water and soil conservation, greenhouse gas emissions reductions and soil management.
- d) Continue to protect agricultural land and agricultural production, in coordination with the City's Dike Master Plan, Flood Protection Management Strategy and climate action initiatives to address sea-level rise.

OBJECTIVE 8:

Maintain a balance between the natural environment and agricultural production.

Environment

- a) Continue to implement standard assessment criteria for farming properties where designated Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) or Riparian Management Area (RMA) will be impacted, while continuing to support agricultural production.
- b) Investigate opportunities for reducing emissions from crop and livestock production, in coordination with the FSAAC, ALC and Ministry of Agriculture.
- c) Explore opportunities to promote the relationship between agricultural viability and biodiversity through agricultural practices that benefit wildlife.

OBJECTIVE 9:

Continue to work collaboratively with upper levels of government to enhance agricultural viability.

Coordination and Collaboration

- a) Coordinate with ALC and Ministry of Agriculture to ensure City bylaws and policies are consistent with Provincial policies and regulations, including the *Agricultural Land Commission Act*, ALR Regulations, ALC Policies and the Minister's Bylaw Standards.
- b) Coordinate with ALC and Ministry of Agriculture to ensure development proposals are consistent with Provincial policies and regulations.



- c) Coordinate with Metro Vancouver to support the Regional Growth Strategy, which includes agricultural designations and policies for protection of agricultural land.

Upper-level Government Support

- d) Continue to communicate with upper levels of government to address the following agricultural-related issues:
- Review income threshold for farm status to encourage legitimate farming operations;
 - Protection for farmers who lease farmland and encourage longer term leases;
 - Strengthening the *Agricultural Land Commission Act* and the ALR Regulations to explicitly prohibit non-farm uses in the ALR and encourage agricultural production;
 - Enforcement of contraventions on ALR property (including monitoring, inspections, and penalties for non-compliance);
 - Improved regulations for non-soil based greenhouses and limiting such structures to areas with lower soil class agricultural land (e.g., Class 4 or lower);
 - Explore financial incentives for farming operations (e.g., grants, tax breaks and training opportunities);
 - Explore financial incentives for environmental/sustainable farm operations, organic farming and reduction in pesticide use;
 - Incorporation of environmental stewardship initiatives into the *Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act*.



Credit: Richmond Food Security Society

7.2 Promote Urban Agriculture and Advance Food Security

OVERVIEW:

Urban agriculture is commonly defined as the growing of food (fruits, vegetables, grains, mushrooms, meat, dairy products) and herbs within cities. Over the last few years, there has been renewed interest in growing local foods, not only in back yards, but in community gardens located in parks, school yards, vacant lots, along roads, privately donated land and rooftops.

Richmond imports the vast majority of its food from elsewhere which has caused concerns for the stability of the food supply. These issues have focussed more attention toward food security. In a food-secure community, the growing, processing and distribution of healthy, safe food is economically viable, socially just, environmentally sustainable and regionally based.

Action to increase food security can be seen as a continuum that ranges from:

- providing emergency food for those in need (e.g., providing support for food banks and community kitchens);
- building capacity to help those in need (e.g., programs to promote healthy eating and food preparation skills) and access within the community (e.g., ensuring that neighbourhoods have grocery stores within walking or cycling distance);
- strengthening the local food system (e.g., support for community gardens and farmer's markets; raising awareness about the supply of local food such as food directories);
- food waste management (e.g., composting).



Credit: Richmond Food Security Society



OBJECTIVE 1:

To support and increase the range of urban agriculture (e.g., community gardening) and strengthen the food system beyond production.

POLICIES:

Urban Food Production

- a) continue to seek out opportunities to collaborate with others to increase urban agriculture, the number of community gardens, edible landscapes and food-bearing trees;
- b) encourage the retention of open space for food production (e.g., edible landscaping, gardens, rooftop gardens, food bearing trees) for the use of residents in new residential developments;
- c) continue to support incubator farms in order to help new farmers develop the necessary skills and their businesses;
- d) support the Richmond Fruit Tree Sharing Farm Project which offers stewardship programs to local groups and corporations on its farm site at Terra Nova Rural Park;
- e) explore the keeping of small animals (e.g., poultry and bees) on a limited basis on small agricultural parcels, in consultation with the AAC, ALC and Vancouver Coastal Health;

Food System Infrastructure

- a) seek ways to support the food system (e.g., retail uses, bakeries, restaurants, street vending opportunities);
- b) explore local street vending opportunities.



OBJECTIVE 2:

Strengthen the local food system to contribute to the economic, ecological and social well being of the City.

POLICIES:

- a) continue to collaborate with Metro Vancouver, the Province, food producers, Vancouver Coastal Health, other municipalities and stakeholders to advance the goals in the Metro Vancouver Regional Food System Strategy;
- b) develop a “Richmond Food Strategy” with citizens and community groups to determine the best role for the city;
- c) continue to raise awareness to strengthen food security; for example:
 - Richmond School Yard Society, Richmond Fruit Tree Sharing Project which offers stewardship programs to local groups and corporations at Terra Nova Rural Park;
 - Kwantlen Farm School at Terra Nova Rural Park;
- d) promote available programs and continue to support community organizations involved with food production/distribution (e.g., Richmond Local Food Guide).



OBJECTIVE 3:

Support Locally Grown Food.

POLICIES:

- a) develop a “Buy Local” marketing initiative to increase the demand for locally grown agricultural products, in partnership with Tourism Richmond, Chamber of Commerce, the RFI, and others.



FACT

In a recent evaluation of the Community Food Action Initiative--across all incomes --86%of participants reported that their participation gave them better 'food skills' and helped them to eat better or have a healthier lifestyle.

Canadian Food Action Initiative, Vancouver Coastal Health.

OBJECTIVE 4:

Increase access to affordable, healthy food for residents.

POLICIES:

- a) continue to support programs that promote healthy eating and increase food-related skills and knowledge about sustainable food systems;
- b) support Terra Nova Schoolyard Society;
- c) encourage local gardeners to grow extra produce or distribute produce they don't use to the Richmond Food Bank or other community groups;



- d) support programs that encourage children and families to learn healthy eating habits.

OBJECTIVE 5:

Find ways to recover food waste.

POLICIES:

- a) support the efforts of community groups and the private sector to establish initiatives that divert recoverable food from the pre-waste stream for redistribution to local food banks;
- b) develop strategies to encourage organic waste diversion from multi-family housing and commercial properties;
- c) support the recycling and re-use of organic waste;
- d) develop an educational program to promote awareness around food production, health, and impacts on the community.



Credit: Richmond Food Security Society

Bylaw 9506
2016/02/15

7.3 No. 5 Road Backlands Policy

OVERVIEW:

Since 1990, the City and the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) have agreed that, within the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR), there shall be a unique area called “No. 5 Road Backlands Policy Area” as shown on the attached No. 5 Road Backlands Policy Area Map.

Bylaw 10258
2021/05/17

The purpose of the Policy is to allow Religious Assembly uses on the westerly 110m (“Frontlands”) of the properties located on the east side of No. 5 Road between Blundell Road and Steveston Highway (the area outlined in bold lines on the No. 5 Road Backlands Policy Area Map), if the remaining portions (“Backlands”) are actively farmed.

For the purposes of Section 7.3, “Religious Assembly” shall have the same meaning as given to that term in the Use and Term Definitions section of Richmond Zoning Bylaw 8500 (Section 3.4), as amended.



Bylaw 10258
2021/05/17

OBJECTIVE:

Religious Assembly uses may be permitted in the Frontlands if the Backlands are actively farmed.

POLICIES:

Bylaw 9506
2016/02/15

- a) in the Frontlands, Religious Assembly uses may be considered subject to the agricultural development of the Backlands, which is to be considered and approved by the City and the Agricultural Land Commission through the necessary land use approval process;
- b) in the Frontlands, uses that are clearly ancillary to a Religious Assembly use may be considered and approved by the City and the Agricultural Land Commission through the necessary land use approval process;
- c) residential uses (e.g., congregate housing, community care facility, multiple-family housing, housing for older adults) are not permitted in the Frontlands or the Backlands;

Bylaw 10258
2021/05/17

- d) the City will continue to strive for a partnership approach with property owners to achieve farming of the Backlands (e.g., based on the approved farm plans);
- e) in the Backlands, a limited infrastructure component (e.g., little or no regional and on-site drainage, irrigation or farm access roads) could be allowed, where a full infrastructure component is not practical;
- f) in the Frontlands, satisfactory sanitary sewage disposal is required as a condition of non-farm use or rezoning approval;
- g) all applicants proposing to develop new Religious Assembly facilities on the Frontlands or expand an existing Religious Assembly facility must either:
 - provide evidence of Farm Status under the BC Assessment Act to demonstrate that the subject parcel has been farmed for the five consecutive years preceding the ALC’s consideration of an application, or (if no ALC approval is required) the City’s processing of a rezoning application; or
 - provide evidence that the Backlands portion of the subject parcel is currently available for farming via a lease registered on title between the property owner and a legitimate farming enterprise for a term of at least five years, and either:
 - provide evidence that the parcel is currently being farmed; or
 - provide a plan for how it will be farmed;
- h) applicants shall submit the necessary reports to the City to achieve and maintain farming with all costs to implement works associated with an approved farm plan to be paid by the applicant;

Bylaw 9506
2016/02/15

Development Application Procedure and Requirements

Bylaw 10258
2021/05/17

- a) all proposals for Religious Assembly development are subject to City and ALC approval through the necessary development application process to be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and in accordance with the OCP;
- b) consideration of Religious Assembly development in the Frontlands is generally subject to:



Bylaw 9506
2016/02/15

- i) submission and approval of an ALR Non-Farm Use application that is required to be endorsed by the City prior to being considered by the ALC. If the City endorses the ALR Non-Farm Use application, it will be forwarded to the ALC for consideration;
 - ii) pending the outcome of the ALR Non-Farm Use application, a rezoning application will also be required and subject to the required statutory process;
 - iii) other Development Applications (i.e., Environmentally Sensitive Area Development Permit, Development Variance Permit) may also be required based on the proposal or site context;
- c) in certain cases, a rezoning application will not be required following approval of an ALR Non-Farm Use application. Under these circumstances, any specific requirements to be secured through the ALR non-farm use application are to be confirmed through the necessary resolution of Council upon consideration of the application;
- d) in considering development proposals (i.e., ALR Non-Farm Use applications or rezoning application) in the No. 5 Road Backlands Policy area, the City requires the applicants to:
- i) prepare farm plans with access;
 - ii) explore farm consolidation;
 - iii) commit to do any necessary on-site infrastructure improvements;
 - iv) co-operate as necessary to remove constraints (e.g., required infrastructure) to farming the Backlands, in partnership with others;
 - v) commit to legal requirements as may be stipulated by Council to achieve acceptable land uses (e.g., farming the Backlands);
 - vi) provide financial security to ensure the approved farm plan is implemented;
 - vii) undertake active farming of the Backlands;
 - viii) register a statutory right-of-way on title for a future farm access road along the eastern edge of the property along the Backlands, to the satisfaction of the Director of Development;
 - ix) comply with such other considerations or requirements by Council;

Reporting Requirements

- a) all property owners who are required to farm the Backlands must, in a form acceptable to the City, report to the City on a yearly basis regarding the current status of the farm by providing clear evidence (e.g., detailed description of the farming activities conducted in the Backlands, photos, farm tax records) that the Backlands are actively being farmed in accordance with the approved farm plans, to Council and the ALC's satisfaction;

Amendments to the Above Policies

- a) amendments to these policies in the 2041 OCP is subject to the required statutory process, which will include consultation between the City, ALC and other stakeholders as deemed necessary;

Co-ordination of Review Process

- a) the City and the ALC will co-ordinate efforts when reviewing applications for ALR non-farm use and subsequent rezoning applications, in order to ensure that the interests of each party are addressed. This co-ordinated effort will be done prior to granting any approvals.



No. 5 Road Backlands Policy Area Map

