

### Green, Active Transportation puts Richmond on the Map

May 2008



Walk Richmond is giving the people of Richmond more options to get moving by raising awareness of walking and cycling routes around the city.

Both the Walk Richmond program and the Green Ways to Active Participation project are under the umbrella of the Getting Richmond Moving initiative—creating more opportunities for getting active and promoting the benefits of living healthy active lifestyles.

The City's Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services department is working with City Transportation Planning staff and community partners to develop the Green Ways project. This mapping and signage project will be piloted this summer in the Minoru Park area—a 26-hectare park with a 956-metre paved pathway circuit and running oval. The oval will be closed this summer to put in an artificial turf field, so the project will give walkers some other options for where to walk. Signs and kiosk maps will go up this summer, directing walkers through well-developed trails within the park, showing distance and directions.

Then signs will lead walkers from Minoru over to Garden City Park along a safe roadway. The aim is to eventually expand the project to introduce people to walking

routes that take them to destinations around the city, including the Olympic Speed Skating Oval and the Canada Line rapid transit service.

*"We can start making all these linkages for how to walk from one location to the other,"* said Carol Lepine, Acting Health and Wellness Coordinator for the City of Richmond.

In addition, volunteer street teams, or Partners in Parks, have been getting out and promoting Green Ways and Walk Richmond. At another nearby park, Getting Richmond Moving has organized scavenger hunts for children and families, so the Green Ways project could eventually link people to that park.

Grants from the Union of BC Municipalities and the BC Recreation and Parks Association through Active Communities are funding the Green Ways to Active Participation pilot project. In addition, the City of Richmond has partnered with Translink to develop a detailed cycling map of the city this spring, including how to get on and off bridges. The UBCM grant, combined with a \$25,000 contribution from Translink, is funding the cycling map.

The Green Ways project ties in directly with the Walk Richmond project, which started up in 2007. The City had received a UBCM grant to build capacity in the community to get people walking for their health. The City partnered with School District 38 and Vancouver Coastal Health (Richmond Health Services) to implement the pilot project, and Walk Richmond was born. There were nine weekly walks in total in July and August, which were so popular that a few more extended into the fall. The walks were 3 or 5 kilometres,



- Getting Richmond Moving initiative started in 2005
- Walk Richmond program hosted 9 guided walks in summer 2007
- Walk Richmond 2008 kickoff event on Move for Health Day
- Partnering with School District 38 and Vancouver Coastal Health
- Scavenger hunts to get children and families to parks
- Grants from BCRPA through Active Communities (\$5,000), UBCM (\$35,000) & Translink for active transportation
- Grant from UBCM (\$35,000) and Vancouver Coastal Health (\$7,000) for Walk Richmond
- Grants for Girls lifestyle expo from BCRPA (\$5,000), Vancouver Coastal Health (\$330) and Sunrise Rotary Club (\$1,000)
- Secured in-kind sponsorships for Girls lifestyle expo from Quilchena Golf & Country Club, Richmond Curling Club, a personal trainer, and Thompson Community Association

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which turned out to be too long for some walkers. So this year, each guided walk will have a few walk leaders who walk at varying paces. Rather than walking a certain number of kilometres, participants will walk a certain length of time at their own pace.

To further enhance Walk Richmond, Vancouver Coastal Health provided \$7,000 to offer grants to community groups and schools to start a walking program.

*“That was a huge success because it created that capacity,”* Lepine said. The small grants were creatively used to motivate walkers—ranging from incentive prizes for participants to buying umbrellas to encourage people to keep walking despite rainy weather.

*“They said people weren’t walking because of the rain, so they gave out umbrellas and people started walking,”* Lepine said.

The 2008 kickoff for the Walk Richmond weekly guided walking series took place on Move for Health Day on May 10 at Garry Point Park. Sixty people showed up, including Mayor Malcolm Brodie and

participants from last year’s walks, as well as some new faces. Lepine reports that at the event a woman told one of the walk leaders, *“All last year I saw these happening and I thought about coming and I never came.”* Now this year she felt comfortable enough to come out to the first group walk.

By getting people out of their cars and out walking and cycling, the Getting Richmond Moving team of partners is building a greener, healthier, more connected community.

### **GRADE 9 GIRLS DANCE, BOX AND GOLF FOR THEIR HEALTH**

After the Getting Richmond Moving team of partners hosted a lifestyle expo this spring to inspire inactive Grade 9 girls to get moving, half of those girls are now involved in sport or recreation activities.

The Girls Only Lifestyle Expo aimed to show girls the benefits of physical activity and introduce them to different ways to get active. In addition, the expo focused on healthy eating, living a holistic, balanced life, and building self-esteem. The results from a Richmond School District

survey had revealed an increasing decline in enrolment for girls in Grades 11 and 12 Physical Education classes. So the City of Richmond’s staff approached the School District and Vancouver Coastal Health to put on a one-day event that would start changing many of these girls’ lifestyles. The committee represented the City’s Parks and Rec and youth workers, the Health Authority’s health and nutrition, mental health, and addictions staff, and the School District’s teachers and counsellors. The City’s Special Projects Coordinator Donna Vines and Community Facilities Coordinator Cindy Eward co-chaired the committee.

Teachers, counsellors and youth workers selected from 10 schools 108 girls they thought could benefit from the expo. The girls started their day watching an inspirational video the committee had developed. In it, Grade 12 girls spoke about how they had discovered an activity that they became passionate about, and how it changed their lives. Then the girls took part in Taiko drumming, Tai Chi, Fitball, DJ and club dance, yoga and pilates, boxing, hip hop dance, Bollywood dance, boot camp, a super walk, curling, and golf—which were new activities to most of them. In focus groups, they talked about their barriers to getting active. In workshops, they learned of the benefits and ways to get active, learned about healthy snacks and meals, and balancing schoolwork with other aspects of their lives. They also connected with youth workers.

*“A lot of the girls weren’t really looking forward to coming on that day; you could tell by the attitudes at the beginning of the day,”* Vines observed. *“But by the end of it, their attitudes changed and they were so into it and incredibly enthused.”*

The girls filled in evaluation forms telling of the next steps they would take towards a healthy lifestyle. Many vowed to replace junk food with fruits and vegetables, to exercise regularly using exercises from

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the Bodies Under Construction workshop, to try new activities, or join a sports team. Since then, 48 of those 108 girls have signed up and gotten involved in physical activity programs.

*“For us, it wasn’t just the event, it was what happened after—it was the sustainability of it, and that has been huge, absolutely huge,”* Vines said. *“That’s probably the best success we’ve ever had afterwards. You usually tend to get about 10%.”*

Sponsors donated free access to activities that day as well as scholarship awards afterwards. Thompson Community Association donated the facility space and some of their instructors donated their time. Richmond Curling Club provided free instruction. Quilchena Golf and Country Club gave free access to its golf course that day, instruction, and gave each girl a golf ball and tee.

*“We approached them to see if they would host the event. Everybody said ‘you’ll never get a private club.’ Well, we went and they were thrilled because they are constantly trying to get more girls to their club,”* Vines said. The golf club is looking to give two of those girls free junior club memberships for a year.

A personal trainer who provided free programming at the event is now mentoring two of the girls. The committee also secured grants to put on the event: \$5,000 from BCRPA through Active Communities,



\$2,730 from a variety of Vancouver Coastal Health grants, and \$1,000 from the Richmond Sunrise Rotary Club.

A City of Richmond Youth Development Worker has started a weekly girls-only recreation club of different activities. At the end of the expo, three girls went out dragon boating with Richmond’s Youth Roving Leader, who is encouraging the girls to participate in an existing dragon boat program.

The idea for the Girls Only Lifestyle Expo had originally sprung from a Girls on the Move workshop put on by the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity, where Vines and her colleague Donna Lee heard about a symposium for girls. The committee is now putting together a video documenting the expo in Richmond. And already, Vines has started working on getting funding and organizing next year’s Girls Only Lifestyle Expo, to reach the next group of girls.

*“They said people weren’t walking because of the rain, so they gave out umbrellas and people started walking,”*

- Carol Lepine

## Richmond Info

**Population:** 173,430 (BC Stats 2005)

- Located mainly on two islands at the mouth of the Fraser River
- 90 parks covering 1,400 acres of land and 200 acres of trails plus perimeter dike trails
- 2 indoor aquatic centres, two outdoor pools, 2 arenas, 8 rinks, 8 community centres, tennis courts, playgrounds, golf courses, lacrosse boxes, running tracks, playing fields, site of Olympic Speed Skating Oval
- Vancouver International Airport
- Culturally diverse population: 60% Asian and South Asian
- Urban, suburban & rural areas
- Home to historic fishing village of Steveston
- Leading industries are services, retailing, tourism, technology, light manufacturing, airport services and aviation, agriculture, fishing and government
- 38 registered Action Schools in School District 38

[www.richmond.ca](http://www.richmond.ca), [www.hellobc.com](http://www.hellobc.com)