



# Environment

**V**ision participants identified many environmental issues, including the need for residents and businesses to be more involved in actions which promote a healthier environment. Participants also expressed concern that the community is largely unaware of many City programs which already address environmental issues. The Vision Directions that will improve the environment are grouped into three categories — actions that start in the home or business with City support, actions that require a joint community/City effort, and broad actions that require co-ordination with other levels of government.

Other Vision Directions which would enhance the environment are found in IMPROVING PARKS, STREETS, LANES, AND PUBLIC PLACES (e.g. Restoration and Preservation of Renfrew Ravine, Greening Lanes), and in TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORTATION (e.g. Greenways and Bikeways, Public Transit).

## **Recycling, Composting, and Garbage**

The City collects garbage from ‘single family’ residences, including most properties with up to four units. The garbage can limit for single family properties was lowered from three to two cans per week in order to encourage residents to reduce waste and use recycling and composting programs. The City collects paper, plastic, metal, and glass for recycling from houses and apartments if the residents separate and set out the materials. Large items, like old fridges and hot water tanks, can be recycled at the Vancouver South Transfer Station on West Kent Avenue North. The City also provides regular yard waste collection from single family properties and subsidizes backyard composters and apartment worm compost bins. These programs, combined with others in the region have reduced the amount of residential garbage sent to the landfill by about 48%.

## **Energy and Water Conservation**

The City has adopted several policies aimed at reducing energy use. CityPlan and the City’s land use policies promote complete communities with jobs close to home, thereby reducing fuel consumption for traveling to work. The Transportation Plan gives priority to pedestrians, transit, and bicycles over the automobile. By-laws and regulations require buildings to be more energy efficient and trees to be retained or replaced during residential development. The conversion of over 24,000 street lights to more energy efficient lamps has also saved energy.

Vancouver has higher per capita water consumption than most North American cities with similar climates. The City supports public and school education programs on water conservation, restricts lawn watering in summer, sells barrels to store rain water for yard irrigation, and requires water saving fixtures and devices in new buildings. These initiatives have reduced water consumption by 20% since summer water shortages in 1990 and 1992.

# 25 Environment

## At Home and at Work

Vision participants discussed many different measures to improve environmental practices in their homes. These ideas included increasing recycling and composting, conserving water and energy, and encouraging the use of environmentally friendly products. Almost all of these actions could also be undertaken by businesses.

### 25.1 Individual Actions to Increase Recycling and Composting

#### **Approved**

Individuals and businesses should take the initiative (with City support) to increase the amount they recycle and reuse materials, reduce waste, and compost. They should also use more environmentally friendly products.

**Percent agree 90%/90%**

#### People's Ideas...

- re-use shopping bags, water bottles, containers, wood, tires, and sound building materials
- talk to neighbours to educate them about City recycling and composting programs
- donate used clothes, shoes, and household items
- encourage proper disposal of hazardous waste (e.g. paints); discourage use of pesticides
- provide incentives and awards to individuals and businesses
- avoid purchasing products that are harmful to the environment or have excessive packaging
- increase recycling and waste reduction by businesses

### 25.2 Individual Actions to Conserve Energy and Water

#### **Approved**

Individuals and businesses should be encouraged and supported by the City to conserve water and energy.

**Percent agree 86%/89%**

#### People's Ideas...

- use water and energy saving devices in the home (e.g. low-flow toilets, shower-heads, and washers; energy efficient light bulbs, auto setback thermostats, better insulation)
- use less water when watering gardens and lawns or washing cars, and collect water in rain barrels for these purposes
- meter water use and create a true user-pay system for water

### In the Community

Vision participants discussed a number of ways the community and the City can work together to create a healthy environment. These areas of collaboration include keeping the community clean and working to conserve natural water courses.

### 25.3 A Clean Community

#### **Approved**

The community and the City should work together to keep Renfrew-Collingwood clean and litter free.

These efforts should include:

- encouraging individual actions and co-operative efforts by the community to solve garbage, litter, and cleanliness issues
- increasing enforcement and penalties where co-operative actions fail to resolve a problem
- improving education of residents and business owners about the recycling, composting, garbage, and disposal (hazardous waste) services offered by the City
- recycling a broader range of items
- picking up hard-to-dispose-of items on special days
- providing more garbage/recycling bins, including dog waste bins, in parks, schools, and public places.

**Percent agree 93%/95%**

### Sustainable Development

The City is working to be more environmentally responsible. In 2002, City Council adopted a definition of sustainability and a set of principles to evaluate City programs, policies, and practices. These include being accountable for individual and collective actions, using renewable resources fairly and reasonably, not compromising the choices of future generations, and collaborating with communities and other levels of government. The City also established an Office of Sustainable Development to further its commitment to preserve Vancouver's unique flavour — its natural environment, heritage, sense of design, and diverse communities — as a key component to Vancouver's future success.



Recycling and yard waste collection

People's Ideas...

- provide needle and condom disposal units in parks and public places
- promote information/reporting hotlines for graffiti and garbage in public places
- encourage neighbourhood businesses to clean the sidewalk and the lane at the back of businesses
- provide better maintenance of trees and removal of leaves
- support community initiatives like citizen's watch, block cleaning parties, adopting garbage cans, community clean-ups and recycling days, special days for disposal of large household items, and holding environmental workshops
- discourage the use of harmful herbicides and pesticides; encourage proper disposal of hazardous waste.

25.4 Conservation of Still Creek and Renfrew Ravine

**Approved**

The community and the City should support initiatives that improve the quality of community streams and reduce water run-off, especially involving Still Creek and Renfrew Ravine.

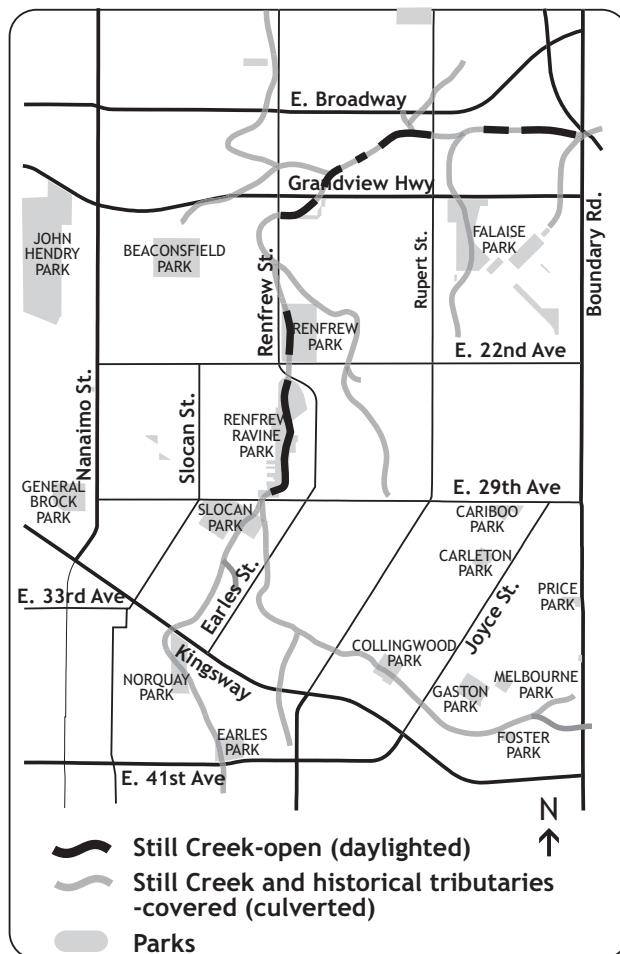
**Percent agree 84%/83%**

Other Direction relating to Still Creek and Renfrew Ravine can be found in IMPROVING PARKS, STREETS, LANES, AND PUBLIC PLACES (see Directions 23.3 and 23.4).

People's Ideas...

- discourage paving in parks and public places; use alternative methods to maintain roads and lanes (e.g. country lanes, using drought resistant plants, 'un-paving' projects)
- support initiatives that clean-up and improve the water quality of Still Creek — dispose of toxic substances properly (e.g. do not dump paint into toilets and street drains); discourage the use of pesticides and herbicides to avoid polluting water sources; and provide public education
- connect settling ponds to existing community streams

Still Creek Watershed in Renfrew-Collingwood



Still Creek

## **At the City and with Other Levels of Government**

While the City can play an important role in building a healthier environment for its citizens, Vision participants recognized that senior governments hold much of the power to change the laws that would improve the environment.

### **25.5 Working with Other Levels of Government**

#### ***Approved***

The City should provide leadership and partner with the regional, provincial, and federal governments to preserve and enhance the environment, including:

- incorporating more sustainable practices within their own operations
- adopting measures to increase water and energy conservation
- adopting measures to reduce noise from vehicles, leafblowers, etc.
- adopting tougher emissions standards to improve air quality
- promoting the development and use of environmentally friendly products.

***Percent agree 74%/73%***

#### **People's Ideas...**

- encourage the development of more fuel efficient automobiles; consider new taxes on fuel and cars
- test older vehicles and trucks for excessive emissions and require adequate vehicle maintenance
- legislate against excessive product packaging



Tougher emissions standards would improve air quality

#### **Air Quality**

The (1990) City of Vancouver Task Force on Atmospheric Change was created by City Council to study climate change as it relates to global warming and ozone depletion. It recommended specific actions that the City could take to reduce its contribution to factors causing climate change. A major implementation action was the development of the City's Transportation Plan, which sets out a long-term strategy to find transportation alternatives to the single passenger automobile. City initiatives like Greenways and Bikeways, which encourage walking and cycling, combine with better public transit (through Translink) to support the plan.