

**Annual Address  
by Mayor Malcolm Brodie  
December 1, 2008**

## **Positioning Richmond for 2010 and beyond**

2008 has been a momentous year filled with great promise. It started in Richmond when over 8,000 people lined up to sign the last roof panel for the Richmond Olympic Oval. It will conclude after the Oval is open and in use for major competitions. In between have been times of great community success balanced by other times of great concern, such as when the world realized the gravity of the unprecedented global economic challenges.

As we begin a new term for City Council, we say farewell to two valued colleagues – Rob Howard and Cynthia Chen. During their tenure, both worked tirelessly to improve our community. Strong advocates for Richmond, their participation in Council meetings, community events and other City business has been remarkable. We salute Rob and Cynthia and thank them for all their civic contributions.

Tonight we also welcome back two familiar faces to City Council. Our new Councillors, Greg Halsey-Brandt and Ken Johnston, are very familiar with these Chambers. Their experience and knowledge gained here and as provincial representatives will be invaluable as we work together to serve the best interests of our community.

In looking ahead and back, a number of familiar themes emerge. Amongst the key issues on which Council has focused are a number which promise to remain at the forefront throughout this coming term, including:

- Community Safety;
- Transportation;
- Livability;
- Sustainability;
- Financial Management; and
- Richmond Olympic Oval / 2010 Olympic Winter Games.

So, let's review some of our past year's achievements as we analyze Richmond's position for the future.

### **Community Safety**

Richmond is a very safe community. Our crime rate remains among the lowest in Canada. To date this year, we have seen an overall reduction in Richmond crime. For instance, these areas are all down over 25%:

- Business break and enters;
- Theft from automobiles;
- Robberies; and
- Motor vehicle theft.

This reduction is a real tribute to the tireless efforts of the Richmond RCMP who are supported by a combination of City staff, community agencies, volunteers and residents.

During the past term, Council has dramatically increased funding to allow the Richmond RCMP detachment to hire new officers and civilian staff. The auxiliary constable program continues to expand to augment our resources for a growing community.

We were pleased to welcome the appointment of Rendell Nessel as our new Officer-in-Charge. With his long standing local experience combined with his commitment to innovative community-based policing, we are confident Supt. Nessel will continue to build on Richmond's international reputation for excellence in policing service delivery.

Richmond RCMP's outreach to the community continues to be a hallmark of its service delivery. One example is the Onside Program which provides opportunities for kids in our community. Richmond members partner with over 500 Richmond youth to attend hockey, football, and theatre events. These bridges with the police help our youth develop positive 'assets' on which they can build throughout their lives.

Canada Line planning continues as a key initiative for the RCMP together with the Transit Police. Rapid transit promises to be a major benefit for our community. Council has lobbied tirelessly to ensure Richmond's Canada Line stations incorporate crime prevention principles. One strategy is to continue the effort to ensure that turnstiles are installed at all stations.

Safety in our community is also addressed by others in addition to the RCMP. Our Bylaws and Emergency Services do an outstanding job whether in response to emergencies or in helping the community to prepare for and prevent public disasters.

Since flooding remains one of our major safety concerns, our island community has developed a robust flood protection system. Council approved our visionary Flood Protection Management Strategy to keep the City safe for the next 25 years.

Richmond Fire Rescue Department has continued its upgrades to meet the needs of our diverse, rapidly growing 21<sup>st</sup> century community. Examples include:

- o Shellmont Fire Hall reconstruction to meet seismic standards;
- o Steveston Fire Hall – soon to be replaced; and
- o Bridgeport Fire Hall – moving soon to Cambie near No. 4 Road.

Like all civic buildings now being built, these projects promise high standards for environmentally-friendly design.

The City is grateful to Acting Fire Chief Ron Beaman and his leadership team who are leading the department to better reflect our community. 2008 recruitment included 27 new firefighters which significantly increased workforce diversity through expanded recruitment efforts.

Members of our Fire-Rescue Department also contribute to the community in other ways. This year:

- o Decommissioned firefighting equipment was donated to El Salvador and Paraguay;
- o Staff were recognized by the Tzu Chi Foundation of Canada for their dedicated efforts to assist with earthquake relief in China; and
- o 24 Richmond Fire-Rescue staff volunteered on their own time for two weeks in Thailand to work on the construction of two homes. They also took tools, toys, books, and sports equipment to two villages and a school.

### **Transportation**

Effective transportation strategies for today and tomorrow remain a primary concern for our residents and our businesses. City Council constantly aims to improve our networks and to promote transportation alternatives. These help us to reduce our reliance on the automobile, protect our environment and promote healthier lifestyles.



The continuing construction of the Canada Line has been a major focus as we look forward to its opening in November 2009. With over \$7 million from external partners in recent funding, Richmond has launched an extensive reconstruction program along No. 3 Road with the introduction of bicycle lanes, improved sidewalks, landscaping, street furniture and public gathering spaces. We look forward to the revitalized streetscape that will emerge from this project.

To support transportation alternatives, Richmond continues to develop bicycling options throughout the City. In 2008, we:

- o Extended our bicycle lanes along Westminster Highway;
- o Created the first dedicated bicycle lanes along No. 3 Road; and
- o Planned the connection to the new Canada Line bridge, thus facilitating easier bicycle travel to Vancouver in the near future.

There are numerous other transportation initiatives that could be mentioned, such as:

- o Completion of the bus-only lane along Russ Baker Way; and
- o Highway 91 & Nelson Road interchange.

Our transportation focus is always to move people and goods efficiently throughout Richmond. This supports our quality of life as well as the economy.

### **Sustainability**

Richmond residents benefit from our approach to sustainability. We live amid some of the most beautiful natural surroundings in the world. While working hard to sustain a prosperous community with modern public amenities, our residents are among the healthiest and most culturally diverse. Recognized worldwide for our innovative and well-managed local government, our challenge is to sustain our high standards for future generations.

A key element of recent sustainability efforts was the development of the City Centre Area Plan designed to concentrate future growth within our downtown. High density urban villages based on transit-oriented development with easy access to public amenities will make our City Centre one of the preferred residential and commercial addresses in the region.

City Council also approved an innovative Green Roofs Policy for industrial and office buildings to encourage their use for urban agriculture and plantings. This in turn facilitates storm water management and generally supports the environment.

Our new Climate Change Response Agenda is based on a three part approach to address the challenge of climate change – Empower, Prevent and Prepare. Environmental Programs staff together with the City’s Sustainability Office are measuring and establishing baseline emissions data so we can then establish reduction guidelines.

To encourage both urban and commercial agriculture, the City welcomed the first outdoor Steveston Farmers and Artisans Market showcasing over 50 vendors every Sunday from May through September. City Council hopes that this Market will now be a yearly tradition.

Creating a sustainable community also includes addressing the social needs of our residents.

Richmond remains a leader in the ongoing implementation of our affordable housing strategy. Though it is a challenge to create affordable housing without greater support from other levels of government, our recent successes include the creation of hundreds of units under the strategy.

In September, City Council adopted a Youth Service Plan originally created by a Youth Services Steering Committee – a partnership between the City, youth and youth-supporting agencies. This collaborative effort reflects the importance of working together to create a positive and enriching environment in which our youth will flourish.

The City's Parks Department and Diversity Services Section worked with the local sports and community organizations to develop a Richmond chapter of KidSport. With a program goal to reduce financial barriers and encourage participation in field sport activities, over 60 children and youth have already been supported with funding through this organization.

Acknowledging the important role of our Older Adults, Council endorsed the Older Adults Service Plan which recognized the need for a more diverse range of services. This Plan builds upon Richmond's record as one of the healthiest cities whose residents lead Canada in average longevity. Also this year, the Seniors Wellness Clinic Program was expanded to 8 sites providing community-based health monitoring for hundreds of culturally diverse seniors.

Richmond also received two UBCM grants. One served to facilitate the highly successful "Decreasing Barriers, Increasing Wellness" pilot project, an outreach program targeting isolated older adults to engage them in positive social recreational opportunities. The second UBCM grant supporting community health was used to create the first-ever Richmond cycling map as well as Richmond's Walking Guide Book for free distribution throughout the City in the near future.

### **Livability**

Richmond City Council is committed to continually improving the livability and vibrancy of our City. We support programs and projects while working together with our community partners. Some of these include:

- The innovative playground at Garden City Community Park was opened.
- The Middle Arm Waterfront Greenway Project to develop an accessible pedestrian-friendly greenway on the downtown waterfront was planned.
- The Hugh Boyd Master Plan update is complete. This includes the renewal of the children's playground thanks to support from the Rick Hansen *Let's Play Grant* and our first Senior's Fitness Park to be added soon.
- Synthetic turf fields were installed at King George and Minoru Parks in October.
- A Wildlife Garden was opened in September at the Richmond Nature Park.
- The Graybar Road Pier was commemoratively opened with our partners to become Richmond's newest public waterfront amenity. It serves as a special picnic and recreational area especially for community members in East Richmond.
- Supporting the growth of community programming at Terra Nova Rural Park, a former garage became a "barn" with an indoor classroom/meeting room, community kitchen and public washrooms. Other projects in this park, include:
  - Restoration of the Parson House Heritage Landscape;
  - Preparations to re-create an historic front yard and heritage orchard; and
  - Opening the original slough to create fish habitat and add biodiversity.
- In Hamilton, the elementary school and the Community Association received UBCM funding through the Community School Connections Project for a community gathering place in the shared rotunda.



- The Partners for Beautification program provides opportunity for community involvement in civic beautification adoption programs. Over 1,200 volunteers participated this year in individual and group projects. For instance, from the corporate sector:
  - Employees of Microsoft Canada Development Centre constructed a boardwalk in a previously inaccessible part of the Nature Park East; and
  - Over 200 Telus volunteers converged on Terra Nova Rural Park to participate in planting, clearing of invasive plants and building new planting beds for the Schoolyard Project.
- Richmond launched the first citywide “Doors Open” event in BC to celebrate the great diversity of Richmond’s arts, culture and heritage. 30 venues open to the public attracted more than 20,000 visits.
- New heritage education kits focussing on the Musqueam culture and Chinese Immigration were created and distributed through partnerships with the Richmond School District and other agencies.
- In conjunction with the Steveston Community Association, Council approved a permanent location for the Steveston Interurban Tram. The tram will be situated on its original route in Steveston Park. Plans are underway to develop a conservation/restoration plan for the passenger car, along with an interpretive centre.

### **Financial Management**

Economic sustainability remains at the core of Council’s budget-planning decisions. We are creative in our cost controls, responsible in our management of reserves and prudent in our commitment to new spending initiatives. Richmond also aggressively pursues new revenue sources through partnerships or other opportunities.

Our Economic Development initiatives are designed to retain and expand the local business sector. This enables the City to plan its growth to create jobs and economic activity while supporting expansion of civic services for the benefit of all.

Strong growth continued this year – more than 8,000 building permits were issued with a total construction value of \$600 million. The Richmond Film Office has built a larger inventory of available locations for filming resulting in 30% more filming activity thus far.

We understand the difficult international economic climate. The reality of an economic slowdown will cause Council to pay its usual careful attention to every aspect of the budget and where necessary re-evaluate its priorities for expenditures. As always, Richmond will aggressively pursue outside sources of revenue and reduce funding reliance on the local tax base. In addition, the City is feeling the pressure from some significant regional initiatives arising out of the need to renew or expand infrastructure for basic services.

### **Richmond Olympic Oval / 2010 Olympic Winter Games**

It has been an incredibly exciting year as we have moved closer to two very important milestones – the opening of the Richmond Olympic Oval, and the beginning of the 2010 Olympic Winter Games.

After a long journey, the doors to the Oval will finally open to the public on December 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> – setting the stage for a series of events over the ensuing months. We are anxious to provide community access to this spectacular new facility. Council also appreciates the many sport, recreational, health, cultural, social and economic benefits it will provide. Public enthusiasm for the project was highlighted in January when more than 8,000 residents,

schoolchildren and others signed the last section of the Oval roof before it was finally lifted into place.

City Council recently dedicated the new Riverside Spirit Square in front of the Oval, built with generous assistance from the provincial government. Council also completed an agreement for the 2010 Games to have the Oval serve as the Athlete Fairness Centre, better known as the anti-doping laboratory. This Centre accelerates our plans for establishing a full sports medicine and sports sciences centre in this section of the Oval following the Games.

The Oval project includes a significant commitment to public art – Susan Point’s Musqueam artwork embedded in the concrete buttresses along the Oval’s north face and Janet Echelman’s WaterSky Garden artwork above the Oval’s water feature. Further art projects will enhance the spectacular architectural and landscape design for all to appreciate.

The Oval will be extremely busy after it opens. Just consider:

- We will close this year by hosting the first major speed skating competition with the Canadian Single Distance Championships;
- In February the popular Richmond Winter Festival will move to the Oval site and will include the City’s one-year countdown celebrations for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games; and
- The prestigious World Single Distance Championships will be held in early March.

Council has been planning to ensure Richmond residents receive the maximum benefits and legacy from its status as an official Venue City. Based on intensive public and business consultation, Council adopted the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games Strategic Operational Plan designed to create ongoing legacies for the community such as new public gathering spaces, gateway beautification and expanded volunteer capacity. Volunteer Richmond agreed to develop new Information Centre and Volunteer programs.

In addition, the Richmond Spirit of BC Committee worked tirelessly to spread the Olympic spirit throughout our community and hosted a very successful event at Aberdeen Centre to mark the opening the 2008 Beijing Olympic Summer Games.

### **General Achievements and Special Roles**

Overall in 2008, Richmond received much recognition. Three significant examples are:

- A national Environmental Award from the Canadian Association of Municipal Administrators for our innovative planning and development of Terra Nova Rural Park. Richmond was recognized for environmental sustainability in protecting the environment. This is our third major award received in relation to this park development.
- The 2008 American Public Works Association Project of the Year Award for the emergency south dyke repairs successfully completed in just 8 weeks.
- Richmond was selected as the host City for the 2009 BC Seniors Games expected to attract thousands of participants for the largest sports event ever held in the City. The Games will be “organized by seniors for seniors” and we are indebted to the Richmond Sports Council for developing the bid. With a community Volunteer Board, the Games will be supported by hundreds of volunteers and 40 community groups.

After many years of consideration, Richmond just signed Friendship City agreements with Qingdao and Xiamen in China. These new relationships have already resulted in a number of



visits between our cities. Council, in conjunction with our Sister City Committee, is exploring interesting new ways to foster cultural, economic and social exchanges.

Special mention needs to be made of the thousands of volunteers who selflessly dedicate themselves to improve the lives of others. Their contributions elevate our quality of life to a level that would otherwise be impossible to achieve. City Council and the people of Richmond truly appreciate all the efforts being made by these dedicated volunteers to strengthen the fabric of our community.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, it has been a rewarding and exciting year. City Council looks forward to even more success as we work through the challenges we expect to encounter during the new term. With the support of our City staff, community partners, businesses and residents, Council is confident that Richmond will continue to move forward strongly.

On behalf of Richmond City Council, I thank all of those who have contributed to make Richmond a better place in which to live, work and play. We know that we can look forward to your continued support in the coming years.

Thank you.