
SmartGrowthBC



February 20, 2008

Mayor and Council
City of Richmond
By email

RE: Use of the term 'smart growth' in reference to Garden City Lands development proposals

Dear Mayor Brodie and Council:

I am writing on behalf of Smart Growth BC, a non-profit non-governmental organization devoted to fiscally, socially and environmentally responsible land use and development. Working with community groups, businesses, governments of all levels, and the public, we advocate for the creation of more livable communities.

While our organization generally refrains from commenting on specific land use plans or project proposals, we feel compelled to address the City of Richmond's recent use of the term "smart growth" in recent communications documents, including an online public feedback form, regarding plans for the Garden City Lands. Specifically, Question #6a on the form states:

The principles of "Smart Growth" involve urban development approaches that are socially, environmentally and fiscally responsible. The Smart Growth principles are: building a complete community; building green; building economic vitality; and fostering a legacy. The agreement between the three partners will allow the City of Richmond to follow these Smart Growth principles on future development of Garden City Lands. Do you support future development of Garden City Lands based on the Smart Growth principles?

However, one of the key smart growth principles absent from the above statement is to "Protect and Enhance Agricultural Lands" including land within the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR). This principle is included in the definition used by dozens of smart growth organizations and advocates from across North America. Furthermore, for a project or proposal to be considered "smart growth" it must incorporate not only some, but all of the principles:

1. **Mix land uses.** Each neighbourhood has a mixture of homes, retail, business, and recreational opportunities.
2. **Build well-designed compact neighbourhoods.** Residents can choose to live, work, shop and play in close proximity.
3. **Provide a variety of transportation choices.** Neighbourhoods are attractive and have safe infrastructure for walking, cycling and transit, in addition to driving.

4. **Create diverse housing opportunities.** People in different family types, life stages and income levels can afford a home in the neighbourhood of their choice.
5. **Encourage growth in existing communities.** Investments in infrastructure (such as roads and schools) are used efficiently, and developments do not take up new land.
6. **Preserve open spaces, natural beauty, and environmentally sensitive areas.** Development respects natural features and has higher aesthetic, environmental, and financial value.
7. **Protect and enhance agricultural lands.** A secure and productive land base, such as BC's Agricultural Land Reserve, provides food security, employment, and habitat, and is maintained.
8. **Utilize smarter, and cheaper infrastructure and green buildings.** Studies show that infrastructure costs associated with greenfield development are higher over the long term than infill and redevelopment.
9. **Foster a unique neighbourhood identity.** Each community is unique, vibrant, diverse, and inclusive.
10. **Nurture engaged citizens.** Places belong to those who live, work, and play there. Engaged citizens participate in community life and decision-making.

We are therefore writing to request that the term 'smart growth' be removed from the Garden City Lands public consultation process and that all principles of smart growth (including farmland protection) be used when defining the term in the future.

The protection and enhancement of ALR land is at the heart of every sustainable community. Food-producing lands, whether they are currently being farmed or not, will continue to be an extremely valuable asset. As fuel and transportation costs rise, producing food in close proximity to current and future populations will be a food security issue for all citizens.

Smart Growth BC offers an array of resources including our Community Assistance Program and our Smart Growth Advisory Services. We would be happy to discuss examples of strategies for ALR protection while exploring economic development opportunities and the creation of livable communities with the City of Richmond.

Feel free to contact our office directly or access many of our publications on creating vibrant, mixed-use communities that are available on our website: <http://www.smartgrowth.bc.ca>.

Yours sincerely,



Cheeying Ho
Executive Director