11.0 Social Inclusion and Accessibility

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OVERVIEW:

In a socially inclusive and accessible community, residents feel valued and respected, are able to have their basic needs met, and face no physical or social barriers to move about or participate in society.

Social inclusion and accessibility are key components of a sustainable Richmond. The City has a long standing tradition of recognizing the inter-connectedness of land use and social planning. It also has a strong tradition of addressing social issues in its planning and service delivery.

The City is preparing a 10 year Social Development Strategy, which will identify social development and service delivery priorities for Richmond over the next 10 years. Some fundamental assumptions of the Strategy—and OCP—are that:

- it is important for the City's social development to proceed commensurate with its physical development;

- the City has a limited mandate and resources to address social issues; however, municipalities are the closest level of government to the people and are often the first level of contact when social concerns arise;

- in addressing social issues, it is essential for the City to be strategic, clearly articulating roles, managing expectations and working collaboratively with other levels of government, external agencies, community service providers, and other partners.

While the Social Development Strategy will provide more specific and detailed information pertaining to the City's social priorities and directions, the Strategy and OCP are intended to be complementary, mutually consistent planning frameworks. For the OCP, three key social issues and related objectives are addressed below:

• social equity and inclusion;

• engaging our citizens;

• building on social assets and community capacity.

11.1 Social Equity and Inclusion

OVERVIEW:

Equity refers to fairness. For Richmond to be equitable—and socially sustainable—it is essential that the needs of all segments of the city's population are recognized and addressed. Further, as the population grows and physical development proceeds, it is important that the City's social fabric be maintained and enhanced—with all groups sharing in the benefits and none being excluded or left behind.

Richmond's population is increasingly diverse. In 2006, for example, 57.4% of the population were immigrants, with 18.8% of that figure having arrived between 2001 and 2006. Further, 90.5% of the recent immigrants (those arriving between 2001 and 2006) were born in Asian and middle eastern countries.

In addition to immigration status, the population is also diverse in terms of age, income levels, physical abilities, sexual orientation, and other factors. While presenting a strong opportunity for community vibrancy and enrichment, diversity also presents challenges—most notably with respect to communication, cross-cultural understanding, integration, and the potential marginalization of certain segments of the population. City policies, programs, and practices must therefore support social equity and inclusion. They must recognize and respect diversity, while ensuring that silos are not created and no one group gets left behind. The aim is to build and nurture a cohesive and inclusive community.

OBJECTIVE 1:

Facilitate the establishment of an equitable, inclusive community, whereby City plans, policies, services and practices respect the diverse needs of all segments of the population.

POLICIES:

a) adopt and implement a 10 Year Social Development Strategy, which will be monitored and updated over time, to guide the City's future social development priorities and activities;

b) continue to implement and update the Intercultural Strategic Plan, Youth Services Plan, and Older Adults Service Plan to ensure that they remain relevant and effective over time;

c) recognize children and youth as valuable, contributing members of the community, providing them with opportunities to participate, as appropriate, in plans, policies, and programs affecting them and the community;

d) continue to employ the developmental asset framework for the planning and delivery of youth services;

e) in City land use planning and design, make Richmond an increasingly child and family friendly community (e.g., family-friendly features in public open spaces);

f) respect and capitalize on the knowledge, skills and abilities of Richmond's older adults by providing them with opportunities to continue to make meaningful contributions to the community through volunteer activities and advice;

g) adopt an "older adults planning for older adults" approach to the planning and delivery of older adult programs and services;

h) promote aging in place, age-friendly and accessible communities where feasible, in City land use planning and design requirements;

i) continue to provide community grants to non-profit societies that deliver social, health, and community safety services to Richmond residents;

j) continue to consult with organizations representing persons with disabilities and other appropriate parties to assist in planning for the needs of persons with disabilities and gaining assistance and funding to improve the overall accessibility of the built environment;

k) update the 2007 Affordable Housing Strategy and seek developer, senior government and other partner financial assistance;

l) collaborate with other levels of government, external agencies and community partners to secure appropriate funding, housing and services for homeless people, with the aim of reducing and ultimately eliminating homelessness;

m) work with senior levels of government, external agencies, and community partners to better understand the extent and needs of households in poverty and support collaborative efforts to prevent and address poverty in the community;

n) continue to apply and achieve targeted measures, as appropriate and financially viable, to reduce financial barriers for low income residents to participate in City programs (e.g., Recreation Fee Subsidy Program, recycle sports equipment);

o) ensure that social factors are considered, in conjunction with economic and environmental factors, in City planning and decision making.

11.2 Engaging Our Citizens

OVERVIEW:

Citizen engagement can take a variety of forms (e.g., participation in City recreation programs, volunteering, sitting on a City or community advisory body, contributing to a community planning process, completing surveys using social media). Citizen engagement is crucial for a healthy society—and it is essential if the City is to achieve a representative and effective vision of being the most appealing, livable, and well managed community in Canada.

While the diversity of the City's population presents substantial opportunities and community enrichment, it also presents challenges. Rather than using a "one size fits all" approach to community engagement, a variety of community engagement strategies need to be employed. The strategies must recognize the unique characteristics, interests, and needs of various segments of the population. They must also provide welcoming and inviting opportunities for all to participate.

OBJECTIVE 1:

Encourage and facilitate the active engagement of all segments of the Richmond population in community affairs.

POLICIES:

a) use a variety of traditional and innovative approaches for consulting with and involving members of the public in community activities and planning processes (e.g., study circles, online forums, social media);

b) work with community partners to provide important City information in multiple languages, as appropriate, and as resources allow;

c) work with community partners to develop effective approaches for eliciting the opinions and involvement of traditionally "hard to reach" groups (e.g., recent immigrants, homeless persons, people with disabilities) in community consultation initiatives;

d) provide pertinent information (e.g., on City programs and initiatives, demographic statistics) to assist members of the public and partner organizations in understanding social issues facing the community and effectively participating in collaborative responses (e.g., Hot Facts, bulletins).

11.3 Building on Social Assets and Community Capacity

OVERVIEW:

Social capital is a term to describe the linkages and communication channels amongst individuals and organizations and the community's capacity to work towards mutual gain. The underlying assumption is that connections are essential to the overall health and well being of the community.

The City's non-profit agencies, advisory committees, associations and community networking forums need to be nurtured as the city continues to grow and develop.

In addition to social capital, the City requires appropriate infrastructure to meet the social needs of its growing population, including:

• community facilities (e.g., child care centres, space for community service providers);

• affordable housing;

• accessible facilities, built environments, and transportation services.

The key challenges with social infrastructure relate to:

• costs (e.g., land, construction, operating) can be prohibitive—particularly in an escalating market such as Richmond;

- jurisdictional issues (e.g., various levels of government are responsible for some social infrastructure);

- priorities (e.g., given finite resources, which elements of the social infrastructure require priority support, and which ones do not?).

Through senior government funding, direct City funding or commitments obtained from developers through the rezoning process, Richmond has traditionally given priority to securing three types of social infrastructure: City facilities (e.g., recreation centres), child care centres, and affordable housing. In the future, additional emphasis will need to be placed on securing other types of social infrastructure—most notably space for non-profit agencies and other community amenities. Recognizing both the future needs and inherent challenges, a range of approaches will need to be pursued to ensure that the City is strategic, transparent, and effective in meeting its social infrastructure requirements.

OBJECTIVE 1:

Facilitate the establishment of a comprehensive, high quality system of child care services in Richmond.

POLICIES:

a) continue to undertake periodic needs assessments to identify existing and future child care requirements, by type of care and geographic area of need;

b) secure City-owned child care facilities, for lease at nominal rates to non-profit providers, from private developers through the rezoning process;

c) encourage private developers to contribute to the City's Child Care Development Reserve Fund, as appropriate;

d) consult and collaborate with child care providers and other community partners on child care issues;

e) request senior governments to contribute funding and improve policies to address local child care needs;

f) continue to administer the City's Child Care Grant Program to support the provision of quality, affordable, accessible child care in Richmond.

OBJECTIVE 2:

Facilitate the provision of space for community agencies.

POLICIES:

a) establish mechanisms to assist non-profit agencies and community groups to secure office or program space, or funding (e.g., through senior governments, NGOs, the lease of any surplus City space, negotiation with developers in the rezoning process);

b) establish clear, transparent guidelines for the securing and allocating of City-owned or negotiated community agency space (e.g., eligibility criteria, cost factors, timing, roles and responsibilities);

c) support non-profit agencies and community partners to develop and maintain an inventory of space requirements for community agencies in Richmond.

OBJECTIVE 3:

Develop and nurture strong, sustainable, and collaborative relationships with senior governments and community partners.

POLICIES:

a) develop and maintain strong networks and communication channels with senior government partners to seek their policy and financial assistance in addressing Richmond social issues;

b) continue to participate in joint planning and networking initiatives with community partners (e.g., Richmond School District, Vancouver Coastal Health, Metro Vancouver, non-profit agencies);

c) maintain strong networks with developers, the business community, and community agencies, collaborating as appropriate to address social issues.