EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. Overview of the Agricultural Viability Strategy

A.1 The Agriculture Viability Strategy (AVS)

The Richmond Farmers Institute (RFI) and the City are partners in the Agricultural Viability Strategy.

The purpose of the Agricultural Viability Strategy is not to determine if the agricultural resource and ALR land should be farmed, but how they can be better farmed and managed.

A.2 Context

Richmond's Strategic Plan Vision is:

"Richmond is the most appealing, livable and well managed city in Canada".

Currently, Richmond's Agricultural Land (ALR) is a finite, unique, valuable and under-utilized resource.

As 38% of the land in the City is designated as Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR), it is important that this resource be well managed and that farming be enhanced.

In managing these lands:

- Step 1 was to designate the farmland for agricultural use.
- This was achieved in 1972 with the establishment of the ALR.
- Step 2 has been to maintain the protection of the ALR.
- Step 3 is to now make better use of this resource.
- Richmond's Official Community Plan (OCP), March 1999, establishes policies to enhance the viability of farmland and farming.

Opportunities to enhance farming viability include:

- increasing farmed land
- identifying agricultural opportunities
- removing constraints to farming
- diversifying agriculture, and
- improving services.

A.3 Role of the Opinion Survey

The purpose of this survey is to gather public opinions regarding how to achieve enhanced agricultural viability for Richmond's ALR lands.

During upcoming public consultations, the survey results will be used by the City, the Richmond Farmers Institute, and stakeholders to better:

- understand farmers, farming and the ALR
- identify ALR opportunities, issues and constraints to farming
- identify areas of and support for ongoing agricultural research
- prepare an effective Agricultural Viability Vision and Strategy.

B. Survey Administration and Analysis

In November of 1999, the City of Richmond conducted a two-part agricultural opinion survey.

The survey consisted of two parts:

- **Part A** was directed to those individuals who live, own land, or lease land within the boundaries of Richmond's Agricultural Land Reserve.
- **Part B** was directed to all other interested people inside and outside of Richmond.

B.1 Survey Distribution

In order to capture individuals who live, own land, or lease land in the designated agricultural lands, surveys were mailed to all land owners and residents in Richmond's ALR (1,974 addresses).

For everyone else, surveys were distributed:

- to 15 sites across Richmond, namely, every community centre (8 sites), Brighouse (Main) Library, Ironwood Library, Minoru Seniors Centre, Watermania, the Richmond Connections kiosk in Richmond Centre Mall, Nature Park, and City Hall;
- online on the City website.

The full survey was made available to everyone.

As well, the survey was advertised:

- at the above sites with large signage, and
- on two separate occasions in the City Notice Board section of the *Richmond Review.*

B.2 Survey Response

For Part A

Of the 1,974 surveys mailed to ALR residents and landowners, 297 were returned completed, for a response rate of 14.6%.

Despite the small response, **the land held by Part A respondents corresponds to 37.4% of the ALR in Richmond**

For Part B

Of the 905 surveys distributed to the 15 sites, 95 Part B surveys were returned, and another 10 Part B surveys were completed on the City website (no Part A surveys were completed on the website).

A response rate for the Part B surveys is not applicable, due to the fact that there was no target sample.

B.3 Method of Analysis

Sections 1.0, 2.0, 3.0, 6.0, and 7.0 present detailed analysis tables for every question in both Part A and Part B of the survey.

For closed questions (i.e. respondents were provided with a list of possible responses), responses were summed and reported in the tables.

To analyse the results of the many open-ended questions (i.e. respondents could provide any response they wanted to) of this survey, content analyses were performed. Categories of responses were created for any type of response that appeared at least two times in the responses to each question. The sum totals of responses fitting each category are reported in the tables. Using this method, the total number of responses exceeds the number of respondents due to the fact that respondents often provide more than one response.

C. Highlights of the Survey Findings

C.1 Introduction

Survey respondents can be separated into “cohorts,” or statistical groups.

This section highlights the responses to certain questions by three cohort groups, namely:[1]

- Full-time farmers (70 respondents),
- Non-farming ALR residents, and
- Part B respondents (persons not living in the ALR, or owning or leasing land in the ALR).

The few “key questions” relate to:

- Perceived constraints and risks to farming,
- Concerns with farming, and
- Solutions to help strengthen farming.

After presenting the cohort findings, this section overviews the responses submitted by the total group of survey respondents to the same questions, and a few others of interest.

C.2 Full-time Farmer Responses

70 respondents identified themselves as full-time farmers.

Top Perceived Constraints to Farming (see Q16, Section 2.0)

Most of the responses involved government services, such as the provision of drainage infrastructure and “lack of government support for farmers.”

This question allowed respondents to provide up to 10 responses, ranked in order of significance.

Looking only at their top 3 responses, full-time farmers were most likely to list the following constraints:

#1) Lack of drainage and irrigation (13 times ranked as #1-3);
#2) Traffic/moving farm equipment on roads (9 times ranked as #1-3);
#3) Competing non-farm uses of ALR land (9 times ranked as #1-3);
#4) Cost of inputs other than land (9 times ranked as #1-3);
#5) Taxes (6 times ranked as #1-3).

Top Solutions to Help Strengthen Farming (see Q19, Section 2.0)

Full-time farmers tended to discuss economic solutions more than the respondents as a whole:

#1) Tax breaks, grants, loans, income insurance, and other financial assistance (13 responses);
#2) Better markets and prices for commodities (8);
#3) Do not allow non-agricultural uses in the ALR (6); and
#4) Improve and/or provide drainage and irrigation (5);
#5) Improve labour supply and affordability (5);
#6) Protect normal farming practices (e.g. via Right to Farm legislation) (5).

[1] Due to time constraints, only Questions 16, 18, and 19 were analyzed at the cohort level. All other questions were analyzed at the total respondent level.

C.3 Non-Farming ALR Resident Responses

87 respondents identified themselves as non-farming, ALR residents.

Concerns with Farming (see Q18, Section 3.0)

87 of the survey respondents were non-farmers living in the ALR.

When asked if they had a concern with farming 39% said yes and 46% said no (15% did not answer the question).

Of those that said yes, the most common responses were:

#1) Non-agricultural development is being allowed in the ALR and should not be (13 responses, or 25% of total responses to Q18);
#2) Farm nuisance issues such as noises and smells (7 responses, or 13%); and
#3) The impact of farms on the environment (7 responses, or 13%).

Top Solutions to Help Strengthen Farming (see Q19, Section 3.0)

Only 26 of the 87 members of this cohort answered this question.

These 27 respondents were more likely than the full-time farmers or the survey respondents as a whole to suggest the termination of non-agricultural uses in the ALR.

Their top 3 solutions were:

#1) Do not allow non-agricultural uses in the ALR (9 responses);
#2) Tax breaks, grants, loans, income insurance, and other financial assistance (7); and
#3) There are no solutions (6).

C.4 Non-Resident, Non-ALR Land Owner, Non-ALR Lessee Responses

This cohort corresponds to the 105 Part B respondents

In general, the Part B respondents were:

- more optimistic about farming than the Part A respondents, and
- were more likely to promote organic agriculture, farmer's markets, public education about the importance of farming, "buy local" programs, and other "green," community-building, or community economic development-supporting responses.

How Important is it to Protect the ALR? (see Q3, Section 6.0)

#1) Very important: 87 respondents
#2) Somewhat important: 9
#3) Not at al important: 7

The remaining 2 respondents did not answer the question or did not have an opinion.

Constraints to Farming (see Q4, Section 6.0)

Part B respondents were far more likely than the Part A respondents to list non-agricultural development as a constraint to farming in the ALR

The following are the top constraints listed by Part B respondents:

#1) Loss of farmland/non-agricultural development (31 responses);
#2) Cost of farmland/land speculation driving costs up (11);
#3) Cheap imports (10);
#4) Farm nuisances (e.g. noise and smells) (8).
#5) The impact of farms on the environment (6).

Solutions to Strengthen Farming (see Q6, Section 6.0)

Part B respondents were less likely to promote financial assistance than were Part A respondents, and focused instead on "saving" farmland and encouraging structural adjustments to the local agricultural economy.

The following are the top solutions listed by Part B respondents:

#1) Protect farmland from development and discourage speculation (26 responses);
#2) Tax breaks, grants, loans, and other forms of financial assistance (24);
#3) Farmer's markets / other local agricultural marketing (13);
#4) Make ALR landowners farm (9); and
#5) Develop organic farms and markets (8).

C.5 All Survey Respondents' Responses

This section presents the total survey respondents' responses to key questions.

Constraints to Farming

<u>Reasons for Not-farmed Land (see Q7):</u>

Respondents indicated that land in their holding was not being farmed because:

#1) There is a home on it / this holding is a residence (74 responses),
#2) Holding is too small to farm (41);
#3) Their land is not suitable for farming (26);
#4) Farming is not economical (18); and
#5) There are other uses (excluding residential) on the holding (18).

<u>Reason the Respondent Doesn't Farm (see Q13):</u>

Respondents indicated that they did not farm because:

#1) Their holding is too small (45 responses);
#2) Farming is not economically profitable (25);
#3) Their land is not suitable for farming (23); and
#4) Age/physical health issues (22).

<u>Top Perceived Constraints to Farming (see Q16):</u>

Most of the overall responses involve economic issues such as labour affordability and the cost of inputs. Looking at only their top 3 responses, respondents were most likely to list the following constraints:

#1) Competing non-farm land uses (e.g. subdivisions, golf courses) (33 times ranked as #1-3);
#2) Lack of proper drainage and irrigation (28 times ranked as #1-3);
#3) The low economic viability of farming (generally) (23 times ranked as #1-3);
#4) Labour availability and affordability (23 times ranked as #1-3);
#5) Cost of inputs (not including land) (22 times ranked as #1-3); and
#6) Unsuitability of the soil/land for farming (e.g. "peat soil is poor for farming") (21 times ranked as #1-3).

Solutions to Strengthen Farming

<u>Services Required (see Q15, Sec. 1.0)</u>

When asked what services respondents would require to start, increase, or diversify their farm operation, the most common responses were:

#1) Drainage (89 responses);
#2) Sanitary sewer (80);
#3) City water (52); and
#4) Roads (48).

Top Solutions to Help Strengthen Farming (see Q19)

When asked about the top solutions to strengthen farming, the most common responses were:

#1) Tax breaks, grants, loans, income insurance, and other financial assistance (33 responses);
#2) Do not allow non-agricultural uses in the ALR (25);
#3) There are no solutions (21);
#4) Improve and/or provide drainage or irrigation (16); and
#5) Improve labour supply and affordability (10).

D. Vision Statement Summaries

This section presents a summary of the proposed Vision Statements collected through Part A and Part B of the survey.

The summary is for all respondents (not individual cohorts).

D.1 All Part A Respondents (see Q20, Section 4.0)

Note: many respondents did not understand that the question asked them to provide a statement about "what they want to see" in the ALR, and instead provided a response indicating "what they believe will happen."

The full-text of all of the vision statements is presented in Section 4.0.

In general, there were 3 basic types of vision statements provided by respondents:

1. Most of the visions (~60%) are negative towards the long-term viability of farming.
   These respondents appear to be either actively opposed to farming and prefer other types of land uses, or they are passively disillusioned about the prospects of farming in Richmond's ALR.

2. Some respondents (~20%) believe that some form of farming will be viable over the long run, but only in a few intensive operations such as cranberry farming and greenhouses.

3. The rest of the respondents (~20%) are hopeful of retaining a diversity of farm types in the ALR, and entertained visions of:
   - community gardens,
   - market gardens and hobby farms,
   - more family farms,
   - more government support for farms,
   - more diverse farm products,
   - organic and sustainable farms, and
   - processing and sales of farm products such as jam, sausages, etc.

D.2 All Part B Respondents (see Q20, Section 4.0)

The full text of the Part B Vision Statements appears in Section 7.0

In contrast with Part A, Part B Vision Statements evince a strong optimism and hopefulness about the future of agriculture in Richmond.

The majority desire to see:

- More local produce for local markets;
- More organic farming; and
- More integrated use and appreciation of Richmond's farmlands (e.g. recognizing the value of Richmond's farmlands for recreation, pollution mitigation, and habitat, and directing policy and funding accordingly).

E. Profile of the Respondents

In order to correctly evaluate the meaning and scope of the survey findings, it is very important to understand who the survey respondents are.

E.1 Part A Respondent Profile

Occupation

- Non-farmers: 168 – 57% of all respondents
- Full-time farmers: 70 – 23%, and
- Part-time farmers: 47 – 16% (the remaining 4% did not answer this question).

- 15% of respondents indicated that they receive 100% of their income from farming.
- Of the non-farming respondents (205 total), the greatest number indicated that they are **retired** (74).

Land Ownership

- 87% (257) of the respondents indicated that they own land in the ALR, but only 49% (127) of these persons indicated that they reside in the ALR – in other words, **51% of the landowners are absentee**.
- Only 9% (27) of the respondents lease land from someone else.

Area of Responses

- McLennan area: 104 – 35% of all respondents,
- E. Richmond, south of the Westminster Highway: 89 – 30%
- E. Richmond, north of the Westminster Highway: 60 – 20%
- Gilmore: 58 – 20%[2]

  (please see map on the attached survey for the location of these areas).

Size of Holding

- The average size of the respondents' "land holding" is 19.7 acres.
- The median size, however, is 3.0 acres, indicating that **most respondents have a relatively small holding**.
- The sum of the land owned and leased by Part A respondents is at least 4,541 acres, or 37.4% of Richmond's Agricultural Land Reserve.[3]

Farmed vs. Not-farmed Land

- 84% of the land reported by respondents was being farmed, 16% was not.
- This corresponds to a ratio of farmed to not-farmed land of 5.3 to 1.

Summary

The majority of Part A respondents are non-farmers, and the greatest number are retired, live in McLennan, and live on relatively small holdings of land (less than 3.1 acres).

Part A survey respondents "represent" approximately 37.4% of the land held in Richmond's ALR, and approximately 84% of this land is being farmed, with 16% not-farmed.

[2] The sum of these percentages exceeds 100 because several respondents had an interest in land in more than one of the 4 regions.

[3] This figure was derived by adding the land owned and the land leased (from), and then subtracting the land leased (out), in order to avoid double-counting land that is leased to another survey respondent. The resulting value is a minimum figure because some of the land leased (out) will have been leased to non-respondents.

E.2 Part B Respondent Profile

Residence

- 89% (93) of the Part B respondents live in Richmond, and 5% live outside Richmond (the remaining 6% did not indicate where they live).
- 23% of Part B respondents live within 500ft., but outside of, the ALR.

Occupation

- The greatest number of Part B respondents indicated that they are retired (32, or 30%).
- This is followed by occupations in social science, education, government service, and religion (16, or 15%), management occupations (11, or 10%), and business, finance and administrative occupations (10, or 10%).

Summary

In sum, almost all of the Part B respondents are Richmond residents, the majority do not live adjacent to the ALR, and the greatest number are retired.