

## City of Richmond *Agricultural Viability Strategy* Summary

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### City of Richmond Statistics<sup>1</sup>:

Population (2006)	174,461
Jurisdictional Area:	
Land:	13,325 ha
Water:	12,400 ha
Total:	25,725 ha
Total Area Farmed (2006)	3730 ha
% of Farmland (landbase):	39%
Number of Farms (2006)	172
ALR	5,182 ha

**Date of :** February 18, 2003

**Title:** *Richmond Agricultural Viability Strategy*

**Length:** 90 pages.

**Prepared by:** The City of Richmond, The “Core Team” (Steering Committee), & various consultants (see stakeholders).

#### **Adoption Status:**

- Approved by council resolution on May 26th, 2003.

#### **Related documents:**

- City of Richmond - Agricultural Survey Report - Executive Summary (1999)
- City of Richmond & Richmond Farmers' Institute - Agricultural Profile (2002)

#### **Purpose Statement:**

- “ .... to provide a 2021 vision and guiding principles, objectives and practical strategies for the future growth and viability of the agricultural sector in the City.” (15)

#### **Highlights:**

- “ 2021 Agricultural Viability Strategy Vision .... ‘ The City and the farm ... working together for viable agriculture’.”

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<sup>1</sup> City of Richmond Agricultural Overview. 2009. Province of British Columbia. Ministry of Agriculture and Lands. <<http://www.agf.gov.bc.ca/resmgmt/sf/Publications.htm#agstats>> Retrieved May 21, 2010.

- “... the agricultural sector is one that is at best, misunderstood, and, at worst, frequently ignored by those not directly involved with agriculture.” (5)
- “The development of this AVS is a long-term commitment and partnership of the City and agricultural community to strengthen and enhance agricultural viability in Richmond.” (5)
- The “strategy” provides 10 guiding principles, summarized as supporting continuing and competitive agricultural and economic growth, retaining ALR land, and provide for farmer support, increasing public awareness, coordinated decision making, environmental awareness, and effective communication.
- “It is envisioned that a Richmond Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC) will take the lead role in the implementation of the AVS. As well, the AAC will advise City Council, staff and the community on a wide range of agricultural matters.” (15)
- “Despite ... limitations, Richmond farms generate over \$56 million in revenues and contribute significantly to the local and provincial economy.” (13)

### Issues/Challenges:

1. Agricultural interests are often inadequately represented in the City’s decision-making process.
  - An AAC is needed to advise city council.
2. Biophysical limitations - excessive wetness and lack of drainage.
  - Much of the city is prone to periodic flooding;
  - Richmond soils do not drain easily;
  - Despite this, many farms require irrigation in the summer months.
3. Service and infrastructure problems
  - Farmers must use city roads, often causing frustration for both the agricultural and non-agricultural community.
4. Pressure to urbanize & subdivide.
5. Rural-urban conflicts.
  - Not all ALR land is used for farming, community must understand agricultural area is a “working farm” landscape;
  - Conflicts along the rural-urban edge - nuisance complaints, environmentally sensitive areas
6. Conflicting land uses and high land values.
  - There is a need for city policy conformity.
7. Economic issues.
  - Inadequate infrastructure, conflicting regulations, subdivision, cost of land, absentee landlords, non-farm uses, both on and adjacent to ALR land.
8. Agricultural awareness
  - Urban population is growing and agricultural population is shrinking.

### Strategies, Objectives & Desired Outcomes:

NOTE: All strategies in this summary and in the AAP are recommendations only, provided by the consultants, the steering committee, and other contributors to the farm plan. Following is a summary of the “strategies”, “objectives”, and “desired outcomes”.

#### Strategies:

1. Agricultural Decision Making Strategy:
  - Provide a framework to ensure that future decision-making recognizes agricultural interests;
  - Establish an Agricultural Advisory Committee, provide opportunities for improved communication;

- Ensure that decision making consults the agricultural sector, promotes agricultural viability, considers the impacts on agriculture.
2. Services and Infrastructure Strategy:
    - Provide farmers with necessary support, services & infrastructure, according to performance standards, and ensuring that projects do not interfere with normal farm practices (addressing flooding, drainage, transportation, and irrigation issues);
    - Ensure drainage improvements are made in the ALR, carried out in an environmentally holistic and comprehensive manner.
  3. City Policies and Bylaws Strategy:
    - Ensure conformity of all City policies;
    - Protect ALR land, ensure they meet land use objectives;
    - Emphasis on communication, dialogue and cooperation over legislation and bylaw enforcement.
  4. Non-Farm Uses and Parks and Recreation Strategy:
    - Ensure farming is the primary use of ALR land;
    - Minimize subdivision;
    - Direct proposed non-farm uses of ALR land to non-ALR land; ensure existing and proposed uses of ALR land support agricultural viability;
    - Ensure city park, transportation and other policies support agricultural viability.
  5. Agricultural Edge Strategy:
    - Recognize the rural-urban edge as a special management area, to mitigate/prevent conflict;
    - Recognize the need for compatible land uses at the agricultural edge.
  6. Strategy for Agriculture With Respect to the Environment and Environmentally Sensitive Areas:
    - Encourage ESA and farms to co-exist;
    - Provide necessary information, communication amongst farming community & government;
    - Encourage the use of best management practices.
    - Mitigate the impact of wildlife on agriculture.
  7. Public Education and Awareness Strategy:
    - Encourage residents to learn more about local agriculture and to support locally-grown products;
    - Ensure awareness of farm practices by those who live near or adjacent to the ALR;
    - Provide opportunities for communication between agricultural and non-agricultural communities.
  8. Economic Growth and Diversification Strategy:
    - Encourage long-term economic success through growth and diversification;
    - Assist farmers to lower production costs, keep farmers up to date with agricultural opportunities for growth and opportunity;
    - Increase demand for locally-grown products;
    - Encourage support services and industry to locate in Richmond.

Desired Outcomes:

1. Favourable and sustainable economic returns for farmers;
2. Supportive policy framework and decision-making structure;
3. Beneficial servicing and infrastructure;
4. Increase encouragement from the community;
5. Increased support for Richmond agricultural products;
6. Increased awareness and respect for the needs of the agricultural and urban communities
7. Sustainable environment which provides quality air, water, and land which supports and complements farming;
8. A positive outlook to attract more young people to choose to farm; and
9. Better working partnerships among important stakeholders.

### **Development Process/Timeline:**

- The City of Richmond divided their development of an AAP into 5 phases:
  - I) Council approves preparation of the AVS, finalizes funding, organized preparation of background reports (Agricultural Profile & Survey Report).
  - II) Farmers' workshops and Public Open House for input. Research continued, including partnerships with federal and provincial agencies.
  - III) Consultant team hired & "Agricultural Viability Strategy" developed.
  - IV) "Strategy" presented to council.
  - V) Full implementation of the "Agricultural Viability Strategy".

### **City of Richmond OCP Supporting Statements:**

- Building use restrictions (2 - 7) are the only specific reference to the Viability Strategy.
- The City of Richmond OCP outlines several agricultural policies, paralleling the *Agricultural Viability Strategy*, however in limited depth. Most notably:
  - "Continue to protect all farmlands in the Agricultural Land Reserve."
  - "Maintain and enhance agricultural viability and productivity in Richmond." (2 -3)
  - "Maintain and improve the quality of drainage and irrigation systems to promote the management of floodplain lands and agricultural operations" (7 - 5).
  - Development Permit, Edge, and Buffer Guidelines (9 - 1).

### **AAC Status:**

- Ongoing. 9 members, consisting of 5 representatives from the Richmond Farmers Institute, 2 from the general farming community, one member from the Advisory committee on the Environment (Richmond), and one member of the general public. Members are selected by council for 2 year terms.

### **References to Agricultural Land Commission Act:**

- General description, purpose, and application provided in Appendix 1 (74).
- Acknowledges that approval is required for specific land uses (10).

### **References to the Right to Farm (Farm Practices Protection) Act:**

- General Description, purpose, and application provided in Appendix 1 (74).
- Definition of "farm operation", relative to the **Farm Practices Protection Act** provided (10).
- Recommendations provided to "work towards consistency" with the Act, within both the "*City Policies and Bylaws Strategy*" and Environmentally Sensitive Areas Strategy (26, 37)

### **AAP References to Water Rights (Canada Water Act, BC Water Act):**

- None.