

THEME 1 Agricultural Land Base

Approximately 4,993 ha (12,338 ac) of Richmond's land base, or 39% of the City, is within the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR). The total amount of area within the ALR and area zoned Agriculture outside of the ALR is approximately 5,563 ha (13,746 ac), or 43% of the City. The amount of land in the ALR has remained relatively stable in the last 30 years. Agricultural land and farming is supported by long-term City policies that maintain an urban containment boundary to keep residential growth outside of the ALR.

Objective 1: Continue to protect the City's agricultural land base in the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR).

Existing Policies

1. Maintain the existing designated ALR boundary and do not support a loss of ALR land.
2. Coordinate with the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) to ensure that:
 - the integrity of the ALR and its existing boundaries for both soil bound and non-soil bound agriculture (e.g. green houses) is maintained;
 - all land uses within the ALR conform to the policies and regulations of the Agricultural Land Commission Act, Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act, Water Sustainability Act, Integrated Pest Management Act, Environmental Management Act and applicable codes of conduct.
3. Ensure that land uses adjacent to, but outside of, the ALR are compatible with farming by establishing effective agricultural buffer requirements on the non-agricultural lands.
4. Designate, all parcels abutting, but outside of, the ALR boundary as Development Permit Areas with specific Guidelines for the purpose of protecting farming.
5. Develop standard ALR buffer requirements for parcels adjacent to the ALR (including where there is an intervening road), but outside of the ALR, in order to minimize impacts on agricultural land.
6. Limit the area used for residential development and the number of dwelling units to one on properties in the ALR.

Objective 2: Ensure agricultural production remains the primary use of agricultural land.

Existing Policies

1. Continue to regulate the use of ALR land for farming only and discourage non-farm uses (e.g. residential).

Proposed Policies

2. Discourage the subdivision of agricultural land into smaller parcels, except as per the policies and regulations of the Agricultural Land Commission Act.
3. Continue to limit the amount of hardsurfacing permitted in agricultural buildings, structures and greenhouses.
4. Ensure agricultural production (e.g. growing of crops and raising animals) remains the primary use of agricultural land and ancillary uses (e.g. farm retail, storing, packing, preparing and processing of farm products) are secondary uses and consistent with the scale of the farm operation.
5. Develop a maximum development area (e.g. 1.0 ha or 5% of the lot area, whichever is less) for farm-related commercial uses (e.g. farm retail, facilities for the storing, packing, preparing and processing of farm products), including buildings and structures, landscaping, and parking.
6. Ensure soil deposit and removal proposals for agricultural production are consistent with City bylaws and policies, and Provincial regulations.

Approximately 3,122 ha (7,714 ac) of Richmond, or 62.5% of land within the ALR, is farmed by 189 farms. The remaining lands in the ALR are either vacant or occupied by non-farm uses (including roads, institutional uses, golf courses, etc.). Cranberries are the most dominant crop in Richmond, with almost 807 ha (1,995 ac), or 16.2% of land within the ALR, in cranberry production. The 189 farms that reported in the 2016 Census of Agriculture recorded gross farm receipts of \$57.8 million (a 19% increase from \$48.6 million in 2011).

Objective 1: Enhance long-term agricultural viability and opportunities for innovation.

Existing Policies

1. Build relationships with farmers through the City's Food Security and Agricultural Advisory Committee (FSAAC) to address issues impacting agricultural viability and food security.

Proposed Policies

2. Increase public awareness of City and other initiatives related to agriculture by disseminating information on farming practices, farm products, and educational programs through the City's website, social media or other forms of communication.
3. Provide information for new farmers and property owners of agricultural land, including property owners who own small parcels (e.g. less than 5 acres), to encourage active farming or lease the land for farming (e.g. land matching).
4. Encourage value-added agricultural related business initiatives consistent with Zoning and Provincial regulations, while ensuring that agricultural production remains the primary use of land.
5. Develop agriculture-specific signage requirements in order to support seasonal farm retail activities.
6. Develop relationships with non-profit and government organizations which promote local agriculture, organic growing, climate adaptation, carbon management and reductions in pesticide use.

Objective 2: Support the use of agricultural land for local food production and encourage a local food network to increase local food supply and consumption.

Existing Policies

1. Collaborate with Metro Vancouver, the Province, food producers, and various stakeholders to advance the Metro Vancouver Regional Food System Strategy and Richmond Food Charter.
2. Continue to seek out opportunities to collaborate with others to increase urban agriculture, the number of community gardens, edible landscapes and food-bearing trees.
3. Integrate urban agriculture into development projects outside of the ALR, including rooftop gardens, community gardens, vertical farming, backyard gardening, indoor farming, edible landscaping and the planting of food bearing trees.

Proposed Policies

4. Raise public awareness, in coordination with the FSAAC, of local farming, farmer's markets, and local food products, produce and programs (e.g. Kwantlen Farm School).
5. Investigate "buy local" or "farm-to-table" marketing initiatives, in coordination with the FSAAC and the Province, to increase awareness and demand for locally grown agricultural products and to highlight local farmers.
6. Support food tourism initiatives, in coordination with Richmond Tourism and the FSAAC to highlight local food production.
7. Strengthen relationships with outside organizations that provide agriculture-related educational opportunities and promote local farming (e.g. Kwantlen Polytechnic University).

THEME 3 Infrastructure For Agriculture

Much of Richmond's soils are organic, formed by fluvial (river) deposits of the Fraser River. Drainage is a major issue for all land uses in Richmond, where the groundwater table is high. However, with improvements (mainly drainage), all of Richmond's ALR is considered to be prime agricultural land. In addition to removing excess water for drainage purposes, the City also supports the local farming industry by pumping water back into our drainage system (e.g. ditches) for agricultural irrigation purposes.

Objective 1: Continue improvements to irrigation and drainage infrastructure in support of agricultural production.

Existing Policies

1. Continue improvement of irrigation and drainage infrastructure to provide secure water supplies and functional drainage systems that support the agricultural sector.

Proposed Policies

2. Consider separate water meters for the principal dwelling and the farm operation and ensure adequate service connections are installed for the farm operation.
3. Coordinate with the City's Engineering Department to update and implement the East Richmond Agricultural Water Supply Study.
4. Support sustainable farm practices that utilize on-site water drainage, storage and use, and result in the reduction of potable water use.
5. Evaluate the impact of the Fraser River 'salt wedge' on agricultural land and review possible improvements to supply salt-free irrigation water to affected areas.
6. Consider where there are no alternatives, options for allowing water service to agricultural sites with no direct road access through unopened road allowances through licensing agreements, subject to compliance with all City bylaws and Provincial policies and regulations.

Objective 2: Support farm access to properties located in the ALR.

Existing Policies

1. Discourage roads in the ALR, except as noted on the Existing Status of Road Improvements in the ALR Map (OCP p. 7-5).
2. Consider how proposed road improvements (e.g. road widening) on existing City roads may impact farmland.

Proposed Policies

3. Consider, for agricultural operations on agricultural sites with no direct road access, allowing access through unopened road allowances for farm access only (no new or improved roads) through licensing agreements, subject to compliance with all City bylaws and Provincial policies and regulations.
4. Continue to review requests for separate farm access subject to applicable bylaws and the City's Planning, Engineering, Transportation and Environmental requirements.
5. Regulate soil deposit for farm access roads, as permitted by Provincial regulations, through a City permitting process to ensure impacts are mitigated (e.g. adjacent properties, City property, Riparian Management Areas, and Environmentally Sensitive Areas).

THEME 4 Agriculture and the Environment

Climate change affects agriculture in a number of ways, including through changes in temperature, rainfall, extreme weather events, prevalence of pest and diseases, levels of carbon dioxide, and sea level. Reducing emissions from crop and livestock production is also important to address the impacts of climate change. Environmental sensitive and riparian management areas are often located on agricultural land in Richmond, and these resources need to be assessed to ensure a balance between the natural environment and agriculture is being maintained.

Objective 1: Mitigate the impacts of climate change on agricultural production.

Proposed Policies

1. Assess the current and long term potential impacts of climate change and expected sea-level rise on agriculture and develop agricultural specific responses and tools to protect and enhance current and future agricultural production.
2. Coordinate with Engineering on the implementation of the City's Dyke Master Plan and Flood Protection Management Strategy, for those areas where dikes involve or protect agricultural land.
3. Encourage sustainable farming practices, in coordination with the FSAAC, Agricultural Land Commission and Ministry of Agriculture, such as water conservation, renewable energy use and improved soil management through education and sharing information.
4. Work with industry to develop crop strategies that can adapt to climate change, in coordination with the FSAAC.
5. Ensure soil deposit and removal proposals for agricultural production are based on enhancing and protecting current and future agricultural viability, through consideration of environmental issues (e.g. climate change, sea-level rise, carbon storage and groundwater table).
6. Coordinate with Metro Vancouver, Agricultural Land Commission, and the Ministry of Agriculture to develop a long-term response to mitigate the impacts of climate change on farmland.

Objective 2: Maintain a balance between the natural environment and agricultural production.

Proposed Policies

1. Continue to review development proposals on properties that include a designated Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) or Riparian Management Area (RMA) to ensure a balance between farming opportunities and environmental management is maintained.
2. Develop standard assessment criteria for farming properties where designated ESA or RMA will be impacted, while continuing to support agricultural production.
3. Continue to review City park and recreational trail projects to ensure that conflict with agriculture is minimized.
4. Investigate opportunities for reducing emissions from crop and livestock production by increasing agricultural production efficiencies, in coordination with the FSAAC, Agricultural Land Commission and Ministry of Agriculture.
5. Explore opportunities to promote the relationship between agricultural viability and biodiversity through agricultural practices that benefit wildlife (e.g. maintaining farm buffers, hedgerows, cover crops).

Local governments are required to work within the established legal framework (e.g. policies and regulations of the Agricultural Land Commission Act), which can limit the ability for local governments to make major changes. For example, the Provincial ALR Use Regulation specifies land uses permitted and not permitted in the ALR. It is important that Richmond continues to work collaboratively with upper levels of government, including regional, provincial and federal, to ensure local agricultural production is supported.

Objective 1: Continue to work collaboratively with upper levels of government to enhance agricultural viability.

Existing Policies

1. Coordinate with Agricultural Land Commission and Ministry of Agriculture to ensure City bylaws and policies are consistent with Provincial policies and regulations, including the Agricultural Land Commission Act, ALR Regulations, ALC Policies and the Minister's Bylaw Standards.
2. Coordinate with the Agricultural Land Commission and the Ministry of Agriculture to ensure development proposals are consistent with Provincial policies and regulations.
3. Coordinate with Metro Vancouver to support the Regional Growth Strategy, which includes agricultural designations and policies for protection of agricultural land.

Objective 2: Liaise with upper levels of government for legislative changes to support agricultural production.

Proposed Policies

1. Continue to communicate with upper levels of government to address the following agricultural-related issues:
 - Income threshold for farm status to encourage legitimate farming operations.
 - Protection for farmers who lease farmland and encourage longer term leases.
 - Strengthening the Agricultural Land Commission Act and the ALR Regulations to explicitly prohibit non-farm uses in the ALR and encourage food production.
 - Enforcement of contraventions on ALR property (including monitoring, inspections, and penalties for non-compliance).
 - Improved regulations for non-soil based greenhouses and limiting such structures to areas with lower soil class agricultural land (e.g. Class 4 or lower).
 - Explore financial incentives for farming operations (e.g. grants, tax breaks and training opportunities).
 - Explore financial incentives for environmental/sustainable farm operations, organic farming and reduction in pesticide use.
 - Incorporation of environmental stewardship initiatives into the Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act.