

RICHMOND: ENSURING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE



Annual Address by
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2021 was a year that few of us will ever forget. We endured another year of COVID-19 which brought the Delta & Omicron variants. Changes necessary to slow the spread of the virus affected our daily lives. Then in just a few short months, we learned about a heat dome and an Atmospheric River. We also heard stories of catastrophic destruction caused by unprecedented heat, wildfires, storms and flooding which devastated cities such as Abbotsford, Lytton, Salmon Arm and Merritt. Every time we thought the situation was improving, we endured another setback. All this is truly unforgettable.

In Richmond last year, we accelerated our efforts to ensure a sustainable future. The concept of sustainability often simply refers to the need to enhance the environment and particularly how we mitigate the effects of climate change. Yet there is much more. Overall, sustainability includes the development of policies, services and supports to ensure that for present and future generations, we maintain a high quality of life for our residents and a strong economy. It involves many diverse areas such as ensuring safety for residents and businesses, providing adequate infrastructure, supporting the local economy as well as protecting our diverse culture. To ensure a bright future, it is important that we take sustainable action and make wise investments today.

As a general reference on the issue of sustainability, the reader may wish to reference the City Council-approved:

[*Sustainability Progress Report 2015-2020 State of the Environment Series*](#)

SUSTAINABLE APPROACHES FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY

Within the Metro Vancouver region, Richmond is determined to statistically maintain one of the lowest incidence of COVID-19. Closing or regulating activities in City facilities and enacting a mask mandate were only the first steps. The emergence of new variants has reminded us to not be complacent and to firmly maintain our commitment.

Effective December 20th, City Council made full COVID-19 vaccination mandatory for all City employees. By year end, the vast majority of city staff and every Council member complied.

To cope with July's record-breaking temperatures, the City developed a cooling-centre strategy to mitigate the effects of extreme heat. Places were identified for residents in which they could seek shelter in safe, air-conditioned facilities under staff supervision. Outdoor cooling options were available as well. Comprehensive communication encouraged residents to check on the safety of neighbours and friends. The City immediately took action to ensure resources and processes are in place should we again experience such extreme weather.

Last fall, record-setting levels of rainfall further reminded us of the realities and dangers posed by climate change. With few exceptions, Richmond's long-term commitment to a comprehensive flood protection strategy kept our community, residents and businesses safe as we avoided the devastation felt in many other communities.

Richmond did not remain safe from flooding by accident. Since 2005, with support from other levels of government, the City has invested over \$122 million in flood protection infrastructure. In the same period, the capacity of our 39 drainage pump stations has increased by 29% so we can drain 1.1 million gallons of water EVERY MINUTE. In the future, though we have started on the challenge of dike improvements, much more will be necessary to bolster our 49km of dikes.

Since the need to keep Richmond safe extends far beyond just dealing with the pandemic and extreme weather, Council in 2021 approved adding the final 16 RCMP Officers and 12 firefighters to complete our Safe Community Strategy. Under this commitment, a total of 51 RCMP Officers and 36 firefighters have been added to the respective complements this Council term.

To provide a more effective and accessible police presence in the heart of Richmond, our City Center Community Police Office opened its doors to the public. Located at the intersection of Gilbert and Granville Avenue, we can expect improved police response times and enhanced service delivery. This is yet another example of City Council's commitment to invest in order to reduce rates of crime, improve safety and better serve the public. This strategy has led to many positive results such as a reduction of break and enter crimes which in 2021 dropped by 33 % for residences and 15% for business.

To further support a safe city, Richmond completed the installation of 110 cameras at major intersections. Unfortunately, the BC Privacy Commissioner has dramatically limited the usefulness of the camera-captured images sometimes showing violent law breakers in action. We continue to work on changing these very tight guidelines.

The RCMP Fox 80 Mental Health Car has now completed its second full year in partnership with Vancouver Coastal Health by responding to approximately 800 calls in 2021. Under this

successful program, a mental health nurse and police officer together respond to incidents where there appear to be mental health issues.

A further option to support residents during challenging times is the RichmondBC Alert system. Launched last May, residents and businesses can quickly receive important notices of imminent emergencies or disasters. 3,200 people have signed up to receive alerts and all are encouraged to join.

PROMOTING A SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT

Richmond City Council has taken many steps to ensure that future generations realize the high quality of life which we have enjoyed.

For instance, last year Richmond became one of only fifteen local governments across Canada selected to participate in the Canadian Circular Cities & Regions Initiative. This peer-to-peer network brings together communities across the country to exchange best practices for implementing circular economy strategies and policies. Our selection recognizes our leadership role in adopting circular approaches which emphasize preserving and repurposing an item at the end of its otherwise useful life.

Following delays caused by the need for Provincial approval and the onset of the pandemic, City Council adopted the Single-Use Plastic and Other Items Bylaw. Effective this March, the bylaw will help reduce unnecessary waste and plastic pollution through bans on the commercial use of foam containers for food, plastic straws and plastic checkout bags. This approach aims to remove the estimated 35 million of these items weighing almost 660 tonnes which annually form part of Richmond's waste stream.

Preserving precious resources through water conservation remains essential to the long-term sustainability of our environment. Since 2003, Richmond's water metering program has seen our City's water use decrease by 12% despite our 26% increase in civic population. With every single family dwelling in addition to every industrial, commercial and institutional property now having a water meter, Council stepped up the program to encourage the use of water meters for multi-family complexes, only one-half of which now have meters.

Maintenance of our roads and pathways is also part of the plan for sustainable innovation and circular approaches. Two years ago, Richmond engaged in a successful road-paving pilot project which involved mixing a substantial amount of re-purposed asphalt with new product in an application along No. 5 Road. Last year the City used the same technology in paving

over 20 non-residential pathways throughout Richmond. This year, residential locations will be chosen for such an approach.

In the City Centre, City Council opened the new River Parkway last March. Formerly a railway corridor, this vital component in the ring road system removes traffic from No. 3 Road to alleviate congestion and improve traffic flow. The Parkway comprises a two-lane vehicle road with bike lanes along with new signals and crosswalks, paved pedestrian walkways and LED streetlights. With around 15,000 car trips currently using the Parkway each day, it is also an important component in creating future access to the 40 acre riverfront Lulu Island Park.

City-owned District Energy now provides non-fossil fuel based energy for 22 buildings with over 5 million square feet of floor space. This program reduces 7,800 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions annually – the equivalent of removing 2,000 cars from our roads. And this program will grow overtime as re-development occurs.

After receiving a dozen awards in the past decade, Richmond's extensive District Energy program received further recognition in 2021 for innovation, efficiency and green sustainability including a Climate & Energy Action Award from the Community Energy Association.

As a way of reflecting our commitment to a healthier, more environmentally-friendly mode of transportation, the City also updated its Cycling Network Plan. Public feedback on the ever-growing network identified potential gaps in existing routes, as well as suggestions on how to fulfill the aspirations of the cyclists.

To encourage the entire community to care for our environment, City Council enacted Environmental Enhancement Grants, a new facet of the annual grants program. These give registered non-profit organizations up to \$2,500 annually to enhance Richmond's natural environment. This should assist the City by improving boulevards, watercourses and natural parks areas.

For more information, see City Council's approved:

[*Energy Action in Richmond: Community Energy and Emissions Plan*](#)

ENSURING A SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY

In addition to Richmond's natural beauty and attractions, a strong city will always feature a strong economy.

With one of the highest job-to-worker ratios in the region, Richmond is now home to a diverse collection of nearly 14,000 businesses of all types and sizes. The number of new business licenses issued in 2021 has increased by 15% compared to 2020 and signals continued economic recovery following the severe impacts of the pandemic.

To assist with the recovery from the pandemic, the City enacted several initiatives to support our business community including:

1. Richmond's Business Resilience and Supply Chain programs: together with partners, the City adopted a long-term program to assist our manufacturing base with training and education. Enhanced connections between businesses and suppliers as well as increased technology adoption should help overcome interruptions in the supply chains and assist in addressing worker shortages.
2. The Expedited Temporary Patio Program: initiated by the City during the early days of the COVID-19 shutdown, the program saw almost 70 restaurants and cafes obtain permits to expand their physical seating areas onto sidewalks and patios to compensate for lost internal space. The City is now actively seeking feedback from the public and stakeholders on whether the program should become permanent.

Notwithstanding the challenges of the past two years, Richmond maintains a vibrant tourism and hospitality sector. Our proximity to YVR and convenient transportation links as well as our many attractions including numerous hotels, countless cultural dining experiences, the Richmond Olympic Oval and historic Steveston make the City a destination of choice.

Prior to the pandemic, visitors added over \$2 billion to our economy. A record 26 million passengers then went through YVR. Richmond has traditionally experienced a significant year-over-year increase in sport hosting events along with a growing awareness of Richmond as a culturally diverse and vibrant city.

Unfortunately, the pandemic imposed a dramatic decrease on the number of our visitors. To revive our tourism in 2021, the City, along with Tourism Richmond and the Richmond Hotel Association, developed a Tourism Plan that received overwhelming support from the accommodation sector. The plan should generate significant interest in Richmond and benefit our economy over the next five years.

As an example of partial recovery, Richmond Sport Hosting supported 20 events in 2021 which generated 2,700 room nights at local hotels. It also provided almost \$60,000 in financial assistance to sport groups. This sector is rebounding as our city expects to host over 50 significant sporting events this year. Regrettably, the Canadian Amateur Recreation Hockey Association World Cup (CARHA), already postponed in 2020 and 2021, had to be further postponed for 2022. Our fingers are crossed that 2023 will be the year for this hockey tournament as alone it brings over 7,500 hotel room nights during a week of events.

The Richmond Olympic Oval is a prominent, world-class legacy of the 2010 Winter Olympic Games and remains home to Canada's National Women's Volleyball team. In addition, programs for Wheelchair Rugby Canada, men's Field Hockey Canada and Climbing Escalade Canada are among its offerings. As with past competitions, the Oval hosted many training sessions for national level athletes in the lead-up to the Tokyo Summer Olympic Games.

The climbing wall is among the many features at the Oval, most of which remained open since the onset of the pandemic. This wall is one of the best in the country. In 2021, the number of members registered in the climbing programs for youth surpassed pre-pandemic levels. Having used the climbing wall to host the North American Cup Series in October, the Provincial and National championships will be staged at the Oval in 2022.

Furthermore at the Oval, you can also look forward to exciting upgrades to the Richmond Olympic Experience being unveiled this year. Honouring the Olympic movement, including Richmond's participation, visitors can relive the greatest moments in Canada's and the world's sports history. It will be fun for all to experience the thrill of competition with interactive simulators including a new surf simulator. Also of interest will be the new Hockey Hall of Fame exhibit.

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

Last year, Council took many decisive steps to assist in preserving Richmond's rich agricultural heritage and to promote a sustainable farming sector.

Council refreshed the 2003 Agricultural Viability Strategy to include specific policies that protect agricultural land for farming, strengthen the economic viability of food production and improve irrigation / drainage infrastructure. Adopting this updated strategy will help mitigate the impacts of climate change and assist the City as it works collaboratively to support and protect our rich farmland.

Council adopted a new Soil Deposit and Removal Bylaw to expand our regulatory framework when soils are moved. For those seeking to fill land, the bylaw provides incentives for sourcing of new soil from within Richmond while it increases fines for non-compliance. It also provides enhanced enforcement in Environmentally Sensitive Areas and supports other Council-endorsed strategies such as the Ecological Network Management Strategy, the Farming First Strategy, and our Invasive Species Action Plan. Future soil deposits are likely to be more frequent as we seek to heighten the level of the land throughout the city in the long term.

To supplement the policies and strategies which encourage the growing of crops, it is also important to support the ability to bring produce to market. In support of local farmers and merchants, an updated Richmond Local Food Map shown on the City's website highlights local food producers and the benefits of supporting local agriculture. City Council provided grants to bolster the Kwantlen Street Farmers Market as well as the Steveston Farmers and Artisans Market. Through the various farmers' markets in Richmond, a healthy, sustainable food sector is created for residents who have more access to locally-produced food. A further grant also provided funding to the Sharing Farm to complete an additional planting of cold weather vegetables to extend access to locally grown produce through the Fall.

DEVELOPING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

Readily apparent is the significant role played by development and construction using the principles of sustainability in shaping our community.

A 23% increase from the previous year, Richmond issued permits for 587 residential, 333 commercial and 217 industrial buildings in 2021. With \$719 million in new construction value, this remained higher than Richmond's ten year average.

Included among the key projects approved by Council in 2021:

1. Replacement of the Steveston Community Centre and Branch Library: Situated within the Steveston Community Park adjacent to the existing structure and costing \$95 million, this project with 60,350 square feet will replace the aging and outdated facility. Construction should begin later this year with completion expected in 2025.

2. The Capstan Canada Line station: Designs were finalized with construction to start soon using \$32 million funded through developer contributions. The station will deliver efficient and environmentally-sustainable public transportation to the rapidly-developing Capstan area. This is an example of how the City, the development community and partners such as TransLink are working together to create vibrant, diverse transit-oriented local communities. In this emerging area, you will find a variety of housing options along with health and lifestyle-focused amenities all within walking distance.
3. The comprehensive redevelopment of the 50 acre Lansdowne Centre site: With revisions to Richmond's Official Community Plan, the area will undergo a phased transition into a high-density, mixed-use community. Features of the re-development in addition to commercial areas include a ten acre park, an extension of the Lansdowne Linear Park and open plazas along with a landmark civic building. Heating and cooling for buildings in the area will be supplied by two City-owned District Energy Plants.

In an effort to have growth in population partially pay for itself, development cost charges levied on new construction are an important component of the City's strategy to build stronger, healthier and more connected communities. \$16.2 million in charges collected last year will finance future infrastructure and amenities such as parks and roads.

SUSTAINABLE APPROACHES TO HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Investing today in a strong and vibrant community should enable future generations to experience long and healthy lives.

Richmond has been called one of the healthiest communities in Canada. Even with the uncertainty caused by the pandemic, community facilities remained mostly open throughout 2021. Over 80,000 people registered for in-person programs, with almost 700,000 recorded drop-in admissions and membership scans. Remarkably, participation is almost 90% of pre-pandemic levels. Richmond residents obviously want to return to our centres to enjoy the physical, mental and social benefits of maintaining vigorous activity levels.

However, City Council knows there is much more to building sustainable, healthy communities than just physical activity. For instance, Richmond wrestles with the challenge of housing its population and supporting those in need.

Council amended the City's Affordable Housing Policy last November to increase from 10% to 15% the number of affordable rental units included in new City Centre residential projects containing at least 60 units. Since inception of the program, well over 1,500 affordable housing units in new developments have been obtained across the City. Our Housing Needs Report completed in 2021 offers further insights into affordability trends common throughout the region as well as conditions unique to Richmond.

To further support Richmond residents who have no home:

1. A \$3.35 million grant, received through the Union of BC Municipalities ("UBCM") *Strengthening Communities' Services* program, will fund projects related to food delivery and staff training. A public education and awareness initiative aims to remove the stigma of those living without a permanent home.
2. Last year, in partnership with Turning Point Recovery Society, an enhanced cold weather drop-in centre opened in the Pavilion at Brighthouse Park. This program will provide dignified access to important necessities including showers, laundry, meals, counselling and referrals to supportive services.
3. Extreme cold weather shelter beds at the South Arm Warming Centre provided individuals with a place to stay dry and warm during nights of frigid winter weather.
4. Richmond's Emergency Response Centre ("ERC") at the Minoru Place Activity Centre provided 45 spaces for individuals without a home to ensure they are safe and sheltered during the pandemic – this will soon be replaced by the Bridgeport Supportive Housing project.
5. In December, Council adopted the *Collaborative Action Plan to Reduce and Prevent Poverty in Richmond*. Funded by a UBCM grant, the plan builds on the City's commitment to increase social equity and inclusiveness. Over the next decade, in collaboration with community-based service providers, it will provide a guide for Richmond's approach to reduce poverty in our community.

One successful initiative well underway is the Richmond Food Recovery Network. This is a partnership between the City and FoodMesh, which engaged over 60 organizations online to provide surplus food to those in need while reducing food waste. Using such food last year, almost 650,000 meals were served. Being the recipient of the 2021 Community Project Award from the BC Economic Development Association, the project is now self-sustaining and a model of success.

Recognizing that much of our future success lies with our youngest residents, City Council has been a vocal advocate for affordable, accessible, quality childcare. In the City, there are over 7,000 childcare spaces to support the needs of children, families, and employers. The City itself currently provides childcare space in twelve purpose-built childcare facilities throughout the community, including two new innovative Early Childhood Development Hubs with 199 spaces opened last year. An additional city-owned childcare centre will open this year. This will bring the total provided by the city to almost 600 childcare spaces. Because so many more spaces will be needed across the City in the future, we must be innovative in encouraging facilities with new childcare spaces to open.

SUSTAINABLE CONNECTIONS

To reflect the strategic goal of having an engaged and informed community, City Council aims to use sustainable principles to keep residents and businesses connected. When residents feel connected to their City and each other, the resulting social and economic networks serve to improve health and well-being.

With one of the most culturally unique and diverse populations in Canada, it is challenging to ensure that people feel connected in Richmond. However, we are proud of our rich heritage that ensures for the community a welcoming and inclusive environment as a priority.

The City reaches out to citizens in many ways, including:

1. Almost 40 engagement initiatives were completed by over 35,000 users through our [LetsTalkRichmond](#) portal in 2021 – a 44% increase from the previous year. The many subjects for the engagements range from an examination of food trucks in Steveston to the future of community gardens.
2. To provide important and timely information, the City's social media platforms continued to grow. Last year saw a 23% increase in Facebook followers, a 47% rise on Instagram, and a 50% jump in YouTube subscribers.
3. Richmond's website www.richmond.ca remains an important tool to connect the City with residents, businesses and stakeholders. In 2021, there were over 3.4 million visits, to the website - a 64% increase from 2020. The site became even more essential when increasing numbers of service providers and users moved online to deal with disruptions caused by the pandemic.

4. Richmond continues to use technology to improve our interaction with customers and strengthen business processes. As the result of steps taken in 2021, online licensing applications, renewals and registration will be fully available by mid-year through the [MyRichmond](#) portal. This online access will enable the business community to register new businesses more easily.

Volunteerism in Richmond was very active in 2021 once again. Last year, city volunteers alone provided over 12,500 volunteer hours through over 150 opportunities. While the overall volunteer numbers and hours have not yet rebounded to pre-pandemic levels, a large contingent of Richmond residents and organizations still provide generous voluntary service. We thank them for their selfless contributions in spite of the prevalence of COVID-19.

The City and Richmond RCMP launched a joint campaign in mid-2021 to address racism after we witnessed a series of anti-Asian and racist episodes in the community. “Hate Has No Place” was among a number of education and awareness initiatives taken to address racist attitudes and behaviours, especially if the incidents had the potential to escalate to heated confrontation.

Richmond also honoured Canada’s first National Day for Truth and Reconciliation with a flag lowering, educational programs and interactive displays. The Brighthouse branch of the Richmond Public Library featured book collections on Indigenous perspectives. City staff completed reconciliation education training and interactive workshops on the subject of Indigenous peoples and culture.

In partnership with Richmond Community Associations and other partners, the City again supported a range of different activities to promote Pride Week and the LGBTQ2S+ community in Richmond. Free online workshops, poetry sessions, and art classes were among the many highlights.

Furthering the discussion on diversity and inclusion was the City’s second Diversity Symposium. Well over 200 individuals from across BC, Canada and elsewhere participated online. Featured sessions on a diverse array of strategic topics included decolonizing practices, inclusion of the community experiencing dementia and disability in decision-making as well as anti-racist organizational change. For the first time, the Symposium featured accessibility measures for participants with visual or hearing impairments such as voiceover information for sessions, live closed-captioning and screen-reader compatible options.

A STRONG AND SUSTAINABLE ARTS COMMUNITY

The pandemic provided ample evidence of the importance of creativity and social interaction. As Richmond is renowned for our vibrant arts and culture scene, 2021 reminded us of our passion to continue to engage through the arts.

Under the grants program in 2021, the City awarded over \$1 million to local organizations. Specifically, almost \$117,000 was given to 20 non-profit arts and culture organizations along with \$108,000 to nine non-profit community service organizations. Also included are the community grants for Childcare (\$47,019), Health, Social and Safety (\$626,971), and Parks, Recreation and Community Events (\$112,828). All will enhance the quality of life in Richmond.

Continuation of the pandemic resulted in some major events being cancelled while others were held online. For instance, Richmond hosted our 14th annual Doors Open festival in June, though it was offered online for only the second time. During the week-long event, a special online glimpse was offered inside 35 partner sites including places of worship, civic centres, museums and local businesses. The 2021 edition included new partnerships intended to showcase diverse groups such as the Fairchild Media Group and Anar Persian Cuisine. Visitors could also witness an Indigenous smudging ceremony. Over 25,000 interactions via social media and more than 13,000 video views were logged.

Again in 2021, the City was one of Canada's Top 10 cities for its annual Culture Days festivities of free, creative activities. Richmond ranked fifth among mid-size cities nationwide. These rankings reflect the high number of registered activities and programs offered locally during Culture Days.

Our Community Mural Program added seven murals to public spaces across the city last year. Murals activate public areas by adding interesting beauty and colour while the images themselves foster community dialogue and strengthen connections.

Another regenerating sector of our arts and culture environment is the film production industry. Shut down for much of 2020, the City's Film Office processed 48 film permits for projects in various locations last year, bringing in total revenue over \$600,000 in service/location fees. In addition, Richmond is now home to six sound stages for use in film production. All this activity improves our economy through the jobs, goods and services created locally.

WHAT NEXT?

As we enter 2022 and the Lunar Year of the Tiger, we do so with a feeling of cautious optimism. The ongoing influence of COVID-19 with all its variants remains difficult to overcome. Climate change will also have a strong, yet unpredictable, impact once again.

As we start the process to review Richmond's Official Community Plan, there are many positives. For instance, in an effort to reduce congestion on Highway 99, the Provincial Government finally announced plans last August to build a new \$4.15 billion eight-lane immersed-tube tunnel to replace the existing George Massey Tunnel. The new crossing will improve transit, cycling and pedestrian connections across the South Arm of the Fraser River. Two lanes will be dedicated for bus rapid transit, while there will be separated pathways for cyclists and pedestrians. The plan supports Richmond's vision of sustainable, environmentally-friendly transportation.

Unfortunately, the new tunnel will not be complete until 2030. In the meantime, the Province commenced work on the new \$87.5 million Steveston Highway Interchange project to improve safety and mobility. This project will feature enhanced ramp connections for traffic along Steveston Highway and improved access to transit stops. There will also be more complete pedestrian and cycling connections across Highway 99. This is the first step in realizing another long-awaited solution to traffic congestion on routes in and out of our city.

This year will see more community-focused development such as:

1. The finalization of design of the City Centre Community Centre North: In the Capstan Village neighbourhood near the Capstan Canada Line Station, project completion is expected in December 2023.
2. Commencement of construction of the affordable housing complex on City-owned land on No. 2 Road: In partnership with Pathways Clubhouse and BC Housing, this will provide 80 affordable homes for single people, families and seniors. Rental rates will support low and moderate income households.
3. Completion of the Bowling Green Community Activity Centre: The facility will be a first-class sports and recreation centre to serve the lawn bowling community as well as providing space for the community at large. This local amenity will serve as a hosting space for community events as well as provincial and National level competitions.

4. Completion of upgrades and an addition to the animal shelter: This should support our growing population for many years.

While members of City Council worked extremely hard in 2021 to fulfill the aspirations of the Community, we were pleased to welcome Andy Hobbs, who residents elected in a by-election to fill a vacant position. Councillor Hobbs has already added valuable insights to the debates at the Council table.

And in the election this October, Councillor Harold Steves has declared his intention to retire, thus ending over fifty years of elected community service to the people of Richmond and British Columbia. The City of Richmond is extremely grateful for Councillor Steves' invaluable contribution, leadership and legacy over many decades. His insights will be sorely missed.

Richmond has always been a civic leader by enacting bold, innovative, sustainable programs and strategies. City Council is building a safe and resilient City for generations to come. Our many achievements during 2021 will improve the environment and quality of life for all. Richmond remains well-positioned to move into the future thanks to the strong strategic leadership of City Council supported by sound management by our staff, great volunteers, vibrant businesses and caring residents.