

Richmond is moving towards a sustainable future

By Bill McNulty
Councillor

Richmond offers an enviable quality of life for our residents. We've been ranked as one of the most livable cities in the world. Even as we've grown to a city of 200,000, we've been able to preserve and protect much of the natural beauty around us. About half of Richmond remains open space as parks, trails, farmland and natural areas. We have a strong and diverse economy. Our public services and amenities are second to none. But can we sustain it?

Throughout our region and around the world sustainability is a top of mind issue. Environmental, social and economic issues can all challenge our ability to maintain the quality of life we now enjoy and to pass it on to future generations.

Sustainability is one of the top priorities for Council. We have adopted a Sustainability Framework to coordinate and foster our efforts, measure their success and set new benchmarks. Sustainability was also a major focus of the new Official Community Plan, recently adopted by Council, which plans our community's future through to 2041.

To be successful, we must focus on all three pillars of sustainability: social, economic and environmental. An example this is our new Social Development Strategy, which is intended to guide the City's decisions and resource allocations on social development matters over the next 10 years. This includes how we meet community needs in such areas as child care, affordable housing, diversity services, and programs for youths and older adults. To learn more, visit www.richmond.ca/socialplan.

Later this year, the City will launch work on an updated Economic Development Strategy. A major focus will be ensuring we have a resilient local economy, which will provide stability in good times and bad, continue to create new jobs in our community and focus on business retention, expansion and attraction.

Most people think of the environment first when discussing sustainability. The City is working hard to reduce our environmental footprint, protect our natural environment and ensure we will have access to the resources we'll need in the future to maintain our quality of life.

A major focus of these efforts is combating climate change. The City has committed to reducing our community's greenhouse gas emissions by 33 per cent below 2007 levels by 2020, and 80 per cent below 2007 levels by 2050. As BC's only PowerSmart-certified municipality we have a strong record in energy conservation, which will help us achieve these targets.

Another important initiative was the opening of the Alexandra District Energy Utility in the West Cambie area. Using geo-thermal energy, this utility allows us to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and provides its customers with an affordable, secure, locally-produced energy source. The City is aggressively pursuing development of other district energy utilities.

There are many ways you can get involved to help ensure Richmond is a sustainable community. One opportunity is to join the city in marking Earth Day on April 21. This year the City is encouraging all local organizations and businesses to join us in celebrating and bringing the public together for this great cause, not just for the day, but for the whole week.

We are challenging community organizations to organize child-focused activities around the themes of energy; 3Rs (reduce, reuse, recycle); nature; healthy living – food; healthy living - exercise, and sustainable fashion. For more information visit www.richmond.ca/parksprograms. All participating organizations will be recognized at a special Volunteer Appreciation on Earth Day at King George Park. There will be awards and certificates, an organic lunch, games and activities, and awesome entertainment. So start planning your event now and we will see you on Earth Day!