



The Riverview Hospital Site

**Respecting its Past,
Realizing its Future**

**Prepared by
The Burke Mountain Naturalists
August 2004**

*Dedicated to the memory of Joan Spira who represented the
Burke Mountain Naturalists on the provincial government's Riverview
Land Use Committee and who was a passionate advocate for the
protection of the Riverview Hospital site*



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SUMMARY OF THE BURKE MOUNTAIN NATURALISTS' VALUES AND VISION FOR THE RIVERVIEW HOSPITAL LANDS

A vision for future use of the Riverview Hospital site must be based on an understanding of its history and appreciation of its existing unique values, namely:

- a haven for care of the mentally ill and a place where the pathway begins for re-integration of patients with society,
- an exceptional arboretum with a world-class collection of mature trees growing throughout the grounds,
- a heritage site with important examples of architecture constructed throughout the 20th century in a graciously landscaped setting, and
- significant natural areas and streams which provide wildlife habitat and connections to nearby parks.

Future uses at Riverview should build upon these significant values. Thus, our vision includes the following objectives and recommendations for action:

1. Ensure that all land is kept in public trust and managed as a single unit, even though a variety of functions may occur in the future. The BC Buildings Corporation (BCBC), a provincial Crown Corporation, currently manages the site.
2. Consider designation as a Provincial Heritage Site.
3. Respect Riverview's heritage and build on the existing values, i.e., mental health care, significant tree collection, heritage buildings and natural assets.
4. Continue Riverview's role in providing mental health care, with possible expansion into related health care areas, e.g., care facilities for those suffering from senile dementia.
5. Site new buildings in the footprint of demolished buildings or on "brown" spaces (e.g., paved or gravelled areas) to ensure continuity of landscaping and to avoid impacts on natural areas.
6. Find appropriate uses for the older buildings no longer needed for health care while ensuring architectural features and landscaping are preserved to the greatest extent possible (e.g., heritage museum, government offices, use by non-profit societies, botanical garden facilities, etc.).
7. Develop the full potential of the arboretum as a major tourist attraction for Coquitlam and consider expansion into a complete botanical garden/horticultural/education centre.
8. Preserve and enhance natural habitat areas and streams. Ensure that such work complements the development of a botanical garden. Complete flora and fauna inventories. Encourage public appreciation of these values.
9. Consider development of more formal links with nearby greenspaces (e.g., Riverview Forest Park and Colony Farm Regional Park) for public use and wildlife movement.

To achieve this vision, the continued involvement and support of the provincial, and likely, federal governments, will be required. The City of Coquitlam can play an important role in taking some initiatives as well as working in partnership with the Greater Vancouver Regional District. Finally, the continuing involvement of the local community and volunteer non-profit societies will be essential to achieve this vision.

2. HISTORY OF BMN'S INVOLVEMENT WITH THE RIVERVIEW SITE

The Burke Mountain Naturalists (BMN) Society is a community organization with most of its 300 members living in the Tri-Cities area. BMN is a member of the Federation of BC Naturalists, whose motto is *"to know nature and to keep it worth knowing"*.

BMN members have explored the natural features of the Riverview grounds for over a decade and introduced the public to its beauty and ecological values. Beginning in 1993, BMN members attended heritage tree tours hosted by the Riverview Horticultural Centre Society (RHCS). These tours soon included walks led by BMN members in "Riverview's Backyard", i.e., the more natural part of the grounds. These Backyard walks included "Finnie's Garden", a quiet space of old rockeries and flower beds which was laid out in the 1950s by former Riverview nurse, Art Finnie, for the use and pleasure of the patients.

Since 1995, BMN has participated in the annual "TreeFest" at Riverview, served on Treefest planning committees, and led guided nature walks at this event and throughout the year. BMN volunteers have prepared two brochures featuring the natural habitat values of the site -- "Nature Walks at Riverview" and "Exploring the Riverview Lands". These brochures are distributed at TreeFest and are available at local libraries, etc.

In November 1995, the provincial government established a Land Use Advisory Committee to obtain public input on future uses of Riverview with representation from BMN, RHCS and others. The following spring, a public open house and forum were held. There was a strong public consensus to have the lands remain intact and dedicated in

perpetuity to mental health services and public greenspace. This Committee was put on hold in September 1996 and its recommendations were not acted upon. In January 1998, the Ministry of Health announced a revised plan for mental health care but with no resolution regarding the Riverview Lands.

BMN worked with RHCS and the BC Schizophrenia Society to gather a total of 22,000 signatures on petitions calling for the protection of the Riverview Lands. These petitions were presented to the BC Legislature by Coquitlam MLA John Cashore in May 2000.

In 2001, BMN successfully appealed to all three local municipalities to pass resolutions calling for the preservation of the entire Riverview site and a strong continuing presence in the provision of mental health services. In response to developing community interest, BCBC and the hospital administration established a Riverview Nature Heritage Stewardship Group to facilitate community input on grounds management. BMN and RHCS continue to have representatives in this group.

In the summer of 2002, BMN obtained permission and funds to map the streams on the Riverview Lands. The results are summarized in Appendix III.

BMN has continued to advocate for the preservation of the entire Riverview site. Several of our members have captured the natural beauty of Riverview in photographs and paintings which have been featured at several art shows. Our members are united by an appreciation for the Riverview Lands and want to see this unique site protected.



“The Taiwanese Canadian Green Club supports the conservation of all 244 acres of the Riverview Lands as an Arboretum which preserves not only exotic trees from all over the world, but also represents a history of psychiatric care in British Columbia”

Dr. Joseph Lin
President,
Taiwanese Canadian Green Club

3. A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE RIVERVIEW HOSPITAL SITE

3.1 THE LANDS

Prior to European settlement, the Riverview Hospital site was of critical importance to the Kwitwetlem First Nation. While their winter settlement was located upriver where Cedar Creek flows into Coquitlam Lake, their summer camp was close to the mouth of the Coquitlam River where their existing Reserve Lands are located. During high water events, such as when the Fraser River freshet flooded these lands, the band would seek dry land refuge on the slopes overlooking the lower Coquitlam River, including the slopes of the Riverview site. Their oral history also indicates that a gravesite(s) was located on the Riverview Hospital Lands. In addition, this site was an important area where nuts, berries and other foodstuffs were gathered.

In 1904, the province of British Columbia formally dedicated 1000 acres of land at “Mount Coquitlam” on the west side of the Coquitlam River. Its purpose was to provide treatment facilities for the mentally ill as well as agricultural fields on the floodplain to supply produce, etc. Soon after Mount Coquitlam was established, John Davidson, BC’s first Provincial Botanist, arrived from Scotland. Part of Davidson’s time was spent exploring the province and collecting its flora. On the grounds of the mental hospital, he established an office, a nursery to house his specimens, an arboretum and a botanical garden. By the time the hospital (renamed Essondale) opened in 1913, Davidson had collected 600 native species and was exchanging materials with other botanical gardens around the world (Adolph, 2004). In 1916, Davidson moved the botanical garden to the newly-formed University of British Columbia (UBC), but the arboretum and nursery remained and flourished at Essondale. By 1922, the nursery had expanded to cover 12 acres. It supplied

trees and shrubs for public institutions and highways throughout the province until the late 1960s. The legacy of Riverview’s tree nurseries can still be viewed in many parts of the province, including on the grounds of the Legislative Buildings in Victoria.



Patients preparing the former bowling green at Finnie’s Gardens.

Much of Davidson’s work at Essondale was accomplished with the assistance of patients. Some patients, such as former miners, were experienced in clearing land and constructing rock walls. The results of their labour can still be seen today, most notably in the old soccer field. Even at Essondale’s inception, the therapeutic value of having patients participate in outdoor physical activities was recognized and promoted.

After Davidson moved to UBC, landscaping at Essondale continued under Head Gardener Jack Renton, who had trained at the world-renowned Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew (established 1759, now a UNESCO World Heritage Site) in England. Over the years, as more buildings were constructed at Essondale, Renton’s talent for landscaping resulted in an aesthetically pleasing and graciously serene

site. By the time Renton retired in 1947, he had established a magnificent collection of trees at Riverview comprising over 160 species/varieties from most continents. Today, these trees have grown to splendid maturity and presently constitute western Canada's oldest and most significant arboretum. Appendix I provides a chronological list of arboreta throughout Canada.

The parcel of land known to many people as "Essondale" has been divided over time into the Riverview Hospital Site on the hillside, Colony Farm Regional Park and the Forensic Psychiatric Institute on the Coquitlam River floodplain and, on the uplands, a large residential development and Riverview Forest Park. Today, only 244 acres of the original "Mount Coquitlam" land grant remain both as a home for the mentally ill and site of western Canada's oldest arboretum. The Riverview Heights residential development (254 acres) was sold to developers in the 1980s with no public consultation. In the 1990s, consideration was apparently given to also selling the Old Orchard area of the Riverview Lands. Consequently, concerns remain within the local community that additional portions of the Riverview Hospital Lands could be removed in the absence of public consultation.

3.2 THE BUILDINGS

The Riverview buildings offer a representative collection of BC architecture. Many of the buildings constructed between 1913 and 1955 are worthy of heritage designation.



Spanish Fir in front of former staff cottages.

The original plans for Riverview were designed by J.C.M. Keith who won a competition held by the provincial government in 1908. Donald Luxton in his book entitled *Building the West – The Early Architects of British Columbia* (2003) describes Keith's original plans as a group of buildings in the "corridor-pavilion style, with a central administration building with twin domed towers that reflected the symmetrical division of the site into male and female halves arranged around a surrounding horseshoe". These grand-scaled buildings were designed to have stately entranceways and panoramic views of the gently sloping lawns and landscape of trees.

The first building, West Lawn (completed by 1913), was done with working drawings prepared by another architect, H.S. Griffith, whose name appears on the cornerstone of the building. Keith's master plan for Essondale was subsequently carried out with modifications by a new architectural team after World War I. The team was led by Henry Whittaker, the province's Chief Architect in the newly-formed Department of Public Works. His style, described by Donald Luxton, is typified by "massive brick-clad structures that define the campus-like environment" of Riverview and which were considered to be "solid, monumental and competent, suiting exactly the tenor of the times and the needs of government". Whittaker's designs were later used in

government buildings in other parts of BC, giving the building complex at Riverview considerable provincial significance.

F.G. Consultants conducted an evaluation of the buildings for BCBC in 1995 (*Riverview – Heritage Evaluation, 1995*). Their report recommended that at least five buildings be added to BCBC's Heritage Inventory: West Lawn, Centre Lawn, East Lawn, the Crease Cafeteria and the Crease Unit. The F.G. Consultants study recorded 64 buildings on site, of which five were closed at the time. Since then, more buildings have closed. Studies indicate that keeping a group of buildings intact on a site significantly enhances their heritage value.

Detailed descriptions of the buildings are found in the report by F.G. Consultants. The Lawn buildings, because of the contemporary desire for improvements in natural lighting and ventilation, were designed on "*sprawling, multi-winged plans*". West Lawn and East Lawn originally had open sun porches on the end wings of each floor but these are now enclosed. Centre Lawn had porches set into the structure rather than open verandahs. The original entry lobby of East Lawn is mostly intact with "*a marble and terrazzo floor, a pastoral stained glass panel above the entry, and inlaid wooden doors*". A highlight of the Crease Unit is the "*central, arcaded entry*" joining the two wings. Many other features of the Crease Unit "*reflect an Italianate influence unusual in British Columbia architecture*". The Crease Cafeteria is an integral part of the original Veterans' Unit design and has equal heritage significance (F.G. Consultants, 1995).

Other buildings on the Riverview grounds have heritage and architectural significance. For example, the Nurses' Home (1930) demonstrates architecture adapted from the English Arts and Crafts style, and contributes to the "*conscious design of the Riverview site in the manner of an English country estate*". The interior of the Nurses' Home #1 has a restored living room designed in the

"Tudor Revival style, with fir paneling, a stencilled beamed ceiling with hammerbeam supports, oak floors, coloured glass in the windows, and a grand fireplace with inglenook seats".

Each hospital building is a monument representing B.C.'s history of mental care:

- West Lawn (1913-1983), originally called the "Hospital for the Mind at Mount Coquitlam", was considered to be the most modern institution of its time when it first opened. Patient care was much improved from the old asylum-style establishments.
- Centre Lawn (1924) was originally used for testing and recommending treatments for new admissions to the hospital.
- East Lawn (1930) was a unit for chronically ill female patients and a school for psychiatric nursing.
- Crease Clinic (1934-1992) first opened as the Veterans' Unit. In 1949, it expanded to become Crease Clinic of Psychological Medicine. It met a full range of needs and contained dormitories, offices, physiotherapy and occupational therapy facilities.
- The Boys' Industrial School (1920) also housed the Home for the Aged after 1936. It was extended in 1959 and is now known as Valleyview.
- Pennington Hall (1950) was constructed to provide expanded recreational services for the patients. It contains a gymnasium, cafeteria, bowling alley, pool tables, a computer room, and remains very popular with the patients.
- North Lawn (1955) opened to accommodate patients with tuberculosis and other infectious diseases. It was the last major facility built until the construction of Connolly Lodge in 2001.

Riverview Hospital was originally designed to accommodate 1800 patients but more buildings were added. The population peaked in 1951 when it housed

4630 patients. In addition to the patients, a number of staff lived on-site.

The buildings are an integral part of the original design and vision of the Riverview site. Riverview's design emphasis was to create calm and opportunities for pleasant outdoor experiences. The success of this design is seen today. The buildings are surrounded

by cultivated gardens, natural landscapes and mature trees. A walk through the lands is filled with the songs of birds and offers glimpses of other wildlife. To the east there are pleasing views of the flatlands of Colony Farm Regional Park and the Fraser River, while a stunning mountain view lies to the north. It is a place where the mind can be soothed by the sights and sounds of nature.



West Lawn Building, prior to opening in 1913

Photo: City of Vancouver Archives, #CVA660-295, by John Davidson

“John Davidson was important as a public educator and tried to bring botany and naturalist education to the masses. He was on the Vancouver Park Board for years and helped in establishing Arbour Day to beautify Vancouver. It is very easy to make the argument that Vancouver is so scenic due to his efforts. It would be wonderful to bring the Riverview Lands back to the display park which he wanted to establish”.

Bill Howden
Faculty of Education, UBC

4. THE TREE COLLECTION AT RIVERVIEW

The real treasure on the Riverview Lands is the collection of specimen trees that are found throughout the grounds. It was the vision of John Davidson over 90 years ago to have trees from all over the temperate world arrayed in one location for the education and enjoyment of the people of BC. Today, the trees stand in their full glory and we see Davidson's creation as he must have envisioned it. Ginkgo trees (*Ginkgo biloba*) from China, a fir (*Abies pinsapo*) from southern Spain, maples (*Acer cappadocicum*) from the Himalayas, and a Sweet Chestnut tree (*Castanea sativa*) from Turkey all thrive on the sunny slopes of the Riverview Lands. The collection also contains representative trees from all parts of BC and the rest of the continent. One native tree that is notable is a Douglas Fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*), although it is hardly recognizable as this familiar tree; it has been grown in isolation from other trees, and as a result, its boughs form a dense skirt that sweeps the ground.

Initially Davidson worked with the hospital's Head Gardener, Mr. I. Van der Bom. Since then, the tree collection has been tended to and expanded by a succession of Head Gardeners, including the Kew-trained Jack Renton (1917-1947), Joe Hancock (1947-1980), Bob Elsdon (1980-2000) and the current Bill Bird. The collection we see today is the legacy of these men, and of the patients who assisted them in the planting and care of these trees.

Over 1800 significant trees on the site have been catalogued for their botanic and historic value. A small numbered disk on the trunk of most trees identifies the tree in *The Riverview Heritage Tree Inventory* commissioned by the BCBC in 1994-1995. When the inventory was compiled, the total value of these trees as individual specimens was estimated according to standards of the International Society of Arborists to be over

\$50,000,000. As a collection, their value is far greater.



The Backyard area offers a quiet stroll.

The specimen trees, i.e., illustrative of the type, are planted throughout the entire grounds. Many are found singly or in thematic groupings around the hospital buildings. A particularly elegant collection of trees is found on the slope in front of the "Lawn" buildings, and attract the most interest on tree tours. These trees are often incorrectly referred to as the arboretum. In fact, the arboretum at Riverview is found throughout the entire site. An arboretum is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as "*a place where many kinds of trees and shrubs are grown for exhibition or study*".

Within the front lawn area, the contrasting foliage of beech trees (*Fagus sylvatica*) can be viewed. Here the deep red cultivar (*F. sylvatica* 'Cuprea') grows adjacent to the bright yellow-green European Beech; nearby is the exceptional tricoloured variety (*F. sylvatica* 'Roseo-marginata'). In another direction, there is a stunning springtime display of Golden Red Oak (*Quercus rubra* "Lutea") and Turkish Oak (*Q. cerris*). In the autumn and winter months, groupings of evergreens (cedars and cypresses, redwoods and yews) become more visually dominating. It soon becomes clear to the visitor that this is a highly-designed landscape, where the interplay of colour, shape, proportion and light has been thoroughly planned. On every visit, the differing lights of day and season reveal new arrangements in this inspired landscape.

The tree collection at Riverview is the second oldest in Canada (after the Experimental Farm in Ottawa) and is the

most significant in Western Canada in terms of the number of species/varieties (163 species and 113 varieties identified to date) which represent mainly the temperate zones of North America, Europe and Asia. Its southeast facing slopes and good quality soils create a microclimate where even the most delicate trees in the collection can flourish. An excellent description of the trees can be found in *The Riverview Lands, Western Canada's First Botanical Garden* (1994) edited by Val Adolph and Brenda Guild Gillespie.

Despite its position today as the most significant collection in western Canada, Riverview's trees remain largely undiscovered by the wider world. It must be emphasized that the tree collection is dispersed throughout the 244 acres of the Riverview site. The entire site has huge potential to showcase this collection.



Holly Drive gracefully guides visitors through Riverview.

“The collection serves as one of the few examples where present generations can see what the mature form of many different species looks like. Because many of the trees have developed in relatively open spaces, free from competition, they provide an excellent example of the form and size that each species can attain.”

Julian Dunster
Professional Arborist

5. THE NATURAL ASSETS OF RIVERVIEW

The natural values of Riverview are found wherever trees have been planted, grassy meadows established or streams allowed to flow, i.e., wherever the forces of nature have been allowed to dominate. Over 80 species of birds have been identified at Riverview (Takahashi, personal communication). They utilize both native and non-native trees as a food source (e.g., nectar, berries, nuts or insects), as nest areas or roost sites. The extensive open meadows and grassy fields of Riverview provide excellent habitat for field mice and meadow voles. In turn, these small creatures attract birds of prey such as owls and hawks. Open streams and wetlands attract some waterfowl as well as great blue herons.

The presence of so many birds on the site is an asset, not only for their appeal to wildlife viewers, but also because of their beneficial effect on trees. Many birds prey upon insect pests, and so improve both the vigour and growth rate of trees. For example, experiments in eastern North America have shown that trees exhibit an increased growth rate of about 25% in the presence of birds (Luoma, 1999).

A number of larger mammals are drawn to the quieter areas of the Riverview grounds. These include black-tailed deer, black bear, bobcat, coyote, racoon, beaver and two species of native squirrels. In addition, bats of unidentified species have been observed at Riverview during the summer months.

Several species at risk have been documented on site by BMN members. These include the barn owl, short-eared owl, western screech owl and great blue heron. The provincial blue-listed (indicative of a species considered to be vulnerable) band-tailed pigeon is also present. Other species at risk may be present. For example, the endangered Pacific water shrew, found in the Lost

Creek watershed at Mundy Park as well as in the nearby Hoy/Scott Creek corridor, could be present at Riverview.



Morning mist casts an air of serenity.

Through volunteer contributions, BMN members have undertaken a preliminary study of the wildlife habitats at Riverview (Harding and Diamond, 2004). In this study, six main habitat types were identified (old-field, old orchard, pioneering deciduous, riparian, coniferous relics and lawn/arboretum). The authors noted a paucity of standing dead snags (i.e., wildlife trees) and coarse woody debris due to the land clearing which took place approximately 100 years ago. They recommended that this habitat deficit be corrected. Wildlife trees provide valuable habitat for almost 100 wildlife species in BC, including a variety of woodpeckers. The authors also indicated that other species at risk such as the Pacific water shrew and the threatened

Townsend's big-eared bat might be present. Additional wildlife studies will be required to complete the inventory work. Three natural areas have particular significance at Riverview. As outlined below, these are Finnie's Garden, the "Backyard" areas and various streams.

5.1. FINNIE'S GARDEN

Finnie's Garden is an area of approximately 2.5 acres towards the south and uphill side of the property. It was established in 1954 by Head Nurse Art Finnie, who wanted to create a quiet sanctuary that the patients could call their own. The landscaping was performed by the patients, and included flowerbeds, a vegetable garden, lawn, a water feature and perennial borders. Until a few years ago, John Davidson's original potting shed stood in Finnie's Garden. Unfortunately, the shed was demolished, despite the concerns of some patients who wanted to see it retained. For many years, Finnie's Garden was neglected by a hospital administration that failed to recognize its important therapeutic value. In recent years however, volunteers from BMN and RHCS have worked to restore the garden by removing the tangle of overgrown brambles and replacing them with native plants. Thanks to these efforts and the patients' vocational therapy members who continued lawn maintenance, Finnie's Garden won the City of Coquitlam's 'Naturescape Award' in 2001 as an outstanding example of a garden which showcased the native flora of BC. Once more, this restored site is attracting patients and is being used by them and their families as a quiet area for visiting and relaxation. Finnie's Garden is one of the most popular places with patients on the entire Riverview site. The walk required to reach Finnie's is beneficial in itself.



A quiet spot in Finnie's Garden.

Finnie's Garden attracts an abundance of wildlife and is especially noted for its owls. This summer, hawks established a nest in a nearby tree.

Last autumn, volunteers completed a colourful mural featuring provincial wildflowers on one wall of the tool shed in Finnie's. For the past two years, the Garden has been a featured stop on the "Art in the gARTen Tours" which highlight the work of local artists in natural settings. With its expansive lawn, charming hand-wrought fences and quaint features, Finnie's Garden is an ideal place to showcase the work of local artists.

"As the great metropolis of Vancouver and the Lower Mainland gradually eats up much of the green space we are accustomed to in British Columbia, let us hope that this historical park will be maintained untouched by developers. It is part of our heritage to be passed along for other generations to enjoy."

David Tarrant
Author and "Canadian Gardener"

5.2. THE “BACKYARD” AREAS

Several areas of Riverview no longer groomed or maintained are slowly reverting to their “natural” state. However, in some cases, the aggressive growth of invasive plant species such as broom and Japanese knotweed are limiting the habitat values of these areas. One popular “Backyard” area is located on the uppermost part of the site along the GVRD right of way. A gravel road (with limited automobile access other than hospital security vehicles) provides a pleasant walking trail that is used by many local residents. The vegetation on both sides of this trail is mainly young deciduous forest that attracts a variety of wildlife and, in some places, extends downhill for a considerable distance. Uphill of the Riverview Hospital site, a small corridor where Lost Creek is culverted provides a wildlife corridor and potential pathway through to Riverview Forest Park.



Each season brings its special charms.

On the south end of Riverview, the abandoned old orchard area has become overgrown with some native plants as well as less desirable invasive species. This area also attracts considerable wildlife and provides forage for some of the larger mammals. Finnie’s Garden provides a convenient connection between the back trail and the old orchard. Below the old orchard is a more mature forest that abuts the Lougheed Highway, close to a light-controlled crossing to Colony Farm. A red-tailed hawk nest was located in this mature forest for several years.

Just north of the Pitt River Road intersection, a steeper area of the Riverview property contains considerable deciduous forest. Extensive vegetative cover here provides an area of refuge for animals such as the black tailed deer and may help to create a wildlife corridor at this point across the Lougheed Highway and railway tracks to the wetlands along the Coquitlam River. It is important to note that black-tailed deer, once commonly observed on the Riverview grounds, have become a rare sight in recent years.



Deer are an increasingly rare sight.

5.3. THE STREAMS OF RIVERVIEW

The riparian corridors that naturally surround streams are now recognized to provide critical fish and wildlife habitat, especially when they are covered with mature vegetation and have a well-developed understory. When Essondale was first created, the surrounding areas abounded in a variety of streams and the Coquitlam River was full of salmon. Over the years, many of these small streams – including most on the Riverview site – have been buried in culverts. Water quality has decreased and salmon populations in the Coquitlam River have diminished considerably. Only in recent years has it been realized how important these small streams are, not only for providing salmon habitat (especially for coho and chum salmon), but also for delivering year-round flows of good water-quality into larger river systems. Additionally, the verdant green

of riparian corridors offers a welcoming visual backdrop to communities and, if developed appropriately, can provide delightful recreation trails.

In view of the recognized value of riparian corridors, BMN applied for funds to map Riverview's streams in 2002. This work, completed last summer with additional support from RHCS and BCBC, is summarized below and in the map presented in Appendix III. Briefly, the stream survey identified five major stream systems that flow through the Riverview lands and deliver water through culverts under the Lougheed Highway and railway tracks into the Coquitlam River. Even in watercourses where fish cannot move upstream because of obstacles such as perched culverts, the type of water delivered downstream is of critical importance to salmon. If water flows from a stream well shaded with natural vegetation, it will be cool, oxygen-rich, silt-free and full of insects that are an important food source for hungry young salmon. If the water flows from a disturbed area with little cover, it may carry pollutants such as pesticides or oil, be too warm for salmon, and contain silt, insufficient oxygen and no insects. It is fair to say that the watercourses of Riverview have delivered both types of water into the Coquitlam River over the years. It is our goal to work with the relevant authorities to improve the water quality and fish habitat in Riverview's streams.

5.3.1. THE SOUTH STREAM COMPLEX

The most southerly stream system on the Riverview grounds carries water year-round through the old orchard and Pennington Hall areas to the pond near the baseball diamond. The water comes from both springs and storm water runoff originating on developed areas. While the pond shows evidence of extensive erosion and is often observed to contain a high level of sediments, it also contains salmon. In fact, this area has excellent potential for salmonid habitat enhancement. It is

the most likely place on the Riverview grounds where consideration could be given to creating a salmon spawning channel as a special feature in, for example, a west coast botanical garden. It could be viewed by the public with relative ease here. Across the highway, GVRD Parks will be undertaking some fish and wildlife enhancement where this creek feeds into Mundy Slough. This work is being funded through the BC Hydro Bridge Coastal Program. If enhancement work was to be considered on the Riverview site in the next few years, funding could be sought from this source.

5.3.2. LOST CREEK

Lost Creek flows from Lost Lake in Mundy Park through the Riverview Forest Park and in a well-shaded ravine for a small distance on the Riverview Lands before it disappears in a culvert. It emerges from the culvert on the other side of the Highway and feeds into wetlands that drain into the Coquitlam River. It is unfortunate that Lost Creek is culverted for most of its traverse through Riverview as it is the one creek with headwaters in a natural area and probably contains the best water quality. Lost Creek does not flow year-round but it is possible that creation of wetlands in Riverview Forest Park or on the Riverview grounds might attenuate seasonal flows and help to assure year-round flows. It is important to note that chum salmon have evolved to spawn in creeks that dry up in the summer. When their eggs hatch, the juvenile fish swim directly downstream and into salt water. In contrast, young coho spend their first year in a fresh water stream and are dependent on a year-round supply of water. Should the opportunity present itself, the daylighting of Lost Creek through the Riverview Hospital site should be considered. Successful daylighting of creeks that were once buried in culverts has been carried out elsewhere (e.g., Suter Brook in Port Moody) with considerable improvement of fish habitat.



Lost Creek

5.3.3. THE WETLAND

North of Lost Creek, there is a watercourse complex on the Riverview site draining an area which was once an extensive wetland. Again, this watercourse is culverted and piped into natural wetlands on the Coquitlam River on the north side of Pitt River Road. Should consideration ever be given to establishing a botanical garden on the Riverview site, the former wetland would provide an ideal location to establish plants that require wetter soils. At the VanDusen Botanical Garden, an artificial wetland was created at great expense to provide appropriate habitat for wetland-type plants. At Riverview, we already have a natural wetland that would be ideal for such use.

5.3.4. RIVERVIEW (DAVIDSON) CREEK

A major creek flowing through Riverview lies to the north of the buried wetland. It is called ‘Riverview Creek’ by some people. For the most part, it flows in an attractive ravine through Riverview, but it appears to drain from developed areas above the site. Although it does not flow year-round, it is the most visually appealing creek on the grounds. Until quite recently, all creeks were groomed, i.e., clearcut to the water’s edge in the managed areas at Riverview. Recent changes in landscape management will apparently now allow a more natural vegetative cover to become established. BMN have unofficially called this creek “Davidson Creek”, in honour of John Davidson, and to avoid confusion with another creek further south which has also been called Riverview Creek.



“Davidson” or Riverview Creek

5.3.5. THE NORTH CREEK SYSTEM

The most northerly watercourse at Riverview appears to flow from springs and storm-water runoff. It is ditched through extensive natural areas but widens into a small wetland before entering a

culvert. Because this small wetland is surrounded by extensive shrubbery, it is possible that it provides habitat for native fauna such as the endangered Pacific water shrew. This watercourse remains mostly culverted through the rest of the Riverview site but where it opens into a ditch on the Lougheed Highway, fish have been anecdotally reported. Given that the water flows through a small wetland, the water quality in this stream is likely fairly high.

Most of the streams of Riverview could be considerably enhanced to the benefit of salmon, wildlife and the enjoyment of people. The most appropriate area to initiate any stream enhancement would be in the pond area at the south end of the property where spawning habitat could be created with excellent opportunities for public viewing. We also recommend that consideration be given to officially naming some of the streams at Riverview in recognition of the contributions made by people such as John Davidson and Jack Renton.

5.4. PASSIVE RECREATION VALUES

With its gracious landscaping, sweeping vistas of distant mountains and seasonally changing trees, the Riverview grounds have excellent potential for limited development of passive recreation activities such as walking and cycling. Already, many local residents use the trails, lanes and road network at Riverview for walking and jogging. Because the roads are constructed, for the most part, along the contours of the hillside, they are well-designed for use by cyclists. At the south end of Riverview, on the downhill side, there is easy pedestrian/cyclist access at a signalled intersection across the Lougheed Highway to Colony Farm Regional Park. The uphill side at the south end provides access to Mundy Park only a few blocks away. Trail access from the backyard area through to the Riverview Forest could be enhanced by the City of Coquitlam. At the north end of Riverview, there is some potential for connections to the

Coquitlam River and Hoy/Scott Creek corridors as well as possibly some other areas under the BC Hydro right-of-way.

GVRD Parks is presently working to establish greenways throughout the Lower Mainland as public recreation corridors to link their Regional Park system to other significant natural areas. Such greenways would also provide corridors for movement of wildlife. For example, the decrease in deer sightings in recent years at Riverview may be due to, not only loss of resting areas on site, but also increased difficulty in moving across barriers such as busy highways and high fences. The remaining Riverview grounds have a historic connection with Colony Farm Regional Park and the Riverview Forest Park. Thus, it would be appropriate to consider re-linking these sites through a more formal trail way with, possibly, the installation of some interpretive signage.



Riverview is renowned for its many species of Magnolia.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS AND GUIDELINES FOR FUTURE USE

1. **Keep in the public trust, open to the public and holistically managed.**

There is very strong sentiment in the TriCities areas (as well as throughout the Lower Mainland) that the remaining Riverview Lands should be kept as public lands and open, to the greatest extent possible, for the public to use, enjoy and appreciate. During the many years that public admission to the Riverview Hospital grounds was discouraged, there was a considerable loss of an appreciation in the community for the outstanding values of the heritage tree collection and the site's architectural heritage. This should not be allowed to happen again.

It is also important that the site continues to be managed as a single unit while recognizing that a variety of uses could occur here in the future. While it is reasonable for BCBC to remain as managers of the site, it is encouraging to note the growing interest of the local community and the City of Coquitlam in the Riverview site. The development of partnerships with the City and the GVRD as well as the local community to assist in developing policies for site management, fund-raising to meet new objectives, etc., should be encouraged. In this regard, the establishment by BCBC of the Riverview Nature Heritage Stewardship Group to facilitate input from RHCS and BMN is a positive step forward.

2. **Consider designation as a Heritage Site.**

Given the most outstanding collection of mature trees in western Canada plus the eclectic variety of institutional buildings that provides a one-stop window of architectural design throughout most of the 20th century, there are compelling reasons to consider

designating Riverview as a Heritage Site. This is an initiative that must be taken by local government, i.e., the City of Coquitlam. As a first step, we recommend that the City of Coquitlam consult with the provincial heritage planner based in Maple Ridge and work towards preparing Statements of Significance. There are funds available from the BC Heritage Branch to assist with such an action. It is important, however, to recognize Riverview is not a static site, but one which is still in active use and which will continue to evolve with the passage of time.

3. **Build on the existing values and respect Riverview's heritage.**

We do not need to re-invent the Riverview site. It already has outstanding values (i.e., a site of mental health care, outstanding tree collection, heritage buildings, natural assets) which simply need to be enhanced and allowed to evolve and mature in conjunction with the surrounding communities. It is important that the significance of the site to Kwitwetlem First Nation be recognized and that they be consulted regarding any new uses.

4. **Ensure a continuing role for Riverview in mental health care and related uses.**

The original goal from a century ago to provide a haven for the care of the mentally ill at Riverview was inspired and remains so. As a society, we must ensure that the mentally ill continue to receive care in a tranquil and appropriate setting. Care also needs to be provided in a manner that encourages positive re-integration with society and provides opportunities for patients to accomplish this. Current mental health policies are focused on de-

institutionalizing patients but have been blamed by some for the increasing number of homeless people living in the back alleys of Vancouver and elsewhere. It is possible that future approaches towards mental health care will be directed towards providing more supportive living accommodation and ongoing assistance with the development of life-skills. Riverview is an ideal site to provide these facilities. It is important that the Riverview lands be retained so they will be available to meet future mental health needs.

The gracious design of the Riverview Hospital site promotes a sense of mental and physical health. Everyone – even casual visitors – experience an elevated feeling of well-being after a leisurely walk around the Riverview site. Riverview has a history of recognizing that the mentally ill benefit from participating in outdoor activities. Patients themselves have requested that they be given a reasonable amount of time outdoors. For example, in the 1994 *Riverview Hospital Charter of Patient Rights*, Riverview patients outlined their desire to have a minimum of 90 minutes of daily outdoor activities. There is no longer extensive involvement of patients in landscaping the grounds or tending plant nurseries. However a small Serenity Garden and a plot at Connolly Lodge presently operate for the therapeutic benefit of patients.

Riverview has excellent potential to become an area of interface where the mentally ill can join in activities with people from the larger community. Some patients already do this by participating in TreeFest events, attending tree tours and visiting Finnie's Garden. The Riverview site contains ample space to provide other opportunities and training facilities that would assist patients in acquiring skills and making the transition to independent living. In this regard, "Providence Farm" on Vancouver Island (<http://providence.bc.ca>) provides an excellent model for the type of mental

health care that Riverview has potential to provide.

In recent years, the trend has been to provide mental health care in a more home-like setting. This has led some people to believe that the large institutional buildings of Riverview are no longer appropriate for mental health care use. However, these buildings were designed to be open and airy structures, so their continuing use for patient care should not be dismissed. For example, large apartment buildings can be designed to provide "home-like" conditions. The Crossroads Hospice in Port Moody, located on the upper floor of a large building, provides wonderful care for its clients in a home-like setting. Loving care under home-like conditions can be provided in larger buildings.

In addition at Riverview, there are several charming cottages on-site built originally to provide residences for staff. These buildings have tended to become used as office space in recent years. Opportunities to use them for semi-independent living have not been fully maximized. The potential to use more of these cottages for patient care should be considered. It should be recognized that not all mentally ill patients will be capable of semi-independent living and thus some degree of long-term institutional care will always be required. Riverview is an ideal site for such facilities.

As the baby-boomer generation ages, there will likely be a need for additional health care facilities, especially as care homes for those who suffer from senile dementia. Real estate has become expensive in the Lower Mainland and it is a challenge to find appropriate sites for such care homes. Riverview could be an ideal site to provide such facilities as it would provide peaceful sanctuary for those who find it an ever-growing challenge to deal with the complexities of modern life. An additional advantage is that Riverview is located in the heart of the expanding suburbs of the largest city in British Columbia and is conveniently located close

to major highways that make the site readily accessible.

The province currently plans for Riverview Hospital to close by 2007, although some mental health care facilities will remain on-site. Given its many attributes, we believe that Riverview is an ideal site that should continue to provide a broad variety of mental health care. We believe the government should reconsider its plans.

5. Site any new buildings in the footprint of demolished buildings or on “brown” spaces to ensure the continuity of the landscaping and to avoid impacts on natural areas.

To preserve the traditional landscaping designs and avoid impacts on heritage trees and greenspaces, it is preferable to have buildings constructed in the footprints of buildings which have been demolished, or on abandoned parking lots or gravelled areas. Although the construction of new facilities for mental health care at Riverview in recent years is a welcome addition, Connolly and Cottonwood Lodges are built/will be built in a greenspace close to heritage trees. This site contains underground services which could possibly supply additional buildings in the future. All new buildings should abide by LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) principles and minimize the use of impervious areas. In this regard, we are pleased that Cottonwood Lodge will be constructed according to LEED principles.

6. Find appropriate uses for the older buildings no longer needed for health care, while ensuring that historic architectural features and landscaping are preserved to the greatest extent possible.

If some of the larger buildings are no longer deemed suitable for patients, consideration should be given to using them as office or administration space for

mental health care services, government or other compatible uses. To some degree, this is already occurring. Other compatible uses should be sought. These could include heritage museums, use by non-profit societies and the development of botanical garden facilities, etc.). For example, in recent years, several non-profit societies have had offices at Riverview. While they may not provide a large revenue stream to BCBC, such uses have the potential to provide programs or opportunities for interaction, training or employment for patients. Facilities already present on site include industrial shops (electrical, metal working, woodworking, upholstery, etc) and a print shop. Some of the older empty buildings such as West Lawn have excellent potential to serve as museum space, a use that is drawing increasing interest. Many visitors have noted the “campus feeling” at Riverview. Certainly the facilities, especially in the Henry Esson Young Building, have the potential to serve as a small conference centre. There may also be opportunities for the development of some educational uses, especially in the horticultural area.

7. **Develop the full potential of the tree collection as a major tourist attraction for Coquitlam and possibly expand into a complete botanical garden / horticultural / education centre.**

The trees at Riverview presently constitute a first class arboretum managed on a third class budget. While BCBC recognizes the need to manage the arboretum appropriately, the sad reality is that the budget for grounds management at Riverview is treated the same as any other large institutional grounds in the province. It is only through the exceptional dedication of the present and recent grounds managers (Bill Bird and Bob Elsdon), that the site has received any special attention in recent years. Recently, through the efforts of BCBC, limited funds were found for a consultant to develop a best management practices document for the trees at Riverview, a report that was long overdue. At the very least, immediate goals should be to label the heritage trees, complete and update the inventory, and develop a plan for future tree plantings and landscaping. Given the potential benefit of Riverview to the City of Coquitlam as a tourist attraction, the City should consider allocating funds towards management of the tree collection. Perhaps some way could be found to fund this through the City's Community Capital Fund.

Ideally, the trees at Riverview should be considered for development as a formal arboretum and, eventually, a full botanical garden. Without a doubt, the arboretum constitutes Coquitlam's most outstanding feature, which is only enhanced by the varied architectural styles of the buildings on site. A more formalized arboretum or botanical garden would likely require, at the very least, a building for offices, displays, teaching, etc., as well as an enclosed area for greenhouses and specialized plant displays. The greenhouse at the Forensic Institute may be available and there could be

opportunities to provide training in horticultural skills to patients. Additional agricultural lands are possibly available at Colony Farm Regional Park. The use of the fields at Colony Farm would restore the historic connection between the farm and Riverview. In addition, the establishment of a botanical garden could possibly provide some employment for patients. While admission costs charged to the public would help to cover operating costs, the development of a formal arboretum or botanical garden would most likely require major support from senior governments or granting agencies.

Initially, we recommend that the City investigate in detail how other botanical gardens are funded in Canada. If funds were available from the Community Capital Fund, this is a project for which a consultant could be hired. There is a need to determine how other such sites have been funded in Canada in order to develop the most appropriate model for the arboretum at Riverview. We believe that the Riverview site must be kept open, for the most part, to the public. Thus, we recommend that only limited areas be developed as exclusive "admission areas" for the arboretum. These could include display and demonstration areas, greenhouses, etc. Paid admission to the arboretum would include a guided tour of the trees found throughout the entire site.

8. **Preserve and enhance the natural habitat areas and streams; ensure that such work complements the development of a botanical garden. Complete flora and fauna inventories. Encourage public appreciation of these values.**

There are a number of opportunities here for both volunteers and professionals to undertake. Some have already been mentioned earlier in this report. Wildlife surveys need to be completed. These include both breeding bird and year-round wildlife surveys, as well

as programs to protect species at risk. The on-going Naturescaping of Finnie's Garden should continue and a program should be developed to remove invasive plants throughout the Riverview site. There is excellent potential for stream enhancement work, especially in areas as already described. In this regard, it is important to note that all modern botanical gardens feature indigenous flora and fauna. Since Riverview already contains significant areas of native flora and supports a variety of wildlife, it is well poised to become a botanical garden of some significance. The creation of wetlands, in addition to providing a site for wetland plants, would enhance amphibian habitat and improve water quality entering the Coquitlam River. In fact, much of the wildlife enhancement work could be done in conjunction with the development of a formal botanical garden on site. Because Riverview has so many of the basic features already in place, it is an ideal site to consider establishing a botanical garden as a tourist attraction in Coquitlam, a municipality already known for its many greenspaces.

9. Consider the development of more formal links with nearby greenspaces such as Riverview Forest Park and Colony Farm Regional Park to enhance public use as well as for wildlife movement.

Riverview is already used on a daily basis by the local community for passive recreation activities such as walking, jogging, cycling and bird-watching. Growth in these activities is likely to occur in the future as the population in Coquitlam increases. As already discussed, there are some opportunities to develop greenways which could restore Riverview's historic connections and encourage appropriate public use. Partnerships between the City and GVRD Regional Parks could be developed to establish greenway linkages between Riverview and the surrounding community. Because of the mental health care facilities on site, and the value of the heritage tree

collection, we do not see the Riverview grounds being suitable for more active public recreation. It is also important to ensure that even limited passive public recreation does not hinder the main functions of the Riverview site. Appropriate planting along such greenways could also facilitate the movement of wildlife between adjacent natural areas.



“I’m not trying merely to defend a little piece of green space. I’m suggesting that this green space represents symbolically a certain quality of life that we wish to keep for the future. I’m making a stand FOR a haven in the middle of our growing city and AGAINST the degradation of an especially important part of the environment that Riverview’s loss would represent.”

Joan Spira
BMN Representative
Riverview Land Use Committee

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APPENDIX I:

Significant Botanical Gardens and Arboreta of Canada

The trees at Riverview comprise Canada's second oldest arboretum and have an estimated minimum value of \$50 million. As these trees reach the prime of their splendour at full maturity, they deserve far more recognition than they have ever received.

- 1. Ottawa's Central Experimental Farm (1886)** was established on 188 hectares (465 acres) and includes an arboretum. At the same time, four other experimental farms were established across Canada at Nappan, Nova Scotia; Brandon, Manitoba; Indian Head, Saskatchewan and Agassiz, BC. Ottawa's Experimental Farm now includes the Fletcher Wildlife Garden. Arboreta typically are graced by expansive natural areas which feature our native flora and provide habitat for our native fauna.
- 2. The Arboretum at Essondale (Riverview) Hospital (1911)** was developed by John Davidson originally on 405 hectares (1000 acres). Here, he collected and grew over 9000 specimens with the help of Essondale patients. His magnificent collection at Riverview now consists of more than 1800 mature trees which represent specimens collected from around the world. The Riverview Arboretum has never received proper recognition. In the 1980s, with no public consultation, 103 hectares (254 acres) of the Riverview lands were sold for a housing development. The grounds at Riverview are now reduced to only 99 hectares (244 acres) in size.
- 3. The University of British Columbia Botanical Garden (1916)** was also established by John Davidson when he moved most of his collection from Essondale (Riverview) to the newly founded university. This Garden is 28 hectares (69 acres) in size and consists of a world-wide collection of plants and a number of special gardens including the Alpine Garden, the Winter Garden, and the Physick Garden.
- 4. The world-famous Montreal Botanical Garden (1931)** on 75 hectares (185 acres) features 26,000 plants, 10 greenhouses, 30 thematic gardens, a Biodome showing four complete ecosystems and an Insectarium. It is a major tourist attraction in Montreal.
- 5. The Hamilton Royal Botanical Gardens (1932)** is the largest botanical garden in the world and consists of 1100 hectares (2718 acres) at the west end of Lake Ontario. It includes wetlands, marshes, forests and wilderness areas including an example of the now very rare Carolinian forest. It also includes the Cootes Paradise Marsh of 480 hectares (1186 acres) which has been a wildlife refuge since 1927. Eighty hectares (198 acres) along the Niagara escarpment is now part of an UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve.
- 6. The University of Alberta's Devonian Botanic Garden (1959)** occupies 87 hectares (215 acres) of rolling hills just outside Edmonton. It specializes in alpine and cold-hardy plants. It consists of 36 hectares (89 acres) of gardens complemented by over almost 50 hectares (124 acres) of natural landscape. It also includes a Native People's Garden and a plant diversity center for the prairies and northern Canada.
- 7. The VanDusen Botanical Garden (1975)** was developed from a former golf course and comprises 22 hectares (54 acres). It features an annual garden show which attracts thousands of visitors.

8. The Memorial University Newfoundland Botanical Garden (1977) has over 40 hectares (99 acres) of gardens, forests, bogs and fens which feature indigenous and non-native varieties of plants.

Other Canadian collections of interest include the University of Guelph's Arboretum, the Living Prairie Museum in Winnipeg and the Fredericton Botanic Garden which was established only in 1990. *Adapted from "A History of Canadian Gardening" by Carol Martin (2000)*

APPENDIX II: SCENES OF RIVERVIEW



An inviting trail in Riverview's Backyard.

Spring in the Old Orchard, with Colony Farm and Fraser River in the background.



Enshrouded by fog, Riverview becomes a tiny bit of wilderness.



Gay Mitchell (left) and Laura Babak-Nagy with their artwork on a shed in Finnie's Garden. The mural illustrates 29 native and naturalized plants, most of which are found in Finnie's.

APPENDIX III:

The fold-out map (Riverview Lands: Watercourses) is not available on this electronic version of the document.