

2018 Inaugural Address
By Mayor Malcolm Brodie
Theme: *As We Reflect and Look Ahead*
Monday, November 5, 2018

Introduction

As City Council enters a new four-year term, I would like to thank the Richmond residents for your confidence and trust. As our Council consists of a mixture of newcomers and veterans, I am personally honoured that the people of this City have given me consistent support since I was first elected as a Councillor and then as Mayor. None of us underestimate the importance of our positions and we will take every possible step to ensure that Richmond remains a great community in which to live, work, play and invest.

I would like to extend a special welcome to our two new Councillors, Kelly Greene and Michael Wolfe. Their energy, backgrounds and knowledge will be of great assistance as we work together to provide strong, thoughtful and caring leadership for the City.

I also want to take a moment to acknowledge the longstanding service of retiring Councillors Derek Dang and Ken Johnston. Collectively, Councillors Dang and Johnston contributed 39 years of service to this City. Their insight into all the civic issues contributed greatly to the quality of our decisions. Our community owes them a debt of gratitude for their integrity and long service.

In the coming weeks, our new Council will begin to develop our new Term Goals to serve as our roadmap. We have to meet some very high standards. Though we accomplished a long list of achievements over the past four years, there still remains much more to fulfill our vision for Richmond. As Richmond City Council has always been a model of collaboration and consensus-building, I look forward to working with this team to build a sustainable future.

As we reflect and look ahead, I will address a number of issues, including:

- Managing growth and housing affordability;
- Community safety;
- Community services;
- Transportation;
- Sustainability; and
- Responsible financial management and the economy.

Growth and housing affordability

Richmond continues to enjoy a strong rate of growth. 2018 may well be another record-breaking year in building activity. As a number of new projects are already approved or under consideration, the strong pace of growth is likely to continue for the foreseeable

future. Council will manage this growth so that is sustainable, reflects the objectives of our Official Community Plan and builds upon the high quality of life we enjoy in Richmond.

Growth is expected to fund needed infrastructure improvements including new roads, parks, child care centres, public art and other amenities. For instance, growth funded construction of the City Centre Community Centre similar to the way it is expected to soon provide the new City Centre Community Policing Office and a new Community Centre on Capstan Way in North Richmond.

Perhaps most importantly, thousands of new housing units have been built over the past decade to help meet the increasing demand arising from population growth throughout our City and region. Thanks to our Affordable Housing Strategy and supporting policies, many hundreds of these units are permanently designated for affordable housing.

Growth also brings challenges for our community. City Council constantly updates our policies to ensure that new residential growth reflects community values. Last term, such updates would include our revisions to the massing regulations for new single-family homes, extinguishing obsolete Land Use Contracts, revising Development Cost Charges and updating our Affordable Housing Strategy. We also introduced policies to encourage more rental housing and a broader array of housing types.

Council will continue to review these and other policies to ensure that we address the deep concerns about housing affordability and livability throughout our community.

Community safety

With a very low crime rate and outstanding public safety services and facilities, Richmond remains one of the safest communities in Canada.

Within a 15-year period, Councils have previously addressed community safety through an ambitious building program, which included the building of five new fire halls, as well as completion of a major retrofit of a 6th fire hall along with the purchase of the new headquarters for the local RCMP detachment. In the past year alone, we opened the new Brighthouse No. 1 fire hall and Cambie No. 3 combined fire hall and ambulance station.

A key project for the coming year will be completion of the new City Centre Community Policing Office. With detachment headquarters now located on No. 5 Road, this new facility promises to enhance service within the City Centre by increasing police presence and reducing response times.

During the last term, Council provided funding for 39 more RCMP officers. As our community continues to grow, the number of first responders must keep pace. Each year, Council revisits staffing requirements for both our police and fire services.

Last month across Canada, recreational use of cannabis became legal. Many unanswered questions remain about the impacts of legalization on local communities. Though it will significantly impact some of our service costs, there has been no decision on the amount

that local governments will be compensated from tax revenues generated by the sale of cannabis.

Legalization of cannabis is bound to also have social, environmental, health and other impacts. Our Council has taken strong positions to limit retail sales and the cultivation of cannabis in greenhouses on farmland. As this issue evolves, the new Council will make further decisions to ensure Richmond's community values are reflected in how we react to legalization.

In addition, Council will continue to address a host of other regulatory issues including problems resulting from the emergence of the short term rental of houses. We will monitor our rental regulations and consider supplemental action to further protect the safety of the neighbourhoods.

Transportation

Transportation presents another set of key issues facing Council. Community livability and economic viability depend in part on the effective movement of people and goods. Because so much pollution is caused by motor vehicles, sound transportation planning must include environmentally-friendly alternatives to reduce greenhouse gases among other sustainability goals.

Through an innovative agreement between the City and Translink, the new Capstan Canada Line Station will soon be built. This long-sought project is being funded through a special development levy on the construction of all new units in north Richmond. Station design started earlier this year as construction is set to start in 2019. Once the 24 new Canada Line cars are delivered, service on this popular line should be significantly expanded.

Construction should also start soon on a new bus mall immediately south of the Brighthouse Canada Line Station. Again, it is imperative that Richmond work closely with Translink to implement these and other service improvements. We strive to increase and improve public transportation throughout Richmond.

Work will now begin on the new River Parkway, a major new arterial route through our City Centre. To be completed in early 2020, River Parkway is meant to further decongest traffic in the City Centre. With improved cycling and pedestrian amenities along with the recently-launched community bike share program, Council aims to encourage alternative forms of transportation.

Regionally, it is important that a solution be designed to effectively address the traffic bottleneck on Highway 99 at the George Massey Tunnel. Working with the Province, Council needs to adopt a sustainable plan to efficiently move traffic while minimizing the environmental and livability impacts on the surrounding communities. Our City Council has remained steadfast in our opinion that the previously-proposed 10-lane bridge is neither viable nor effective and that more consideration needs to be given to options such as twinning the existing tunnel after being upgraded. We await the imminent release of the Province's review of the Massey Tunnel Replacement Project.

Community services

As our community grows, Council will address our residents' need for services and facilities.

We eagerly anticipate the upcoming opening of the new Minoru Centre for Active Living which will effectively double the seniors program space as well as the pools. Once vacated, the City will repurpose the existing Seniors Centre. As the Cultural Centre can no longer meet the space needs of our many resident arts groups, the Seniors Centre will be repurposed to provide needed arts space for community users.

In the past year, the City made significant progress for the Garden City Lands to eventually become the new green heart of our community. We opened up the new trail system as our partners at Kwantlen Polytechnic University launched their new farm school. Extensive landscaping is underway to introduce new trees and vegetation throughout the site and to protect the remaining bog eco-system as an environmental preserve. The upcoming phases of the vision contemplate the expansion of farming activities along with the addition of community gardens and trails.

Soon Council will also consider a new Minoru Park Vision to guide the future evolution of our centrepiece park. At the same time, we will oversee development of the new West Cambie Neighbourhood Park to serve one of our rapidly-growing neighbourhoods.

Council considers its key capital priorities to include construction of a new Steveston Community Centre, an animal shelter and a lawn bowling clubhouse adjacent to the greens in Minoru Park. Once final designs are approved, each can move forward with construction.

With the urgent need for affordable housing, two key projects to open in 2019 are the expanded overnight emergency shelter in the Ironwood area and the Temporary Modular Housing project on Elmbridge. These projects will assist many in our community who struggle to secure the basic necessity of safe, secure shelter. Council also plans to update our Homelessness Strategy in 2019 to further address this ongoing crisis.

Council plans to build and broaden the inventory of all types of affordable housing across the City. To date, the City's Affordable Housing Strategy and related policies have realized many successes as we have secured more than 2,000 units.

Over the past few years, the City has secured a number of new child care facilities, including the recently-opened 37-space Seasong Centre on the old Steveston Secondary site. Through rezoning, Richmond has nine child care facilities which provide a total of over 300 licensed child care spaces. Over the next few years, we expect to open well over 200 additional spaces as part of new development across the City. Helping to meet this important need for young Richmond families will continue to be a Council priority.

Richmond is known internationally as a model for multicultural diversity and harmony. However, maintaining effective intercultural relations requires constant attention. To assist, the City will soon start public consultation on a Cultural Harmony Strategy for completion next year.

Sustainability

Building a sustainable community is the main focus of Richmond's Official Community Plan and guides our efforts as a Council.

Richmond has been long-recognized as a leader among local governments in energy reduction and conservation. Through our innovative energy plan, the City has reduced overall greenhouse gas emissions by 6% since 2007, despite a 7% growth in population. This resulted in Richmond saving \$13 million in energy costs. With aggressive GHG reduction targets, our award-winning District Energy Utility is on track to become the largest of its kind in North America.

Richmond also leads in recycling and reducing the waste going into local landfills. I am particularly pleased to report that Richmond is closing in on our target to meet the regional goal of 80% diversion of our waste by 2020. In the coming months, look for Council to announce additional measures to increase recycling opportunities and services.

As an island community, the impacts of climate change such as rising sea levels and global warming are very real. To meet future threats, we prepare by investing in infrastructure every year. Because of this, our residents can be confident in the City's flood protection system and the knowledge that the immediate threat from flooding is very low.

During the past term, odours from the Harvest Power composting facility in south-east Richmond caused considerable distress for our residents. Council insisted on resolution of this issue by Metro Vancouver and the Provincial Government as the parties responsible for air quality. Recently, the City along with some local residents were parties to an environmental appeal that led to more stringent plant operating requirements. While Harvest Power has announced plans to phase out its local operation, Council will remain vigilant to ensure that odours are controlled during the facility's remaining months of operation.

In the last term, many concerns were also raised regarding the size of new residential construction on farmland. I expect that this matter will be further considered very soon.

Financial management and the economy

Richmond residents enjoy some of the lowest property taxes in our region. We have carefully maintained an equitable balance in the share of property taxes paid by business relative to residents. This ensures that we support a robust economy and continued job growth along with affordability.

Through prudent financial management, our financial reserves have now reached more sustainable levels. The City must expand and renew our civic infrastructure to meet future needs. Consequently, it will remain an ongoing challenge for the new Council to adopt operating and capital budgets for 2019 and beyond. We will provide for the needs of our growing community while striving to keep taxes and tax increases modest.

Economic development, in addition to general strategies for business attraction and retention, are always important for Richmond. Tourism promotion through our Sport Hosting Program and our filming office are examples of initiatives to attract business. In the upcoming term, consideration may be given to expansion of these and many similar programs to ensure our business sector remains robust.

Significant achievements

Innovation is a key corporate value for Richmond. City staff always seek ways in which to improve customer service and staff efficiency, often involving new technologies. That commitment fueled our successful submission in the prestigious, nation-wide *Smart Cities Challenge* competition. As a finalist for the \$10 million prize, our final submission will be considered next spring. Council, staff and our corporate partners will fine-tune our final submission as the project involves the innovative use of technology and data streams to improve our emergency response capability. This project builds upon work already started through our award-winning Digital Strategy.

Richmond is also among the first cities in the world to be named as a *Global Active City*. To earn this designation, cities must offer all their residents the opportunity to have active, healthy lifestyles while improving their well-being. Richmond joins other first cities: Buenos Aires, Argentina; Hamburg, Germany; Lillehammer, Norway; Liverpool, UK; and Ljubljana, Slovenia. This honour was predicated on work with our partners in developing key initiatives such as our Community Wellness Strategy and the draft Recreation and Sport Strategy. Building a healthy, active community is a constant work-in-progress and over the coming term, Council will continue to focus on initiatives to further improve overall community health.

Upcoming highlights

2019 will mark the 140th anniversary of Richmond's incorporation. As we did during our very successful Canada 150 celebrations, Council will consider a special grant program to assist community groups in planning celebrations and creating legacies to mark the anniversary.

Looking forward, 2020 will also be very interesting. Richmond will again be the host to the 55+ Games. We will also host the Canadian Adult Recreational Hockey Association World Cup (CAHRA), a huge international event known as the Olympics of recreational hockey. These events and many others will provide a big boost to our tourism economy, while adding great vibrancy and excitement to our City.

Conclusion

To conclude, I'd once again like to say thank you to all those who participated in the election process as candidates, staff or volunteers. Governance renewal is a key tenet of the democratic process. We look forward to the next four years as we work diligently to fulfill our commitments.

Much of our success in the upcoming term will be possible through the support from our corporate partners in the community in addition to the group of volunteers which can be counted on to form a part of every City initiative. We are indeed fortunate to have an active community which includes so many people who generously assist others as volunteers.

In Richmond, we are able to enjoy a very high quality of life. City Council counts on the public's generous support and active participation to enhance the well-being of others. We look forward to the challenges and opportunities we shall face in the coming term.