



Patients, staff and visitors can enjoy a quiet walk among the trees.

## THE RIVERVIEW LANDS TREE COLLECTION VISION

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ServicesBC

### ABOUT RIVERVIEW LANDS & THE TREE COLLECTION

The 244-acre Riverview Lands in Coquitlam have served as a home to patients at the Riverview Hospital (formerly Essondale) since 1913. Accommodation and Real Estate Services (ARES), a division of Shared Services BC in the Ministry of Labour and Citizens' Services, operates the Riverview Lands property on behalf of the provincial government.

One of the most spectacular and prized elements of the Lands is its collection of

trees. There are more than 1,800 tree specimens, including some of the first natives and exotics in BC, some dating back to the site's initial development in the early 1900s. The trees at Riverview are the result of a number of influences, including a succession of committed planners, arborists and gardeners, coupled with access to seeds and plants from around the world.

Early construction of the hospital saw the addition of a botanical nursery, which produced ornamental trees for use in landscaping around highways and public





buildings using native British Columbia plant species. In 1916, the botanical collection was relocated to its current site at the University of British Columbia. Some trees were too large to move and remained, forming the genesis of the current collection on the site.

The Riverview tree collection has largely been left to grow and mature in a natural state with little intervention or formal expansion, mainly due to its placement on an operational institutional site. In 1995, unique and specimen trees were surveyed, ranked, catalogued and tagged. The tree inventory classifies trees by age, heritage rank, condition, uniqueness and other criteria. This work was updated in 2006.

Riverview Hospital is now downsizing as the BC Mental Health Plan is implemented. The future use of the land is as yet undetermined, however the importance of formally addressing the tree collection and its future is significant, regardless of future potential uses.

## THE TREE COLLECTION VISION

The Riverview Lands tree collection will be the North American premier representation of significant trees within a working landscape.

This will be accomplished by continuing the relationship of the trees with the surrounding landscape and buildings and by enhancing the tree collection's diversity, honouring its history, embracing its therapeutic values, and supporting its educational role, in perpetuity.

### THE SUPPORTING PRINCIPLES

Principles were prepared to help guide the creation of the vision. They represent the fundamentals to be considered and/or followed during any work to further develop and deliver the vision.

- Recognize and continue the site's working landscape theme.
- Recognize that the composition of the collection and its relationship with site elements creates a distinct sense of place

with therapeutic and historical value, educational benefit and significant legacy.

- Maintain the historical integrity of the collection.
- Ensure the collection is accessible for public viewing.
- Actively manage the tree collection following a comprehensive tree management plan.
- New plantings should complement site elements and continue the formal, gracious and working landscape.
- Enhance and diversify the collection.

### PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE TOGETHER

As part of its commitments relating to the approval of a new residential mental health facility (Cottonwood Lodge), ARES engaged in a formal collaborative process to develop a draft vision for the tree collection. This work focuses on the trees listed in the 2006 Riverview Tree Inventory.

A Tree Collection Vision Working Group was formed to create a draft vision for the collection of trees and to consider the required supporting plans and tools, such as a Tree Collection Management Plan.

The goal of the tree collection vision is two-fold:

- To protect and enhance the status and value of the collection in perpetuity.
- To inform any future land planning or change in use processes.

Open grown trees interact with the institutional facility.







## VISION WORKING GROUP MEMBERS

Riverview Natural Heritage  
Stewardship Advisory Committee

Members:

- ARES
- Burke Mountain Naturalists
- Riverview Horticultural Centre Society
- BLJC-WSI (grounds maintenance)
- big think communications inc.

Dunster & Associates (ISA Certified  
Arborist)

City of Coquitlam, Parks and  
Recreation

University of British Columbia  
(Botanical Gardens)

Retired architect

Group participants all bring extensive knowledge and understanding of the tree collection and the Riverview lands to the discussion. They worked for nine months to explore issues, develop principles, create a draft vision statement and to identify some of the supporting tools required to implement the vision. This was a significant piece of work that addressed complex issues and considered the collection looking forward 50-plus years.

## WHAT IS A WORKING LANDSCAPE?

A working landscape is a landscape that has been created and maintained for a functional or active purpose. The Riverview tree collection has evolved over nearly 100 years and has been integrated with the institutional buildings, the broader landscape and natural areas together with the surrounding views to provide an attractive, functional and therapeutic setting for patients, staff and visitors.



Trees require active management to optimize their health and longevity and to minimize risk.

## UNDERSTANDING THE TREE COLLECTION

The first step in creating a vision was to understand the trees' value as a collection. ARES retained Dr. Julian Dunster (Dunster & Associates), an International Society of Arboriculture Certified Arborist, to lead the assessment. His first step was to consider the collection in relation to others around the world within its historical context, its composition (e.g. rarity and specimen quality) and the regional, provincial and national significance of the trees.

Dr. Dunster determined that the value of the tree collection is defined by the site's use: institutional buildings and specimen trees coexist within a large landscape of open lawn areas laid out to be of therapeutic value.

The Riverview tree collection differs from classic botanical gardens or arboreta typical of North America or Europe; most tend to be relatively compact areas, well groomed, highly maintained, and with an extensive collection of plants. Further, they typically don't include large buildings in active use for non-garden or arboretum functions, as is the case at Riverview.

The assessment concluded that a primary value of the collection is rooted in the relationship of the significant trees to the site; its buildings (historical and others); the landscape and natural features; and to the patients and staff who live and work there. These integrated relationships are formally referred to as a working landscape.

Examples of the trees' relationship to buildings and site features.





## KEY ISSUES

The committee discussed and worked through a wide variety of issues including:

- Need to enhance collection, not just protect or preserve it.
- Open vistas and views are an important context point of trees.
- Planting for sheer numbers' sake is counter to value.
- Natural open grown trees are an important aspect for many specimens.
- Natural areas, while connected, will be addressed under own vision.
- Balance required between public access and impact on trees and tree roots.
- History and therapeutic values are key to the "spirit" of the collection.
- Trees need active management.
- Doing what's best for the tree should be at the heart of a management plan.
- Baseline information and record keeping is of significant value.
- Collection is aging and succession planning is important – not just what to plant, but where.

## VISION STATEMENT STATUS

The vision statement and principles will be considered draft until comments are collected and considered during a community-based consultation process in late 2006 and early 2007.

## HISTORY OF THE TREES

- 1908 – Wooded areas of the hospital cleared by patients in preparation for construction.
- 1910 – Original landscape design plans prepared by G.K. McLean, engineer and landscape architect.
- 1913 – John Davidson, provincial botanist, begins the creation of a botanical garden and arboretum on the hospital site.
- 1916 – Formal plant collection moved to the University of British Columbia, larger specimens left at Riverview. Head gardener Jack Renton takes over hospital site landscaping and the plant and tree nursery.

The integration of trees, buildings, landscape and views create a working landscape.



## PHOTOGRAPHY PERMISSION REQUIRED

The Riverview tree collection is located on the grounds of Riverview Hospital, a treatment facility for people with mental health challenges that is in active operation. In order to protect and respect patients privacy we ask that you receive written permission before you visit the lands for the purposes of any photography. For more information please contact: Craig Woznikoski at [cwoznikoski@bcmhs.bc.ca](mailto:cwoznikoski@bcmhs.bc.ca) or 604.524.7303.



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If you have any questions or would like to be added to our mailing list please email: [riverview@gov.bc.ca](mailto:riverview@gov.bc.ca)

To learn more about this project, please visit our website and review the Riverview Tree Collection Vision: Summary and Background Report June 2006, at [http://bcbc.bc.ca/Partners\\_and\\_Projects/Riverview](http://bcbc.bc.ca/Partners_and_Projects/Riverview)