

# City of Richmond 2022 Parks & Open Space Strategy

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# Executive Summary

The completion of Richmond's 2022 Parks and Public Open Space Strategy is a significant milestone. This is the City's first comprehensive strategic plan for its parks and public open space system since 1977. The parks and open space system in Richmond today is the result of over 100 years of community initiative, foresight by successive City Councils, and systematic planning. As the first Parks and Open Space Strategy, this document endeavors to tell the whole story; the history, the state of the current system, how the system is changing and will change in the future, and what needs to be done over the next decade so that the community can continue to enjoy the benefits of healthy, vibrant parks, trails and greenways, natural areas, waterfronts and the urban realm.

## Planning for the Next Decade

Richmond is in the midst of a transformation, becoming an increasingly urban, 21st century city while sustaining strong suburban and rural communities. The kinds of parks and open spaces and the kinds of services that are being provided are changing and diversifying as a result.

The city's growing and ethnically diverse population requires more and new services. Addressing the needs of an aging population and increasing levels of inactivity will require a shift in the approach to accessibility and programming of outdoor places. Changing technology and innovative practices present opportunities for more effective management of the system, and at the same time will require shifts in organizational structure and resources. A greater awareness of climate change and the City's commitment to a "Sustainable Richmond" means that there is greater impetus to incorporate multiple objectives within each part of the parks and open space system. These are concrete indicators of the kinds of changes and adaptations that are required.



## The Parks and Open Space Strategy Framework

In March of 2011, Richmond City Council endorsed the Strategy Framework. The framework flows from the City's corporate vision to be "the most appealing, liveable and well-managed community in Canada". It consists of seven Focus Areas, each accompanied by several Outcome Statements that direct where priorities and resources must be focused in order to continue to provide a high quality parks and open space system into the future.

## Strategy Framework

Focus Areas	Outcome Statements
Health and Wellness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The parks and open space system is inviting and welcoming to residents and visitors of all ages and backgrounds</li> <li>2. Residents of every neighbourhood have equal access to safe, appealing outdoor places to engage in healthy active lifestyles</li> <li>3. The diverse interests of the community are reflected in the range of spaces and programs offered by the parks and open space system</li> </ol>
Great Spaces and Experiences	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The rich variety of great places, features and activities in the parks and open space system contribute to the city's vibrancy and identity</li> <li>2. The parks and open space system enhances Richmond's status as an exceptional local, regional and international destination</li> <li>3. The city's unique landscapes, food, arts, culture and signature events are supported and showcased</li> <li>4. Richmond's natural and cultural heritage are brought to life through active engagement, education and interpretation</li> </ol>
Connectivity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. There are well established pedestrian, rolling and cycling connections between every element of the city</li> <li>2. The system is inviting, accessible and safe, enabling residents and visitors to feel comfortable and connected to the community</li> <li>3. The system promotes a culture of walking and cycling and supports active transportation modes</li> </ol>
Green Network	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Nature and natural areas are recognized as fundamental building blocks of a liveable and healthy city</li> <li>2. The parks and open space system includes a range of green spaces that support recreation, social interaction, and psychological and spiritual renewal</li> <li>3. The parks and opens space system contributes significantly to the conservation and enhancement of the ecological network</li> </ol>
Blue Network	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The recreational and ecological values of the waterfront and waterways are celebrated and protected</li> <li>2. Richmond's waterfront provides a variety of activities and multiple destinations</li> <li>3. The experience of the waterfront and waterways reflects the cultural and ecological uniqueness of our island city heritage</li> <li>4. The parks and open space system integrates water into the urban fabric in creative and innovative ways</li> </ol>
Diversity and Multi-functionality	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The system provides a variety of diverse open spaces that are flexible and able to respond to changes and community need</li> <li>2. Community objectives are met while the finite resource of park land and public open space are protected</li> <li>3. The City's sustainability is improved by the green infrastructure provided by the parks and open space system</li> </ol>
Resource Management	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The parks and open space system is managed by a responsive organization that meets community needs</li> <li>2. Richmond's Parks Division is recognized for its innovation and efficient management of resources</li> <li>3. The system inspires shared stewardship between multiple stakeholders to foster pride, purpose and a sense of community</li> </ol>

## Strategy Context

This document is written within the context of several overarching City policies and plans:

- the Official Community Plan, which contains policies regarding the provision of parks and open space;
- the City Centre Area Plan where most of the city's growth is occurring and where 136 additional acres of park and public open space will be acquired;
- the Development Cost Charges program that derives revenue for capital construction of city infrastructure and amenities in response to growth from each new development; and,
- the Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Service Master Plan 2005-2015, which established the service delivery model for the Community Services department.



*London Heritage Farm and community garden*

In addition, the City's long-standing relationship with the Richmond School District has resulted in a high degree of cooperation in co-locating schools and parks and in shared use of facilities. School District sites comprise 22% of the total parkland in Richmond and are a critical part of the network of neighbourhood parks. The School District is one of the key stakeholders considered in the Strategy.

## The Evolution of the Parks and Open Space System

This Strategy includes a thorough inventory of the whole system and all of the services delivered by the Parks Division, establishing the baseline for future decision making about priorities and resources. Parks delivers a broad range of services within the larger context of City policies (e.g., the Official Community Plan) and according to the Community Service Department's service delivery model. That model is based on a three-pronged approach to service delivery; working with others, being accountable and focussing on meeting community needs.

The evolution of the system, from the opening of the first school park at Mitchell School in 1908 to the first park bylaw in 1957 and the rapid growth of the system since, provides a fascinating perspective on the evolution of Richmond. Through the period of suburban expansion from the 1960's through the 1990's, the majority of the network of neighbourhood and community parks was established. Meanwhile, important landmarks like Minoru Park, the Richmond Nature Park, Garry Point Park, Terra Nova Rural Park and the Richmond Olympic Oval were secured and developed, showcasing Richmond's unique places and spaces. In

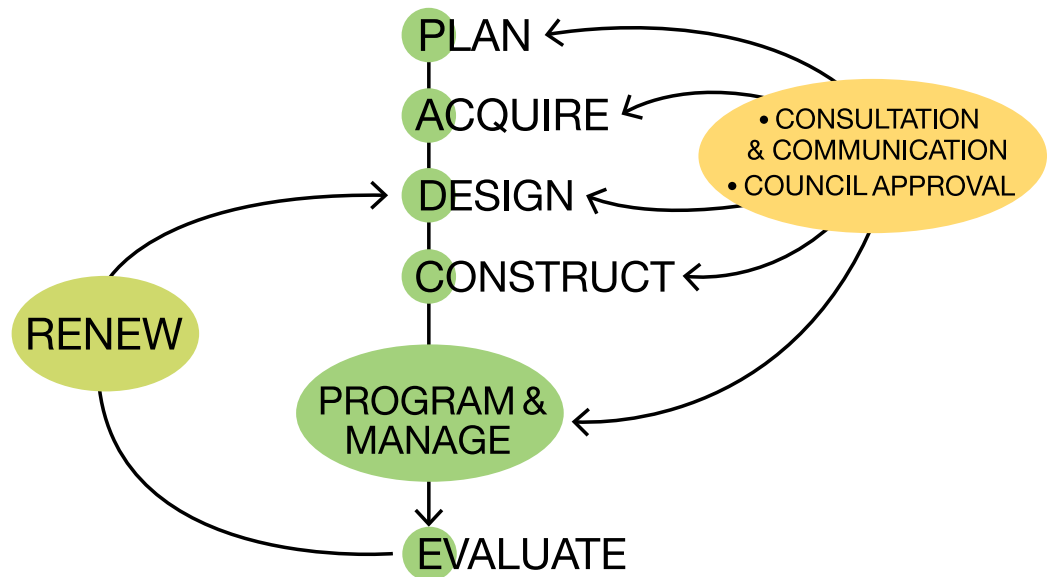


*Minoru Lakes c. 1984*

addition, the system is becoming increasingly sophisticated and diverse. For example, the development of artificial sports fields in several locations has enabled both increased access and play time for local sports organizations as well as the ability to host major sports tournaments. Public art has been integrated within several parks, for example the “House of Roots” at Paulik Gardens Neighbourhood Park, enriching people’s experiences. The range of programming opportunities is expanding offering more people more ways to become engaged with parks and open spaces.

## Delivering Excellent Service

The Parks Division’s three sections, **Parks Planning, Design and Construction**, **Parks Programs**, and **Parks Operations**, deliver a broad range of services as shown in the diagram below. The Division is responsible for the management of a total of 685 ha. (1,695 acres) of dedicated park land, more than 50 km of trails, a variety of waterfront amenities and a rapidly developing urban realm.



*Parks Division Services Diagram*

Surveys and public consultation results consistently show that Richmond residents have a high level of satisfaction with the city’s parks and trails and they wish to see these levels of service sustained. Through the use of demographic information and a variety of methods to gauge community need, the Parks Division has been able to deliver excellent service. As the city grows and diversifies, our services must be responsive to changing community needs and expand into new lines of business. Public consultation and working with community partners is key to ensuring that our resources are targeted to deliver the greatest community benefit.

The City has adopted standards for the provision of parks and open space and the analysis in the Strategy indicates that while most of the city is well served, there are some gaps to be addressed. This strategy includes directions for addressing those gaps and introduces a new standard for access to the city-wide trail system in response to growing demand for more and convenient access to trails.



*Garden City Community Park at the Play Environment*

Given the changes in the community and the consequent changes to the parks and open space system, the services provided by the Parks Division are expanding. In the last decade the new parks that have been built offer greater diversity in programming opportunities and landscape types. The size and number of private development projects that include significant parks and open space has increased dramatically in the last 5 years requiring a new level of service. Over the next decade new activities and new programs will be introduced to engage the city's diverse population and will provide more opportunities for active living and connection to Richmond's unique environment. In addition, in order to address the increasing complexity of the system, new strategies for sustaining high-quality operations and resource management are being adopted.

## Implementation Plan

The implementation plan highlights the priority actions that will be the focus of the Parks Division's work plans for the next ten years. The priority actions answer each of the Outcome Statements of the strategy framework. The plan will guide all annual and ongoing responsibilities (e.g., advanced planning and design, ageing infrastructure replacement, educational programs, annual maintenance programs). In addition, specific projects have been identified in the Implementation Plan.

Regular monitoring and evaluation will ensure the outcomes are met. With this strategic focus, Richmond's parks and open space system will be a key part of realizing the City's vision.

