

Richmond Parks Committee, Tuesday, September 24, 2013

**Jim Wright, President, Garden City Conservation Society, on Item 6,
the 2022 Parks and Open Space Strategy**

Councillor Steves as chair—and everyone through the chair,

Clearly, the 2022 Strategy is promising.

I'd just like to highlight three of the strengths.

One strength of the strategy as a whole is the systems thinking.

The commitment is to making optimal use of the park *system*, using a *range* of park spaces to meet a *range* of park needs. I suggest that it's important to *keep* emphasizing that principle because single-interest groups sometimes don't grasp it.

Another strength is the wellness approach. Sometimes the city has seemed to me to be equating wellness with *physical* wellbeing, and that would be a shortcoming. I'm glad that equal importance has been given to our park system's role in *fostering belonging* and *nurturing the human spirit*. When the report equates wellness with physical, social and spiritual wellbeing, that's perfect, especially in the choice of "spiritual" ahead of the more common "psychological" (or "mental"). I hope that will be a regular feature of our park system's messaging.

A third strength is the emphasis on inclusiveness, with equal access. In practice, that would mean always giving priority thinking to the needs of citizens who are less privileged in one way or another. Our parks are an ideal group of places for putting that principle into practice. If it is a commitment and not just high-sounding words, we will know soon, since it will be put into practice immediately and at every opportunity. The good effects will spread naturally to the whole community.

Good luck to the Parks staff in implementing the 2022 Strategy.