

## The Riverview Lands

The **\*Riverview Hospital** Lands are situated in Coquitlam B.C. (originally called **\*Essondale**)

- ✦ In 1904, 1000 acres of land were set aside for two purposes:
  - ✦ A sanctuary and residential treatment facility for the mentally ill, *and*
  - ✦ A site for a B.C. Provincial Botanical Garden.
- ✦ By the 1950's Essondale had grown into a self-sufficient community with 4300 patients, plus employees.
- ✦ In the early 1980's over 200 acres were lost to housing development.
- ✦ In 1995 approximately 600 low-lying acres became Colony Farm Regional Park.
- ✦ As part of the Riverview Hospital Redevelopment Project patients are currently being transferred to facilities run by regional health authorities, leaving some of the buildings under-utilized or vacated.
- ✦ The plan is to close the hospital, although Fraser Health Authority will care for some patients on site in lodge style buildings.
- ✦ The remaining 244 acres of Riverview contain heritage buildings, gardens & landscapes, a magnificent tree collection, streams and wildlife habitat.

## FREE GUIDED WALKING TOURS

Visit [www.rhcs.org](http://www.rhcs.org) for schedule



Photo: ©Christina Symons

"Examples of trees such as are found on this ground are priceless in terms of their aesthetic, educational, and scientific values. This site will be world renowned if it becomes a preserve or education centre"

International Society of Municipal Arborists



## The Tree Collection

A Nationally significant collection of trees from around the world, together with areas of native vegetation it creates a restful haven and attractive destination for botanists, arborists, tourists and the local community.

- ✦ Starting in 1911 Provincial Botanist, John Davidson created a botanical garden at Riverview. Davidson and subsequent gardeners collected and planted specimens from all over the world, drawing their inspiration from Kew Gardens.
- ✦ In 1925 the botanical gardens were moved to UBC, but a nursery remained at Riverview for the next 40 years, supplying trees and shrubs for boulevards and government properties throughout BC.
- ✦ In 1951 Art Finnie began a horticultural therapy program and together with patients built Finnie's Garden.
- ✦ Today **over 1900** significant trees have been identified and tagged in the **Riverview Heritage Tree Inventory**. Our society RHCS conducts regular guided tree tours of the Arboretum.
- ✦ Apart from their aesthetic importance, the trees form a valuable gene pool and source of seeds.

**Many citizens fear that the lands will be further divided for development. This would lead to removal of heritage trees and damage to their root systems by indiscriminate activities around the trees.**

## The Natural Environment

Naturalized areas of native trees, shrubs and old-field habitat attract diverse wildlife to the grounds. Over 80 bird species have been recorded at Riverview.

- ✦ The property forms a vital link in a greenbelt corridor connecting the Fraser River to Burrard Inlet and the mountains beyond.
- ✦ Five major stream systems traverse the lands and flow into the Coquitlam River, contributing to its salmon rearing capacity.
- ✦ Acres of meadows, ravines, wetlands and rock walls add interest, sustenance and habitat. The site comprises a sanctuary of tranquility and regeneration that is enjoyed by all.

"It is very important for people, especially children, who live in cities to have an opportunity to experience nature. That is what makes the Riverview Lands so important. I hope that it will be seen as already fully developed and left for people to experience."

Dr. David Suzuki

## The Heritage Buildings

The collection represents a rich architectural legacy ranging from large 1913 Victorian buildings to unique 1920's cottages.

- ✦ Five buildings with very high *heritage status* are clustered in a campus-like setting, amidst the distinctive treed landscape forming this **irreplaceable resource**.
- ✦ Twenty-three other heritage buildings are scattered throughout the site.
- ✦ Facilities include classrooms, lecture theatres, living quarters, meeting rooms, banquet rooms, a library, gymnasium, auditoriums, industrial workshops and office space.

**Individually these resources are noteworthy, but as a grouping they are of even greater importance.**

## Guiding Principles

The position the Society (RHCS) holds is that the needs of the **mentally ill** and the protection of the **tree collection** and **heritage landscapes** must guide future land use decisions.

If land & buildings become surplus to mental health requirements, other initiatives could be undertaken on the Riverview Lands without altering the unique character of the space.

Some of these initiatives have the potential to generate revenue & turn the site into an international tourist attraction.

### **RHCS recommends that any future land use must:**

- ✿ Retain the site under public ownership & public access.
- ✿ Give priority to the needs of people with mental health issues.
- ✿ Encourage the use of existing buildings in a financially responsible manner in harmony with mental health needs & the ecology of the site.
- ✿ Protect the Riverview trees & root systems.
- ✿ Preserve the heritage buildings & landscapes.
- ✿ Preserve & enhance the green space, wildlife habitat & biodiversity.
- ✿ Formally recognize the arboretum & restore the botanical garden.

### **Other appropriate land uses include:**

- ✿ A heritage tree interpretive centre.
- ✿ A horticultural training & research facility.
- ✿ An arts centre encompassing galleries, studios, performance venues.
- ✿ A "museum of museums".
- ✿ Community passive recreation & continuing education site.
- ✿ Facilities for retreats, meetings, banquets & conferences.

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## Riverview Horticultural Centre Society

**Founded in 1992 Our Mission is;**

**"To preserve and protect the Lands and Trees of the Riverview Hospital Site as a community oriented, financially viable centre for horticultural, educational and therapeutic activities."**



"We have here a unique and beautiful creation that is the legacy and gift of previous generations. We want to take this botanical creation and use it for education, for therapy, and for the mental health of the people of British Columbia and Canada. This is our vision."

**Bill Browne, Founding President RHCS**

**For info & volunteer opportunities:**

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Centre Society*

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For more on the natural values of the Lands visit:  
'Burke Mountain Naturalists': [www.bmn.bc.ca](http://www.bmn.bc.ca)

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 *The Riverview Horticultural  
Centre Society*

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Brenda Gillespie and Kiyoshi Takahashi

**RIVERVIEW  
ARBORETUM**  
**244 ACRES**

Photo: © Sue Habeger

**A Unique Collection of Trees  
and Heritage Architecture**

Photo: © Kiyoshi Takahashi

**A Green Haven for  
Wildlife and People**