

ANNUAL ADDRESS
By: MAYOR MALCOLM BRODIE
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2011 will be remembered as a year of significant growth for the City of Richmond.

Two projects typify our ongoing evolution as a City. The Canada Line, now fully operational, has changed our attitude towards public transportation and become an important foundation for sustainable growth. The 2010 Olympic Winter Games are long over and the converted Richmond Olympic Oval stands as our main legacy, reminding us of a time when we proudly invited the world to our City as one of the hosts for the biggest sports event of all.

As we commence another City Council term, let's take a few moments to reflect on our accomplishments and look ahead with confidence. First, we wish to pay tribute to two retired members of our City Council who helped us reach significant milestones. Greg Halsey-Brandt has been a Richmond City Councillor, Mayor and MLA. Sue Halsey-Brandt distinguished herself as a member of the Board of School Trustees as well as City Council. During their many years of service, each made extensive contributions to our community. We thank them for their commitment and dedication to our City as we wish them well.

It also gives me pleasure to welcome two new members of City Council, Chak Au and Linda McPhail. Each has an extensive record of service to Richmond, highlighted by long tenure on the Board of School Trustees. In sharing fresh perspectives, each will complement the returning City Councillors.

Special note must also be made of the long tenure of Councillor Harold Steves. This year, Harold received the Special Long Service Award from the Union of BC Municipalities to mark more than 40 years of civic service. Having served on Council during six different decades, Harold has expressed how he eagerly anticipates yet another term.

Unfortunately, not every event in the past year was positive. We were all deeply saddened by the passing of Milan Ilich, the founder of the Progressive Construction group. Milan made a dramatic impact as a business leader though he will be most remembered for being supportive of those in need. Milan Ilich's devotion to family and to his community was truly inspiring. Our continued thoughts are with his wife Maureen, his family and many friends as we continue to feel his loss.

2011 will also be remembered for when a small commercial aircraft crashed on Russ Baker Way. Tragically, the pilot and co-pilot died. However, thanks in part to the spontaneous efforts of people near the site, all passengers on board were saved.

In addition, the entire world was saddened earlier this year by the terrible earthquake and tsunami that devastated Japan. With strong ties to the

country, Richmond residents particularly felt the impacts. Our community groups led the way as we raised well over \$100,000 to assist earthquake victims in the Village of Onagawa. Our Sister City Committee also worked with the Richmond Textile Arts Guild to create more than 40 hand-crafted quilts for Village children.

Overall, the City of Richmond has experienced robust growth in 2011, though many economies throughout the world continue to struggle. With a population now exceeding 200,000, Richmond has made significant commitments to support community sustainability. Our continued growth, particularly in the City Centre, is oriented towards the use of the Canada Line. Thus, we will enhance our livability and preserve our high standard of living for the benefit of future generations.

I would now like to review a number of areas that continue to be of significance for Richmond City Council and our community in the upcoming term:

- Community Sustainability
- Innovation and Customer Service
- Community Safety
- Parks and Recreation
- Arts, Culture and Heritage
- Planning for the Future
- Awards and Achievements

COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY

Community sustainability has long been a primary Council focus as we continued to develop our Corporate Sustainability Framework in adopting carbon neutrality and waste diversion goals. This Framework was supported by many focused initiatives emphasizing the environmental, economic and social aspects of sustainability.

Environment

Construction of the first phase of the Alexandra District Energy Utility in West Cambie should soon be complete to become our first district energy system. It will ultimately provide heating and cooling for almost 4 million square feet of residential and commercial buildings, all free of reliance on fossil fuels.

The City also acquired the last remaining privately-held remnant of Richmond's Northeast Bog Forest to create almost 50 acres of parkland forest. The Lesser Lulu Bog is unique to Richmond and thus its preservation is important for environmental, historical and recreational reasons.

In 2011, the City along with community partners and volunteers constructed many new community garden plots. The gardens are for all, from seniors to school children. Each year, we hope to expand the hundreds of such plots throughout Richmond.

For our solid waste diversion, the City implemented a pilot project to extend the Green Can food scraps program to serve the townhomes. The goal is to extend the initiative as far as possible.

With grant funding from the federal government, solar thermal hot water systems were installed at Steveston, South Arm and Minoru swimming pools. This fits with our designation as a Solar Community.

And there were many more programs, such as:

- A pilot public spaces recycling program in partnership with Nestle Waters;
- An expanded cycling network;
- An education program for Environmentally Sensitive Areas developed in partnership with Hamilton Elementary School; and
- A snow geese management program to humanely control the snow geese population.

Economic

Strong fiscal management is important to any city. Our services must be efficient and affordable. In 2011, we increased reserves, reduced debt and limited the property tax increase to less than 3 percent, among the lowest in the region.

Richmond has a strong economic base, important to a sustainable community. A new Business Retention and Expansion Program was launched based on our successful business programs during the Olympic

Winter Games. We also confirmed that Richmond has an adequate supply of employment lands to accommodate future business growth.

Our region-leading jobs to worker ratio should become even higher because Canada Post was convinced to move its regional operations here. This will secure well over 1,000 future jobs in our community.

Because assessments for some of the buildings had sky-rocketed as the result of potential redevelopment, we persuaded the Province to allow Richmond to give tax relief for certain Brighthouse area commercial properties. This unique legislation provides well-needed interim protection for some of the businesses in the area. Richmond Centre MLAs, Olga Ilich and Rob Howard, both provided key assistance in this effort.

In 2011, the Highway 91-Nelson Road Interchange was opened. This will spur further development of Port Metro Vancouver's industrial lands, help create hundreds of new jobs and strengthen our role as a gateway to the Asia-Pacific. It has already reduced speeds and improved safety for local residents as well as farm vehicles on Westminster Highway.

The City also ensures economic sustainability by obtaining diverse grants and forging partnerships. Last year, approximately \$16 million in external funding was secured through grants and corporate sponsorship revenue for various City facilities and events.

There are many other City programs to generate increased economic activity. For example:

- The efforts of our Sport Hosting Office together with Tourism Richmond resulted in more than 20,000 hotel stays. Event highlights include hosting the World Senior Badminton Championship and being awarded a number of events for 2012. Each of these involves hundreds of participants, hotel stays and attracts international interest for our City; and
- The Richmond Film Office saw an increase in film activity with a number of major productions such as the hit TV series “Once Upon A Time”, “The Killing” and the “Secret Circle”.

Social

The social pillar of sustainability attempts to ensure that all residents have the means and ability to fully enjoy the high quality of life in Richmond.

A major focus for this year was the continued implementation of our region-leading Affordable Housing Strategy. We want everyone to be able to live in Richmond. Since the Strategy’s adoption in 2007, the City has secured many affordable rental units, secondary suites and coach houses, as well as affordable home ownership units. As an example, City Council recently announced it has, together with a number of community agencies, approved in principle 123 units of affordable housing in a development on Granville Avenue.

Richmond has always boasted about its high level of community engagement and compassion. We are all always thankful for the number of hours that volunteers in Richmond commit to support a myriad of community initiatives. In 10 months this year, the City's volunteer database alone recorded more than 20,000 hours of service contributed by volunteers. This database, though it reveals only a fraction of Richmond's entire volunteer networks, helps many of our community partners.

After many years, we look forward to the completion of a new purpose-built rental building in the Riverport area. Zoning for an adjacent rental building has been approved and construction should start soon.

Childcare spaces are a challenge for any family-oriented, growing city. More than 200 spaces in new developments will augment the current number.

In addition:

- The City partnered with the Rick Hansen Foundation and the Richmond Centre for Disability to provide an accessibility-rating tool;
- An expanded City Grant Program will increase the amounts given to the Arts;
- Staff conducted diversity training sessions intended to improve their ability to serve our increasingly diverse population; and
- The City also ensured that programs are accessible to all through the Recreation Fee Subsidy program.

INNOVATION AND CUSTOMER SERVICE

We are living in the midst of an information revolution. From social media to smart phones to tablets, we increasingly rely on external information sources in our daily lives. The City took many creative steps to improve our online service to our stakeholders.

The City's website is projected to have more than 7.5 million visits this year. The site features more than 10,000 pages of content and more than 16,000 pdf attachments. It is now being modified to a more user-friendly design allowing easier access for public feedback.

The City's website provided a number of new features this year such as:

- Our incredible Geographic Information System which allows the public to examine maps and photos of over 100,000 properties;
- BrowseAloud enables our website contents to be read aloud;
- Bizpal guides the user through the steps needed to open a Richmond business;
- The Richmond Business Directory is now free and available online;
- A Public Art database established a locational map; and
- Discussion forums hosted by the City on the OCP Update 2041 and other key civic strategies.

The City also actively embraced the world of social media, launching its corporate Facebook page. Dedicated Facebook pages were created for the Civic Election and the Richmond Public Library, as well as other civic facilities and programs.

A new centralized voter registration software, "Voter View" allowed the City to introduce the "Vote Anywhere" initiative for this year's civic election. This resulted in an increase of votes cast for the first time in four elections.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Community safety remains one of Council's top priorities with well over one-third of every civic tax dollar going to keep the public safe. Everyone wants to feel safe where they live or work. Though Richmond is one of Canada's safest communities, we must constantly work to maintain that position.

We were pleased to unveil a new post-disaster rated Richmond Community Safety Building as the new home for our RCMP detachment. Most of our policing services are now based in this LEED Gold-rated facility. By purchasing and retrofitting an existing building, Council was able to cost-effectively complete this project.

Earlier, we also celebrated the opening of the new Steveston Fire Hall, also built to LEED Gold standard. This is the third fire hall we've built in the past decade and we need to complete the fire hall program with two more

facilities. This will ensure that our key public safety buildings are ready to address the emergency needs of our growing, evolving community.

In addition:

- The RCMP continued to implement a Crime Reduction Strategy;
- Many traffic and parking improvements were completed in Steveston, including signalization of the No. 1 Road and Moncton Street intersection complete with the Scramble crosswalk;
- City staff participated in a variety of regional emergency exercises and planning workshops; and
- Richmond RCMP now operates a marine vessel to patrol our Island City.

PARKS AND RECREATION

Richmond's network of parks, trails and recreational facilities is one of the best in Canada. The City is constantly striving to provide even more opportunities for the public to access and enjoy these resources.

Richmond is now realizing the benefits of the legacy provided by the Richmond Olympic Oval. It is now converted into a place for community recreation and wellness activities, for high performance sport, and for our youth. With the vast majority of members and users being Richmond residents, this implements City Council's original vision.

A further phase of the Thompson Youth Park has been completed with the addition of a multi-use plaza near the Community Centre. This provides a great community gathering place.

The Hamilton Community Centre's dramatic expansion was completed last Spring to produce a sustainable structure built to LEED Gold standards. The South Arm Community Centre also underwent extensive renovations. Both initiatives included support from the City, Federal government, and the Community Associations.

There were also important parkland acquisitions and plans, including 12 acres of the former Fantasy Gardens site. In addition, the park plan for the next section of waterfront near the Oval promises to add to the area's destination status.

ARTS, CULTURE AND HERITAGE

Richmond is rapidly evolving into a regional centre for arts and cultural activities. We have witnessed a dramatic expansion of events and programs. These emphasize our inventory of heritage assets, creating experiences that enrich our lives, while highlighting the past.

Examples of the events and programs include:

- The unforgettable presentation of "Salmon Row" depicting 150 years of history at Britannia Heritage Shipyard;
- Ships to Shore 2011 when we hosted four tall ships and over 40,000 people in early June;

- The new Media Lab in the Richmond Arts Centre designed to increase technology, literacy and creativity, particularly for youth;
- The Rooftop Garden at the Cultural Centre, an outdoor venue for arts programs and events;
- A community celebration of international film and media arts in the Richmond International Film and Media Arts Festival;
- The Gateway Theatre's 56,000 patrons throughout the year and over 1,000 uses of all stages and spaces; and
- The City Centre Area Public Art Plan, a guide to enrich our urban identity by incorporating meaningful art in the public realm.

PLANNING FOR FUTURE

While we provide the daily services upon which our residents rely, to thrive we must also focus on the future.

Metro Vancouver's 2040 Regional Growth Strategy was accepted by City Council after adopting key changes to designate Terra Nova, Garden City and the D.N.D. lands for "Conservation and Recreation" uses. The Strategy should influence regional population growth, contain urban boundaries and maintain land for agriculture, while it balances local autonomy and regional decision-making.

For completion next year, Richmond continued our 2041 Official Community Plan Update “Towards A Sustainable Community”. The City is also midway through development of the Richmond Social Planning Strategy.

The City has already begun working with TransLink on its Richmond Area Transit Plan update. Needed improvements include better east-west service and public transportation to many areas lacking adequate coverage.

Working with the Community Association and the public, we will identify priorities and stakeholder needs for a new Community Centre. This will be completed by 2014 within a mixed-use development on Minoru Boulevard.

2012 will mark the 45th Anniversary of our Sister City relationship with Pierrefonds, Quebec. There will be a number of special events to commemorate this anniversary. Also in 2012, a large delegation from our Sister City, Wakayama, Japan will visit Richmond. This event will remind us that 2013 will be the 40th Anniversary of that Sister City relationship.

I am also pleased to highlight that a Letter of Intent to become Sister Cities was signed last April between the cities of Richmond and Xiamen, China. Our Friendship City relationship with Xiamen has produced many beneficial exchanges. The impending Sister City relationship recognizes our deeper cultural ties, in addition to Richmond’s growing role as a centre for Asia-Pacific trade and investment.

AWARDS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

The City of Richmond always strives for excellence as proven by the numerous civic awards recently received. They include:

- The Public Works Association of BC Project of the Year Award for the No. 4 Road Drainage Pump Station. This initiative increased the City's flood protection capacity;
- The BC Government's Child Care Award of Excellence for progressive child care initiatives;
- Recognition as an "International Eco-Safety Demonstrative City" at the First World Eco-Safety Assembly (WESA), organized by a United Nations affiliate;
- The Outstanding Regional Partnership Award presented by the Canadian Diabetes Association to our Library;
- Two awards from the Government Financial Officers Association for our annual report;
- Foreign Direct Investment magazine ranked Richmond amongst the Top 10 Small Cities for Infrastructure in North America; and
- Two highly prestigious architectural awards for the Richmond Olympic Oval, presented by the International Association for Sports and Leisure Facilities (IAKS) in partnership with the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the International Paralympic Committee (IPC). The awards honour exemplary design and function for sports facilities and accessibility. The Oval was the only one of the 135 entries into this worldwide competition to have won both a Gold Medal and an Awards of Distinction.

CONCLUSION

This report can only provide a glimpse of the initiatives in which Richmond City Council was involved over the past year. The coming term promises to be an exciting and busy time. It is important that we drive all the pillars of community sustainability – environmental, economic and social – to ensure that future generations realize the same opportunities that we have come to enjoy. Richmond City Hall must work innovatively and use all our tools to effectively connect with the public. We will:

- expand our offering of parks, green spaces and recreational facilities, particularly for the benefit of the City Centre where we expect most of the growth;
- keep our City safe, our spending cost-effective, and our residents healthy;
- respect our heritage; while we
- support arts, cultural and volunteer opportunities for all.

Thus, we must envision and implement forward-looking strategies to maximize our future opportunities.

I would like to conclude by saying that I am extremely honoured to commence my fifth term as Richmond's Mayor. I want to repeat my words when first being sworn in as Mayor in October 2001:

“To all of the people of Richmond, I accept the opportunity to provide leadership as your Mayor and I offer two basic commitments in return.

“The first is my pledge to serve as your representative. I will do my best to perform diligently and competently in an office that deserves nothing less. I will always show respect for our shared commitment in this community to inclusiveness, openness, understanding and common-sense decision-making.

“My second pledge is to my colleagues on Council and to the people of our City. I will strive to provide the kind of leadership that respects and inspires the individual talents and ideas that each of you contribute. Richmond is indeed fortunate to have a City Council made up of people with such abundant talents, diverse backgrounds and, above all, a true commitment to community service. By working together as a team, there is much we can accomplish on behalf of the people of this City.”

As Mayor, these words have guided me every day during the last decade and remain my ongoing commitments. I have heard so many people talk about our City’s emergence in the last decade. There have in fact been great triumphs though they have been mixed with many very difficult challenges. I look forward to the coming term of Richmond City Council as together we will set new standards for liveability and prosperity.

Thank you.