

## Why the future of Garden City Lands is still in jeopardy

Canada Lands Company is still entrusted with title to the Garden City Lands. It is not yet listening to the community. In a recent letter, the president revealed it is still seeking "real estate solutions" (construction) with "a free hand" (no ALR restrictions).

Richmond Council members are under pressure behind the scenes. The mayor is still not helping to save the Lands and even called a council meeting where "Save Garden City" councillors were chastised by an ex-bureaucrat behind the agreement. Council did not let itself be intimidated into reopening the ALR-exclusion application, but the "Pave Garden City" forces are still powerful.

Public awareness is increasing that Canada Lands Company has a mandate to "enhance the quality of life in local communities."

Canada Lands is a caretaker that does not want to hold the Garden City Lands indefinitely. The status of the property will change. With people power and persistence, citizens can ensure that it will stay green with ecological and food-security uses for community benefit.

## What citizens can do

Citizens can find ways to seek increased support from Canada Lands Company, Richmond Council, the Musqueam Indian Band, and the federal and provincial governments. Also:

- *Visit the Coalition website, [www.GardenCityLands.ca](http://www.GardenCityLands.ca), for basic background and eco-tour information.*
- *Join the Coalition as a Friend of Garden City (free opt-in/out emailed newsletter) or a member of the Garden City Lands Coalition Society (small annual fee, optional free "Save Garden City" bumper sticker). Details on website.*
- *Read the Coalition blog for in-depth knowledge, <http://gardencitylands.wordpress.com>.*
- *Write the decision-makers. Note: If you have questions or want a draft checked for accuracy, email the Coalition at [GardenCityLands@Shaw.ca](mailto:GardenCityLands@Shaw.ca).*
- *Help other people to be informed and to act.*

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## Garden City Lands Coalition

## 花園城市土地聯盟

Keeping the Garden City Lands green



The Garden City Lands Coalition invites you to continue helping save the Lands for agricultural, ecological, and park uses for community benefit.

## About the Garden City Lands

The Garden City Lands are a 136-acre green space in the City Centre area of Richmond, BC. (They are bordered by Garden City Road, Westminster Highway, No. 4 Road, and Alderbridge Way.)



In 2005, the Garden City Lands were surplus federal property, and the government entrusted them to the federal land disposer, Canada Lands Company, for uses described in a memorandum of understanding (MOU).

Under that agreement, Canada Lands Company and the Musqueam Indian Band planned to split the profits from rezoning of at least half the property for high-density construction. The City of Richmond hoped to get the rest, scattered throughout the Lands.

The property has been in BC's Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) ever since the ALR was founded over thirty-five years ago. The ALR protects BC's scarce farmland, which was being lost to uses that put short-term worth ahead of long-term food security.

In 2006, BC's Agricultural Land Commission rejected Canada Lands Company's first application to remove the property from the ALR. The commission said it is fertile farmland suitable for agriculture.

Canada Lands Company then began a massive second application to remove the property from the ALR. It remained the project manager but used the City as the nominal applicant for credibility.

In 2007, the project's phone "survey" of 508 residents was shown to have made false statements, *manipulating* opinion (about the proposed development) under the guise of *gathering* opinion. That eye-opener prompted growth in public awareness about the issue.

Community groups proposed alternatives such as the Richmond Sustainable Food Systems Park. It would facilitate urban agriculture education and feed the needy. It would also give city dwellers space to grow food, to enjoy trails around a reservoir lake, and to get together—and, in some visions, do tai chi—in a tranquil setting.

In early 2008, citizens and groups who wanted to keep the space green for community values formed the Garden City Lands Coalition to facilitate effective action. It soon incorporated as a society.

In February 2008, citizens reported that the ALR-removal project's open-house survey had misled the public about the reapplication. The survey question that solicited public support even claimed at great length that the proposed development was "Smart Growth." The executive director of Smart Growth BC then sent Richmond Council a letter making clear it was definitely *not* Smart Growth.

In March 2008, citizens addressed Richmond Council in a six-day public hearing. A strong majority urged council not to put forward the reapplication to the Agricultural Land Commission. When the public were ignored, almost two thousand citizens signed a petition to keep the Garden City Lands green in the ALR.

Citizens sent hundreds of detailed submissions to the Agricultural Land Commission. Well over ninety percent of the submissions opposed the application as harmful to community needs and values.

Political support for saving the Garden City Lands keeps growing. It now includes the two Richmond Members of Parliament, the Richmond East provincial MLA, and six of the nine Richmond Council members.

In February 2009, the Agricultural Land Commission rejected the reapplication to remove the Garden City Lands from the ALR.

That means that high-density development is not allowed. Under the Garden City Lands agreement, Canada Lands Company, the Musqueam Indian Band, and the City of Richmond are expected to renegotiate any conditions that cannot be met.

And before the company and band can end the agreement, the parties to the agreement are also supposed to cooperate to restore each to the position it was in before entering the agreement. One of the four parties is the federal government, which owned the lands.

Now the challenge for citizens is to ensure a good ending.