

Report to Committee

To:

Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Committee

Date:

February 16, 2011

From:

Dave Semple

File:

06-2345-01/2011-Vol

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Re:

2011 Parks and Open Space Strategy

General Manager, Parks and Recreation

Staff Recommendation

That the seven focus areas and associated outcomes be endorsed as the foundation for the 2011 Parks and Open Space Strategy, as outlined in the staff report dated February 16, 2011 from the General Manager, Parks and Recreation entitled 2011 Parks and Open Space Strategy.

Dave Semple

General Manager, Parks and Recreation

Att. 1

	FOR ORIGINA	TING DEPARTME	ENT USE ONLY
ROUTED TO:		CONCURRENCE	CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER
CPMG Recreation Policy Planning		Y ☑ N □	
REVIEWED BY TAG	YES	NO NO	REVIEWED BY CAO YES NO
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Staff Report

Origin

This report has been prepared subsequent to the approval of the one time additional level request approved by Council on July 5, 2010:

"To develop a comprehensive Parks & Open Space Strategy, which will provide direction and policies to manage the City's green infrastructure to achieve an attractive and livable community and ultimately establish an implementation plan which sets priorities and funding requirements for open space acquisition and development. The strategy will respond to several concurrent or recent studies including the City Centre Area Plan, the Parks Land Acquisition Strategy and the OCP Update. Key to the strategy will be to respond to emerging trends and promote an expanded, attractive public realm."

Since the funding was approved, a consultant team, lead by Dillon Consulting Ltd., has been retained to develop a comprehensive Parks and Open Space Strategy. The purpose of this report is to introduce the focus areas and the outcomes the Strategy will be based upon (Attachment 1) and to receive Council endorsement prior to embarking on a public consultation process to receive community input.

Analysis

Background

Strategic development of the Parks and Open Space system in Richmond has been guided by a succession of plans over a time span of more than 50 years, dating back to 1957. In that time, 1,500 acres of park and 42 kilometres of trail have been developed resulting in a comprehensive and well distributed open space system that provides a high quality of life and a high level of satisfaction for the community. A review of those plans reveals both the continuous effort required to develop and sustain the system and the changes that were made to address a changing community:

Year	Study
1957	"Parks and Schools for Richmond", Lower Mainland Planning Board
1977	"1977 - 82 Parks and Leisure Services Comprehensive Plan", Richmond Parks and Leisure Services
1979	"Richmond Trails Plan", Department of Leisure Services
1989	"Parks System Strategy Plan", PERC and Guzzi Perry & Associates
1997	"Parks, Open Space & Beautification Strategy", Yates, Thorn and Associates, The Rethink Group, and Urban Systems Ltd.
2003	"2010 Richmond Trail Strategy", Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Division
2005	"Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services: A Masterplan for 2005 – 2015", Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Division
2008	"PRCS Strategic Plan 2008-2010" (updated in 2009 for 2010-2013), Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Division

¹ "PRCS Community Needs Assessment", Concerto Research and PERC, May 2009

In addition, there are numerous other strategies and plans (i.e. the 1999 OCP, the Corporate Plan, the Community Wellness Strategy, the Sport for Life Strategy), which have informed the development of our parks and open spaces.

Purpose of the Strategy

The 2011 Parks and Open Space Strategy is the next generation of planning that will ensure the system continues to meet community needs and will continue to provide a high quality of life and a healthy environment for future generations. It is a forward looking document that is intended to guide ongoing growth and development of the system. The purpose of the strategy is to develop a comprehensive, working document that will:

- · enable balanced decision making;
- explore innovation in resource management;
- explore integration of solutions to emerging urban issues (climate change adaptation, energy generation, urban agriculture and ecology, increasing density);
- inspire community engagement and reflect community identity; and,
- ensure the City is able to deliver great parks and a complete open space system.

Phase 1 of the Strategy (Attachment 1) provides the context of emerging trends and issues that must be addressed now and in the future such as increasing urbanization, an aging population and sustainability and adaptation to climate change. It also highlights some best practices from around the world that illustrate responses to these trends and issues.

This phase establishes the focus areas and outcomes for the whole Strategy and will also inform the OCP Update, currently underway. There are seven focus areas and each embodies the principles of safety, sustainability, placemaking, inclusivity and equality as the foundation for Richmond's parks and public open space system. The seven focus areas are:

- 1. Great Spaces and Experiences
- 2. Connectivity
- 3. Green Network
- 4. Blue Network
- 5. Health and Wellness
- 6. Multi-functional and Diverse
- 7. Resource Management

The outcomes associated with each focus area will guide the development of policies and a ten year implementation plan to be developed over the coming months leading to the final strategy that will be presented to Council for consideration later in 2011.

Next Steps

Once Council endorsement for Phase 1 of the Strategy is received, work will proceed as per the following process and proposed timeline:

March - April 2011	Public Consultation	To receive comment on the focus areas and outcomes.
April - May 2011	Policy Development	To guide decision making and resource allocation.
May - June 2011	10 Year Implementation Plan	To prioritize strategic directions and actions.
June - July 2011	Final Report	To receive Council endorsement.

The final report will present the 2011 Parks and Open Space Strategy including a set of actions and recommendations for further study that will inform the Parks Department's work program for the next decade.

Financial Impact

There is no financial impact as a result of this report.

Conclusion

The 2011 Parks and Open Space Strategy will build on the success of the past 50 years of planning and development. It will provide a decision making framework for setting priorities and allocating resources to address current and future opportunities and challenges. The seven focus areas and outcomes outlined in Phase 1 of the Strategy will lead to policy that will ensure continued success in sustaining a vibrant, healthy parks and open space system.

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City of Richmond Richmond Parks and Open Space Strategy - Phase I

February 2011







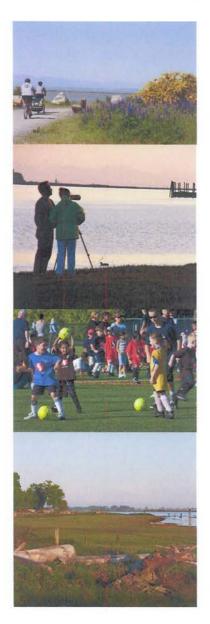


Dillon Consulting Limited 3820 Cessna Drive, Suite 510 Richmond, BC V7B 0A2



THE IMPORTANCE OF OPEN SPACES

Richmond's Parks and Open Spaces are in integral component of city life and our knowledge of their importance and how they contribute to society has grown over the past decade:



- They support physical activity, which is a key contributor to health, and there is strong evidence that proximity to parks is related to increased physical activity.
- Their trails provide important links for alternative forms of transportation, such as walking, running and biking.
- Their playgrounds and sports fields facilitate child and youth development.
- Large regional parks and open space destinations contribute to tourism and economic development.
- They form a significant component of Richmond's special places and unique built environment.
- They function as 'green infrastructure' and help to conserve and support ecosystem integrity and function for the benefit of all species.
- They contribute to the city's overall environmental health by: mitigating air pollution, counteracting the urban "heat island" effect, increasing the amount of permeable surface area, filtering run-off, and providing habitat for plants and wildlife.
- Their environmental protection function helps to increase community resiliency and can help mitigate climate change.

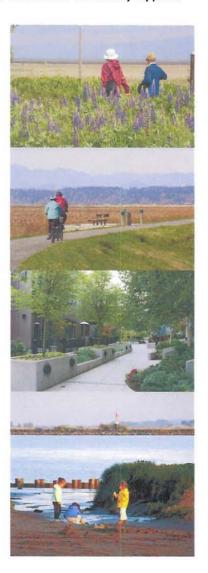
These are but a few of the reasons Parks and Open Spaces are important to a city, especially a growing and dynamic city like Richmond.



WHAT ARE PARKS AND OPEN SPACES?

There are many types of parks and open spaces that can comprise a system and the language of open space types provides the vocabulary for conceptualizing and designing a coherent and high-quality system for the future. Richmond's Parks and Open Space System contains four key types:

- Parks, including neighbourhood parks, combined school park sites, community parks, athletic parks, and city-wide specialty parks (i.e., Terra Nova Rural Park and the Nature Park).
- Trails and greenways, including Richmond's signature dyke trail system and streetscapes like No. 3 Road where public activities can take place and where a large part of the urban forest exists.
- 3. **Plazas, squares and walkways** within developments, which enhance the public open space system and create connections and public amenities, that are part of everyday life.
- The waterfront and waterways (i.e., canals and sloughs)
 which are integral to Richmond's island city character and are
 favourite destinations for residents and visitors.

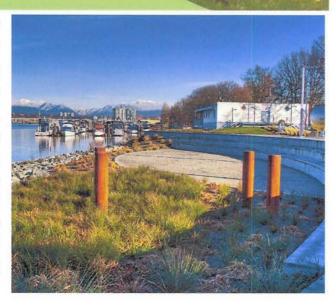


The Parks and Open Space Strategy will target each of these types, and potential new types (identified through the comprehensive inventory in Phase II) to ensure that Richmond resident's needs are being met, and will continue to be met over the next 30 years.

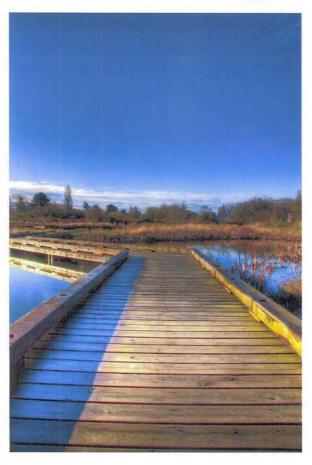


A PARKS AND OPEN SPACE STRATEGY

2011 is a good time to develop a new strategy for Parks and Open Spaces in Richmond. The Official Community Plan (OCP 2041) is currently being updated, allowing the opportunity to update the OCP policies that relate to parks and open spaces. Also, the public will be engaged through many OCP open houses and there are joint opportunities to consult the public with regards to parks and open spaces. Lastly, the new OCP will help to manage the expected changes Richmond will face during the next 30 years — it is also a good time to think long-term and strategize about Richmond's parks and open spaces as a part of this.



Purpose of the Strategy



The purpose of the Parks and Open Space Strategy is to move from a reactive to proactive way of developing parks and open spaces. This is particularly relevant in the following areas:

- Decision making from demand driven to balanced.
- Resource management from status quo to using innovation and identifying the shifts we will have to make to address the challenges.
- Solutions to emerging urban issues continue to explore integration of solutions to climate change adaptation, energy generation, urban agriculture and ecology, increasing density.
- Community engagement continue to inspire residents and reflect community identity.

Being proactive in all these areas will ensure the City is able to deliver great parks and a complete open space system.



RICHMOND'S CURRENT PARKS AND OPEN SPACE SYSTEM

Richmond's current parks and open space system can be seen on the map below. It contains 115 parks that total 1,500 acres, and 42 kilometers of trails.

Richmond's Current Parks and Open Space System



Planning for parks and open spaces in Richmond is not a new thing – it's been done for almost 60 years. The next page shows the evolution of Richmond's parks and open space system and how the City got to where it is today. It wasn't by accident – it was by thoughtfully and strategically planning for future parks and open spaces, to fill gaps in the system and take advantage of opportunities that arose. The Parks and Open Space Strategy builds on this tradition and takes it to a new level of strategic direction, working with all City departments.



EVOLUTION OF THE CURRENT SYSTEM

Richmond had a total of 20 acres of park at South Arm, Steveston, Brighouse & King George
1957 1st Park Bylaw dedication of 60 acres for Minoru Park expansion of King George and Steveston Parks dedication of 10 acres for Hamilton Park
1970's Nature Park and 19 new neighbourhood parks
1980's 11 new neighbourhood parks Bath Slough, Horseshoe Slough and Shell Road Trails
1984 Garry Point Park
1986 Burnett/Thompson Community Park
15 new neighbourhood parks West Dyke, South Dyke, River Road, East Richmond, Steveston Greenways, South Cove & McCallan Road Trails
1995 Britannia Heritage Shipyards
1995 Britannia Heritage Shipyards 1996 Terra Nova Natural Area
1996 Terra Nova Natural Area
1996 Terra Nova Natural Area 1998 McLean Park
1996 Terra Nova Natural Area 1998 McLean Park 2000's 3 new neighbourhood parks
1996 Terra Nova Natural Area 1998 McLean Park 2000's 3 new neighbourhood parks 2002 Begin development of Terra Nova Rural Park
1996 Terra Nova Natural Area 1998 McLean Park 2000's 3 new neighbourhood parks 2002 Begin development of Terra Nova Rural Park 2004 Imperial Landing complete 2005 Begin development of Garden City Community Park 2009 Richmond Olympic Oval
1996 Terra Nova Natural Area 1998 McLean Park 2000's 3 new neighbourhood parks 2002 Begin development of Terra Nova Rural Park 2004 Imperial Landing complete 2005 Begin development of Garden City Community Park



RICHMOND IS CHANGING - CURRENT TRENDS

Richmond continues to be a diverse city with a dynamic population, and with growth comes change... The Parks and Open Space Strategy explores the challenges Richmond faces today and expects to face tomorrow, and the trends that are occurring across the globe in the area of parks and open space provision. Some of the key trends and issues facing Richmond include:



Richmond on the World Stage – Being an official Venue City of the 2010 Olympic Winter Games was a "transformative milestone", placing the city on the world stage, attracting many new developments and helping Richmond evolve into a distinct, destination city for tourism and investment. Richmond is now home to the internationally renowned Olympic Oval and is connected to the airport and region through the Canada Line.

Richmond is growing older — with an aging population, use of parks and open spaces is changing, and the needs of the elderly need to be met with innovative and targeted park and open space design. As people age, for example, they participate less in sports and walk more.

Cultural diversity – Richmond's population continues to diversify, and residents have evolving expectations of a parks and open space system and thoughts about open space types, from manicured gardens to natural areas. The Strategy must ensure that the needs and expectations of each segment of the population are met.

Urbanization – Constrained by the ALR and facing a continuing influx of migrants, growth pressures will be experienced in all areas of Richmond, particularly the City Centre, but also in existing suburban neighbourhoods. This will create the need for evolving purposes and flexibility for parks and open spaces.

Traffic and congestion – In many areas of North America, traffic and congestion are decreasing residents' mobility options, and as a result people are increasingly choosing to spend more time in their neighbourhoods, which puts additional pressures on local parks.

Increasing costs – The price of land throughout Richmond continues to increase, which means resources to purchase parkland do not go as far as they once did. Also, costs for operation and maintenance are increasing, putting increasing strain on already stretched City budgets.



RICHMOND IS CHANGING - CURRENT TRENDS



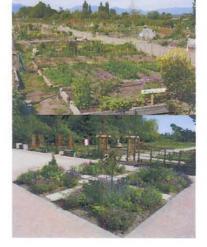
Evolving parks standards - Meeting the standards for parks provision is increasingly challenging where population growth exceeds the ability of parkland to meet population needs. Over the past decade there has been an emphasis on the effective use of parks and open space rather than the quantity. The Strategy will need to find a balance in the debate between quantity and quality.

Threatened biodiversity – Rapid population growth and extensive development continues to place unprecedented pressure on Richmond's natural capital, threatening biodiversity. Parks and open spaces, particularly 'naturalized' open spaces, can play a very important role in maintaining healthy ecosystems and protecting the health of environmentally sensitive areas in urban areas.

Food security — In the age of peak oil, loss of farmland, water shortages, and agricultural dependence on fertilizers, the issue of food security continues to move to the forefront. The contribution that parks and open spaces can play towards reducing the potential for urban food shortages is something the Strategy must consider. The placement and function of community gardens will be an important consideration.

Tree canopy and urban forests – Maintaining healthy city ecosystems requires management and enhancement of the entire urban forest, including street trees, woodlands and other vegetated areas. Greening strategies in existing parks and open space, and strategic location of new parks and open space linkages can expand the green infrastructure and provide connections for ecosystem functions.

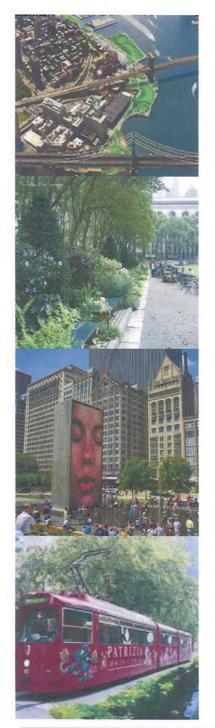
Sustainable design – Landscape and site design measures in parks and open spaces can help mitigate micro and macro climate change, lessen the heat island effect, trap pollutants, help preserve native species, conserve energy and water, reduce stormwater runoff and use rainwater, improve air quality, and provide shading and cooling. The Strategy's Implementation Plan will need to ensure that future parks and open spaces are designed with sustainability in mind.





HOW ARE OTHER CITIES RESPONDING TO THE ISSUES?

From Constructed nature in China, to vibrant waterfronts in North America and life in the urban realm in Europe, cities across the globe are developing creative approaches to the challenges they face. Some of these examples are particularly relevant to Richmond and the issues we face. Some of these best practices that we will be following and will help inspire our Strategy include:



New York: For all New Yorkers to live within 10 minute walk of a park. The more recent park construction activities in New York include reinventing open space where none existed. The Brooklyn Bridge Park is a waterfront park made up of old, abandoned piers that have been converted to park space and linked together with green space. Bryant Park, a privately-operated public park, is the most densely occupied urban park in the world, exceeding 800 visitors per acre per day.

 Rising property costs in Richmond will require similar 'outside-thebox' thinking to reinvent open space.

Chicago: Has set out to be the green roofs leader and the "greenest city in the country." Their Central Area Plan stated: "This is a plan for urban greatness." Millennium Park in Chicago was constructed using public and private investments. The park has been credited with increasing surrounding residential real estate values by \$100.00 per square foot.

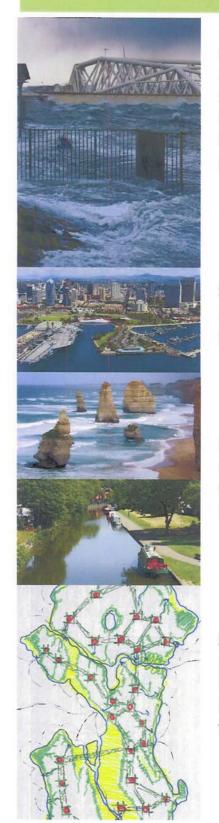
Being a 'green' leader and investing in open space in Richmond can have great returns.

Portland: Their "Parks 2020 Vision" plan emphasizes developing community. The five central goals are to ensure a park and recreation <u>legacy</u> for future generations, provide a wide <u>variety</u> of services and opportunities for all citizens, to provide <u>nature in the city</u>, to create an <u>interconnected</u> regional and local system of trails, and to develop parks and recreation facilities and programs that <u>promote community</u> in the city.

Richmond can use examples from Portland's success and use public open space to promote community.



HOW ARE OTHER CITIES RESPONDING TO THE ISSUES?



Rotterdam: – To be 'climate proof' by 2025 through mitigation and adaptation measures. Their two-pronged approach to the challenges of climate change addresses the *causes* through prevention (e.g. reduction of greenhouse gasses) as well as the *consequences* (e.g. over-constructing their dyke system). Their dykes are viewed as 'urban balconies'. They are exploring innovative ideas such as urban water plazas and storm water storage underneath artificial grass fields.

Richmond can learn from Rotterdam and other delta cities that are being proactive about climate change and related issues, which could have major implications for public open space.

San Diego: The waterfront is the "Front Porch" of downtown. San Diego is focusing its open space on the waterfront including connections that lead to the water.

As a waterfront city, Richmond can observe how other cities are handling their water / city interface.

Melbourne: Hobsons Bay (a suburb of Melbourne) focuses on linking people and spaces by emphasizing protection of natural habitat, especially for the migratory birds along its 25 km of coastline, recognizing the importance of spaces to have multiple functions.

Hobsons Bay and Richmond share many physical similarities including the proximity to a larger metropolitan area and kilometres of coastline.

Seattle: "Open Space Seattle 2100" is a 100-year visionary open space plan. It includes a regenerative green infrastructure (i.e. the green lattice) that will strive to maximize economic, social and ecological sustainability. Ecological function and integrity are core components to this plan.

Richmond can study this bold plan and learn from the long-term benefits of planning for 100-years out and investing in green infrastructure.



A SOLID FOUNDATION FOR A STRATEGY

Recognizing that the Parks and Open Space Strategy needs to be based on the City's existing policy directions, it began with Richmond's vision to be the most appealing, livable, and well-managed community in Canada. It has also examined other key City initiatives, such as focusing on the water's edge, the Placemaking initiative and "Small City, Big Destinations", strategic city-wide thinking, and using partnerships & local organizations to help facilitate park development & programming.

To create a foundation for the Parks and Open Space Strategy, a visioning session was held with staff from several City Departments in December 2010. Through this session a number of themes became apparent and seven focus areas were distilled, that will form the basis of the Strategy moving forward.

Results of the Staff Visioning Session – Parks and Open Space WordMap



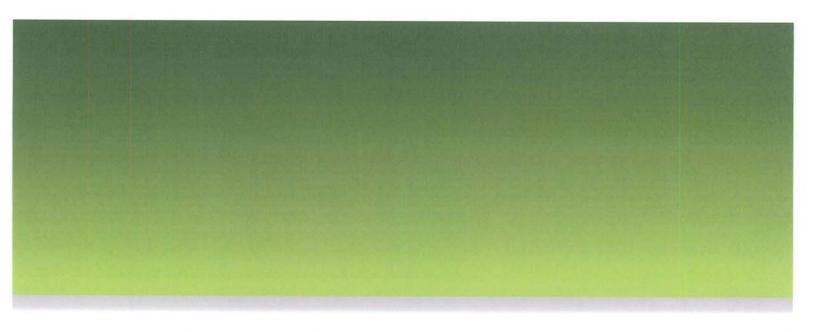


These Seven Focus Areas are the core of Phase I of the Parks and Open Space Strategy, and will guide development of policies and actions in the coming months. They are explained in the pages that follow, and include:

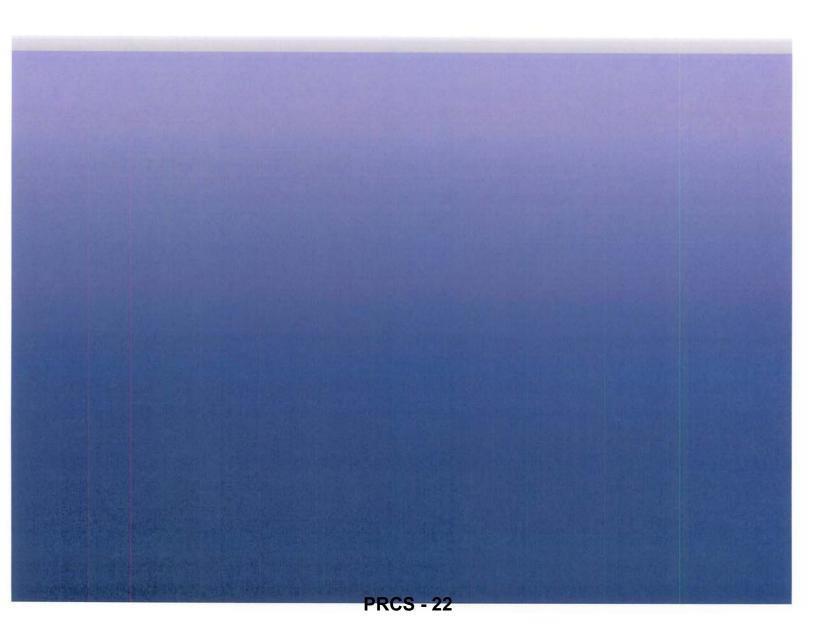
- Great Spaces and Experiences
- 2) Connectivity
- 3) Green Network
- 4) Blue Network

- 5) Health and Wellness
- Multi-functional and Diverse
- 7) Resource Management





Phase I - Core Results: The Seven Focus Areas and Related Outcomes



GREAT SPACES AND EXPERIENCES:

Promoting a vibrant and distinctly Richmond' urban realm



Outcomes:

Our Parks and Open Space System:

- significantly contributes to the city's vibrancy and identity through a rich variety of special places, features and activities;
- enhances Richmonds status as an exceptional regional and international destination;
- showcases the city's unique landscape, food, arts, and culture, and supports the city's signature festivals, sport tournaments and events;
- brings to life Richmond's natural and cultural heritage through active engagement, education and interpretation.





CONNECTIVITY:

Linking people, community and nature



Outcomes:

Our Parks and Open Space System:

- connects every element of the city (neighbourhoods, schools, civic spaces, neighbourhood service centres, parks, natural areas, streets, commercial areas and industrial parks) in a legible manner;
- is accessible, inclusive, and safe, enabling residents and visitors to feel comfortable and connected to the community and the environment;
- provides strong linkages between important ecological features to enhance city-wide ecological function;
- promotes a culture of walking and cycling and supports a range of active transportation modes.





GREEN NETWORK:

Creating a greener, dynamic, and resilient cityscape



Outcomes:

Our Parks and Open Space System:

- is an integrated green network of parks, plazas, streets, greenways, trails, urban forests, natural areas, playing fields, and gardens that form a fundamental building block of a livable, and healthy city;
- protects and creates a range of green spaces from the built to the natural that supports recreation, social interaction, and psychological and spiritual renewal;
- contributes significantly to the conservation and enhancement of the ecological network of resilient and healthy eco-systems;
- incorporates innovative ecosystem services, that ensure biodiversity, clean water and air, and that are integrated with many other park and open space uses.



Great Spaces Conne



Green Network



Blue Network



Health and Wellness Multi-functio

-functional Resource d Diverse Managemer



BLUE NETWORK:

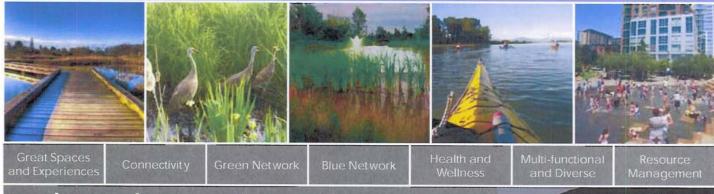
Transforming and celebrating our waterfront and waterways



Outcomes:

Our Parks and Open Space System:

- celebrates and protects the recreational and ecological values of our waterfront, sloughs, wetlands, and canals;
- showcases a world-class waterfront that provides a variety of activities and multiple destinations;
- provides experiences of the waterfront and waterways that reflect the cultural and ecological uniqueness of our island city heritage;
- Integrates water into the urban fabric in creative and innovative ways





HEALTH AND WELLNESS:

Building for physical, social, and spiritual well being



Outcomes:

Our Parks and Open Space System:

- is inviting, and welcoming to residents and visitors of all ages and backgrounds;
- ensures that residents of every neighbourhood have equal access to safe, appealing places to walk, exercise, play, socialize and engage in a healthy, active lifestyle;
- provides a full range of spaces for gatherings, sports, events, and quiet sanctuaries within the City.



MULTI-FUNCTIONAL AND DIVERSE:

Meeting and integrating multiple community objectives and uses



Outcomes:

Our Parks and Open Space System:

- provides a variety of diverse open spaces that are flexible and able to respond to growth, social needs and environmental changes;
- meets community objectives while respecting the limited and finite resource of land;
- plays a significant role in improving the city's performance in stormwater management, clean energy production, food security and adaptation to climate change.











Great Spaces and Experiences

Connectivity

Green Networ

Blue Network

dealth and Wellness Multi-functiona and Diverse Resource Management



RESOURCE MANAGEMENT:

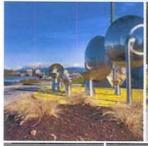
Responsive and collaborative stewardship



Outcomes:

Our Parks and Open Space System:

- · is managed by an innovative, responsive organization that meets community objectives while ensuring efficient distribution of resources:
- inspires shared stewardship between multiple stakeholders to foster pride, purpose, and a sense of community;
- is recognized and managed for its economic benefits through increased property values, diverse tourism opportunities, and attraction for investment in the City.















STRATEGY TIMELINE

The project began in November 2010 and continues through to July 2011. The table below shows the steps that have been completed as part of Phase I, and those that remain as part of the subsequent phases.

Phase I (December – February)

- √ Background: Environmental Scan & Best Practice Review
- √ Staff Visioning Session
- √ Defining the Strategic Focus Areas & Outcomes
- √ Drafting the Parks & Open Space Objectives for the OCP
- √ Phase I Status Update to PRCS Committee & Council

Phase II (March -April)

- Stakeholder Consultation A number of meetings will be conducted with stakeholders such as community associations, the Seniors Advisory Committee, Richmond Sports Council Richmond Chinese Community Society and Multicultural Concerns Society, among others.
- City-wide GIS Parks & Open Space Inventory A comprehensive inventory will be developed to help evaluate parks policies and standards, and the hierarchy of open space typologies that has been adopted and is currently in use by the City.
- Public Consultation The draft focus areas and outcomes will be presented to the public at a series of open houses and focus groups, allowing residents the opportunity to share their views on the future strategic directions the City should take in relation to Parks, Open Spaces and the linkages that connect them.

Phase III (April - May)

- Gap Analysis Using the GIS Inventory as a baseline, a gap analysis will be conducted to identify areas where levels of park and open space provision are lacking and opportunities for improvement.
- Draft Objectives & Policies After the gap analysis, objectives and corresponding policies will be developed for each opportunity, to support the vision and guiding principles.

Phase IV (May - June)

- Prioritization of Policies & Actions Based on feedback received through consultation, policies will be developed and actions will be prioritized, to be presented in a 10-year Implementation Plan
- Phase V (June - July)
- Final Strategy The last phase will consolidate all of the material into a comprehensive yet concise document, that is simple to follow and easy to read, and include the fine details of each policy and action, for Richmond Council, staff and residents to use.

