

# 2 1908 to 2013: Richmond's Parks & Open Space System

The evolution of the parks and open space system in Richmond is part of the story of the evolution of the city. An understanding of the present day system, how it is operated as the city grows and how it will expand, is the starting point for setting the direction for the future. From the earliest form of public open space, the schoolyard, to the most recently developed greenway, the 5.7 km Railway Greenway, the evolution of the parks and open space system in Richmond has been driven by community initiative, recognition of important landmarks, and by systematic planning.

From the creation of new parks or public open spaces, to the activation and management that supports and sustains them, it is the responsibility of the Community Services Department, and especially the Parks Division, to balance the myriad of interests and influences at play. What follows is a comprehensive review of the planning processes, the approach to service delivery, as well as an overview of the history of the system.

## 2.1 The Planning Context

The growth of the parks and open space system is planned in concert with the growth of the city. It is through systematic planning, and the relevant supporting policies, that a well-distributed, well-connected system of parks and open space is achieved.

### **i. Official Community Plan (OCP)**

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The OCP guides the City's growth through designation of land uses, locating civic infrastructure and public facilities, housing policies, targets for greenhouse gas reductions as well as policies regarding agricultural uses and ecosystem protection and enhancement. The Public Open Space and the Public Realm section in the 2041 OCP Update establishes the City's policies for the provision of parks and public open space and provides objectives for the protection and future expansion of the system.

### **ii. Development Cost Charges (DCC's)**

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New development typically means an increase in population and a resultant increase in the demand for municipal services. According to Provincial legislation, municipalities can charge developers a one-time proportional fee for the acquisition and development of parkland (as well as for sewers, drainage, water and roads). DCC's can be applied to acquiring land for new parks or to expanding existing parks in areas of the City affected by growth. They are also used to construct new parks or to add new features to existing parks. By law, DCC's cannot be used for parks operations and maintenance.

### **iii. City Centre Area Plan (CCAP)**

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According to the OCP, the majority of the City's growth over the next 30 years will occur in the City Centre. The CCAP shows in detail how much and where additional public open space will be secured or acquired. The City has already acquired 20 acres for future park and will continue to acquire land within the City Centre and citywide to accommodate the projected growth.

### **iv. City and Richmond School District Relationship**

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The City of Richmond and the Richmond School District have a long-standing agreement to co-locate schools and parks. The Richmond School District's 38 elementary school and 10 secondary school sites comprise 22% of the total parkland in Richmond. Of the 48 school sites, 36 include property owned by the City. The cooperative relationship goes deeper with the joint use agreement where the Parks Division exchanges community use of school gymnasiums for school ground maintenance. In addition, the City and the Richmond School District both support school Parent Advisory Groups to enhance playgrounds and other park amenities.

## 2.2 The Community Services Department Service Delivery Model

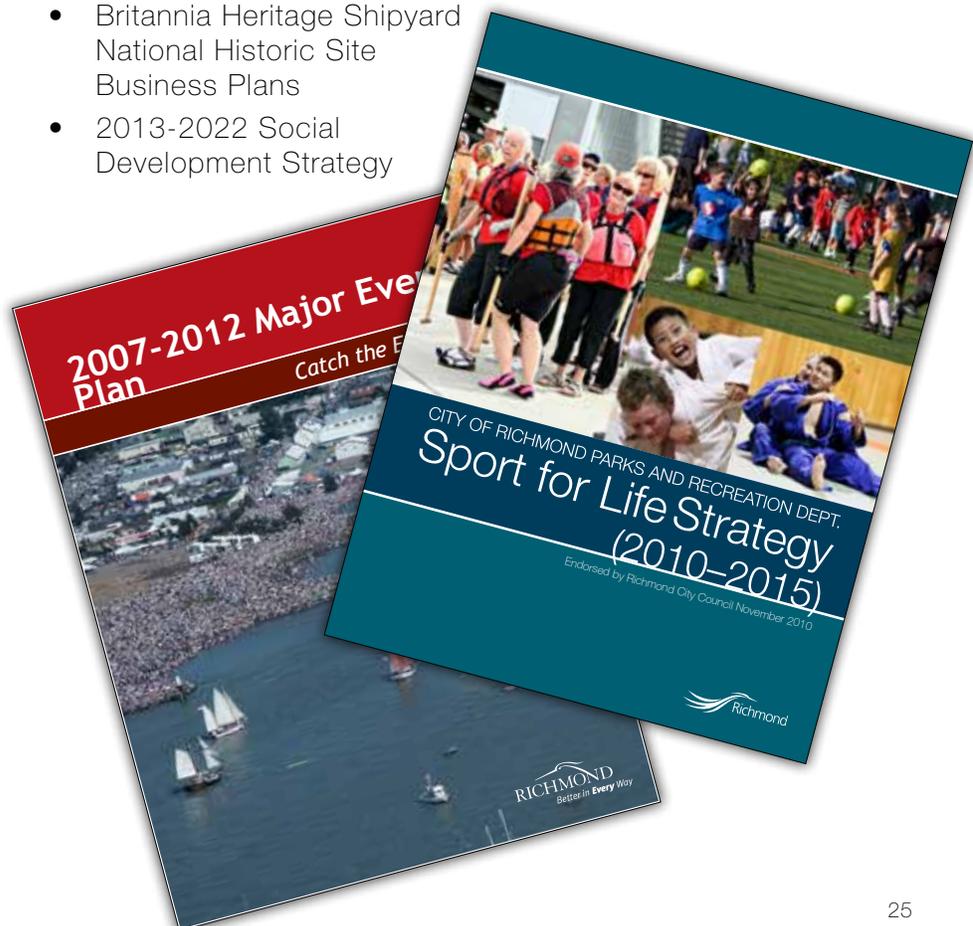
The Parks Division is one of the 4 divisions within the Community Services Department; Parks, Recreation, Arts, Cultural & Heritage Services, Community Social Development. The Department's programs and services are delivered according to the Well-Being Framework adopted in the Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services Master Plan 2005-2015. The framework describes the essential needs of well-being; healthy lifestyles and a healthy environment, a connected community, and opportunities for individual growth. The Master Plan established a comprehensive service delivery model based on the following three approaches:

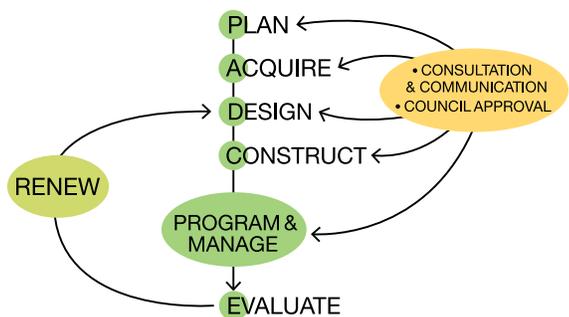
1. A Relationship-Based Approach describes how the City will work with others by valuing and encouraging community involvement and valuing effective partnerships.
2. Being Accountable in the context of parks and recreation services means providing the best services and programs possible within the resources available.
3. A Service-Based approach focuses on program and service priorities that;
  - Address community need;
  - Deliver the range of opportunities that will reach all segments of the community; and,
  - Ensure City and community resources are effectively allocated.

## 2.3 Related Strategies and Plans

The following is a list of City strategies and plans whose directions and recommendations are relevant to the effective delivery of services in the parks and open space system. See Appendix A for detail on the relevant directions and recommendations from each.

- PRCS Volunteer Management Strategy
- Older Adults Service Plan
- Youth Service Plan
- Community Wellness Strategy
- Richmond Sport for Life Strategy 2010-2015
- Richmond Field Sport Strategy
- Museum and Heritage Strategy
- Richmond Arts Strategy
- City Centre Public Art Plan 2011
- 2007-2012 Major Events Plan
- Waterfront Strategy
- ESA Management Strategy
- Britannia Heritage Shipyard National Historic Site Business Plans
- 2013-2022 Social Development Strategy





## 2.4 Parks Division Services Overview

The Parks Division's services are organized around three sections, a) **Parks Planning, Design and Construction**, b) **Parks Programs**, and c) **Parks Operations**. The following is an overview of the Parks Division's areas of responsibility and expertise.

PLAN

The establishment of new parks and public open spaces is initiated through the planning of new neighbourhoods or redevelopment of neighbourhoods. At the planning stage, location and function (e.g., neighbourhood, community, city-wide) are determined and the integration of new parks and open spaces into the neighbourhood and into the larger system is carefully considered. Parks Planning staff are responsible for providing guidance through area planning, rezoning, and development application processes. Refer to Appendix B for more detail about the processes.

ACQUIRE

As determined in the OCP, the projected population increase of 80,000 people over the next 30 years will mean expansion of the system by 133 ha. (330 acres) to meet the City's current standards for the provision of parks and open space. A set of criteria, based on the City's priorities, has been adopted to assist with planning for future land acquisition and to evaluate opportunities as they arise. The priorities are; acquisition of waterfront sites, accommodation of population and residential growth, completion of acquisition of existing parks, conservation of significant ecological features, response to public need, and acquisition of land being sold by other levels of government where it will have an impact on the system.

DESIGN

The design of new or the renewal of existing parks and open spaces is the product of a thorough understanding of the site and its context, knowledge of best practices, public consultation, and design expertise. Through the design process, a program (i.e., the mix of activities and elements) is developed and finally, a master plan is presented to City Council for approval. Parks Design staff provide the expertise to undertake design and to direct developers and their consultants in the preparation of master plans and detailed design.

CONSTRUCT

The Parks Division is responsible for the construction of parks and oversight of public open space constructed by others to ensure the City's objectives are met. For City constructed projects, Parks and Public Works staff have expertise in the construction of all types of park and open space projects and the wide variety of program elements included (e.g., sports fields and courts, playgrounds and water parks, plazas and amphitheatres, piers and floats).

## COMMUNICATE

Information about the system is communicated through reports and strategies presented to City Council, on the City's website, through information and marketing publications (e.g., maps, brochures), public open houses and other public forums, and through signage and interpretive features. The Parks Division is responsible for the graphics, mapping and technical production necessary to inform Council and the community about the parks and open space system.

## PROGRAM

Engaging individuals and community groups in the activation of parks and open spaces is the responsibility of the Parks Programs section. Stewardship activities are offered through the Partners for Beautification Program while educational and experiential programs are offered at Terra Nova Rural Park and the Richmond Nature Park. The Programs section facilitates community events and a variety of urban agriculture initiatives including community gardens. It is also charged with a central role in urban wildlife management and companion animal programs and services.

## MANAGE

Sustaining the quality of the City's parks, trails, boulevards and medians, the urban forest, and the grounds of City facilities is the responsibility of the Parks Operations section. From maintenance of park infrastructure, to the beautification of streets, to the management of vegetation along major infrastructure corridors (e.g., dykes and drainage ditches), the Operations section beautifies all parts of the City.

*For more information on the Parks Division's services, please refer to Appendix C.*

## 2.5 Community Relationships

The Parks Division works with a range of community organizations, non-profit organizations, sport and culture organizations, and individuals to augment City services and to provide services not offered by the City. These relationships add value to people's experiences and provide a multitude of opportunities for people to become engaged in parks and public open spaces.

- **Community Associations**  
The city's 8 community associations assist with the understanding of the needs of individual communities and provide direct connections to community members for various outreach and consultation processes. They also participate directly in delivering programs and supporting capital improvements in community parks.
- **Sports Organizations**  
The Parks Division works closely with outdoor athletic organizations through the Richmond Sports Council to build, maintain and allocate sports facilities.
- **Programming Relationships**  
There are a variety of organizations that run programs, including school programs, in parks and related facilities (e.g., Richmond Nature Park Society, The Sharing Farm Society).
- **Licensees and Tenants**  
Organizations that have lease or other agreements for use of park space or other City facilities (e.g., buildings) also offer some form of community benefit (e.g., the learn-to-row programs at the UBC M.S. Lecky Boathouse).

- **Partners for Beautification Program**

This City-run program offers stewardship opportunities and activities that provide a connection to nature for individuals and groups (e.g., corporations, cultural organizations, non-profit organizations).

- **Volunteers**

Volunteers assist the City in delivering programs and special events. While volunteers are an invaluable resource, expanding the capacity of the City and other organizations to deliver programs and events, the benefits of social interaction and engagement are an important part of community building.



*Garden City Community Park: The bridge over the stormwater detention pond*

## 2.6 The Evolution of the Parks and Open Space System

Richmond residents enjoy a wealth of parks that are treasured by the community and a network of waterfront trails that are a regional destination. The parks and open space system is comprised of parks and trails, greenways and streets, plazas and squares, waterfronts and waterways. The system offers 121 parks, a total area of 680 hectares (1680 acres), and over 50 kilometres of trails. Local neighbourhood parks are highly valued by the community, as are the City's special places; Garry Point Park for its waterfront location and spectacular views, the unique blend of natural features and agricultural activities at Terra Nova Rural Park, Minoru Park with its premier sports facilities and the peaceful, garden-like lakes area, and the Richmond Nature Park where one can experience and learn about Richmond's natural history.

The legacy of over 100 years of concerted effort by the community, the support of successive City Councils, and strategic planning and land acquisition has resulted in a system of parks, trails, and public open spaces that adds immeasurably to the quality of life enjoyed in Richmond.



*Steveston Park Playground c. 1970*

# The Evolution of Richmond's Parks & Open Space System

**1908** Mitchell School Opens

**1944** Steveston Park Playground

By 1950 there were **8** neighbourhood parks and **3** community parks

**1950's**

1955 Richmond had a total of **20 acres of park** at **South Arm, Steveston, Brighthouse & King George**

1957 **1st Park Bylaw**

- dedication of 60 acres for **Minoru Park**
- expansion of **King George** and **Steveston Parks**
- dedication of 10 acres for **Hamilton Park**

**1960's**

**13** new neighbourhood parks

1960 **Hugh Boyd Community Park**

1968 **Thompson Burnett Community Park**

**1970's** **Richmond Nature Park**

and **14** new neighbourhood parks

1979 **1st Richmond Trails Plan**

**1980's**

**11** new neighbourhood parks  
Bath Slough, Horseshoe Slough and Shell Road Trails

1984 **Garry Point Park**

**1990's**

**20** new neighbourhood parks  
West Dyke, South Dyke, River Road, East Richmond, Steveston Greenways, South Cove and McCallan Road Trails

1995 **Britannia Heritage Shipyards Park**

1998 **Terra Nova Natural Area**

1999 **McLean Park**

**2000's**

**5** new neighbourhood parks

2002 Development of **Terra Nova Rural Park** begins

2004 **Imperial Landing** complete

2005 Development of **Garden City Community Park** begins

2009 **Richmond Olympic Oval**

Riverside Spirit Square and Water Sky Garden complete

**2010's**

**Middle Arm**

**Waterfront Greenway** complete

- **1** new neighbourhood park
- Purchase of **Railway Avenue Lands** and the **Grauer Lands**





