

10.0 Open Space and Public Realm



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The Public Open Space System is comprised of:

- outdoor spaces available for public use that are either publicly owned (e.g., parks and trails) or are secured through legal agreement with private landowners (e.g., plazas, squares and pedestrian walkways).

The Public Realm is comprised of:

- streets, plazas, squares, boulevards, and pedestrian and cycling linkages between and through neighbourhoods

OVERVIEW:

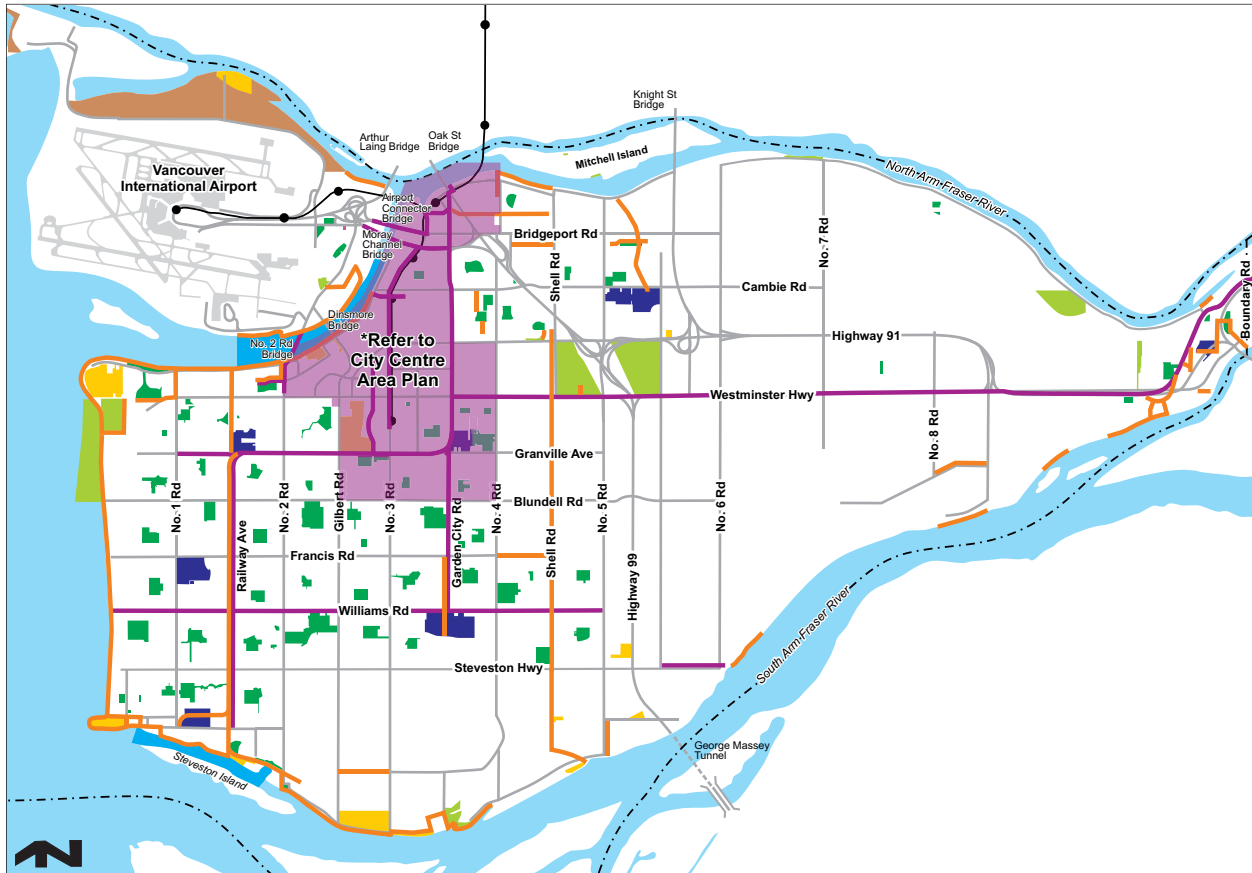
Parks and other types of public open space play a vital role in the quality of life and vibrancy of a city. A well designed, well connected system of parks and trails, greenways and streets, plazas and squares, waterfronts and waterways significantly contribute to individual and community wellness in the following ways:

- **Promote Healthy Lifestyles:** Convenient access to parks and open spaces is a strong indicator for healthy levels of physical activity. Access to places to walk, the most common reason people cite for visiting parks and trails, is a critical service the System can provide. Contact with nature and even simple green spaces with grass and trees, have been shown to have profound psychological and physical benefits, for example, reducing stress and contributing to the healthy development of cognitive functions in children such as memory formation and spatial learning.
- **Foster Community Cohesiveness:** Community cohesiveness is stronger where there are opportunities to engage in informal social contact, to play together, and where people of diverse ages and backgrounds can engage in shared experiences. The sports fields, playgrounds, places to walk dogs, community gardens, and public plazas play a central role in fostering a strong sense of community.
- **Support a Healthy City Environment:** The quality of city life is determined, in part, by the quality of the urban environment. The System contributes to the Ecological Network (EN) and provides desirable ecosystem services such as mitigating temperature extremes, improving air and water quality, contributing to biodiversity and ecological health, and reducing the need to expand expensive infrastructure such as stormwater systems. These services have a positive impact on human health, as well as reduce infrastructure operating costs.



- Contribute to Economic Development: A vibrant open space system can exert a positive influence on the city's economy. Great parks and signature places, like Richmond's waterfront parks and trails, confer economic benefits through improved property values, attraction and retention of businesses, and attraction of tourism with signature outdoor places and events.

Current Parks and Public Open Space System Map



Canada Line	City Wide Park
Trails/Greenway	City Wide Natural Area
Cycle Route	Community Park
	Marine Recreational Area
	Neighbourhood Park
	Regional Park/Conservation Area

*Refer to the CCAP for the locations of future parks in the city centre.
 See Section 3.4 (Specific Richmond Neighbourhoods) for locations of Neighbourhood Links.
 Refer to the 2010 Richmond Trails Strategy for more detail on planned future trails.



Richmond enjoys a wealth of parks and a waterfront trail network that is a regional destination. The City’s parks and open space system offers 121 parks, for a total of 688 ha (1,700 ac.) of dedicated park land and over 50 km (31 mi.) of trails. Many parks include land owned by the Richmond School District, the result of a long standing effort to co-locate school and park sites. Neighbourhood and community parks are equitably distributed so that every neighbourhood, with the exception in the short-term of some rapidly growing areas in the City Centre, has convenient access to diverse types of open space including playgrounds, sports fields and courts, gathering places, community gardens and natural areas. There are also approximately 170 ha (420 ac.) of open space on Sea Island, at Iona Beach Regional Park and the federally owned Sea Island Conservation Area.

Richmond Parks and Public Open Space System Facts

Open Space Standard	3.1 ha (7.66 ac.)/1,000 population City-wide	1.3 ha (3.25 ac.)/1,000 population in City Centre*	133.5 additional hectares (330 ac.) required for 2041 population of 280,000
Park Distribution Standard	Neighbourhood Parks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serve an 800 m (2,625 ft.) radius • 400 m (1,312 ft.) radius in City Centre* 	Community Parks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serve a 1.5 km (0.9 mi.) radius 	City-wide Parks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location determined by unique site attributes (e.g., waterfront)
Park Numbers	80 Neighbourhood Parks (incl. school parks)	8 Community Parks	33 City-wide Parks

* The higher population densities in City Centre mean that residents will have access to parks and public open spaces within 400 m (1,312 ft.) of where they live to the standard of 1.3 ha (3.25 ac.)/1,000 population. The balance of open space will be located elsewhere to meet the City-wide standard.

In the future, the city’s finite land area and increasing population will mean that the open space system must grow and diversify to meet community needs. With a projected population increase of 80,000 people to 2041, an additional 133.5 ha (330 ac.) of public open space will be required. While the quantity of open space is a factor in ensuring equitable distribution, the focus must be on increasing the diversity of the types and functions of the system of public open spaces and the public realm to enrich people’s daily experiences and, at the same time, contribute to the city’s sustainability.



OBJECTIVE 1:

Continue to ensure that there is sufficient public open space that is equitably distributed (e.g., City Centre; City-wide) to meet community need.

POLICIES:

a) for City owned park spaces:

- ensure equitable access to parks and open spaces across the city;
- protect the current inventory of dedicated City park land and ensure no net loss of dedicated park land where changes occur;
- secure additional dedicated park land through the acquisition of new park sites in growing areas of the city;
- work with developers and other land owners (e.g., other levels of government) to secure publicly accessible open spaces that will make a meaningful contribution to the system;
- guide the development of the public realm to increasingly play a role in providing recreational opportunities and the stage for social life;

b) for School Board owned park spaces:

- it is acknowledged that the School Board is reviewing its long-term school and school/park needs. This matter will be addressed over the long-term. In this process, the City will collaborate with the School Board to achieve a “no net loss of parkland”.



OBJECTIVE 2:

Provide a full range of appealing, welcoming places for residents and visitors of all ages and backgrounds to walk, roll, exercise, play, socialize and engage in healthy, active lifestyles.

POLICIES:

- a) continue to provide outdoor sports and recreation facilities that encourage participation by all ages, abilities and financial means;
- b) ensure that all aspects of the System are designed to be inclusive and barrier free;
- c) promote the sense of belonging and connectedness people feel through the development of more and improved community gathering places;
- d) continue to work with community partners to further develop outdoor programs and facilities that support healthy lifestyles (e.g., community gardens, wellness walks).

OBJECTIVE 3:

Showcase and enhance the City's identity through a rich variety of great places and experiences that bring to life Richmond's natural and cultural heritage.

POLICIES:

- a) invest in the System's unique attributes to better foster a sense of city and neighbourhood identity (e.g., varying waterfront character areas, heritage and cultural features);
- b) ensure that Richmond's urban realm reflects the city's distinct culture and landscape through design, materials, public art and interpretive features;
- c) animate more public outdoor places by delivering programs and supporting events with community partners;
- d) showcase Richmond's significant natural, cultural and heritage sites through a broader range of educational and interpretive programs, and capitalize on new media opportunities.





OBJECTIVE 4:

Strengthen pedestrian, rolling (e.g., wheelchairs, scooters, etc.) and cycling linkages among every element of the city (neighbourhoods, schools, civic spaces, neighbourhood shopping centres, parks, natural areas, streets, commercial areas and industrial parks).

POLICIES:

- a) improve connections across the existing City-wide trails system;
- b) continue to improve pedestrian, rolling and cycling linkages within neighbourhoods to key destinations and amenities;
- c) improve the wayfinding and signage system for parks and major public destinations;
- d) expand the range of opportunities for cycling routes separated from automobile traffic.

OBJECTIVE 5:

Strategically expand the range of ecosystem services (e.g., biodiversity and habitat, rain water management, carbon sequestering) integrated within the open space and public realm to strengthen and contribute to the Ecological Network.

POLICIES:

- a) protect, enhance and sustain ecosystem services in parks and other public open spaces as these are significant parts of a robust Ecological Network (see Chapter 9.0);
- b) as practical, connect significant Ecological Network assets via existing or enhanced corridors (linear connections between ecosystems that facilitate the movement of species, water, nutrients and energy increasing the viability of those ecosystems);
- c) provide more opportunities for people to experience nature (e.g., bird watching, nature walks);



- d) provide recreational opportunities to appreciate and participate in agricultural activities;
- e) provide leadership in education and awareness of Richmond's unique ecological assets.



OBJECTIVE 6:

Showcase Richmond's world-class waterfront and enhance the Blue Network (the Fraser River shoreline and estuary, and the internal waterways, the sloughs, canals, and wetlands) for their ecological value, recreational opportunities, and enjoyment.

POLICIES:

- a) protect, enhance and connect the ecological values and public amenities in the Blue Network (e.g., trails, piers, floats, beaches, riparian areas and the foreshore);
- b) continue to acquire land for the waterfront park on the Middle Arm in City Centre;
- c) continue to support the City's signature maritime events (e.g., Ships to Shore, Maritime Festival, Dragon Boat Festival);
- d) develop recreational opportunities on and around sloughs and canals;
- e) deliver educational and interpretive programs that increase the community's connection to the Blue Network;
- f) include water as an element in the urban environment (e.g., Garden City Park stormwater detention pond, Water Sky Garden at the Oval).



OBJECTIVE 7:

Ensure that the System offers a diversity of open spaces and performs a range of functions to better respond to changing community needs (e.g., from urban plazas to natural areas).

POLICIES:

- a) conduct regular consultation and needs assessment with residents, community organizations and others to address gaps in the System;
- b) balance the diversity of open space uses to ensure that community needs are met (e.g., formal programs and informal uses);
- c) increase the diversity of functions and activities available in neighbourhood parks;
- d) ensure that civic infrastructure is appropriately integrated such that community use and ecological values are not compromised.

OBJECTIVE 8:

Sustain the quality of public open spaces through innovative, responsive management and shared stewardship between the City and multiple stakeholders.

POLICIES:

- a) align resources to improve customer service, efficiency and quality of asset management;
- b) increase the consideration of maintenance requirements through appropriate design and quality of construction;
- c) improve the health of the urban forest and communicate its value to the community;
- d) pursue additional revenue generating activities that provide community benefit and services not offered by the City. (e.g., bicycle rentals);
- e) ensure the quality of parks infrastructure through a comprehensive, long-term infrastructure replacement program.

