



City of Richmond  
6911 No. 3 Road  
Richmond, BC  
V6Y 2C1

March 7, 2023

Mayor & Councillors

**Re: Richmond Circular City Draft Strategy**

This submission from the Richmond Poverty Reduction Coalition (RPRC) is to comment on the City's circular city draft strategy. The RPRC is *'a coalition of Richmond resident and agencies working together to reduce poverty and the impacts of poverty with research, projects, and public education.'*

RPRC member organizations include the Richmond Centre for Disability, Richmond Food Bank, Richmond Family Place, Richmond Women's Resource Centre, Family Services of Greater Vancouver-Richmond, Kehila Society of Richmond, Richmond Addiction Services, Gilmore Park United Church, Heart of Richmond AIDS Society, Richmond Presbyterian Church, and Richmond Mental Health Consumer & Friends Society.

Together, our 11 member organizations represent thousands of Richmond residents who receive services and resources from them. Recipients of services include seniors, women, low-income families and single parent families, people with disabilities, people with health challenges, newcomers, refugees, and low-income individuals.

The RPRC is pleased Metro Vancouver has adopted a **2050 Regional Growth Strategy**, see <http://www.metrovancouver.org/services/regional-planning/PlanningPublications/Metro2050.pdf>

Key improvements to the Metro Vancouver Regional Growth Strategy 2050 are:

- new policies that support resilience to climate and natural hazards,
- expanded policies on housing choice and affordability,
- regional targets including protecting 50 % of the land base for nature, and expanding tree canopy cover in the urban area to 40 %,
- ensuring that at least 15 % of new and redeveloped housing units in urban centres and frequent transit development areas (FTDAs) are affordable, rental housing, and
- tools to help the region direct more growth to transit-oriented locations and to protect the supply of trade-oriented industrial lands.

The RPRC is also pleased to see the Richmond strategy employs an **equity lens**. The Richmond residents that we represent often bear the brunt inequitable systems that do not consider their health, safety and wellbeing in an economic framework.

It is encouraging to see that both the Regional Growth Strategy and Richmond's Circular Strategy are in line with the government of Canada's definitions of the **social determinants of health**. See <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/health-promotion/population-health/what-determines-health.html>


The RPRC uses the social determinants of health to guide our advocacy work, recognizing and valuing the need for Richmond residents to have:

- the ability to create social bonds and community for wellness,
- safety and comfort in their neighbourhoods and their homes,
- equitable access to quality services including education, food and health,
- affordable, accessible and appropriate housing choices, and
- economic stability and good jobs where they live.

In line with the foregoing, the RPRC offers the following recommendations for a robust and living, Circular City Strategy. Please see our report and recommendations enclosed with this letter.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission.

Sincerely,



De Whalen  
President, RPRC

cc. RPRC Board of Directors  
RPRC members



## **RICHMOND POVERTY REDUCTION COALITION (RPRC)**

### **REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **CITY OF RICHMOND CIRCULAR ECONOMY (CIRCULAR CITY) DRAFT STRATEGY**

**MARCH 2023**

The RPRC applauds the City of Richmond for engaging in a process to establish a Circular Economy (Circular City) Strategy. The draft strategy states that over time, various actions will be prioritized, developed and implemented to: maximize ecosystem services, create a regenerative food system, build a resilient and innovative economy, develop shared mobility models, adapt the built environment, and streamline products and materials management.

The RPRC submits this report and recommendations using **social determinants of health** and a **‘poverty lens’** to provide insight on strategy direction. Low-income Richmond residents make up over 20 % of our population and our child poverty level remains high in relation to other Metro Vancouver cities.

Our vision is that well-working circular economy strategy must include initiatives on the issues and concerns that directly affect a substantial proportion of the population.

The RPRC report and recommendations follow. We have focused our report on the six areas stated in the City’s strategy.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jimmy Ho  
RPRC member

Deirdre Whalen  
RPRC President

March 2023

# **CIRCULAR ECONOMY (CIRCULAR CITY) STRATEGY**

## **DIRECTIONS FOCUS AREAS**

### **1. Maximizing ecosystem services**

This recommendation is two-fold, in consideration of natural environment and built environment. The City can create safeguards against spatial inequality within Richmond's Ecological Network (EN), assessing both the physical distribution of the natural ecosystem services as well as the means of access by different neighbourhoods to identified natural ecosystem services. Any assessment undertaken needs to investigate barriers that prevent access to a circular economy, as well as barriers that limit the development of a circular economy.

The City must also consider that the cost of maintenance or disaster aftermath that can disproportionately impact the most vulnerable population, residents who have fewer tools or options available to deal with such events. For instance, in light of recent extreme weather events, the City must implement concrete actions and policies to deal with weather events such as heat domes and extreme cold weather.

#### **Actions can include:**

- assessing the barriers to access to natural ecosystems for people on limited incomes,
- minimizing the impact of natural disasters (fire, flood, heat) to the most vulnerable,
- creating conditions in the city where nature is preserved and maintained,
- increasing natural park land for full public access, especially in the city core,
- preserving and enhancing tree canopy cover and natural cover in all neighbourhoods, and
- creating permanent warming and cooling centres for people experiencing poverty.

### **2. Regenerative Food System**

The City can apply a food security lens on all City strategies and committees and move away from reliance on emergency food relief as a solution to food insecurity (Food Mesh). The City should embed the use of food in culture, nutrition and medicine into a regenerative food system and encourage community kitchen programs by increasing the number of commercial kitchens in the city.

The City should engage in research to investigate any overemphasis on cash crops and/ or monoculture farming as a barrier to a regenerative food system. The City should enable small scale farmers to lease unused land in the ALR for local food production.

#### **Actions can include:**

- developing a comprehensive Food Hub on the Garden City Lands,
- mandating commercial kitchens as a community amenity in new developments,
- researching Richmond cash crops that may be a barrier to a regenerative food system, and
- creating conditions for landowners in ALR to lease long-term(10 years) to small scale farmers.

### **3. Resilient and Innovative Economy**

The City can act as a convener for non-profit and community partners to work together in job training and employment opportunities for Richmond residents. The City should investigate best practices and implement pilot projects or incentives for alternative business models that support resilient, innovative, cross-sectoral, and circular economy systems. The City should be a model employer for other businesses in Richmond.

#### **Actions can include:**

- creating incentives for resilient social enterprises or co-operative businesses to operate,
- developing a Food Hub model that includes food processing and job training, and
- implementing a Living Wage policy for the City of Richmond.

### **4. Shared Mobility**

This recommendation addresses both transportation needed by Richmond residents as well as workers transiting into their jobs in Richmond. Residents deserve improved transit to get to work, services, and daily activities. As pedestrians, they should feel safe while using roadways, crosswalks and sidewalks. The City should work with Trans Link to increase the number and frequency of buses and sky train. The City should work with the School District to encourage students to walk or bus to school and for parents to not idle their cars on school grounds.

Richmond is an island, accessed by bridges, sky train and a tunnel. Emergency personnel such those in police, fire and health care services need to be able to reach their jobs in an emergency. The City should create safeguards against extreme weather situations where travel and transportation are significantly delayed or prevented. The City should be prepared to react quickly when snow, rain and other weather conditions impact how workers get to jobs in Richmond, and how residents get to services and activities around Richmond.

#### **Actions can include:**

- creating and regularizing east-west transit across Richmond and ensuring linkages to existing north-south routes,
- keeping up with pedestrian safety improvements in line with increased pedestrian traffic,
- removing automobile traffic to create pedestrian-only mobility on certain routes,
- liaising with the School District to encourage “Walking School Bus” programs,
- liaising with the School District to encourage “No Idling” zones on school grounds,
- implementing policies to encourage building of workforce housing for emergency personnel (hospitals, police, fire), and
- implementing policies to encourage building of non-market housing along transit corridors.

### **5. Adaptive Built Environment**

Over the past thirty years, 94% (>46,000) of Richmond new builds have been condos, townhouses and detached houses. Only 6% (about 2,800) have been purpose-built rental housing. Of that 6%, only a handful have been non-market See the City Richmond 2021 Housing Needs Assessment report:

<https://www.richmond.ca/shared/assets/housingneeds59652.pdf>

Not only does the City need to address the imbalance of market to non-market housing, they should encourage development of a variety of built forms in housing stock. The City should employ sustainable building practices including using wood instead of concrete and thus encourage ‘gentle density’ in single family neighbourhoods. The City should account for the real number of rental units lost to land assemblies and include the numbers in rental units needed. The City should extend its’ geothermal power utility to low income neighbourhoods.

**Actions can include:**

- prioritizing the building non-market rental developments first,
- fast-tracking approvals and permitting processes for non-market housing,
- eliminating public hearings for affordable rental projects,
- using wood form (‘stick built’) construction not concrete to a six story maximum,
- encouraging the construction of pre-fabricated housing developments in city centre,
- limiting demolitions of single family homes to preserve affordable rental units,
- including rental units in single family homes in the City’s 1:1 replacement bylaw, and
- increase the use of geothermal power in new affordable housing developments.

**6. Products and Materials Management**

The RPRC has limited scope in this area but can offer some observations on material purchasing and material waste. Regarding purchasing, the City can work with Metro Vancouver regional government to procure machinery and other equipment needed for production processes as well as spare parts. The City should apply an ethical lens and purchase from companies that pay their employees a living wage, and avoid doing business with companies from outside of Canada who do not adhere to international labour standards. The City should prioritize purchasing materials and services from local B.C. companies.

Regarding material waste the City can minimize waste by buying locally where transport does not require extensive packaging that must then be disposed. Local materials can also be kept on the company’s site, thereby reducing the need for the City to invest in extra inventory storage.

**Actions can include:**

- working with regional entities to increase snow clearing equipment and usage so all Richmond roads are cleared expeditiously,
- employing ethical purchasing practices to avoid dealing with questionable suppliers,
- purchasing from companies that pay employees a living wage,
- buying from local or B.C. suppliers, and
- negotiating ‘just in time’ delivery to minimize inventory storage needs.