



CITY OF RICHMOND

REPORT TO COMMITTEE

TO: General Purposes Committee

DATE: February 7, 2001

FROM: Terry Crowe
Manager, Policy Planning

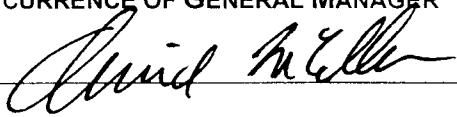
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RE: Proposed Richmond Trade and Exhibition Centre

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

1. That the City, through partnering, take a proactive role in planning and facilitating the development of the proposed trade and exhibition centre, together with the potential development of Federal lands in the vicinity.
2. That the concept of a trade and exhibition centre on the Federal lands bounded by Alderbridge Way, Garden City Road, Westminster Highway, and No. 4 Road be endorsed.
3. That staff determine the development potential of the Federal lands, identify partnership opportunities with affected interests, and assist Tourism Richmond in its preparation of a comprehensive development proposal, and report back as soon as possible.
4. That the City formally approach the Federal Government with a request that a portion of their lands be made available for the development of the trade and exhibition centre.
5. That the City act as an intermediary between Tourism Richmond and the Federal Government.


 Terry Crowe
 Manager, Policy Planning

FOR ORIGINATING DIVISION USE ONLY		
ROUTED TO:	CONCURRENCE	CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER
Parks Design, Construction & Programs.....	Y <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	
Recreation & Cultural Services	Y <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	
Business Liaison & Development.....	Y <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	
Land & Properties.....	Y <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	

STAFF REPORT

ORIGIN

In the mid-1990's, Tourism Richmond began exploring the possibility of establishing a multi-purpose exhibition and convention facility. Since then, it has undertaken a number of studies to better determine the market demand for such a facility and to fine tune its program and site requirements. The conclusion of this work indicates that there is a strong demand for a 400,000 square foot trade and exhibition centre in Richmond, aimed at the trade and consumer show market (as opposed to the convention market). The proposed size, location, and target market of the Richmond facility will enable it to fulfil a unique role in the region. In doing so, it will complement Vancouver's convention centre at Canada Place (VCEC) and other Lower Mainland facilities, and support a substantial expansion in the region's overall exhibition/convention market share.

On November 28, 2000, the Spaxman Consulting Group, working on behalf of Tourism Richmond, made a presentation to members of Council outlining their progress to date and a development concept for a 133 acre parcel of land on the eastern edge of the City Centre (**Attachment 1**). The parcel is currently used by the Federal Government's Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) for Coast Guard communication towers, but is expected to be decommissioned in the near future. As a result, Council approved the following:

"That the concept of a Trade and Exhibition Centre to be located on Federal land at Garden City Road and Alderbridge Way, including the following five recommendations proposed by Tourism Richmond on this matter, be referred to staff for review and comment as soon as possible:

- 1) That the concept of a Trade and Exhibition Centre to be located on the Federal Lands at Garden City Road and Alderbridge Way, be endorsed;
- 2) That Richmond City Council formally approach the Federal Government with the request that the lands be made available for that purpose;
- 3) That Richmond City Council formally approach the Federal and Provincial Governments for assistance in funding the development;
- 4) That City staff be instructed to report on the development opportunities for the larger site; and
- 5) That City staff be instructed to report on the way in which the City and Tourism Richmond can best work together to achieve the Trade and Exhibition Centre, including obtaining private partners for the development."

The purpose of this report is to take a first look, from a Richmond perspective, at the issues raised by the proposed project and its potential viability. In light of the complexity of this proposal, staff have attempted to broadly identify the potential benefit that the City may derive from the project and associated development, as well as areas of concern or uncertainty, as the basis for recommending a possible series of "next steps".

FINDINGS OF FACT

Proposed Richmond Trade and Exhibition Centre (RTEC) Program

Tourism Richmond's proposed 400,000 square foot centre includes 240,000 square feet of exhibition space, 30,000 square feet of meeting space, and a 30,000 square foot ballroom accommodating up to 3,000 people, together with 100,000 square feet of support and public areas. Circulation and pre-function areas are planned to allow their conversion to exhibition space, and kitchen and ballroom spaces are situated on the second floor to reduce the building's footprint. Based on market comparables, parking for 3,000 cars is proposed. Together, the building and parking require a total site area of approximately 33 acres. This area may be reduced, however, if opportunities can be identified to share parking with neighbouring future uses (**Attachment 2**).

Site Selection

Tourism Richmond has undertaken a lengthy process to identify the subject property as its preferred development location. In 1999, Tourism Richmond endorsed the Sun Tech City site as its preferred location. This was later supported by Council as part of Sun Tech's application for rezoning. Unfortunately, the small size of the parcel designated for use by the trade centre meant that Tourism Richmond would have to buy additional land if it was to meet the project's program/market objectives. Raising the additional funding necessary for land acquisition threatened to undermine the project, and forced Tourism Richmond to resume its search; this time looking specifically for a property offering special ownership and/or development characteristics that could enable the necessary land to be secured at no cost to the project.

Having reviewed possible sites all across the city, Tourism Richmond has concluded that the lands occupied by DFO may be the only practical siting option available to the project in the foreseeable future on the basis that:

- Excepting the YVR lands, it is the only property offering good proximity to existing Richmond hotels and services, that is large enough to meet the requirements of the RTEC; and
- The Federal Government is interested in its possible divestiture of the DFO site, which under the right conditions, could facilitate Tourism Richmond's access to a portion of the property at no direct cost to the project.

Sun Tech City Status

At the time of writing this report, Sun Tech City Development Corp. has not yet completed its rezoning, but is aware that Tourism Richmond prefers to locate the RTEC elsewhere. When Sun Tech's zoning is adopted, the City will be in a position to take ownership of the 2.75 acre parcel designated for the trade and exhibition centre. Zoning of that parcel will allow the City to put it to an alternative public use or, if conditions warrant it, the City may consider applying to rezone it.

DFO Site Availability

DFO is initiating a process to determine if its 133 acre Richmond site is surplus to the needs of the Federal Government, including Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (e.g. native land claims). The process is anticipated to take approximately two years, at the end of which, if the land is surplus to Federal needs, it will be offered to the Province and then the City. The land will not be offered to Tourism Richmond, nor to any other non-government interests. Therefore, in order for Tourism Richmond to secure a portion of the DFO lands for the development of the RTEC, the City will have to make arrangements to acquire or lease the property on their behalf. The terms of this acquisition or lease are yet to be determined, but may be affected by the development potential of the remainder of the site and the City's role in the Federal Government's disposition of that land.

First Nations Land Claims

With regard to when, how, and to whom the DFO divests its lands, it should be kept in mind that the site will likely be of strategic importance to any First Nations group that wishes to pursue a land claim in the Richmond area. This includes the Tsawwassen Nation which currently has a claim on the subject site. (Ottawa's current proposal to the band is limited, however, to lands within Delta.) Land claims can be very lengthy processes, fraught with uncertainty. However, this need not delay the planning, or even the development, of the DFO site. The Spaxman Consulting Group, consultant to Tourism Richmond, has experience with two projects in southern British Columbia involving land claims where the bands determined that the importance of the lands in question was more strategic and economic (e.g. this could include employment opportunities for First Nations people), than territorial. On this basis, the bands were in support of the consultant, their clients, and the Federal Government proceeding with development plans for the affected properties while negotiations were underway.

Project Funding

With land costs out of the picture (see "Site Selection"), financing options for the RTEC has focussed on its construction and operation. It is estimated that the project will cost \$63 million to construct, of which \$40 million is targeted to come from Federal/Provincial/public investment, \$11 million from private investment, and \$12 million from Richmond's 2% hotel room tax.

The hotel room tax was instituted in October 1999, and is expected to generate approximately \$2 million per annum, of which 50% is committed to the development and operation of the trade and exhibition centre.

With regard to possible Federal funding, as a result of discussions with proponents of the Whistler/Vancouver 2010 Winter Olympic Games bid, Tourism Richmond understands that a media centre of approximately 400,000 sq ft will be sought. Under International Olympic Committee rules, the Federal Government is not permitted to fund a bid, but it may fund facilities that could be made available to support a bid. The proposed RTEC could be well suited as the required media centre and could, thus, be eligible for special funding considerations. This opportunity will, of course, be affected by the results of Toronto's bid for the 2008 Summer Olympic games, which is expected to be announced in the spring of this year.

Project Timing

Tourism Richmond's goal is to open the Richmond Trade and Exhibition Centre in 2003/2004. This date could be delayed, however, if, as has been suggested by the DFO, the government process of devolving the land takes a full two years or longer and there is no opportunity provided as part of that process for Tourism Richmond to advance its planning (e.g. coordination with native land claim and/or other Federal needs assessment processes).

City Involvement

To date, the City has expressed a positive interest in the proposed trade and exhibition centre and made staff available as a resource to Tourism Richmond, but it has not formally endorsed the project. At the end of last year, at the request of Tourism Richmond, senior staff did, however, correspond with the Deputy Minister of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) to confirm the City's interest in the proposed facility as an important catalyst for economic development on their lands and offer assistance in the planning of those lands, particularly as it may relate to Richmond's Official Community Plan and Zoning Bylaw (**Attachment 3**, City letter and response).

ANALYSIS

Development of the proposed Richmond Trade and Exhibition Centre (RTEC) raises a number of concerns and opportunities. Attached is a series of discussion papers looking at five key issues facing the City right now (**Attachment 4**), including:

- The market feasibility of the project;
- The project's impact on the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) and possible compensation;
- Sports, recreation, and public open space, and their potential roles in development of the RTEC and the DFO site;
- The nature of development on the DFO lands and its opportunities for Richmond; and
- The role of the City as the RTEC and DFO developments unfold.

To date, the City has been supportive of Tourism Richmond's efforts toward the establishment of the proposed trade and exhibition centre, but it has also expressed concern that such a project can pose a significant risk to an owner/operator and, as such, Richmond has not taken a major role in the project. However, with Tourism Richmond's identification of the DFO lands as its preferred site and only practical option for the foreseeable future, the City must make a decision if it is in the best interest of the community for it to take a lead role in the project, or if it is preferable for the project to remain independent of the City, even though this may mean that the project cannot proceed.

In reviewing the market feasibility report submitted to the City by Tourism Richmond, establishment of the RTEC appears to be complementary to existing Lower Mainland facilities and well supported within the region (e.g. BC, Alberta, and the Pacific Northwest). However, development of the facility on the DFO lands raises significant concern with regard to the need to remove those lands from the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) and its implication for the future development of the adjacent Department of National Defence (DND) lands (also in the ALR), land speculation in the ALR, and the viability of agriculture in Richmond. A practical solution to this problem may be to ensure that the planning of the DFO and DND are considered concurrently and development takes significant steps to support agriculture in Richmond in the form of funding, facilities integrated with the RTEC, and a range of special uses across the DFO lands (i.e. farming exhibition space and events, agri-tech, greenhouses, food research, etc.).

A similar conclusion is drawn with respect to sports, recreation, and public open space. The DFO lands have long been targeted for facility development, and while the scale and purpose of these uses may have changed, it is still important that both city-level and community level facilities be integrated into the site, preferably with the RTEC, and that the DFO lands be developed around a network of trails and public open spaces. This concept fits well with Tourism Richmond's proposal that the RTEC form part of a large high-tech/educational complex developed on the DFO lands. It also could fit well with the City's vision, and opens the door for the establishment of a state-of-the-art business park as a catalyst for economic development across Richmond.

Interestingly, while development of the proposed trade centre is the impetus for the City considering the future of the DFO lands, regardless of whether the RTEC proceeds or Richmond lends its support, it appears that this 133 acre property is poised for development with urban uses. From this perspective, the RTEC is attractive as it could provide the City with a significant presence in any DFO site development, and the opportunity to promote community objectives regarding agriculture, sports and recreation, and economic development. It is unlikely, however, that Tourism Richmond will have the opportunity to pursue a site on the DFO lands without the support of the City. In fact, unless the City takes a proactive role in the RTEC and the DFO lands, neither the City

nor Tourism Richmond may get the opportunity to have much of a say in the future of this prime site. With Federal departments, native groups, and the Province ahead of Richmond in DFO's divestiture process, it would be surprising for the lands not to be claimed before the City is invited to the table. Alternatively, if the City was to partner with the Federal Government, native groups, and/or the Province, Richmond's interests and those of the RTEC could be considered far earlier in the process, giving the City a much greater chance of success. In order to undertake such a partnership, as a first step Richmond would need to commit staff time and in-house resources to:

- Undertake a review of the development potential of the DFO site and an assessment of what the City can bring to such a project;
- Explore partnership opportunities with the Federal Government and other affected interests;
- Assist Tourism Richmond in their preparation of a development proposal for the RTEC that takes into account Richmond's needs and objectives; and
- Act as an intermediary between Tourism Richmond and the Federal Government.

Once potential partnership opportunities have been identified and the Government's divestiture procedure has become more clear, staff would be in a position to recommend the next steps in the process, tasks, expected costs, and possible timing.

Recommendation:

That the City take a proactive partnership role with regard to development of the proposed Richmond Trade and Exhibition Centre, together with the potential development of Federal lands in the vicinity (i.e. DFO and DND).

Options:

Approval - On the basis that this approach is in Richmond's best interest (staff recommendation);

Referral - On the basis that additional information and clarification is required; OR

Denial - On the basis that it is premature for Richmond to commit to a larger role in the trade and exhibition centre project and development of the Federal lands.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There are no financial impacts at this time, however:

Financial projections prepared by Tourism Richmond's marketing consultant, Grant Thornton, assume that the Trade and Exhibition Centre will be required to pay property taxes to the City of Richmond. These projections suggest that the City could expect revenues to range from \$1 million in the project's first year (e.g. 2003) to almost \$1.2 million in its tenth year (e.g. 2012). The consultant's report goes on to note, however, that this requirement is often waived, as in the case of Tradex in Abbotsford and BC Place Stadium in Vancouver. The advantage to the RTEC of waiving taxes is the ability to reduce its debt and increase its profits sooner, thus, making it a more attractive investment opportunity. In order for Richmond to waive the taxes, it would have to take ownership of the building. It is premature for the City to make any commitments to Tourism Richmond in this regard. Staff will consider this proposal in context with other factors as the project proceeds.

CONCLUSION

On November 28, 2000, Council directed that staff review a proposal by Tourism Richmond for development of a trade and exhibition centre on Federal land bounded by Alderbridge Way, Garden City Way, Westminster Highway, and No. 4 Road. The results of staff's review highlights areas of significant concern with the proposal, but also draws attention to a number of potential benefits. In order that the City may take best advantage of the opportunities presented by the proposed developments, staff recommend that Richmond take a proactive role in the processes and pursue strategic partnerships with the Federal Government, native groups, and the Province.

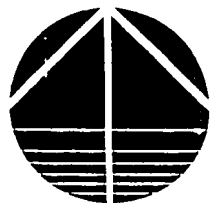
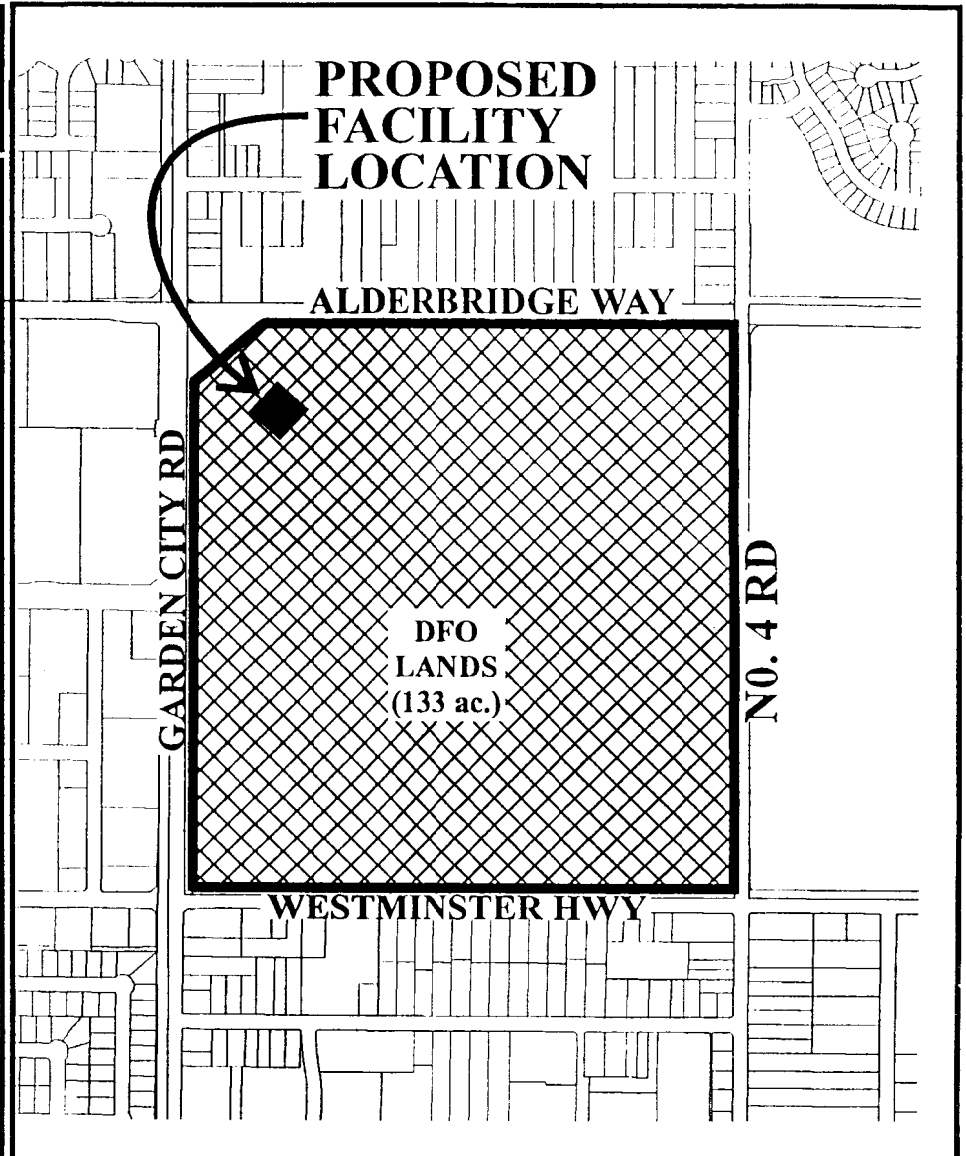
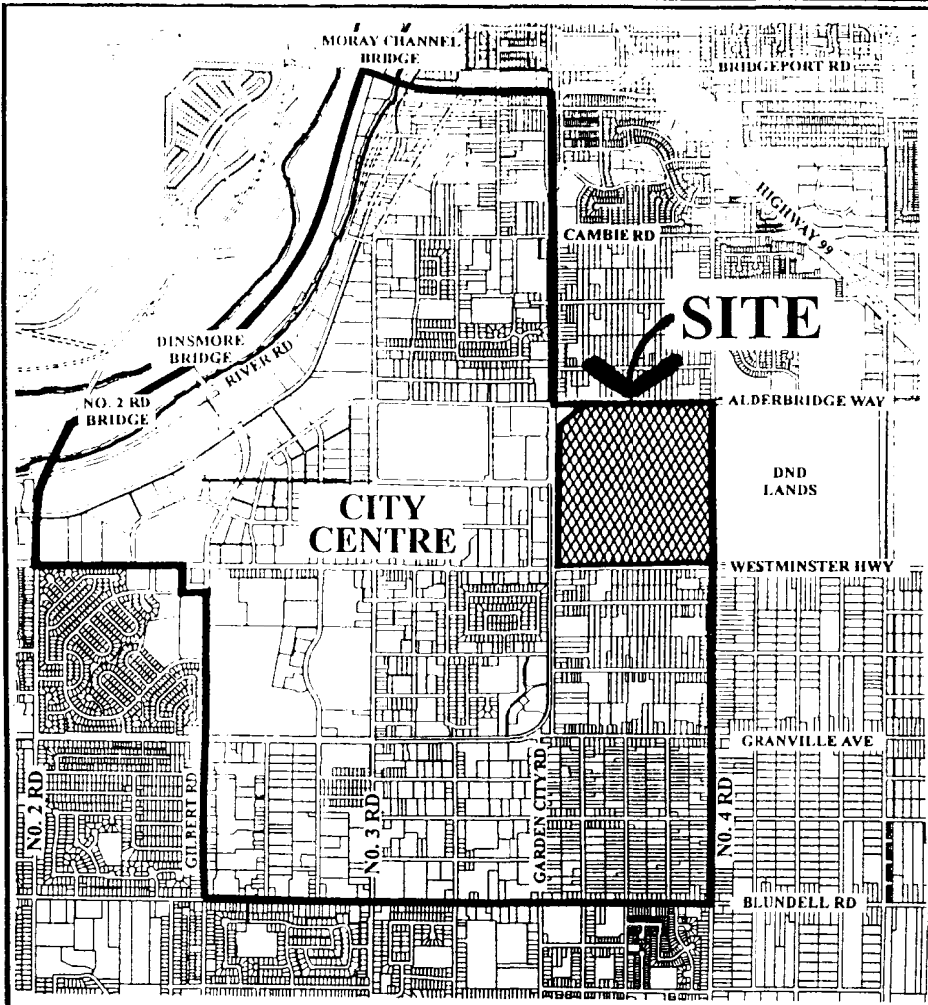


Suzanne Carter-Huffman
Senior Planner/Urban Design

SPC:cas



City of Richmond



Proposed Site of the Richmond Trade & Exhibition Centre

Original Date: 02/05/01

Revision Date:

Note: Dimensions are in METRES

RICHMOND TRADE & EXHIBITION CENTRE

Proposed Facility Program

<i>Space Allocations</i>	<i>Building Area sq ft</i>
Exhibit Hall • Divisible into 4 spaces	200,000
Concourse/Circulation • Useable for exhibit space in conjunction with Exhibit Hall	38,000
Ballroom • Divisible into 3 spaces. Accommodates up to 3,000 people.	30,000
Meeting Rooms (20)	30,000
Show Offices (8) & Business Support Centre	7,000
Public Service Areas	12,500
Exhibition Storage	2,500
Truck Docks	14,000
Furniture, Fixtures & Equipment Storage	10,000
Kitchen Facilities	15,000
Administration	10,000
Concessions (4)	2,000
Registration	20,000
Service/Mechanical Areas	9,000
TOTAL	400,000



City of Richmond

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 www.city.richmond.bc.ca

December 11, 2000

Urban Development Division
 Fax: (604) 276-4177

Wayne Wouters, Deputy Minister
 Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Deputy Ministers Office
 200 Kent Street
 Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0E6

~~0065-20-TRICL~~

XR! 0140-20-FOCEI

Dear Mr. Wouters:

Re: Fisheries and Oceans Property in Richmond, B.C.

The City of Richmond has become aware that the Department of Fisheries and Oceans is currently assessing the future disposition of its land ownership in this region. One property which may be determined to be surplus to the department's needs is the area of land bounded by Garden City Road, Alderbridge Way, Westminster Highway and No. 4 Road, in the City of Richmond.

We understand from our work with Tourism Richmond that they have been in discussion with your department about the opportunity for locating the proposed Richmond Trade and Exhibition Centre at this location. This important regional facility would act as a catalyst for further economic initiatives on the rest of the site. I am enclosing a copy of the Project Overview prepared by Tourism Richmond which describes the concept for the Centre and the various benefits to be derived from it.

My purpose in writing to you is to confirm the City's interest in planning the future of this site, particularly where changes to the City's Official Community Plan and Zoning Bylaw may be desirable. I would offer our assistance to your department as you consider opportunities such as the Trade and Exhibition Centre.

Yours truly,

David McLellan
 General Manager, Urban Development

DJM:cbm

RICHMOND
Island City, by Nature



Fisheries
and Oceans

Pêches
et Océans

Deputy Minister

Sous-ministre

*Copies sent to
Rob Taylor, Pa.
Spaxman
Jan 25/
C.*

JAN 19 2001

Mr. David McLellan
General Manager, Urban Development
City of Richmond
6911 No. 3 Road
Richmond, B.C.
V6Y 2C1

Dear Mr. McLellan:

I would like to thank you for your letter of December 11, 2000 offering your Municipality's assistance in the development of land use options for our Garden City Road property.

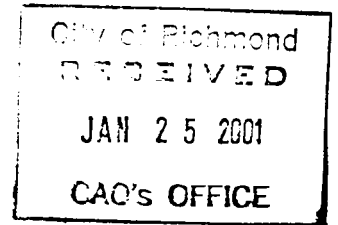
As you have noted, DFO is considering its operational requirements for the Garden City Road property, and this may well leave an impact on the future disposition of the land. I appreciate your indication of interest in the matter, and would like to assure you that we will take this interest into active consideration. As you may know, should a decision be made to declare this property surplus to DFO requirements, it will be circulated to federal departments and agencies for expressions of interest and then to provincial and municipal levels of government prior to being offered on the open market.

Thank you again for your offer of assistance.

Yours sincerely,

Wayne G. Wouters

c.c. Donna Petrachenko



Ottawa, Canada
K1A 0E6



Canada

**PROPOSED
RICHMOND TRADE & EXHIBITION CENTRE**

ISSUE DISCUSSION PAPERS

***Market Feasibility
Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR)
Sports, Recreation & Open Space
Form of Development
Richmond's Role***

Prepared by Policy Planning Department
Urban Development Division
City of Richmond
February 8, 2001

MARKET FEASIBILITY

Issue

Establishment of a trade and exhibition centre could be a catalyst for economic development in Richmond, or it could be a "white elephant".

Background

The Richmond Trade and Exhibition Centre (RTEC) project was initiated by Tourism Richmond with the aim of strengthening the city's hospitality industry and increasing hotel room nights. Originally conceived of as a convention centre, market research resulted in a revised proposal that is targeted at the trade show market in BC, Western Canada, and the Pacific Northwest, and is complementary to Vancouver's international convention facility. That same research notes that the overall number of trade shows in North America is not expected to increase, but that show size, number of exhibitors, and number of attendees will, especially in regions where the high-tech sector is growing. In this regard, there is evidence that the Richmond market has significant latent demand for trade and exhibition space and that local groups have been displaced to locations outside the Lower Mainland because of facility size constraints. The strength of the RTEC proposal, thus, lies with the attractiveness of the Lower Mainland and Richmond (with its convenient access and proximity to the airport) as a trade show location, coupled with the area's lack of appropriately sized facilities geared to the broad regional market. Based on this, the project's economic forecast for its first 10 years are significant:

- 4,105 person-years of employment;
- \$201 million in Gross Domestic Product (e.g. the unduplicated value added to the BC economy);
- \$27 million in Provincial revenues, and \$30 million in Federal revenues; and
- \$11 million in City revenues (e.g. property taxes).

Concerns

The performance and viability of the RTEC could be impaired if:

1. The current weakening of the high-technology sector was to worsen;
2. Competitive facilities are introduced in the BC, Western Canada, Pacific Northwest market;
3. Project quality is compromised by poor design/programming and/or inadequate funding; and
4. Project quality is compromised by a lack of community support (e.g. inadequate access to convenient hotels, services, transit, amenities, etc.).

Opportunities

Establishment of the RTEC will benefit both the facility and the City through its synergy with:

1. Richmond's and the Lower Mainland's growing high-technology sector;
2. Richmond's agricultural sector, as a stage for its promotion to consumers and within the industry;
3. Vancouver International Airport;
4. A major new business, educational, and recreational focus on the DFO lands;
5. City Centre businesses and services; and
6. The region, as a possible media centre for the 2010 Winter Olympics.

Conclusion

While establishment of the RTEC appears to be well supported by the market, from a Richmond perspective much of the strength of the proposal comes from its anticipated synergy with high-tech/agriculture, the DFO lands, and the City Centre. In addition, concerns exist regarding the facility's ability to remain competitive under changing market conditions. This may be substantially addressed, however, by ensuring the project moves forward in a timely manner, is of high quality, is integrated with city networks and neighbourhoods, and is complemented by the development of a unique, attractive community on the DFO lands.

Recommendation

Work with Tourism Richmond, the Federal Government, Richmond's high-tech and agriculture sectors, and other affected interests to ensure the Richmond Trade and Exhibition Centre and development of the DFO lands are of high quality, and meet the needs of both the trade show market and the local community.

AGRICULTURAL LAND RESERVE (ALR)

Issue

Development of the Richmond Trade and Exhibition Centre and the DFO lands requires the removal of those lands from the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR), which may have significant implications for the future removal of other lands and the continued viability of farmland in Richmond.

Background

In 1973, the Province established the ALR as a means to protect farmland. This goal is stated in Richmond's Official Community Plan (OCP), which recognizes that farming provides an important food source and environmental/heritage resource, and contributes to the local economy. In 1995, for example, farm earnings in Richmond totalled nearly \$60 million and, although local farms tend to be small, earnings were almost three times the provincial average on a per-farm basis. Nevertheless, farmland in Richmond is under pressure to convert to urban uses, both from the development community and from some farmers who are finding it increasingly difficult to remain competitive as the Lower Mainland grows.

With this in mind, in late 1999, the City, with the assistance of the Province and Agriculture Canada, initiated preparation of a strategy to manage the ALR for increased agricultural viability. Preliminary findings advocate the continued protection of ALR lands; and, while there may be compelling arguments for relaxing this position, such relaxations are only supported where a net benefit to agriculture in Richmond can be realized.

Concerns

Removal of the DFO lands from the ALR and its conversion to urban uses:

1. Represents a significant loss in agricultural land and is contrary to the City's OCP;
2. Could set a precedent for the Federal Government's adjacent Department of National Defence (DND) lands and other private and publicly-owned ALR properties;
3. Requires a comprehensive rationale addressing both the future of the DFO and DND lands; and
4. Could increase land speculation, leading to decreased agricultural viability, especially in the adjacent McLennan area where the owners of smaller lots have long lobbied for their removal from the ALR.

In addition, the Federal Government is not bound by the ALR or its rules, and may alter the use of the subject site without Provincial or City approvals.

Opportunities

Urban development of the DFO lands could:

1. Employ industrial uses to establish an effective urban-rural buffer, thus, avoiding a contentious residential-farming interface and defusing potential residential speculation on remaining ALR lands;
2. Benefit farming in Richmond through the establishment of a farm fund and/or on-site facilities and programs specifically promoting Richmond agricultural products and technologies (i.e. organic farming) and agricultural research, development, and education;
3. Be a model for the integration of farming and related technologies with urban uses (i.e. rooftop greenhouses, grey water applications, storm water retention, etc.);
4. Make Richmond and the site attractive for Federal/Provincial agricultural investment; and
5. Include City ownership/control of farm-related facilities (i.e. the trade and exhibition centre if it was designated to promote/accommodate agriculture) to provide for security of tenure and access.

Conclusion

Removal of the DFO from the ALR would be contrary to current City objectives. However, it appears that through some combination of sensitive on-site development, funding, facilities, programs and City-ownership/control of key farming-related project components, Richmond's agricultural community could realize a significant long-term benefit from the development of these lands.

Recommendation

Work with the Federal and Provincial Governments and the Richmond Farmers Institute to identify a package of City/farming benefits that would enhance the long-term viability of Richmond's agricultural industry, including the possible City-ownership of key farming-related project components.

SPORTS, RECREATION & OPEN SPACE

Issue

Richmond's sports community wants access to a broader range of high quality facilities and, together with the general public, has long targeted the DFO lands for their provision, along with public open space and recreational linkages with the Nature Park and surrounding neighbourhoods.

Background

In 1987, Richmond, working with the Federal Government, put forward a bid for the 1994 Commonwealth Games to be hosted in facilities proposed for the DFO lands. In the 1980s, the City permitted development of Kwantlen University College on lands designated for park, with the understanding that 5-10 acres of the DFO site would be secured in the future to make up for this loss of parkland. And in 1995, the City Centre Area Plan designated the DFO lands for a major city-level athletic park, thus, freeing up Minoru Park's aging and overburdened facilities to focus on the needs of local users.

Today, Richmond sports groups continue to struggle for access to much needed facilities, while the City struggles, within a limited budget, to balance these needs against the needs of other interests. Riverport's development and the possibility of additional facilities there may relieve some pressures, but DFO's central location still make it, to many, a superior location for sports. And, while the City has, for the most part, given up on the entire 133 acre DFO site being devoted to athletic facilities, development of the site still presents terrific potential for sports/recreation/open space benefits to the city as a whole and the local community.

Concerns

1. Richmond's sports and recreation groups do not yet share a common vision for the future.
2. The Federal Government's ability/desire to support sports and recreation uses at DFO may be limited by its commitment to Tourism Richmond and other aspects of the development, especially with regard to the availability of land.
3. The high cost of constructing "boulder dirt" playfields on the DFO lands makes the site impractical as a short-term solution to pressing immediate needs (i.e. girls' soccer).
4. The DFO site may offer the only neighbourhood park opportunity in the vicinity of Kwantlen College.
5. Public trail and open space development at DFO will set a benchmark for the future use of the adjacent Department of National Defence lands.

Opportunities

1. Development of the DFO lands can be the catalyst for a common sports/recreation vision.
2. The trade and exhibition centre can support the 2010 Olympic bid by serving as a media centre. This would raise Richmond's profile and could make the facility eligible for special Federal funding.
3. Tourism Richmond encourages City ownership of the trade and exhibition centre, which would give Richmond a controlling interest in management of the facility and its use for sports.
4. Tourism Richmond supports use of the proposed facility as a multi-purpose venue for sports events.
5. Expansion and shared use of the trade and exhibition centre could be a cost effective means for the City to provide a required 30,000 square foot community centre for the City Centre, together with other city-level sports facilities.
6. Trails, greenways, and neighbourhood-level public open space can enhance the attractiveness and marketability of the DFO site, without compromising its development potential.

Conclusion

Tourism Richmond's proposal presents the City with a unique, cost-effective opportunity to provide city-level sports and community recreational facilities and open space, while contributing to the Whistler/Vancouver Olympic bid and, in turn, enhancing Richmond's sports profile.

Recommendation

Work with Tourism Richmond, the Federal Government, the Richmond Sports Council, the City Centre Community Association, and other affected interests to determine facility and open space needs and a cost-effective strategy for their implementation as part of the proposed development.

FORM OF DEVELOPMENT

Issue

What standards of planning, design, development, and operation should the City apply to the proposed trade and exhibition centre and the 133 acre site controlled by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) in Section 3-4-6?

Background

Tourism Richmond has suggested that the proposed Richmond Trade and Exhibition Centre (RTEC) could anchor a comprehensively planned development of the DFO site, focussed around a high-tech business park, educational/institutional facilities, recreational facilities, and greenways linkages. Such a mix of uses could strengthen Richmond's City Centre, bring new, long-term employment and business development into the downtown, and help support establishment of high quality, multi-family neighbourhoods. The proposal would also remove 133 acres of land from the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) (and signal the possible future removal of the Department of National Defence lands to the east), potentially compromising City objectives for high-tech development elsewhere, and generating pressure for increased residential densities nearby. So, as with any large planning exercise, it is necessary with this one to balance the benefits against the drawbacks, and the needs of the development against the needs of the community. And in this case, the needs of the community can perhaps best be summed up by the City's Vision, that:

"The City of Richmond be the most appealing, liveable, and well-managed community in Canada".

Concerns

Tourism Richmond's proposal for the DFO lands is contrary to City objectives for:

1. The ALR and local agricultural viability, as urban development is proposed for the DFO site;
2. Industrial development, as interest in high-tech uses would be directed away from the City Centre and lands north of the DFO site, and would likely be replaced by renewed interest in increased residential densities in these high-impact aircraft noise areas;
3. Transit, as the RTEC is highly car-oriented and the site presents challenges for transit planning; and
4. Urban design, as the RTEC building is currently envisioned as a cost-effective "black box" set in large, inhospitable parking lot.

Opportunities

1. Any land deal with DFO will likely require that the City have a controlling interest in the trade centre project, thus, putting Richmond in a strong position to influence its quality and form of development.
2. Development of a state-of-the-art high-tech business park could be attractive to Tourism Richmond, as well as government and native interests, as it would complement the RTEC, enhance land values, and provide on-site employment opportunities.
3. Development of a state-of-the-art high-tech business park on the DFO lands could:
 - Promote environmental and social concerns as an integral part of business/development;
 - Attract progressive companies, many of whom are industry leaders;
 - Become a "showcase" for Richmond's vision, extending to transportation, servicing, "green building" technology, and other initiatives;
 - Employ special measures and uses aimed at enhancing the viability of farming in Richmond; and
 - Be a catalyst for economic development in the City Centre and across Richmond.

Conclusion

As a "green field" site on the edge of Richmond's emerging high-density downtown, the DFO lands offer an unparalleled opportunity as a "showcase" for putting the City's vision into action and providing a benchmark for future development in Richmond and elsewhere. Compromises in quality will not only impact the viability of the project, but could reflect badly on Richmond as a whole.

Recommendation

Explore opportunities to partner with Tourism Richmond, the Federal Government, and other affected interests to promote development of the RTEC-DFO lands as showcase for sustainable development.

RICHMOND'S ROLE

Issue

What role should the City play in the proposed Richmond Trade and Exhibition Centre (RTEC) project?

Background

To date, the City has encouraged Tourism Richmond in its efforts towards the establishment of the proposed trade and exhibition centre, and assisted in instituting the hotel room tax being used to fund a portion of the project's construction and operation. With Tourism Richmond's identification of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) lands as the project's only practical site option in the foreseeable future (from the standpoint of location, size, and potential land costs), the City must make a decision as to if, when, and how it might be willing to take on a larger role and responsibility in the RTEC project.

DFO is initiating a process to determine if its 133 acre Richmond site is surplus to the needs of the Federal Government. If it is, the land will be offered to the Province, followed by the City, but not to Tourism Richmond. On this basis, Tourism Richmond would like to see the City secure the necessary portion of the DFO site for the RTEC. The City could then either act as the facility's owner/developer/operator or make the land available to others for these purposes. Alternatively, a native group or the Province could step in to secure the land prior to it even being offered to the City: First Nations are increasingly interested in Federal sites, such as DFO, from a strategic economic perspective (e.g. job creation, etc.), while BC Lands and Assets is increasingly acting as a developer.

Concerns

1. It appears that the DFO lands will come up for development with urban uses in the near future, regardless of whether the City takes steps to become involved with the RTEC, Tourism Richmond, the Federal Government, or any other affected interests.
2. Without the City working proactively to secure a portion of the DFO site for the RTEC, there may be no alternative means for Tourism Richmond to establish the facility in the foreseeable future.
3. Greater City commitment to the RTEC could mean a large commitment in staff time and resources.
4. In light of the anticipated Federal and native land claim processes, and subsequent offer to the Province, it could be premature for the City to commit to a larger role in the RTEC project.
5. The City's position to date has been that it is willing to take ownership of the RTEC site, but it will not take on the risk of owning or operating the proposed facility.
6. If the City becomes the owner of the RTEC, revenues in the form of property taxes may be forfeited.

Opportunities

1. The City could potentially acquire a prime City Centre site (e.g. the proposed RTEC site).
2. The City could enter into strategic partnership(s) with the Federal Government, Provincial Government, and/or First Nations as a means to secure the RTEC site, off-set land costs, possibly accelerate the acquisition process, and take a proactive role in the development of the DFO lands.
3. Strategic partnerships established in regard to the DFO site could form the basis for lasting working relationships and future projects of mutual benefit.
4. As owner of the RTEC site and/or building, the City could exercise a degree of control over the facility's quality of the development, operations, and public access (e.g. sports, recreation, economic objectives).
5. If the City owned the RTEC facility, it could waive property taxes, which in turn would decrease the project's debt, increase profits, and encourage increased investment from other sectors.

Conclusion

Development of the DFO land with urban uses appears to be imminent. If the City is proactive, it may be able to gain greater advantage of this situation for the benefit of the community and the proposed RTEC facility.

Recommendations

- Undertake a staff review of the development potential of the DFO site.
- Explore partnership opportunities with the Federal Government and other affected interests.
- Act as an intermediary between Tourism Richmond and the Federal Government.