

DATE: March 11, 2008

TO: Richmond City Council

FROM: Theresa Harding, Richmond Resident

RE: Garden City Lands

I am here to let you know that I do not agree with the proposed removal of the Garden City Lands from the Agricultural Land Reserve.

Richmond has been home for me and my three children these past 20 years. I and my children have been active members of my community for many years. We have a strong interest in how our city develops.

The fact that our home is near to where some of our food grows has been a source of local pride. We have been pumpkin buying in the fall, strawberry and blueberry picking; we get our vegetables at stands filled with produce from the garden right behind, even our Christmas trees had been growing nearby. We cycle and drive by the farms and can see the foods ripening and anticipate their arrival to our table.

While the Garden City Land has not been farmed for a long time, its unrealized potentials for agriculture today are tremendously valuable. The proposed agricultural uses of community gardens, agricultural learning centre for Kwantlen University College and local schools, park land and open green space are highly desirable. More importantly, they are needed. They are needed to demonstrate innovative farming concepts and practices and the viability of urban farming at this time when our ecological footprint has to be greatly reduced.

Council's application to remove this site from the ALR has caused many of us to stand against the community and agricultural losses should the land be removed from the ALR and to stand up for the gains that can be realized by retaining this site for educational, innovative, and community agriculture uses.

Here is an opportunity for collaboration between the Musqueam Band, local commercial and community farmers, Kwantlen University College and the City. Here is an opportunity for the Musqueam to demonstrate how the land was used prior to the coming of European settlers, and integrate new technologies and new agricultural information that could integrate traditional knowledge and practices with contemporary for the benefit of everyone.

This is an opportunity for Richmond to demonstrate its leadership in agricultural innovation and education. Here is an opportunity for residents to learn to farm in

*-and is not optimal for conventional farming given its surrounded by roads and dwellings*

urban gardens. An opportunity for students at Kwantlen and in local elementary and high schools to learn increasingly relevant – even urgent - urban gardening concepts and practices are pushed to the forefront by this debate. Here is an opportunity for local farmers to capitalize on the presence of research and fieldwork presented by Kwantlen and its students, and to collaborate with them toward mutually benefiting outcomes.

Here is an opportunity for Richmond community gardeners, students and commercial farmers to share with their peers throughout the Lower Mainland, the province, and the world.

We in Richmond and people all around the world must learn to maximize the food potential of our agricultural lands. We need to learn many new practices to reduce the carbon footprint of food processing, packaging, and transportation. Keeping the Garden City Land in the ALR will give Richmond homegrown solutions to food issues and to reducing our ecological footprint. Richmond can be the City that people come to learn about urban farming, just as people – including Richmond Councillors – go to Italy to learn about slow food.

This site should be developed through collaborative processes between the Musqueam, Kwantlen and local schools, the City and city residents to generate opportunities for research and education, commercial and community farming, and traditional and contemporary synergies that could place Richmond as a leader in the emerging field of urban farming. Council must vote to keep the Garden City Lands in the ALR.

Respectfully,



Theresa Harding