

Richmond Agricultural Viability Strategy (RAVS) Update Referral

Background

In 1999, after the adoption of the City's then current Official Community Plan (OCP), the City embarked on a process to develop an Agricultural Viability Strategy (AVS) and Profile (data base, charts, maps), to better manage the City's agricultural areas, for long-term viability. The four-year process, which was carried out in partnership with the City, Richmond Farmers Institute (RFI), BC Agricultural Land Commission and BC Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries included extensive consultation with the local farming community.

The Council approved Terms of Reference (ToR) to prepare the AVS was overseen by a Core Team comprised of representatives from the City, RFI, Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) and Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries (MAFF). A consultant assisted.

The AVS was approved by Richmond City Council on May 26, 2003 and provided a 2021 vision, guiding principles, objectives, and practical strategies for the future growth and viability of the agricultural industry in Richmond. Soil based farming is a high priority.

The AVS is a long-term commitment and partnership of the City, and agricultural community, to strengthen and enhance agricultural viability in Richmond. The Strategy identified initiatives that were to be undertaken and coordinated at the local level, to create a positive agricultural, environment, infrastructure and regulatory policy framework to support the agricultural sector.

At the time, Richmond's AVS Strategy was regarded by the BC agricultural community, as one of the first comprehensive and innovative municipal agricultural Strategies in the Province.

The Strategy has led to the establishment of the Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC), policies to manage ALC and City farm and non-farm ALR development applications, significant City infrastructure and regulatory improvements, and improved public awareness of agricultural soil based viability and food security issues (e.g., ALR tours, improved ALR road signage).

As part of the 2041 OCP preparation, the 2003 Richmond Agricultural Viability Strategy was reviewed with the Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC), to determine how it had been useful and if any changes were needed.

While significant improvements have been achieved, looking out to 2021, many of the 2003 Strategy issues and challenges still require attention today, as they are complex, and involve senior government, community, private sector and farmer support.

To continue its innovative and leadership agricultural role, Council wishes to update the AVS, to ensure that it remains effective and an important part of the City's economic development vision.

An updated AVS would support Council's 2014-2018 Term Goal #4, Leadership in Sustainability which states that:

Richmond aims to be a climate prepared City with sustainable resource use, a green-built and natural environment, local agriculture and food, and a leader in sustainable businesses and municipal government.

- 4.1 Continued implementation of the sustainability framework.
- 4.2 Innovative projects and initiatives to advance sustainability.

Recommendation:

That staff prepare a report, in consultation with the Richmond Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC), which proposes a work program, to update the exiting Agricultural Viability Strategy and Profile, for Council's approval by December 2017, which is to include:

- Terms of Reference, to complete the Strategy and Profile,
- the 2016 Census statistics and related information,
- policies to address City agricultural viability opportunities and challenges including land use, and infrastructure (e.g., drainage),
- any needed improved City farm and non-farm development application regulations (e.g., zoning, soil fill),

- a stakeholder and public consultation process
- a budget which may include consultants.