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November 12, 2010

Terry Crowe  
 City of Richmond  
 6911 No. 3 Road  
 Richmond, British Columbia V6Y 2C1

Dear Mr. Crowe:

***Re: Richmond Official Community Plan (OCP) 2041 Update***

I would like to thank you for organizing the October 26, 2010 meeting to review the City of Richmond's OCP with organizations in the development industry and their members. From the discussion, it was clear that the industry supports the City allowing more flexibility in single-family zones for more housing types and increasing residential intensification opportunities outside of the City Centre Area.

Generally the minutes of the meeting reflect UDI's position, but I would like to clarify a few of points.

**Schools:**

During our discussion, it was noted that in one Neighbourhood Centre there was community support for the redevelopment of an older shopping centre - in part because the neighbourhood was concerned that their local school might close in the future.

We recommend that the City work with the School Board to identify areas where there is the threat of school closures due to a lack of students. The City could then partner with the School Board and the local community to allow densification which enables more affordable forms of housing which in turns encourages new residents, especially those with school aged children, to move into the area.

**Incentives for Coach Houses and Granny Flats:**

In the first bullet point under the *Coach Houses/Granny Flats/Duplexes* section, it is noted that the City should "... consider reducing the density (FAR) in the existing single family zones or increasing the density (FAR) if the builder constructs a coach house or granny flat instead of putting all of the building area into the single family house."

UDI supports increasing density and incenting developers to build coach houses and granny flats as this promotes the principles of wise and efficient land use and affordability.

In general, UDI opposes downzoning as it undermines investor certainty and discourages development. We would prefer the latter approach (increasing the density) be used by the City to incent the development of coach housing and granny flats.

#### **Property Assessment Issues:**

Under the first bullet point on page 2 of the minutes, it is recommended that the City talk to the BC Assessment Authority about the tax implications of permitting coach housing and granny flats. UDI recommends that all of the policies of the OCP be discussed with the BC Assessment Authority, as property tax issues have arisen in the past with previous municipal plans.

#### **Parks:**

*As we noted in our February 11, 2010 letter, "Metro Vancouver's Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) will further challenge the City by restricting uses within the Urban Containment Boundary as well as limiting growth in the Non-Urban Designated areas. As a result, having high park ratios within the Boundary will be difficult, and expensive – if not impossible to achieve – because the land supply will remain finite as the population grows within the Boundary."*

Park costs were a significant issue the last time Richmond reviewed its DCCs. It should be noted that another Metro Vancouver municipality had to reduce its park standard because it would have resulted in DCCs increasing to over \$80,000 per single-family unit.

#### **OCP and the City Centre Area Plan (CCAP):**

We raised the question about how the City Centre Area will be treated under the OCP review (third point under the *Other Comments section*). Our understanding from the discussions is that the CCAP will not be impacted by the new OCP. Is this correct?

#### **Property Owners and Tenants:**

Similarly, the second last bullet point on page 2 from our discussions about distinguishing property owners from tenants was phrased as a question not a recommendation.

Since meeting with City officials, UDI has received further recommendations from UDI members:

#### **Row Houses:**

UDI is supportive of non-strata row houses as a housing form for municipalities seeking to densify neighbourhoods. Row houses are non-intrusive and allow people to live in a denser project without the restrictions of a Strata Council. Several local governments have permitted row houses in their communities. UDI will be sending you further information on this matter in the near future.

**Neighbourhood Centres Planning Schedule:**

It would be helpful if the City could provide a firmer schedule for the planning of the Neighbourhood Centres, so our members can better assess potential development opportunities. At the meeting, City staff noted that a substantial portion of Richmond's growth over the next 30 years will be outside of the City Centre Area. Growth in the Neighbourhood Centres will be important to the success of the new OCP.

One question our members have is whether the process for planning the Centres will occur simultaneously or if the City will move forward with some Neighbourhood Centres before others? If so, does the City know which Centres will proceed first?

We would like to thank you again for organizing the October 26<sup>th</sup> meeting. There was a positive discussion between City staff and the industry on the OCP review. UDI looks forward to working with you and your staff as Richmond develops its vision for the future through this process.

Yours truly,

Original signed by:

Jeff Fisher  
Deputy Executive Director

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**CITY OF RICHMOND  
CHILD CARE DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
SOCIAL PLANNING STRATEGY RESPONSE (FINAL)**

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**1. What are Richmond's key social assets?**

With respect to child care, Richmond has a strong community of child care professionals and advocates, not-for-profit and for-profit child care centres as well as the City's Child Care Development Advisory Committee, the Child Care Resource and Referral Centre, Richmond Children First, group child care centres, family child care homes, as well as a wide range of pre-schools.

**2. What are some key social issues facing Richmond?**

Child care in the City is in crisis just as it is all over the country. A lack of dedicated and stable funding from the provincial and federal governments has created a patch work system of child care. Standards of care are not consistent and access to affordable, group care is unattainable for many families. Programs that are the most expensive to operate, such as infant/toddler group care and before/after school care, are in short supply. Attracting and retaining qualified staff is difficult due to the low wages.

Simply having a CCDAC and negotiating with developers for child care space in all new developments is politically correct but not enough to make a difference in resolving the crisis issues around early learning and care. Richmond is suffering from a number of challenges – high cost of infant/toddler care, oversupply of 3-5 care and a shortage of before and after school care. A City commissioned report has repeatedly recommended the City hire a dedicated full-time child care co-ordinator but to-date, the City has not taken action to implement this recommendation.

**3. What's working well re: social issues?**

As it did in the 90's, the City is currently working closely with developers to create new child care centres. This initiative has provided growth in the number of child care spaces available within the City during a period of significant new construction.

The City enjoys a broad range of child care programming options; among them play-based, Montessori, Reggio, fine arts, bilingual centres, family, group and out-of-school care.

Within the City of Richmond there is a large pool of talented and dedicated child care professionals who often work under difficult circumstances to provide child care, hire and retain qualified staff, keep parent fees affordable, maintain premises and generally do whatever it takes to keep the doors of their child care spaces open.

**4. What could be improved?**

There are a variety of other municipal models for providing child care such as a Hub or Reggio model that could be explored for delivery of services in Richmond. For example, a 'Hub' model may offer child care and other child services gathered under one roof to provide a 'service hub' to meet the needs of children and their families. It is suggested these alternative models could be explored to more effectively service the child care needs in Richmond.

Other municipalities such as West Vancouver have implemented bylaw changes to ease the burden of creating child care spaces. A review of existing City of Richmond bylaws could look at the potential to ease certain bylaws to support the creation of additional child care spaces.

Provide financial and organizational support for the City to participate with all stakeholders in the early learning and care community in Richmond to come together, identify individual strengths of each organization and opportunities for collaboration to provide measurable benefits to the child care and early learning community. The City should see it is in their best interest to strengthen the CCDAC and encourage community wide collaboration and support.

Make the CCDAC relevant and an integral part of the City planning process or get rid of it. Refer all matters relating to child care and early learning in the community to CCDAC for input and feedback. Give CCDAC profile as a meaningful group of citizens who contribute valued time and energy to helping the City address child care and early learning matters. In doing so, we would hope to avoid the situation which occurred in 2006 when the entire CCDAC disbanded due to the perception the Committee was not relevant nor being treated as a partner with the City.

Establish a baseline and benchmarks to measure progress of critical success factors in maintaining and growing the number of quality affordable child care spaces needed in Richmond during a period of significant change in the early learning and care delivery model; update and report semi-annually.

#### **5. What should our social planning vision be for the City?**

CCDAC's vision for child care includes a full-time child care co-ordinator, to ensure that funding opportunities are not missed, to bring together different child care members for partnerships, and to ensure that the child care centres that are built by developers meet the actual needs of the community and are organizationally and financially viable within the rapidly changing child care context.

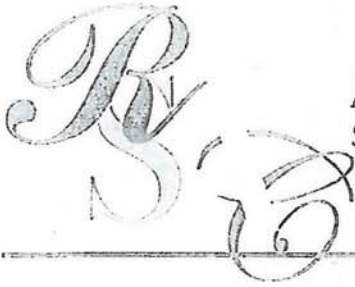
#### **6. What roles can others play to better address local social needs?**

Provincial government: provide stable and sufficient funding, address the ECE shortage and attrition (particularly for infant/toddler), share their vision for the proposed programming for 3-year and 4-year olds within the public school system, work with local school district to ensure newly built schools can accommodate child care centres

Federal government: offer a universal child care system, extend maternity leave duration (to lessen need for infant/toddler care),

Child Care Community Members: Create better community network connections to improve quality of child care, and to tackle arising issues such as child care space shortages (infant/toddler and out-of-school care), work collaboratively to respond to changes to child care imposed by the likely implementation of Full-day Kindergarten for 3-year and 4-year olds including the impact on child care for school age children.





*Richmond Seniors Advisory Committee*  
Serving Richmond since 1991



November 15, 2010

Mayor Malcolm Brodie  
and Councillors  
City of Richmond

Dear Mayor and Councillors:

Re: Official Community Plan

As a member of Richmond Seniors Advisory Committee (RSAC), I have been asked to articulate our comments regarding the Richmond's Official Community Plan (OCP)

There is a great need for an appropriate mix of housing, high-rise, low-rise, multiple family, single family, social housing, affordable housing and supportive housing.

Although we think this is necessary, on the other hand, we would like to see some areas such as Steveston, Seafair and Sunnymede maintain their uniqueness. A difficult balance.

Having to look forward to the population growth over the next 10 - 20 years, we are cognizant of the fact that there will be highs and lows in the development market. With this in mind, we trust the City Fathers will have a rainy day fund to use for social amenities such as community centers, libraries and added health needs

RSAC are pleased at the progress and participation of the public by giving their views on the future planning of Richmond. We feel that Richmond has strong potential and is headed in the right direction, but strong political leadership is needed to achieve the proposed 2041 OCP Vision.

Yours sincerely,

Aileen Cormack

**Input from Richmond Poverty Response Committee on  
The Official Community Plan Review  
November 24, 2010**

The City of Richmond has requested citizens' input to the update of the Official Community Plan (OCP). The Richmond Poverty Response Committee comprises volunteers representing the faith community, community organizations, local social services, and members of the public who wish to help alleviate the effects of poverty in Richmond. We are pleased that the City has chosen to update the OCP with a focus on sustainability, because many recommendations and considerations for sustainability will also assist lower income Richmond residents to meet their basic needs, remove barriers, and facilitate social connectedness.

Of all jurisdictions in British Columbia, Richmond has the second highest rates of general poverty and of child poverty.<sup>1</sup> Its groups most at risk of poverty include families with children, immigrant newcomers, women, seniors, and people with physical or mental disabilities. Their poverty affects their health and well-being by restricting access to affordable housing, safe neighbourhoods with public amenities, transit, and social activity. These adverse effects can be mitigated by land-use plans and community planning that address the needs of lower-income residents through sustainable strategies for affordable housing, community wellness, and social services.

In the 2000 report *Poverty in Richmond: a Sense of Belonging*, focus groups of people with low income indicated that living in poverty has two major impacts: an overwhelming exclusion from life in the community, and a limiting of choice in the decisions they had to make. Reported most frequently were constant juggling between basic expenses and emergency expenses and cutting back on social contact as a way to make ends meet. The focus groups said that reducing the costs of housing and increased access to transportation would make their life easier.

The Official Community Plan 2041 Update circulated by City Council reflects the idea that liveability of neighbourhoods is enhanced through healthy built environments.<sup>2</sup> This idea has also been advanced on behalf of low-income residents by the BC Healthy Living Alliance. Their recent report recommends changes to the built environment such as increasing housing density, more mixed land-use patterns, improving connectivity between urban streets for easier and shorter walks between locations, and better public transit. Similarly, the Richmond Wellness Strategy points out that the physical environment and land-use can affect physical well-being by providing healthy choices for transportation (walking, cycling, and transit) and can help residents know their neighbours and feel part of their community.<sup>3</sup> It is the view of Richmond Poverty Response Committee that creating neighbourhood centres that allow for a range of housing sensitive to a range of income

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<sup>1</sup> Local-Level Data On Income and Poverty for BC from 2006 Census, Provincial Health Services Authority, Health Officers' Council of BC and Vancouver Coastal Health October 2008

<sup>2</sup> Health Inequities in British Columbia A Discussion Paper, BC Healthy Living Alliance, November 2008

<sup>3</sup> Richmond Community Wellness Strategy, Living Well in Richmond 2010 - 2015



needs, provides increased access to affordable transportation alternatives and fosters social connectedness will enhance the quality of life of low income residents.

### **Affordable Housing**

The OCP document has identified a need for 41,000 housing units to accommodate population growth forecasts up to 2041. It recognizes the importance of planning to ensure that Richmond will have adequate and affordable housing for the full range of incomes and needs. It also points out the opportunity to add more housing choices within neighbourhood centres and along transit routes, providing for a diversity of housing types to suit all ages, incomes, and family composition.

When developing the Regional Growth Strategy and examining the issues of affordable housing, the Metro Vancouver Board estimated the housing demand, for various incomes, of each Metro Vancouver community over the next ten years. It projected that Richmond will need 1,800 units of low income housing (which includes subsidized housing) and 2,200 units of moderate income housing.<sup>4</sup> To meet this demand, an average of 400 units of low/moderate income housing needs to be added each year. However, according to a recent progress report on the city's Affordable Housing Strategy, just 645 such units have been secured over the last three years. At that rate, it would appear, there will be a significant shortfall to meet the affordable housing needs of Richmond residents.

Understanding and meeting the challenge of providing affordable housing is a complex issue. A recent report from the Conference Board of Canada<sup>5</sup> stated that 67% of Metro Vancouver households struggle with the high cost of housing, making Metro Vancouver 22<sup>nd</sup> on a list of 25 least affordable communities. Using CMHC data, the report concluded that a lack of affordable housing supply left one in five Canadian households (3 million) spending too much on housing. It also pointed out that when a household over spends on housing it threatens the health of individuals who cannot also afford nutritious food, other healthy pursuits like sports and recreation, or education that could lift them out of poverty. High costs have led developers to build homes predominantly for upper and middle incomes. It suggests that governments, the private sector, and the non-profit housing sector should combine their efforts to increase the supply of affordable housing. Each sector has its unique expertise – governments have planning and development-approval powers to encourage private-sector developers to include affordable units in their developments. Private-sector developers are best at building such units because of their ability to find ways of reducing construction costs, and the non-profit sector can operate social housing developments and advocate for addressing poverty issues.

A report<sup>6</sup> prepared by Will Dunning for the Cooperative Housing Federation of Canada put a price tag on eliminating the affordability gap. Using CMHC data from 2006, it determined that almost 4 million people, including 750,000 children, were living in accommodation that was in a state of disrepair, or was unsuitable for the number of people living there, or cost more than 30% of the household's pre-tax income. The report calculated that it would cost \$4.7 billion a year (\$1.10 per

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<sup>4</sup> Metro Vancouver 2040: Shaping Our Future. Metro Vancouver Board, November 10, 2010, p. 71.

<sup>5</sup> Building from the Ground Up: Enhancing Affordable Housing in Canada. Conference Board of Canada, March 2010

<sup>6</sup> Dimensions of Core Housing Needs in Canada, Cooperative Housing Federation of Canada, November 2009



day for every Canadian household) to ensure that core housing needs were met for the 1.5 million households in need. It also identified British Columbia as one of four provinces where the incidence of core housing is greatest.

These findings are supported by other research. A background report prepared in January, 2007 for the development of the Richmond affordable housing strategy noted that based on CMHC data for 2001 16 % of households were in core housing need.<sup>7</sup> A CMHC report of 2009 placed 18% of Metro Vancouver households in this category.

Two other reports, one by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities<sup>8</sup> and the other by the Canadian Senate<sup>9</sup> raised related concerns about housing in Canada. The Federation noted increases in the wait time for social housing and in the number of shelter beds. The Senate report on poverty stated that governments must commit to a strategy of core poverty eradication which would entail designing all housing and income support programs to "lift Canadians out of poverty rather than make living within poverty more manageable." It urged the development of a national housing strategy.

In Richmond, wait lists for subsidized housing are still high and shelter beds have not increased. In 2007, BC Housing provided the following information to Richmond Poverty Response Committee. On their wait list at the time were 692 applications from Richmond, including 417 families, 185 seniors, and 90 people with special needs. Between 2000 and 2007, only 74 units of non-market housing were built in Richmond. The homeless count of 2008 showed 56 homeless people in Richmond, up 60% from the 2005. The Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness<sup>10</sup> provided a snapshot of who make up the homeless population in Richmond. They range widely in age range: six accompanied children under 19 years of age, one unaccompanied child under the age of 19, one youth aged 19 – 24, 34 aged 25 – 54 and 7 over 55 years of age. Twelve were women and 32 were men. Half reported having multiple health conditions. Today, in Richmond there is one 10-bed shelter for men only and one temporary shelter that is open from November to March.

It is clear from the information above that providing affordable housing is a complex proposition. By experience it is known that solutions cannot be left to market forces and that solutions require the involvement of the many sectors – developers, government, and non-profit organizations and community working together. Richmond City is to be commended for adopting an affordable housing strategy that provides a framework for finding solutions for the provision of affordable housing including secondary suites, preserving and maintaining rental stock as well as low-end market home ownership. The OCP envisions adding more housing choice within neighbourhood centers to suit a range of ages, incomes, and family composition which may allow for more proactive implementation of the affordable housing strategy. In addition, as the affordability gap

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<sup>7</sup> City of Richmond Affordable Housing Strategy: Background Indicators and Key Measures and Indicators. McClanaghan and Associates, January, 2007, p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> Mending Canada's Frayed Social Safety Net: the role of municipal governments, Federation of Canadian Municipalities, March, 2010

<sup>9</sup> In From the Margins: A Call to Action on Poverty, Housing and Homelessness, Canadian Senate Report tabled December, 2009.

<sup>10</sup> Homeless in Metro Vancouver: A Comparative Profile, Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness, March 2010



widens to include more people, and people with higher incomes, it is important to also plan for housing needs of the most vulnerable, those who are living in inadequate and unsafe housing and people who are hard to house due to medical and behavioural problems. The homelessness and those at risk of homelessness are no longer the stereotypical single adult male; it includes families and women and seniors.

#### **Affordable Housing Recommendations:**

1. Give priority to non-market and low-end market rental units within neighbourhood centres, near transit transfer points, services, and amenities.
2. Increase the city's efforts to implement Policy Areas 5 and 6 of the affordable housing strategy. Area 5 focuses on building capacity through targeted strategies as well as through partnerships brokered in the community and Area 6 focuses on advocacy aimed at improving the policy framework and funding to resources available for responding to local housing needs. Both are important tools for ensuring the development of non-market and low-end market rental units.
3. Promote the redevelopment of existing social housing. Some social housing in Richmond was built 30-40 years ago and needs upgrading or maintenance. Many of these projects may be redeveloped with increased density. The BC Housing Service Plan for 2008-2011 includes strategies to work with the private and non-profit sectors to redevelop their lands into mixed-income communities in which subsidized housing is more fully integrated. The Co-operative Federation of Canada has been also exploring ways through its 2020 Vision discussion to redevelop co-op lands (already by definition mixed-income communities) to increase density and to better serve the needs of their residents. Opportunities will undoubtedly exist where the City of Richmond could provide support and leadership in promoting redevelopment projects that build on existing resources.
4. Help the homeless. While Richmond's affordable housing strategy addresses three broad areas of affordable housing (affordable ownership, affordable rental and subsidized rental), it glaringly neglects to mention the homeless and supportive housing. Indeed, while the city wholeheartedly endorses the recommendations of the 2002 homelessness report "It's My City Too", little effort has been made to implement the recommendations. The affordable housing strategy needs to be broadened to include supportive housing and homelessness initiatives and the OCP should acknowledge our responsibility to provide accommodation to those on the margins of our society.

#### **Food Security**

Food security means having access to enough food for an active and healthy life without having to resort to emergency food assistance, begging, stealing, or scavenging for food. Professor David Holben, a Canada-U.S. Fulbright Scholar, who spent 2006-2007 exploring the food security, health status, social capital, and characteristics of emergency food program users in the Lower Mainland, observed that a significant number of Richmond residents do not have daily access to affordable and nutritious food. The Food Security



Task Force of the Richmond Poverty Response Committee completed a Richmond Food System Assessment<sup>11</sup> in 2006 identified specific challenges to food security for people of low income: insufficient community gardens (only one was accessible by public transit), a lack of groceries and fresh produce in East Richmond, and the ad-hoc nature of food programs in schools (which can be an effective way to provide nutritious food to children and youth). A 2010 UBC student project found that Richmond is only eight percent self-sufficient in vegetable production.

Many factors contribute to the lack of food security. The sagging economy has increased unemployment and swelled the numbers of those accessing social assistance. Yet despite rising costs for food and rental housing, social assistance rates and the minimum wage have remained static.<sup>12</sup> Hunger Count 2009<sup>13</sup> showed 89,886 individuals were supported by food banks in BC in March 2009, a 15 percent increase from March 2008. The Richmond Food Bank assists 480 households in an average week—more than 1,200 people, 30 percent of whom are children—a 55 percent increase over the previous year.

Richmond's Official Community Plan 2041 Update recognizes that the viability and use of agricultural land for food production is a challenge facing Richmond now and in the future and refers to food as a basic survival service in the context of a healthy ecosystem and environment. But it fails to address food security as an immediate requirement for healthy individuals and a healthy community. To achieve a healthy and complete community Metro 2040 Shaping our Future Draft Regional Growth recommends supporting urban food production and distribution by encouraging roof-top gardens, green roofs, and community gardens on private and municipally owned lands, and by encouraging the location of healthy food retailers and farmers' markets near housing and transit services. Although Richmond's Parks and Recreation Department is actively supporting the development of community garden sites—where people of low income will be able to have access to healthy, affordable food – there is currently a three-year wait list for garden plots.

The following recommendations are made to support and reinforce current City initiatives:

#### **Food Security Recommendations**

1. Make city-owned agricultural land available for local food production.
2. Show land designations accurately on City maps, to help preserve agricultural land for current and future food production.
3. Include healthy food outlets as components in the OCP Update.
4. Decrease impediments to food-related enterprises like farmers' markets and green grocers, and encourage them to locate within neighbourhood centres by providing incentives and staff coordination time.

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<sup>11</sup> Richmond Food System Assessment: Environmental Scan and Action Plan, Richmond Food Security Task Force, September 2006

<sup>12</sup> Cost of Eating in BC 2009: Low income British Columbians can't afford healthy food, Dieticians of Canada, BC Region and Community Nutritionists Council of BC, December 2009

<sup>13</sup> Hunger Count 2009, Food Banks Canada, November 2009

5. Provide community gardens in better proportion to the City's population, improving the current ratio of one garden plot for every 900 people in Richmond to down to at least one plot per 500 people, including plots in the City Center, where population growth is greatest.
6. Acknowledge the links between income, housing, and food security, and consider the affordable housing recommendations, above, in the context of food security.

### **Transportation**

Anticipating continuous population growth within Richmond's limited land base, The Official Community Plan 2041 Update has identified access to public transit and alternative modes of transport such as bicycling and walking as important priorities to ensure that citizens' quality of life is not diminished by increased traffic congestion and loss of access to amenities such as parks, recreation, libraries, etc.

This access is especially crucial to low-income individuals and families. They need convenient transit and safe walkways that are well connected to schools, employment, recreation, medical care, and government services. Many will also benefit from a comprehensive network of on-street cycling routes that connect to local destinations and regional bike routes, as well as other supports that encourage the use of bicycles, such as the co-op program used during the Olympics, safe bike lanes, and storage.

The Canadian Federation of Municipalities<sup>14</sup> concluded from an analysis of commuters' income data that lower-income households are disproportionately dependent on transit for their commuting needs. A good transit system that provides mobility to persons with low income can help increase their prospects for employment and for social interaction. Richmond should explore options, investigated by some other Canadian cities, for keeping transit costs affordable, such as by providing transit subsidies or discounts in the form of community passes.<sup>15</sup>

### **Transportation Recommendations**

1. Through mixed-use zoning in the centre of each neighbourhood, ensure that most residents are within a ten-minute walk of jobs, schools, services, amenities, and parks. Maintain and light walkways, and ensure that crosswalks are safe for crossing.
2. Plan to provide appropriate levels of transit between neighbourhood centres as well as to external destinations, and encourage more bikes on transit, to give residents a workable alternative to car ownership.

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<sup>14</sup> Mending Canada's Frayed Social Safety Net: Role of Municipal Governments, Federation of Canadian Municipalities, March 2010

<sup>15</sup> See, for instance the description of the Municipal Fee Assistance Program in Kingston, Ontario, at <http://www.cityofkingston.ca/residents/transportation/transit/fee-assistance/>



3. Increase accessibility and use of transit by providing transit fare subsidies for low-income residents.
4. Ensure the safety of new and existing on-street cycle routes; develop an expanded comprehensive network for cyclists, in part by using municipal rights-of-way and parking lanes; encourage implementation of a "co-op bike" program; increase the number of secure bike storage lockers at strategic points.

### **Social Inclusion**

As mentioned in the introduction, our poverty report of 2000 recorded that low-income residents felt excluded from full participation in community life and had few choices in the decisions they faced. In considering land use and planning, it is worthwhile to look at how the physically built environment can facilitate social inclusion.

In a backgrounder completed for a community development project by the Laidlaw Foundation<sup>16</sup> social inclusion is described as extending beyond bringing "outsiders in". It is about closing physical, social and economic distances separating people, rather than eliminating barriers between "us" and "them." In other words, social inclusion and preventing social exclusion are not synonymous. Preventing social exclusion focuses on getting individuals to change their attitudes, while promoting social inclusion rallies a whole community to work together. Looking at social inclusion as a process as well as an outcome, the report concludes that local governments can do much to lessen aspects of social and physical distance among people, and that citizens have great confidence in their local government's ability to understand and respond to the social needs of the community. But at the same time a subtle form of exclusion can arise in the political process itself, when support programs and services are developed by upper- and middle-income portion of the population, because vulnerable members of the community are alienated from the development of policies and programs that affect their lives.

Social inclusion is not formally addressed in the regional growth strategy or the Richmond OCP update. However both documents provide tools for addressing social inclusion. In the discussion of developing complete communities, the regional growth strategy speaks to the importance of ensuring an appropriate mix of housing options to respond to diverse and changing needs of the community. Strategy 4.2 of the Regional Growth Strategy specifically recommends that municipalities provide public spaces that offer increased social interaction and community engagement. The OCP Update adopts this recommendation to an extent, by advocating neighbourhood centres with a diversity of housing types to suit all ages, incomes, and family types. Additionally, the Richmond Wellness Strategy points out wellness cannot be achieved by activity alone and must be linked with residents having a sense of connectedness to their community and a commitment to wellness and well-being.

### **Inclusion Recommendations:**

1. Redouble efforts to support the participation of low-income residents by removing financial barriers to city programs and by providing opportunities for low-income residents to give back to their community through volunteerism by providing

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<sup>16</sup> Poverty, Inequality and Social Inclusion, Perspectives on Social Inclusion, Laidlaw Foundation, December, 2002.

reimbursement for out-of-pocket expenses (including transportation and childminding costs).

2. Ensure that public consultations are inclusive by continuing to facilitate the participation of low-income residents. The recent use of study circles and on-line discussions are recent City initiatives that are to be encouraged as examples of ways to include all residents in the policies and programs that affect their lives.
3. While developing neighbourhood centres, examine ways to decrease the physical and social distances separating people through inclusion of mixed affordable housing options and creation of public spaces that facilitate engagement and connectedness within these hubs.