

CityClerk

From: Karen Barry [bcprograms@bsc-eoc.org]
Sent: November 15, 2012 3:16 PM
To: Weber, David; CityClerk
Cc: Christy, June
Subject: Submission for Richmond OCP update from Bird Studies Canada
Attachments: RichmondOCP_BSCcomments_Nov2012.pdf

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Categories: 12-8060-20-9000 - 2041 Official Community Plan

Hello,
Please accept the attached letter which provides our comments and suggestions for consideration in Richmond's Official Community Plan update. Can you please forward this letter to Mayor and Council and other City staff as necessary for inclusion in the public hearing agenda?

We appreciate the opportunity to provide input and we are happy to provide additional information and details about any of these recommendations.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Thank you,

Karen Barry, M.Sc., R.P. Bio.

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** To find out more about BSC and support science and conservation in action, visit <http://www.bsc-eoc.org/support/>
** Keep updated on bird conservation news and events by signing up for BSC's free e-newsletter at <http://www.bsc-eoc.org/organization/bscnews.html>





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To Public Hearing
Date: Nov 19, 2012
Item # 3
Re: OCP Amendment
Bylaw 9000

November 15, 2012

Dear Mayor Malcolm Brodie and Council, City of Richmond

RE: Comments and Recommendations on the 2041 draft Official Community Plan (OCP).

On behalf of Bird Studies Canada, please accept this letter with our suggestions and recommendations for consideration in Richmond's 2041 Official Community Plan (OCP) update. Bird Studies Canada (BSC) is Canada's leading non-government conservation organization focused on bird monitoring and research (www.birdscanada.org). With our partner BC Nature, we are implementing the Important Bird Areas (IBA) program in BC (www.ibacanada.ca). The IBA program is international in scope and recognizes sites that are of global importance to birds (www.birdlife.org). At BSC, we also manage several monitoring datasets (eg. breeding birds, coastal waterbird abundance, nocturnal owls) that are freely available to governments, biologists and managers for use in planning, environmental assessment or sensitive areas mapping projects.

We are currently undertaking a project with local governments to incorporate information regarding birds and biodiversity conservation into municipal policy and planning initiatives including Official Community Plans. As outlined below, the information we provide can address several themes including: the Natural Environment, Environmentally Sustainable Development, Parks and Greenspace, Economic Benefits of Ecotourism, and Identifying and Mapping Environmentally Sensitive Areas. We reviewed Richmond's 2041 draft OCP focusing primarily on those sections that address the environment and natural features and offer the following input and suggestions.

Overall, the OCP contains many valuable goals and policies aimed at protecting and enhancing the natural resources of the area. The City's Environmentally Sensitive Development Permit Areas (Intertidal, Shoreline, Upland Forest, Old Field and Freshwater) are beneficial mechanisms to protect habitat and biodiversity. It would be useful to mention the Important Bird Area designation covering the estuarine and wetland areas of Sturgeon Banks, and waters of the south arm of the Fraser River to highlight the global significance of this area for birds. These areas are also part of the newly announced Fraser River Delta Ramsar Site designation, or Wetland of International Importance (www.ramsar.org). The City may also want to encourage the use of new building guidelines to minimize bird mortality from window strikes, as well as measures to reduce light pollution at night. A bylaw or an educational program to reduce disturbance to overwintering waterbirds from boats, off-leash dogs or other causes may be warranted.

The 2012 updated version of the provincial *Develop with Care Guidelines* has recently been released and there may be some useful recommendations for planning and building design, see <http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/wld/documents/bmp/devwithcare2012/index.html>



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Our specific recommendations are below:

Section 2.0. Climate Change Response

- With predicted increasing temperatures, existing shoreline structures could be affected by sea level rise, and future developments must consider this during the planning stage. We suggest adding a policy that installation of hardscape shoreline armoring to protect waterfront homes and other buildings is not supported. A Green Shores approach is encouraged to address shoreline stabilization issues (www.greenshores.ca).

Section 4.0: Vibrant Cities

- Pg. 4-12, Objective 5: Suggest adding a policy to enhance or develop a network of walking trails and pathways that can be used by a variety of groups including families with small children and people with disabilities to allow for increased access and exposure to outdoor recreation.

Section 6.0 Resilient Economy

- Suggest mentioning ecotourism as part of the local economy, such as wildlife watching, nature experience (including benefits to human health of regular exposure to natural surroundings) and related activities. We are happy to supply background reports about the economic benefits of these activities, if interested.
- Marketing Richmond as a premier birdwatching destination based on the internationally recognized Important Bird Area and abundant local parks and natural areas could have substantial economic benefits to the City.

Section 7.0. Agriculture and Food

- Suggest mentioning that agricultural lands provide important wildlife habitat especially for migratory waterfowl in winter

Section 9.0 Island Natural Environment

- Overview: Insert reference that Richmond is located within an internationally recognized Important Bird Area and that the shoreline marshes, mud flats and shallow water areas of Sturgeon Banks are one of the most significant wetland habitats in North America.

Background information on the IBA:

The undeveloped land in Richmond and the surrounding shoreline areas and waters are part of an internationally recognized Important Bird Area (IBA), called *Boundary Bay - Roberts Bank - Sturgeon Bank (Fraser River Estuary)* IBA. It was designated because the area supports globally significant numbers of numerous species, including Western Sandpiper migrating in spring, Dunlin and several other shorebirds. In fall and early winter, counts of over 100,000 waterfowl use the area. At least two nationally vulnerable species breed here: Great Blue Heron ssp. *fannini* and Barn Owl. The marshes of Roberts and Sturgeon Banks support breeding American Bitterns, Soras, Virginia Rails, waterfowl and Northern Harriers, and outside the breeding season, large numbers of feeding swallows, Bald Eagles, Northern Harriers, and Peregrine Falcons. The area also supports large numbers of Short-eared Owls, Red-tailed Hawks and Rough-legged Hawks in the winter (www.ibacanada.ca).

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With reference to this Important Bird Area, it has been noted that there is constant pressure in this region from non-agricultural development such as housing, recreational and industrial expansion. Since the banks are situated adjacent to large urban areas, the pressure to expand industrial, residential, and port facilities (for example jetties and causeways) is intense. Recent airport expansion has brought airplane flight paths closer to the birds. There is also the potential for water pollution from urban and industrial developments along the Fraser River, as well as the risk of oil and ballast pollution arising from shipping in the Georgia Strait, Roberts Bank and the Fraser River. *Zostera japonica* (an exotic eelgrass) has been introduced and invasive *Spartina* is a non-native saltmarsh cordgrass that has been spreading in recent years.

- Pg. 9-3, Ecological Network Management Map: it would be beneficial to include the boundaries of the IBA as another type of conservation land designation. We are happy to supply a GIS shape file for this purpose. The shoreline areas of the IBA should be identified as an Environmentally Sensitive Area if they are not already.
- Suggest adding a policy that the City will support education programs to increase public awareness about local natural areas and ways to reduce impacts from development, disturbance and pollution.
- Suggest adding a policy that land clearing should be minimized for new developments as much as possible and the disturbed areas replanted with native vegetation. Trees and shrubs should not be cleared during the active bird nesting season, from April 1-August 1.
- Suggest adding a policy that states the use of invasive horticultural ornamental plants is discouraged, for example English Ivy, Vinca, English holly, Bishop's weed (*Lamium*). The City could state its support for programs to increase public awareness of the benefits of using native plants for landscaping.
- Large older trees provide habitat for Bald Eagles as well as other raptors such as Red-tailed Hawks and Peregrine Falcons. Suggest adding a policy that removal and topping of native shoreline trees to enhance views is discouraged.
- Suggest adding a policy that building standards using materials and designs to reduce bird window strikes are encouraged
- Suggest adding a policy that use of appropriate lighting to reduce light pollution at night is supported
- Suggest adding a policy that free-roaming house cats are discouraged. For information on the negative impacts of outdoor cats to wild bird populations, see <http://www.abcbirds.org/newsandreports/releases/120806.html>



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Section 10.0 Open Space and Public Realm

- Enhancing connectivity between parks and green space will benefit wildlife and increase biodiversity conservation
- Suggest adding a policy that the City will support events to celebrate local natural areas, such as Nature festivals, World Migratory Bird Day
- The City could work towards developing new partnerships and collaborations with other organizations to increase opportunities for people to experience and enjoy nature (eg, guided walks, tours, outdoor learning events, collaborative signage projects)

We appreciate the opportunity to provide input to Richmond's draft OCP and trust you find this information useful. We would be happy to provide more details about any of our comments. Please contact me if you have any questions or if further information is required.

Sincerely,

Karen Barry
Bird Studies Canada
Email: BCprograms@birdscanada.org

CC: June Christy, Senior Planner
David Weber, Director City Clerk's office