

How did the City of Richmond and Agricultural Land Commission's Collaboration to Implement Multifunctional Agriculture in the Peri-Urban Fringe Fail in the No. 5 Road Backlands Policy?

by
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Ethics Statement

The author, whose name appears on the title page of this work, has obtained, for the research described in this work, either:

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Abstract

This thesis delves into a locally specific case study of the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) in the City of Richmond, British Columbia, providing a detailed exploration of the complex factors shaping the formulation and implementation of multifunctional agriculture policies in peri-urban areas. By examining perceptions of agricultural land use across provincial, municipal, and public levels, and by scrutinizing the collaboration gaps between the Agricultural Land Commission and the City of Richmond, this research illuminates crucial considerations for policymakers. The City of Richmond's No. 5 Road Backlands Policy, and the changes to this policy since inception in 1986 and 2021, highlights how the lack of cooperation and policy coordination across provincial and municipal scales of government results in policy failure. The lack of communication between different governing bodies stems from inherent challenges in the multi-jurisdictional nature of the Agricultural Land Reserve, with competing and conflicting interests between different government scales and the public. Looking ahead, there is a pressing need for collaborative efforts and effective communication between government bodies to ensure the successful implementation of multifunctional agriculture initiatives in peri-urban spaces. The use of multifunctional agricultural policies in peri-urban areas could assist in revaluing agricultural land use perceptions, resulting in increased protection of the agricultural land base.

Keywords: Multifunctional agriculture, multilevel governance, peri-urban, Agricultural Land Commission, Agricultural Land Reserve, City of Richmond

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Chapter 1.

Introduction

Agricultural land in British Columbia is some of the highest quality in Canada; however, due to the province's diverse physiography, most of British Columbia is unsuitable for agricultural use (Commission, 2021). The combination of scarcity of suitable land and a growing population makes British Columbia's agricultural land an extremely valuable resource. The creation of the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) in 1974 is considered one of the most impactful methods of protecting agricultural land and shaping growth patterns in British Columbia, to date (Runka, 2006). Originally created to protect the province's highly valuable farmland from sprawling development, the ALR still plays an essential role in shaping urban areas by acting as an urban growth boundary (B. E. Smith, 2012). In doing so, the ALR provides a geographic location where municipalities, and the governing body of the ALR known as the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC), can apply land management policies and guidelines which address land use conflicts by ensuring there is a stable edge between the urban and agricultural interface (Runka, 2006). The ALR was assumed to create a stable edge between the urban and rural interface by creating a permanent zone from which urban development is redirected away from. Meaning that land within the ALR could be free from urban development pressures, as there is a clear delineation between what land is reserved solely for agricultural use.

Urban containment boundaries are land use control tools which set aside land that is protected from most forms of development, such as commercial or industrial use, to maintain a long-term and contained footprint for urban development (Regional District of Nanaimo, 2023). Urban containment boundaries are a land use tool frequently used by local governments to preserve natural ecosystems within growing urban areas, create amenity and recreational green spaces for urban residents, and prevent undesirable urban expansion (Ma & Jin, 2019). However, urban containment boundaries are not intended to be permanent, these boundaries can be reassessed and expanded over time (Bengston & Youn, 2006). In contrast, greenbelts are intended to act as permanent barriers to urban expansion. While both urban containment boundaries and greenbelts are land use planning tools implemented to contain urban development and protect

agricultural land, greenbelts create a permanent divide that is more difficult to change. Through the restriction of certain land uses and the protection of agricultural land, the ALR acts as a greenbelt for communities throughout British Columbia.

The intention behind the ALR's creation was to protect valuable farmland from urban development pressures. However, the establishment of the ALR also created a unique subset of land use where the urban and agricultural interfaces directly interact. The peri-urban fringe can be generally described as where the city meets the countryside (Pryor, 1968). While peri-urban areas differ depending on local context, they are usually defined by blurred boundaries between urban and agricultural interface, creating a landscape of urban and rural land uses and pressures (Gallent, 2006b). Generally, the peri-urban area is a hybrid landscape where urban pressures and fragmented agricultural lands intertwine (Hoggart, 2005). The interaction between different land uses within peri-urban areas created a unique environment, which may add even more complexities when creating land management policies.

British Columbia contains a vast range of geographic diversity, spanning from mountainous areas, coastlines, to valleys (Condon et al., 2011). Because of these geographic differences, there can be significant differences in land management policies used by local governments to manage the urban/agriculture interface. Despite these regional discrepancies, the overarching objective of urban/agricultural interface policies is to mitigate potential conflicts and complaints by imposing restrictions on specific urban and agricultural land uses (Spataru et al., 2020). Urban/agricultural policies also aim to strike a delicate balance between conflicting interests, such as preserving agricultural land for food production instead of urban development. In urban settings, the focus is typically on ensuring the efficiency of infrastructure expansion, accommodating expanding populations, and preserving greenspace for recreation or aesthetics (Zasada, 2011). Conversely, in rural areas, the emphasis is on preserving agricultural lands, conserving natural resources, and maintaining rural lifestyles and traditions. The difference in regional geographies, population density, and economic priorities contributes to the substantial variation in land management policies across British Columbia.

In addition to the variation in geographies across the province, the perception of agricultural land use influences the creation and implementation of land use policies

(Ives & Kendal, 2013). Different landscapes, such as urban or agricultural, often have different values associated with that use depending on an individual or group's priorities (Zube, 1987). People, whether they are a member of the public or a governing body, assign different land uses economic, ecological, aesthetic, or other values which in turn influence how that use is perceived. These perceptions then guide land use management and policy creation depending on which land use is perceived as important. Because perceptions of land use can differ, depending on what values are deemed important, local communities and governing bodies may hold contrasting perspectives on the importance of agricultural land protection within their regions (Huang & Drescher, 2015). While some communities may value agricultural land, others may perceive the protection of agricultural areas less important than other land uses. Policymakers need to understand and address these diverse perspectives in order to tailor land use management strategies to the different regional needs and perceptions of land use across British Columbia.

The ALR, established and overseen by the provincial government, is subject to the influence of local government policies which impact land use. The importance of provincial and municipal government collaboration is especially important for policies which affect land within the ALR, as both levels of government play a vital role in how agricultural land is used and perceived. Given the combined impact of provincial and municipal policies on the ALR, along with differing priorities and perceptions of agricultural land, a multilevel governance approach becomes essential for effective land use administration within the ALR boundary. Multilevel governance, emphasizing decentralized decision-making across various government entities rather than relying on a single authority, proves to be a valuable tool for enhancing the management of land use policies (Hooghe & Marks, 2003). This non-hierarchical approach fosters collaboration among governing bodies, as highlighted by the increased interaction facilitated by multilevel governance (Curry, 2018).

Land use management policies relating to the urban/agricultural interface are also influenced by proximity to an urban core. The terms "urban" and "rural" are well understood, most people have predetermined perceptions of what an urban or rural landscape should look like (McGregor et al., 2006). However, the transition zone where the urban and agricultural dichotomies intersect, known as the peri-urban interface, is less understood due to the complex nature of this space. This interface is typically

subject to intense urban development pressures and rapid change. Categorizing what can be defined as a peri-urban interface is difficult as these spaces are ever changing and do not follow typical land use patterns as seen in urban and agricultural areas. Because the effectiveness of land use management policies is often reliant on understanding the different values or perspectives associated with an area, creating policies to govern the peri-urban interface is challenging and may not always achieve desired outcomes (Huang & Drescher, 2015).

1.1. City of Richmond's Agricultural Planning and Policy

The City of Richmond has a long history of agricultural land use and production. Early settlers were attracted to Richmond as the high soil fertility resulted in abundant agricultural yields (City of Richmond, 2022). As the population grew, and parts of the City of Richmond became dense urban centres, a large portion of the city remained reserved for agricultural production. Today, approximately 34%, or 4,993 hectares, of the City of Richmond is within the ALR. Of the 4,993 hectares located within the ALR, 2,909 hectares or 58% of Richmond's ALR is actively supporting agricultural use and production. The remaining portion of the ALR within the City of Richmond is either vacant or occupied by non-farm uses, such as roads, golf courses, or institutional use. A map of the City of Richmond's land within the ALR is provided as Figure 1.5 below.

Although the amount of land located within the City of Richmond's ALR boundary has remained stable over the past 20 years, and there has not been a large loss or gain to the ALR land base, urban development pressures continue to persist (City of Richmond, 2022). In response, the City's Agricultural Viability Strategy was updated in 2021, renamed to the Farming First Strategy, to ensure the Strategy is effective and responds to the current and future challenges facing Richmond's agricultural sector (City of Richmond, 2021). One of the objectives outlined in the Farming First Strategy is to limit urban development pressures by using land use tools, such as zoning and development permit areas, to ensure adjacent uses to the ALR, but not within, are compatible with agricultural production. This includes limiting residential density on lands abutting the ALR boundary and establishing agricultural buffers, such as fencing or vegetative screens, on non-ALR lots. The peri-urban fringe, where urban uses meet agricultural or rural uses, is especially susceptible to redevelopment and rapid change

(Zasada, 2011). The City's Farming First Strategy focuses on this fringe to limit the introduction of non-farm uses into Richmond's ALR boundary.

Through a case study of the City of Richmond's Number 5 Road Backlands Policy (Backlands Policy), this thesis analyzes how different governing bodies and their priorities and perceptions of agricultural land use, as well as the relationship between different levels of government, has affected the creation and implementation of this Policy since conceptualization in 1986, and official policy creation in 2000. In this introductory chapter, a brief history of the Backlands Policy, as well as the importance of this Policy, will be provided. Secondly, in order to understand the specific contribution of my thesis, a conceptual framework is provided in Chapter 2 which both situates my research among past scholarship while also identifying the gaps in previous literature. In Chapter 3, I will describe the methodology used to determine how provincial and municipal priorities and perceptions surrounding agricultural land use, and the relationship between these two governments, affected the interpretation and implementation of the Backlands Policy. Chapter 4 will provide an analysis of the provincial and municipal relationship and how that relationship has shaped the creation and implementation of the Backlands Policy; while Chapter 5 will discuss the most prominent themes stemming from this relationship and how multilevel governance, dispersing power between different levels of government, could have been a better approach when creating and implementing the Backlands Policy. Finally, Chapter 6 will summarize the findings, identify the strengths and gaps in this research, and provide concluding remarks.

1.2. Role of the Agricultural Land Commission in Municipal Policy Creation

On April 18, 1973, British Columbia's legislative assembly granted assent to the *Land Commission Act* (Lane, 1973). The purpose of this Act was to preserve the province's limited, but valuable, farmland from urban development pressures through the creation of the ALR. The ALR was established in 1974 in response to the rapid loss of prime agricultural land throughout British Columbia to urban development (*ALR History*, 2014). The ALR, which comprises 5% of British Columbia's land base, is a zone dedicated to the protection of agricultural land through land use management, such as limiting impacts of urban development through what uses can and can not occur within

the Reserve. These impacts can include soil degradation and loss of land area to impermeable surfaces (Commission, 2014). The *Land Commission Act* was the first piece of legislation dedicated to the preservation of farmland in Canada and remains in place today as an important management tool to limiting urban encroachment into agricultural lands.

After the *Land Commission Act* and regulations were passed by the legislative assembly, an independent Land Commission was established to administer the ALR in 1977 (Runka, 2006). The purpose of the Land Commission, later to become the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC), was not to balance competing urban and rural land uses or negotiate conditions in which non-farm uses could be established within the ALR. The purpose of the ALC was to protect farmland and preserve the option for the ALR to be used for food production in future. While there have been additions to the ALC's mandate over the years, the primary purpose has always been to preserve the ALR for farm use.

To administer the ALR while meeting the core mandate, the ALC has taken on two main roles. The first is acting as a quasi-judicial decision-making role for exclusion, subdivision, and land use change applications within the ALR (Runka, 2006). Land use change applications are an option for landowners proposing to establish non-farm uses, such as commercial or industrial use, in the ALR (Agricultural Land Commission, 2022b). Although the application process has the ability to degrade the integrity of the ALR boundary, as it provides an avenue for non-farm uses to be established should the ALC approve the application, it also acts as a technical review of the ALR boundary. When the ALR was first established, land that was deemed capable of supporting agricultural production, based on the Canadian Land Inventory agricultural inventory data which is a soil classification system, was added into the Reserve boundary (Agricultural Land Commission, 2022a). This boundary was primarily straight lines drawn around urban cores or physical features where farming was not possible, such as mountain ranges. The application process, particularly in the early years of the ALR's establishment, was a tool used to re-evaluate land within the Reserve and determine if it should be preserved for farm use.

The ALC's second role is to review local government land use policy, plans, bylaws, and programs from an agricultural land preservation perspective (Runka, 2006).

Local governments play an important role in preserving the ALR land base, as local government planning and policy has the ability to affect both urban and rural land uses (Commission, 2018); whereas the ALC's jurisdiction ends at the ALR boundary. As local government plans and policies need to be consistent with the ALR's legislation, they cannot allow uses into the ALR not permitted by the *Land Commission Act* or regulations, the ALC staff review these documents for consistency prior to local government adoption. In rare cases, where a local government land use management policy is not consistent with the ALR's legislation, the Commission as the decision-making body would need to consider and approve the policy.

Because of the two roles of the ALC, a quasi-judicial decision-making role and a local government planning and policy review role, the ALC can be further divided into two groups, staff and the Commission. The Commission is the statutory decision-making authority comprised of Commissioners which are appointed by the Minister of Agriculture (Provincial Agricultural Land Commission, 2022a). Only the Commission has the authority to make land use and application decisions within the ALR. ALC staff take on a more technical role at the ALC, primarily reviewing local government plans and policies to ensure they are consistent with the applicable regulation (Commission, 2018). Only local government policies that are not consistent with the *Land Commission Act*, now the *Agricultural Land Commission Act*, and regulations require review and approval from the Commission.

The Commission members are appointed through a merit-based process by the Ministry of Agriculture, and must have knowledge in agriculture, land-use planning, local government, or First Nations government (Agricultural Land Commission, 2023). Further, the *Agricultural Land Commission Act* stipulates that each of the six administrative regions throughout the province; Island, South Coast (Metro Vancouver), North, Okanagan, Interior, and Kootenay, have at least one Commission member representative. These administrative regions were introduced in 2002 to ensure the Commission was more representative of British Columbia as a whole (Yearwood-Lee, 2008). Today, the Commission, the decision-making body of the ALC, is appointed by the provincial government based on merit as well as locational representation.

The ALC was established in 1977 to act as the governing body of the ALR with a primary goal of preserving agricultural land (Agricultural Land Commission, 2022a).

Although the preservation of agricultural land to allow for the potential of food production in future was the main objective behind creation of the ALR, the ALR also provides unintended benefits that go beyond protection of the agricultural land base for food production. The ALR helps preserve the agricultural character of many communities, by maintaining valued natural capital which may hold aesthetic or other benefits to community members, while also guiding urban development by acting as an urban containment boundary (B. E. Smith, 2012a). Local governments are able to employ the ALR designation as part of a suite of agricultural policies and planning practices, individually or regionally, with different implications for relative protections of ALR land and the encouragement of farm uses (Agricultural Land Commission, 2018).

The *Land Commission Act* ensured that agricultural planning was at the forefront in local government planning processes, as local government planning and regulatory powers are essential tools in protecting British Columbia's agricultural land base (B. Smith, 1998). While the ALC has provincial oversight of the ALR designation and agricultural land use within it, sharing a common vision of farmland use and protection between provincial and local governments is a critical element to ensure the agricultural land base is preserved and enhanced in BC's future. When the *Land Commission Act* was first introduced in 1973, there were many questions regarding the new piece of legislation. In response, the Ministry of Agriculture released a report outlining the background behind the creation of the *Land Commission Act*, as well as to answer outstanding questions. As highlighted in the below quote, the Ministry's, and by extension the ALC's, intent behind the creation of the ALR was not to supersede local governments, but to work together to best protect and preserve the agricultural land base.

7. Is it intended that the commission will take over the entire planning and zoning function from local government?

NO. The commission will seek to work cooperatively with local authorities in firming up those zones that are of particular concerns to this [legislation]. There are many other Municipal and Regional planning and zoning responsibilities quite beyond the interest and authority of this legislation. Local government has little to fear from this [legislation] unless their efforts are badly out of line with the public's will to preserve farm land. It is expected that in many instances local zoning of agricultural lands will have been well accomplished and the commission will need only to designate existing boundaries. The commission should be expected to provide leadership in land use planning. (Ministry of Agriculture, 1973, p. 11)

Today, local government planning processes are still highlighted as an essential tool in protecting the province's agricultural land base. The below quote, taken from the ALC's website, outlines how both ALC and local governments must work together to efficiently manage the ALR.

Consultation is central to any effort to ensure consistent policies and regulations dealing with agriculture and related issues in the ALR. Prior to creation of the ALR, local government had almost exclusive authority over the use of privately held agricultural land. The *Land Commission Act* of 1973 established primacy of the ALC over most other provincial legislation in the managing of land use within the ALR. However, local government planning and zoning powers have never been removed or replaced. Both the ALC and local governments have legitimate regulatory authority over ALR land. This reaffirms the need for on-going consultation between the ALC and local governments. (Agricultural Land Commission, 2022b)

In order to ensure both provincial and municipal priorities for planning within the ALR are aligned, the ALC reviews local government policies prior to adoption by municipal or regional elected officials. However, this does not preclude local governments from creating policies that are not consistent with the *Agricultural Land Commission Act* or regulations. Should a local government wish to implement a policy which is not absolutely aligned with the ALC's legislation, they are able to work with the ALC and request approval from the Commission. Although a rare occurrence, these policies have the ability to implement creative agricultural land use policies where appropriate.

1.3. The City of Richmond's No. 5 Road Backlands Policy

Globally, the loss of agricultural land to urban development is an increasing concern (Pearson, 2011). In a British Columbian context, the global loss of agricultural land has the ability to severely impact food availability throughout the province, as roughly a third of food comes from international markets (Hild, 2009). The reliance on international agricultural markets has left British Columbia vulnerable to fluctuations in food price and availability (Shawki, 2015). Furthermore, the mounting challenges posed by population growth, urbanization, and climate change are anticipated to further exacerbate the pressures on food demands and supply chains (Marcos-Martinez et al., 2017). An infographic of British Columbia's 2020 food supply sourcing is provided in Figure 1.1 below.

While the establishment of the ALR, and later the ALC, made progress in protecting British Columbia's arable farmland for food production, it did not eliminate urban development pressures (Buholzer et al., 2020). When agricultural land is located in proximity to urban centres, it becomes targeted for other non-farm uses and land speculation. In order to minimize urban development pressure and maintain consistency between local government policies and the intent of the ALR, to preserve agricultural land, the ALC reviews municipal policies that would apply to ALR lands (Provincial Agricultural Land Commission, 2022b). As noted above, only policies which are not directly aligned with the *Agricultural Land Commission Act* and regulations required review and approval from the Commission. Because the Backlands Policy introduced a non-farm use (religious institutional use) into the ALR, the City of Richmond (City) was required to have the Commission review and approval as the policy. The history of the Backlands Policy development from inception to current day is discussed in detail below.



Figure 1.1 An Infographic of British Columbia’s 2020 Food Supply Sourcing
Map: (Metro Vancouver, 2020) (Reproduced with permission)

1.3.1. Planning in the Backlands Policy Area Pre-1990

The Backlands Policy, at the time of initial policy development, was partially situated in the McLennan Sub-Area and partially within the Shellmont Sub-Area, within the City of Richmond (City of Richmond, 2004). The northern portion of the Backlands Policy area, spanning from Blundell Road to Kingsbridge Dive, was within the McLennan Sub-Area (Township of Richmond Planning Department, 1986). The southern portion of the Backlands Policy area, spanning from Kingsbridge Drive to Steveston Highway, was within the Shellmont Sub-Area (Richmond Planning Department, 1985b). This study

notes that when the McLennan Sub-Area and Shellmont Sub-Area were created, Francis Road still connected with No. 5 Road. Eventually, the portion of the land between No 4. Road and No. 5 Road was developed into residential use. The residential development changed the road network, meaning that Francis Road no longer connected to No. 5 Road. The historical maps included in this thesis will reference Francis Road, instead of Kingsbridge Drive, as the dividing street due to the historical changes in the street network.

Before the Backlands Policy was created, the northern portion of the policy area, located within the McLennan Sub-Area Plan, consisted of small parcels that were designated by the City for agricultural use (Township of Richmond Planning Department, 1986). The parcels were also all within the ALR boundary. Generally, the McLennan Sub-Area had some limitations on agricultural capability as the soil structure consisted of lowland peat, which could be up to 8 metres thick (Richmond Planning Department, 1985a). While peat can be beneficial for agricultural production, as it helps retain nutrients in the soil, too much peat could result in over watering as peat retains 20 times its weight in water (International Peatland Society, 2020). However, the McLennan Sub-Area had the ideal soil structure for blueberry production which, in 1985, accounted for 61% of agriculture production within the Sub-Area. Figure 1.2 below shows the soil structure throughout the McLennan Sub-Area, including the northern portion of the Backlands Policy area.

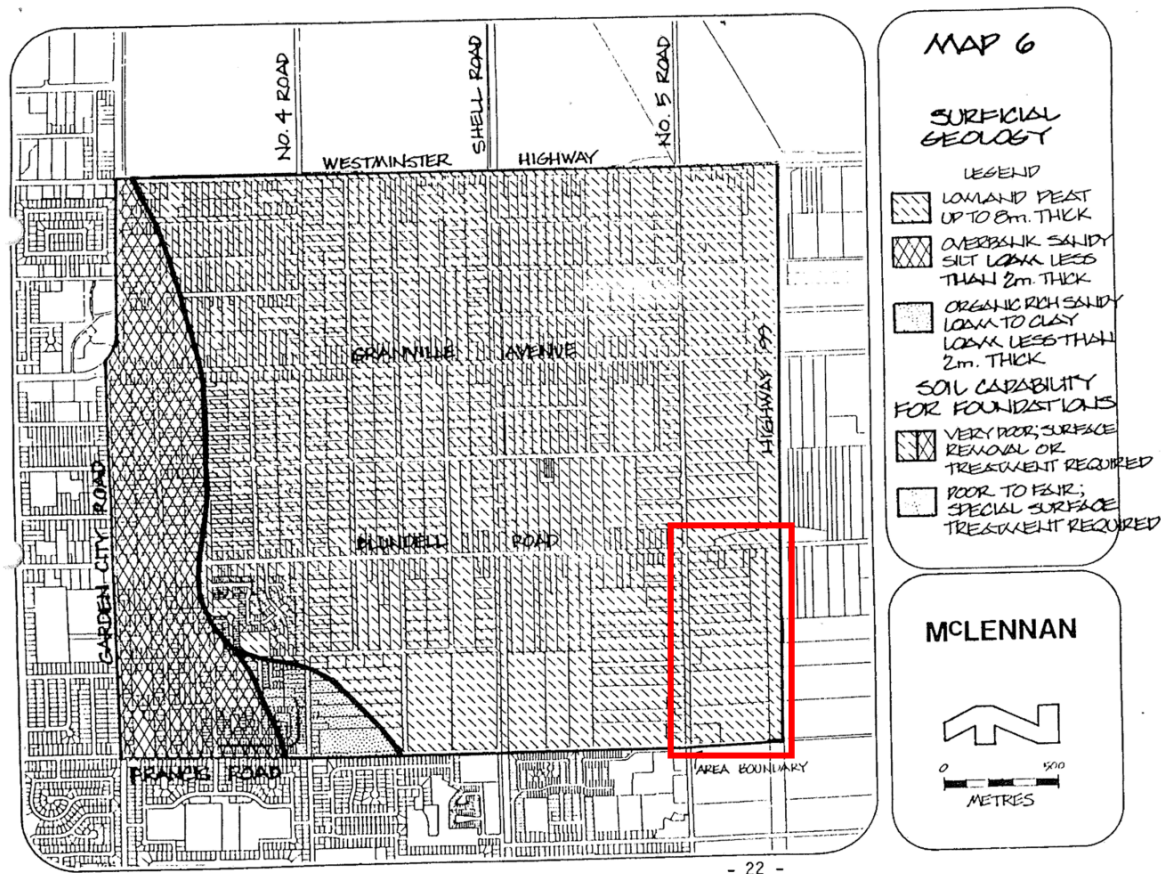


Figure 1.2 McLennan Sub-Area Soil Structure Map, Northern Portion of Backlands Policy Area Outlined in Red

Map: (Mann, 1987)

The poor on-farm drainage and impervious soil structure, caused by the lowland peat characteristics within the McLennan Sub-Area, did limit agricultural production primarily to blueberries (Zbeetnoff Consulting, 1997). Further, the McLennan Sub-Area was experiencing rapid urbanization which was starting to conflict with the existing agricultural parcels (Mann, 1987). In 1985, within the eventual Backlands Policy area, two parcels of land were already developed for residential use (Buddhist monastery), one parcel of land was developed for religious institutional use, and there was an application to rezone an agricultural parcel to religious institutional use (Richmond Planning Department, 1985a). Figure 1.3 below shows the existing land use designations within the Backlands Policy Area.

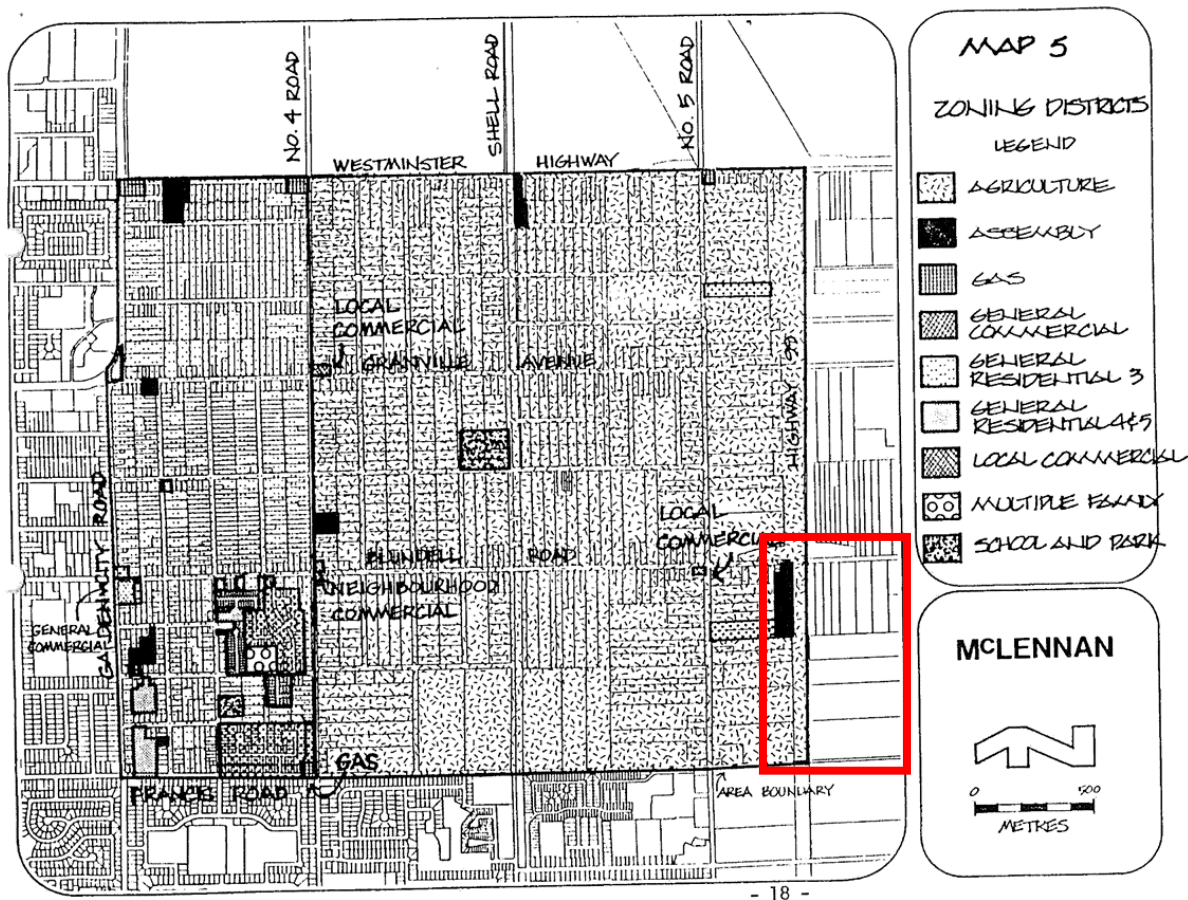


Figure 1.3 McLennan Sub-Area Land Use Designation Map, Northern Portion of Backlands Policy Area Outlined in Red

Map: (Mann, 1987)

The portion of the Backlands Policy area located within the Shellmont Sub-Area supported a wider range of agricultural uses, with vegetables, forage, and raspberries as the main agricultural commodities; however, this portion of the Backlands Policy area had a greater number of established non-farm uses (Richmond Planning Department, 1985b). Although the properties were located within the ALR, a golf course, a garden village (Fantasy Gardens, eventually developed into a multi-family residential development), a church, and a gas station were established prior to 1985. While 59.4% of the Shellmont Sub-Area consisted of agricultural use, 40.6% of the area consisted of established non-farm uses. Figure 1.4 below shows the existing land use designations with the Shellmont Sub-Area, including the established non-farm uses.

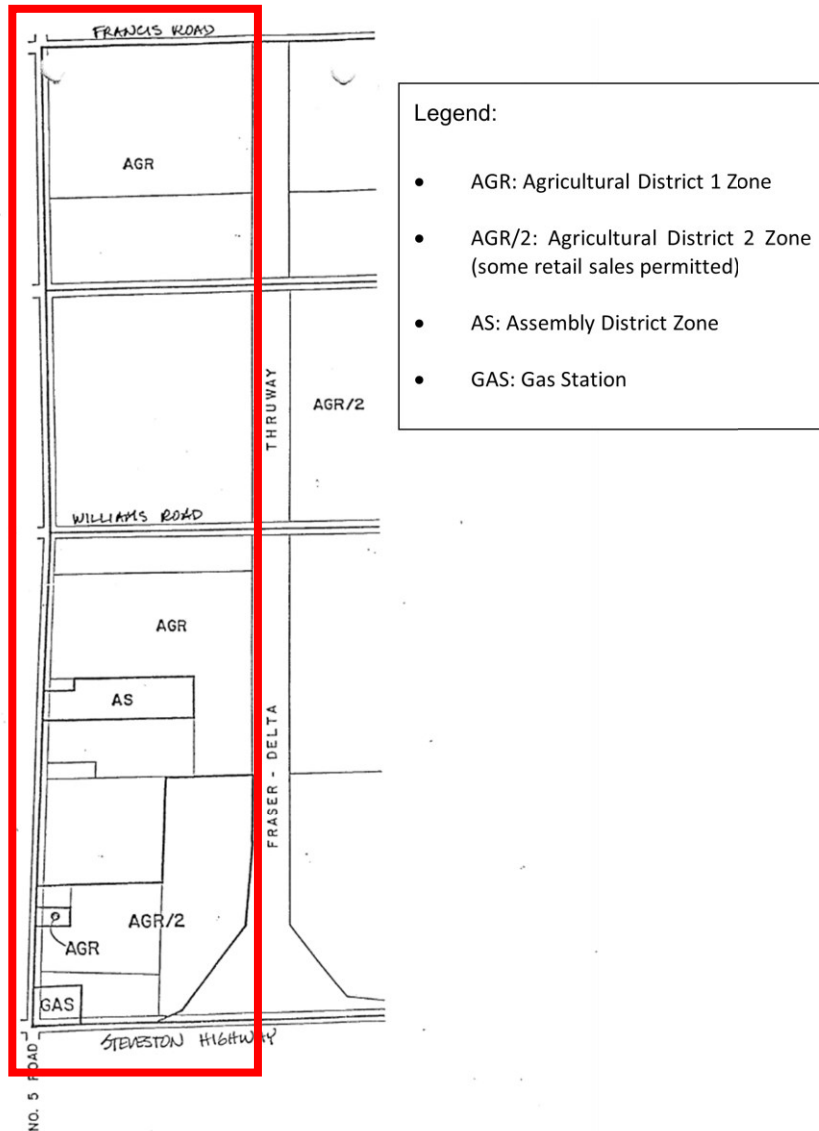


Figure 1.4 Shellmont Sub-Area Land Use Designation Map, Southern Portion of the Backlands Policy Area Outlined in Red

Map: (Richmond Planning Department, 1985b)

Before the Backlands Policy was established, the policy area in both the McLennan Sub-Area and Shellmont Sub-Area was agriculturally productive. However, development pressures and established non-farm uses within the eventual Policy area were evident. Although the Backlands Policy spanned two different planning sub-areas, there was no physical barrier between the McLennan Sub-Area and the Shellmont Sub-Area. With both the northern and southern portion of the Backlands Policy area facing development pressures, as well as established non-farm uses, the Policy was developed

across a cohesive land base. The Backlands Policy did not distinguish between the two planning sub-areas.

The development of religious institutional uses within the Backlands Policy area, before the official establishment of the policy, did not require approval from either the City or ALC. Prior to 1983, the City of Richmond's Zoning Bylaw permitted religious assembly (i.e. institutional) uses on properties zoned for agricultural use located within the ALR (Hopkins, 2021). At the time, ALC legislation also permitted religious institutions within the ALR without restrictions or requiring additional approval. In 1983, the City amended its Zoning Bylaw to prohibit religious assembly on properties zoned for agriculture, and all existing religious institutions were rezoned to the newly created Assembly Zone. For properties rezoned to the Assembly Zone that were also located within the ALR, the ALC reviewed and accepted rezoning of these properties while keeping them within the ALR boundary. Several of the properties rezoned to the Assembly Zone were located along No. 5 Road, in what eventually became the Backlands Policy Area. While this thesis will evaluate why No. 5 Road was chosen for the Backlands Policy area in Chapters 5 and 6, it is theorized that existence of properties within the Assembly Zone, in close proximity to each other, is one reason why the Backlands Policy was established along No. 5 Road, instead of referring to other agricultural areas within the City of Richmond.

In 1986, the City amended the Official Community Plan to permit public, institutional, and open space use on the frontage of properties along No. 5 Road between Steveston Highway and Blundell Road, which were also located within the ALR, conditional on the rear portion of properties being used for agricultural production (Lambie & Collins, 2020). As the *Agricultural Land Commission Act* requires that non-farm uses within the ALR be approved by the decision making body of the ALC (the Commission), the Official Community Plan amendment was reviewed and accepted in 1986 by the Commission (Hopkins, 2021). The City, at the time, had also included several properties north of Blundell Road into the Backlands Policy area, as these properties also had existing religious institutional uses (Lambie & Collins, 2020). While the ALC was willing to establish non-farm uses between Steveston Highway and Blundell Road, the ALC was not willing to extend the Policy any further. The ALC did not approve of the properties north of Blundell Road being included into the policy area.

1.3.2. Origins of the Backlands Policy 1990 - 2000

The Official Community Plan was further amended by the City, with approval from the ALC, in 1990 to clarify that assembly and institutional uses were only permitted in the westerly third portion of properties along No. 5 Road between Blundell Road and Steveston Highway (Lambie & Collins, 2020). The City's proposal to include several properties north of Blundell Road had been removed. The 1990 amendments to the City's Official Community Plan also clarified that a farm development plan needed to be submitted by religious institutions, should they wish to develop under this allowance. Farm development plans are comprehensive documents which indicate how an agricultural business will begin, a roadmap indicating how a farm will get from bare land to cultivation (Growing Forward, 2021). These farm development plans can include what crops are suitable, what land improvements (e.g. drainage infrastructure) are required, and initial input costs such as fertilizer or farm machinery will be needed. This amendment to the Official Community Plan was the beginning of what is now known as the No. 5 Road Backlands Policy.

Although the City and ALC came to an agreement on which area was permitted to establish assembly and institutional uses, there was still uncertainty as to where assembly and institutional uses could be located on each property. The 1990 Official Community Plan amendment stated that assembly and institutional uses were permitted on only the westerly third portion of properties (Lambie & Collins, 2020). This caused uncertainty as each parcel was a different size so assembly and institutional development would be established unevenly. In order to achieve cohesive development on all parcels within the policy area, the assembly and institutional use area along No. 5 Road was further defined in 1991 as "the 110 metre area adjacent to No. 5 Road".

In addition to the ALC reviewing and approving each policy change within the City's Official Community Plan, the ALC also reviewed and approved each application for religious institutional use along No. 5 Road, even if the proposal was consistent with the Official Community Plan policy (Lambie & Collins, 2020). Between 1986 and 1994, the ALC and the City approved eight applications for religious institutional use along No. 5 Road which were consistent with the Policy of that time. However, in 1994 the ALC and the City met and discussed that, while the Official Community Plan policy was

resulting in religious institutional development, agricultural use of the rear of the properties was not occurring.

To understand why farming was not occurring on these properties, the ALC and the City commissioned a joint feasibility study in 1994 to identify the opportunities and constraints surrounding agricultural production within the policy area (Lambie & Collins, 2020). While the study was undertaken, the ALC and the City also agreed to implement a moratorium on new applications for religious institutional development within the policy area. This was done to ensure changes could be made to the policy without impacting active applications for religious institutional development. The study concluded in 1997 and found that, while agricultural use of the back portions of the properties was achievable, there were impediments to agricultural production, such as poor soil drainage, that should be addressed to maximize productivity of the area (Zbeetnoff Consulting, 1997).

In 1997, after determining that the backland portion of properties could be used for agricultural production, the ALC and the City reconfirmed that the policy within the Official Community Plan, to permit development of assembly and institutional uses on the front 110 metre portion of properties located along No. 5 Road between Steveston Highway and Blundell Road, subject to agricultural use of the rear of the property, should remain in effect (Lambie & Collins, 2020). However, as the feasibility study concluded that farm use could be established on the properties, the ALC and the City started exploring different implementation options for more successful encouragement of the agricultural component of the policy. In 1998, the City consulted with landowners within the policy area to discuss implementation of agricultural use along the rear portion of the properties, and to reiterate that agricultural production was a requirement to develop the front portion of the property for religious institutional use.

From the 1998 discussions between the City and landowners, it was determined that the largest barrier to undertaking agricultural use within the policy area was drainage concerns and the costs associated with mitigating them (Lambie & Collins, 2020). The landowners, at the time, generally did not support the drainage improvements due to the associated costs (Chan, 1998, p. 5). It was estimated that the necessary on-site drainage improvements, which would be the responsibility of each individual landowner, would cost \$2,500 per hectare. For many landowners, the cost to

improve drainage on the property was too high to be feasible. In addition to the on-site drainage improvements, the City would have needed to invest an additional \$232,000 into the municipal drainage system. Without commitment from the landowners to also complete on-site works the City was not willing to make the investment. The City could not force landowners to complete the on-site drainage improvements, and any improvements made to the municipal drainage system would not fix the issues.

Although drainage was still identified as an issue, the City went forward to draft the No. 5 Road Backlands Policy (Backlands Policy) in November 1998 which was subsequently sent to the ALC for review and comment (Lambie & Collins, 2020). The ALC suggested that additional refinement and revision to the Policy was needed, including further defining what was required in the farm development plans, submitted by the religious institutions when seeking development approval, and clarity on the process to have these applications reviewed by both the City and ALC. In 2000, after the ALC's comments were incorporated by the City, the Backlands Policy was approved by both the ALC and the City as a stand-alone policy. While the reason why the Backlands Policy was established as a stand-alone policy, instead of previous incorporation into the Official Community Plan, is unknown, the ramifications of creating a stand-alone policy are discussed in more detail below. A map of the Backlands Policy area is provided as Figure 1.4 below and the 2000 version of the Backlands Policy, which remained unchanged until 2016, is provided as Appendix A.

This thesis will further evaluate why the 1990 Backlands Policy was adopted in Chapter 5.

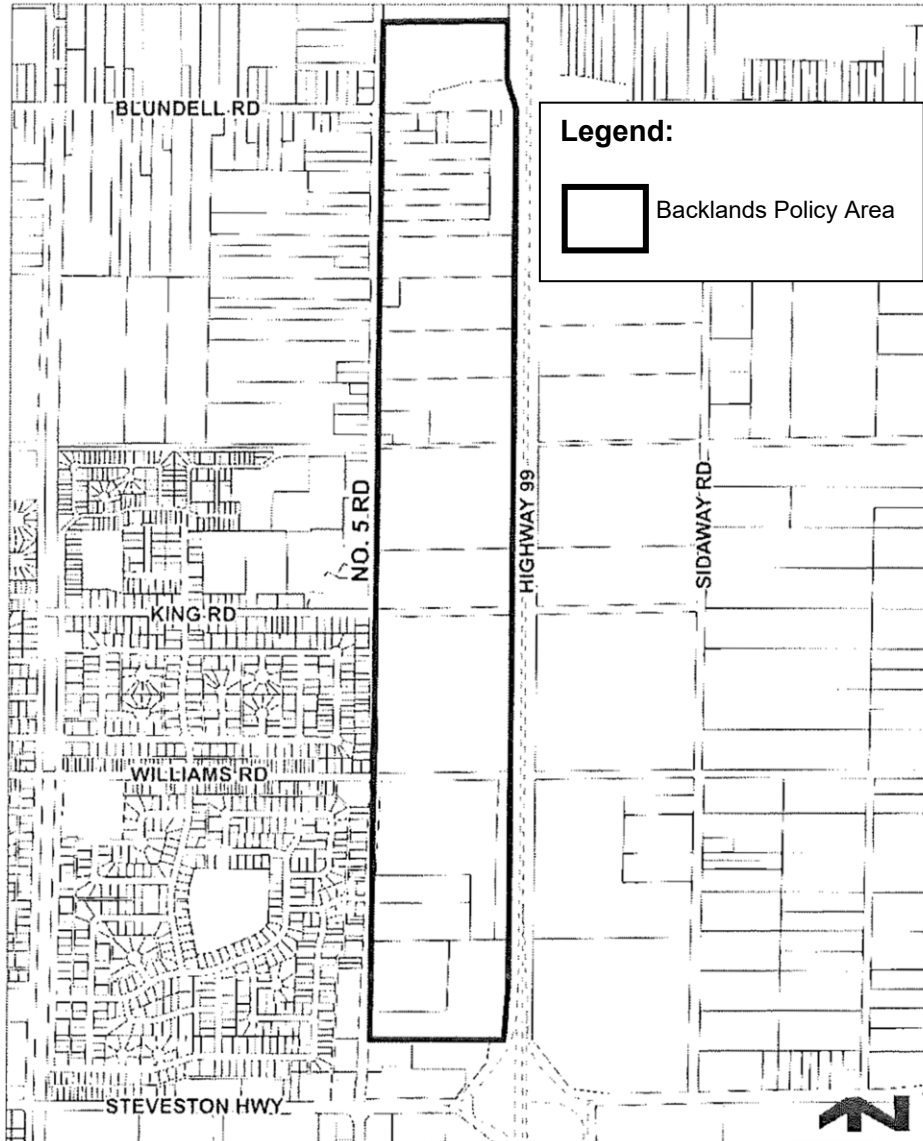


Figure 1.2 The Backlands Policy Area Map
 Map: (Hopkins, 2021)

1.3.3. History of the Backlands Policy 2000 – 2021

Between 2000 and 2016, the ALC and the City reviewed five applications for assembly and institutional use within the Backlands Policy Area, all of which included farm development plans outlining how the backland portion of the property would be brought into agricultural production (Lambie & Collins, 2020). All five applications were approved as they were consistent with the original Policy approved in 2000; however, later reports conducted by the ALC and the City note that while each application

included a farm development plan, the actual implementation of farm use rarely occurred.

In 2016, the City decided that the Backlands Policy should no longer be a stand-alone document and be incorporated into the Official Community Plan, similar to how the Policy first began in 1986 (Konkin, 2020). The rationale was the Official Community Plan should be a long-range plan for the City, and that having stand-alone policies led to greater confusion for landowners trying to navigate the municipal planning process. Incorporating the Backlands Policy into the Official Community Plan also included changes to the Policy with the intention of bringing the backland portion of the properties into agricultural production. One of the most substantial changes made in 2016 was allowing landowners to dedicate the backland portion of the property to the City, with the intent to form one contiguous agricultural area instead of having smaller stand-alone lots.

Due to an error made by ALC staff, the 2016 change to the Backlands Policy was never formally approved by the Commission (Lambie & Collins, 2020). When the City submitted the 2016 Backlands Policy changes to the ALC for review, review and approval of the changes was only conducted by ALC staff. As previously mentioned, the Commission is the statutory decision-maker for land use policies and would have needed to approve the revised Backlands Policy. While the reason why ALC staff approved the 2016 Policy changes without approval from the statutory decision-making body of the ALC – the Commission - was never expressly outlined in a document or letter, based on interviews with ALC staff conducted as part of this research, it is presumed that the staff member did not realize that the Backlands Policy required the Commission's approval. As outlined in Section 1.1, most municipal policies reviewed by ALC staff are consistent with the *Agricultural Land Reserve Act* and regulations. The existence of a policy that is not consistent with the Act or regulations, as it allows religious institutional development within the ALR, is extremely rare. It is assumed that the ALC staff member who reviewed the 2016 changes followed the standard process for reviewing and commenting on municipal policies consistent with ALC legislation; resulting in the City adopting the 2016 version of the Backlands Policy that had not been approved by the Commission.

This error came to light in 2017 when the City forwarded an application to the ALC which was consistent with the 2016 Backlands Policy changes made by the City, but not formally adopted by the ALC (Lambie & Collins, 2020). The application proposed to develop the front 110 metres of a property, previously containing a golf course, for religious institutional use, and dedicate the rear portion of the property to the City of Richmond so that the City could coordinate programming and leasing the property to an agricultural operation. The Commission, unaware of the 2016 Policy changes, refused the application as it was not consistent with the version of the Backlands Policy approved in 2000. The refusal prompted further discussion between the ALC and City of Richmond and the realization that the 2016 Policy changes were not approved by the official decision-making body of the ALC.

From 2017 to 2021, the ALC and City of Richmond worked to revise the Backlands Policy to ensure both parties were comfortable with the document. This included a presentation from the City to the Commission and ALC staff on the Policy's history and proposed revisions, as well as the ALC and the City conducting a site visit to properties developed under the original Backlands Policy (Lambie, 2021). After the site visit, the question of drainage, still not formally addressed after being identified in the 1997 feasibility study, was discussed (Mark, 2019). After further analysis on the costs associated with drainage upgrades considered necessary, the ALC and the City decided to place the financial onus for these improvements onto the religious institutions. The City's 2016 amendments to the Backlands Policy allowed the religious institutions to designate the backlands portion of the lot to the City, which would have relieved the institutions of needing to complete drainage improvements. However, the ALC was not amenable to this, as the Commission viewed designation of the backlands as further subdividing the agricultural portion of the properties, resulting in further fragmentation of the ALR and reducing the agricultural capability of the backlands (Lambie & Collins, 2020). If the religious institutions wanted to develop a portion of the site for non-farm uses, they would need to cover the costs of all upgrades required to bring the remainder of the property into agricultural production. While the Backlands Policy area is capable of being farmed, as outlined in the 1997 feasibility study commissioned by the ALC and the City, the area needed infrastructure (e.g. drainage) upgrades to successfully farm the land long term (Zbeetnoff Consulting, 1997).

In 2021, once the ALC and the City came to the conclusion that each religious institution would be responsible for on-site drainage improvements, both governing bodies made several other revisions to the Backlands Policy (Lambie, 2021). Two of the 2021 policy changes are considered by the religious institutions to be a drastic variation from the original policy. The first change required that religious institutions need to either provide farm receipts showcasing that the property has been farmed for at least 5 years, prior to submitting a development application, or to have entered into a lease with a farm operation committing to farm the property for 5 years should the application be approved. The second change to the Backlands Policy, which is notably different from the original policy, was the City's and ALC's interpretation of "school" use.

Since the Backlands Policy inception in 1986, school uses were permitted as part of the permitted religious institutional development on the front portion of the properties (City of Richmond, 1990). When the Backlands Policy became an official stand-alone policy in 2000, certain school uses were still permitted but there was no clarity within the policy as to what "certain school uses" actually included (Agricultural Land Commission, 2000). While it has been suggested that the City and ALC were allowing Sunday Schools or smaller religious schools, there was no formal agreement or record of what school uses were and were not permitted (Lambie, 2021). Between 2000 and 2020, the definition of what "school use" included was inconsistently administered by the City and ALC, resulting in several large independent schools being developed within the Backlands Policy area. In 2020, the inconsistent interpretation of school use became a topic of debate by the City and ALC when an independent school applied to the City of Richmond to develop within the Backlands Policy area (Ryan, 2020). While Richmond city staff recommended that the independent school be permitted, as there were multiple schools already within the policy area, the Richmond Planning Committee rejected the application as the school was not an independent religious school nor tied to a specific religious institution like the other independent schools within the policy area. In addition to the school's application being denied, the application sparked a larger discussion about the Backlands Policy.

The different interpretation of "school" use prompted the City and ALC to review what uses should, and should not be, permitted within the Backlands Policy area. Ultimately, the 2021 changes to the Backlands Policy removed "school" use as a permitted use altogether (Lambie, 2021). Instead, only religious assembly and child

care, ancillary to religious assembly use, are permitted non-farm uses within the Backlands Policy area. Although the existing independent schools within the policy area can continue to operate, any expansion of school use or replacement of existing buildings requires approval from both the City and the ALC.

In 2021, the ALC and the City came to an agreement on the changes and formally adopted the revised Backlands Policy. The 2021 version of the Backlands Policy is provided as Appendix B. It is important to note that at the time of this research there had been no applications submitted to the ALC or the City for religious institutional development under the revised 2021 Policy, therefore the effects of these changes will not be reflected in this study.

1.4. Research Problem and Question

The Backlands Policy applies to land located within the City of Richmond's peri-urban fringe. Unlike agricultural land more typically found in rural hinterlands, peri-urban areas represent an ever-evolving amalgamation of urban and rural features (Olsson et al., 2016). The Backlands Policy area is directly adjacent to urban residential use along the western boundary but separated from other agricultural areas to the east by Highway 99. The locational realities of the Policy, close to urban development and separated from other agricultural land use, highlight the pressures peri-urban areas are under. Further defined and explored in my conceptual framework, the fluid boundaries between urban and rural land use create heightened development pressures in peri-urban areas (Opitz et al., 2016).

Development pressures provincewide, and especially in Metro Vancouver, have continued to increase since the ALR's origins in 1974 (Commission 2021). Land values for parcels located within the ALR are often one-fifth to one-tenth of the price of parcels located outside of the ALR (Nixon & Newman, 2016). Although the lower land values on ALR land provides reduced barriers to new farmers wanting to establish a commercial agricultural operation, the low land prices attract speculative land purchasing, resulting in more pressures on agricultural land. Large scale commercial agricultural operations, such as berries, continue to thrive in close proximity to the City of Richmond's urban core; however, the smaller lots within Richmond's peri-urban fringe are under extreme pressure for urban redevelopment (Newman et al., 2015). Historically, the ALR has

acted as a strong boundary to keep urban development pressures at bay in lieu of robust agricultural land use policies at the municipal level. In recent years, the City has implemented agricultural policies and long-range planning documents, such as the Farming First Strategy, which build upon provincial legislation (the ALR) to better protect agricultural land.

Increased municipal involvement in agricultural policies can be partially attributed to the growing public interest in local food systems, which has influenced government bodies to reevaluate their agricultural policies to strengthen the ALR boundary against non-farm development pressures (Newman et al., 2015). While current public interest in agricultural protection and maintaining local food systems has become a driver of municipal agricultural policies, this attitude has not always been positive. Preservation of local food systems emerged in the public's interest during the turn of the 21st century when rapid globalization and the threat of climate change became prominent topics. Local food was perceived by the public as increasing community self-reliance, improving environmental sustainability, and as a way to connect with the land base while creating a sense of place.

The recent changes to the Backlands Policy, in response to the 2016 amendments conducted by the City of Richmond, highlight the need for further analysis of the current perception of agricultural land use and how these perceptions can influence policy creation and implementation within the peri-urban fringe. These perceptions become increasingly important in the peri-urban area where urban and agricultural land uses are often in conflict. By understanding how provincial, municipal, and the public values agricultural land use, policy solutions can be crafted to manage land use within the peri-urban fringe by balancing the competing uses. In summary, my thesis question is as follows:

How did the City of Richmond and Agricultural Land Commission's collaboration to implement multifunctional agriculture in the peri-urban fringe fail in the Backlands Policy?

This thesis question aims to unravel the complex relationship between the City and ALC and how lack of communication and collaboration led to the failure of the Backlands Policy. This thesis revolves around the overarching theme of farmland

protection at the peri-urban fringe, and creative agricultural policy solutions that address the competition between different land uses prevalent in peri-urban areas. Creative policy solutions can aid in the protection of farmland by preserving the possibility of future agricultural use, while still balancing different perceptions and values.

The choice to focus on protecting agricultural land in peri-urban areas parallels the rationale behind the establishment of the ALR by the provincial government in 1973- to safeguard farmland from complete conversion into urban uses. Despite perceptions that food production in peri-urban areas may be less productive than large-scale agricultural practices, there is mounting evidence indicating that the peri-urban fringe plays a pivotal role in both food production and agricultural protection policies (Spataru et al., 2020). This research seeks to shed light on the significance of preserving agricultural land in peri-urban regions and the potential for innovative agricultural policies that can navigate the complexities arising from competition between various land uses.

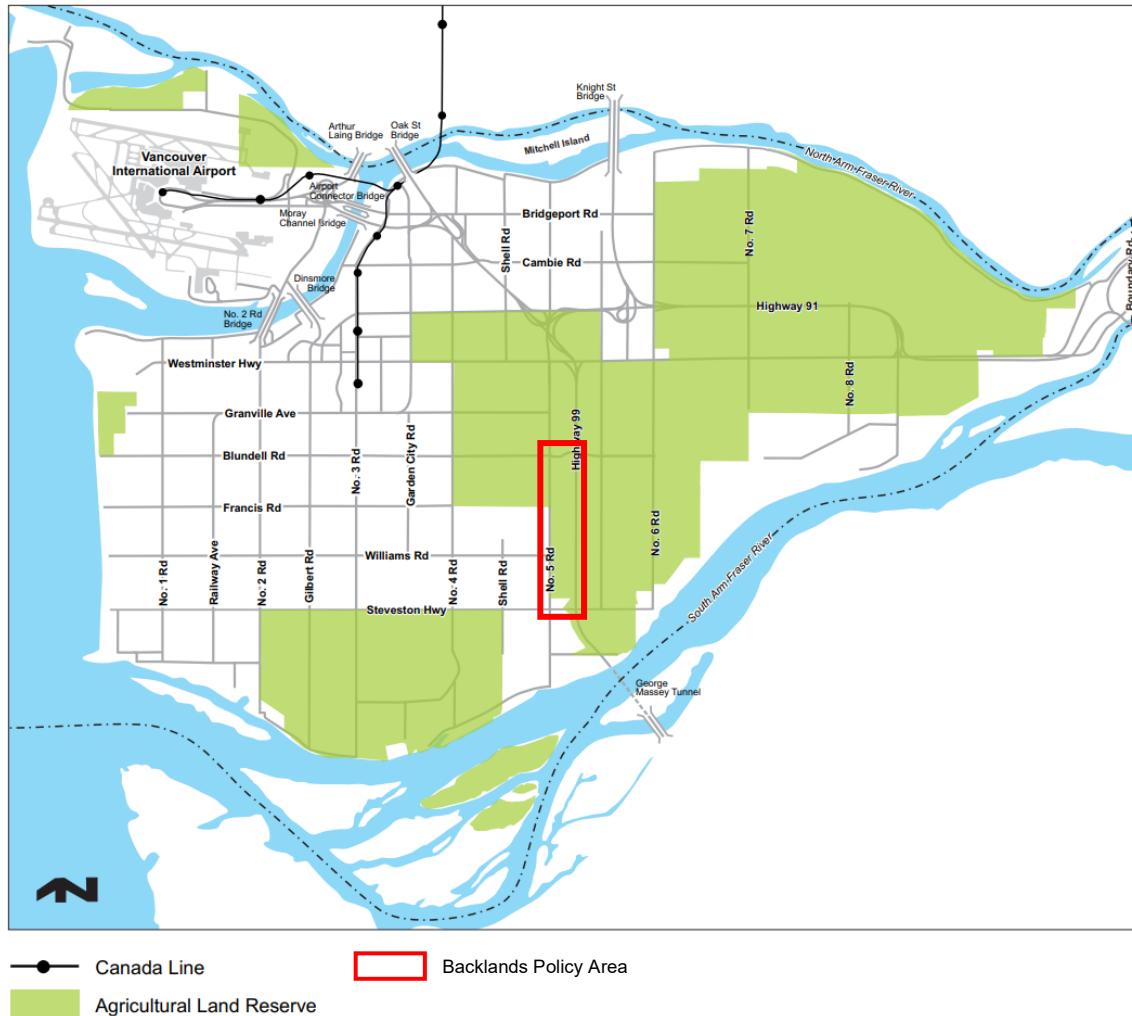


Figure 1.3 Map of the Agricultural Land Reserve Boundary within the City of Richmond
 Map: (City of Richmond, 2021)

1.5. Significance of the Backlands Policy Case Study

Among the arguments on how to further support the global agricultural sector, a pivotal small-scale action is strengthening local food security and preserving local greenspace (Pearson, 2011). Local food systems can increase food self reliance while magnifying a community’s influence on their food system. Shortened supply chains prioritize local interests while increasing transparency in the food system (Mullinix et al., 2018). This transparency often leads to increased potential for local policy to influence the food system, instead of relying on larger scale policies which often do not reflect the priorities or values of the local community. Additionally, local food systems retain a greater portion of the profits at the local economy scale, increasing the area’s economic

benefit. Because of these benefits, government organizations and the public are increasingly advocating for local food systems instead of relying on a globalized food system.

1.5.1. Importance of Local Food Systems

However, the benefits of a local food system are currently overshadowed by the economic benefits of trade within the global food system. In 2020, British Columbia imported 39% of the total food supply from international markets and 26% from other regions in Canada (B.C. Food Security Task Force, 2020). Only 34% of the total food supply consumed in BC was produced in British Columbia (Metro Vancouver, 2020). The high proportion of imported food in British Columbia can be attributed to high production costs and a limited growing season (Hild, 2009). British Columbia's higher cost of land, coupled with higher costs of farming inputs (fertilizer, machinery, etc.), forces local agricultural operations to price their goods higher than imported products. Further, local producers cannot grow year-round, unless it is a greenhouse operation, resulting in inconsistencies in food availability. In contrast, imported foods are able to maintain year-round availability of products at a lower price. Instead of trying to compete with imports, local food producers have shifted away from local distribution to take advantage of the global food market.

While the global trade market does play a substantial role in British Columbia's food system and economy, over-reliance on the global food system could have negative ramifications to the longevity of local food production. As local agricultural producers shift to international markets, British Columbia's food system becomes exclusionary. Large distribution and wholesale companies control local agricultural producers' access to the international market, resulting in a power imbalance between the distribution and production of food (Hild, 2009). Distribution and wholesale companies often favour large-scale and industrial sized agricultural producers, as these producers can meet the international demand. In turn, small or new agricultural producers are faced with significant barriers to entering the global food market as they often cannot provide enough product to meet the international market's demand. While alternative distribution companies, with an emphasis on supporting local food, have emerged, the mainstream system is still preferred by vendors due to the established and consistent nature.

On face value, the global food system appears to provide the best economic options for British Columbia. Agricultural products are less expensive to import than local products, and local producers can sell their agricultural products at a higher price on the international market (Hild, 2009). However, this reliance on the global food system fails to capture the multiplier effect which could better bolster the local economy when compared to the global food system (Metro Vancouver, 2011). The multiplier effect can be described as money which is spent on local food, as opposed to imports, and boosts local economy. This is due to the greater probability that locally owned businesses will purchase inputs from local suppliers, who in turn would have more money to spend locally. Imported food does not have the same opportunity to bolster local spending, as the revenue collected from agricultural products is taken outside of the local economy.

Although there is a current reliance in British Columbia on the global food trade, increasing local food systems provides opportunity to improve the local economy and food self-reliance (Mullinix et al., 2018). The rise of the local food movement in the early 21st century not only positioned local food production as a safer and more environmentally sustainable alternative than imports, but also as a tool to increase community connection to their food (Newman et al., 2015). A community's connection to a food system can not only increase the number of local food resources, such as community gardens and farmers markets, but also promote local agriculture to establish stronger links between farmers and consumers (Turetta et al., 2021). Community food systems can promote community engagement through empowerment as well as identify local food demands. This shift in support for regional food systems plays a vital role in agricultural policies, especially at the municipal level. Public support of local food systems has become a driving force behind the creation of municipal policies seeking to preserve agricultural land for food production, instead of allowing the conversion of these lands for urban use.

1.5.2. Protection of Local Food Systems Through Land Use Policies

Although the ALR was established to protect British Columbia's agricultural lands, the ALR alone is not enough to prevent the erosion of agricultural lands to urban development. Municipal governments need to establish policies with the primary goal of protecting agricultural lands, in addition to the ALR, which address competing land uses and speculation (Mullinix et al., 2018). Speculation occurs when desired uses (such as

residential development) are abutting less desired or valued land (such as agricultural land), which leads to the idea that the less desired land will eventually be redeveloped (Commission, 2021). Municipal policies focused on preserving the agricultural land base are especially important in peri-urban areas, as these landscapes are especially susceptible to urban development pressures.

Legislation and regulation of what uses are permitted within identified areas, such as Zoning Bylaws or Land Use Policies, remain the primary land control option for local governments (Goetz et al., 2005). Other regulatory devices such as control over subdivision and building permits can also affect how agricultural land in peri-urban areas is directly and indirectly used. These policies and regulatory tools can directly affect a property through controlling what uses happen on the land, as well as indirectly by controlling how the adjacent land is used. This includes limiting infrastructure servicing to agricultural areas and directing development into existing serviced areas. By restricting the adjacent uses to agricultural land, municipal planning and policy tools can reduce speculation by clearly defining where urban development should and should not occur. The urban-agricultural interface is constantly balancing the needs of urban and agricultural use, while trying to reduce urban development pressures (Gallent, 2006a). Restricting adjacent uses to agricultural land is an important land use planning tool to try and reduce conflict within this interface, as it allows compatible uses, such as low-intensity land uses (passive recreation), to become more easily established (Ministry of Agriculture, 2015). The land use policies and tools enacted by local governments do impact how agricultural land is protected and used. Local governments need to have strong agricultural land use policies; otherwise these greenspaces will be redeveloped for perceived “highest and best use”, an economic concept which measures which land use would result in the highest land value on the private market (Zink et al., 2022).

The urban-agricultural interface in peri-urban areas plays an important role in urban planning, especially in areas like Metro Vancouver that have greenbelts (the ALR) running through most urban centres. In recent years, managing urban growth has emerged as a prominent urban planning theme, as well as viewed as an essential element to land use policy best practices (Goetz, Shortle, and Bergstrom 2005). Emerging from effects of urban growth on surrounding greenbelts, pressures of development on farmland has established itself as a prominent theme in agricultural protection policy planning policy. Extending beyond British Columbia, other regions in

Canada are grappling with trying to balance urban growth and agricultural land protection. However, the land use management tools currently used to protect agricultural land are not always effective.

Land use policies in the peri-urban area have often been reactive. With urban centres so focused on urban planning policies, the impacts that loss of farmland and greenspace have within a metropolitan area are only realized once the disintegration of rural areas through urban expansion has already begun (Gallent, 2006a). Peri-urban fringe areas, or the areas in which the urban and rural dichotomy comes to a head, need to have well established land use policies in place to avoid conflict between the two different uses (Serra et al., 2014). Further, peri-urban fringe areas represent the boundary between urban and rural land uses, ad-hoc or reactive planning policies are not a solution to managing the conflict between urban and rural land use and can often result in this boundary being eroded and diminished over time. Intentional policies are required which balance the needs of the urban areas while still protecting agricultural use. In places like Metro Vancouver, where a greenbelt still exists throughout the metropolitan areas due to the ALR, strong peri-urban fringe planning practices need to be enacted by local governments.

While the boundaries of the ALR have changed throughout the years, the total size of land within the Reserve has remained consistent since its creation in 1974 (ALR History 2014). However, each year development pressures, and competing resource use, challenge the integrity of the ALR boundary throughout British Columbia (Commission 2018), especially in peri-urban areas. Municipalities are a first line of defense against these pressures, and the land use policies they implement directly impact how the ALR is perceived and used with effects that can be long lasting. Due to their proximity to urban centres, food production in peri-urban areas is very important to the larger local food production system (Spataru et al., 2020), not because peri-urban areas are better at producing food than large-scale agricultural practices in rural hinterlands, but because they provide intangible benefits to protecting and promoting local food production (Newman et al., 2015). The introduction of food production into peri-urban areas can result in increased awareness and education of farming for residents living with urban settings that are unlikely to be exposed to the local food system (Pearson, 2011). Public education on food production can lead to better

perceptions, which in turn can lead to stronger food protection policies at both provincial and municipal levels.

Although peri-urban planning may have substantial ties to growth management of urban centres, agricultural protection policy does have its own established history in and policy implications for urban settings (Goetz, Shortle, and Bergstrom 2005). The reasons for peri-urban policy intervention are diverse, ranging from economic to social to environmental, and can substantially influence how the urban and rural interface interacts and how land is used. British Columbia, through creation of the ALC, has established a baseline for strong rural policy and planning throughout the province. However, rural policies do not fully capture the complexities that peri-urban areas encompass. While these rural policies can act as a strong starting point, provincial and municipal peri-urban planning best practices needs to be further explored as these areas require a much more diverse approach to agricultural policies and protection.

1.5.3. Ontario's Greenbelt – Why Government Support of Agricultural Land Use Policy Matters

Generally, the main tools used for agricultural land protection throughout Canada have been limited to differential property assessments (e.g. tax incentives), and agricultural zoning and urban growth boundaries (MacRae, 2019). This includes British Columbia, which introduced tax incentives along with the ALR to try and protect the agricultural land base (B. E. Smith, 2012b). However, these tools have not been particularly effective due to urban development land sale prices greatly exceeding the tax savings on agricultural land. Instead, land speculators hold agricultural properties waiting for the opportune moment to propose development. Very few Canadian agricultural policies focus on protection on the agricultural land base by using an urban containment boundary. Only British Columbia (ALR), Ontario (Greenbelt), and Quebec (Commission de Protection du Territoire Agricole) have strong legislative frameworks for agricultural land protection through agricultural zoning and use of urban containment boundaries. Although, even these established land reserves can become compromised by exemptions and political whims.

The effects of lackluster protection of peri-urban areas from urban development is currently highlighted in Ontario, Canada. In November 2022, Ontario's Premier, Doug

Ford, announced that the Provincial Government would be removing 7,400 acres from Ontario's Greenbelt, land protected for farming and green space, for residential development (Callen & D'Mello, 2023). While the land within the Greenbelt was intended to be protected for farmland and greenspace in perpetuity, urban development pressures and the opportunity to profit caused initial removal of this land (Stone & Gray, 2023a). It is speculated that the decision to open the Greenbelt to development was to benefit prominent developers who had personal ties to Ford. This decision to develop the Greenbelt resulted in immense public backlash, multiple investigations by provincial agencies, and the resignation of two cabinet ministers (Stone & Gray, 2023b). This leaves the public sceptical of the provincial government's motives.

Due to the immense outcry, on September 21, 2023, Ford announced that development of the Greenbelt would be rescinded, and the area would remain protected for farming and greenspace (Stone & Gray, 2023a). Ontario's Greenbelt not only highlights the power public support for agricultural protection can have, but also how exposed agricultural protection and policy is to government whims. When Doug Ford was first elected as Ontario's Premier in 2018, he vowed to preserve the Greenbelt for farm use. Soon after becoming Premier, a video was released by an opposing political party of Ford showing a map of the Greenbelt to developers, forcing Ford to backtrack on his promise. This case highlights how perceptions of land use can influence land use management policies. Instead of preserving the Greenbelt for food production, Ontario's provincial government quickly sought to redevelop the land into something they perceived as a better use of land (urban development).

Urban containment boundaries, such as the ALR and Greenbelt, not only benefit agricultural lands through protection from urban development. Urban containment boundaries can also be economically beneficial to the urban core (Smart Growth British Columbia, 2008). By forcing redevelopment within the urban area, instead of sprawling further into the countryside, urban containment boundaries reduce infrastructure servicing costs. Redevelopment within the urban core also increased the population density, which can better support transit infrastructure, commercial areas, and community services.

Instead of being viewed as a positive land use planning tool to stimulate redevelopment in urban centres, as well as create more vibrant commercial centres

connected by transit systems, urban containment boundaries are often viewed as a barrier to development (Kim, 2013). This can be attributed to agricultural lands not being perceived as the “highest and best use of land” (Zink et al., 2022). The indirect benefits urban containment boundaries provide to urban centres is often overshadowed by agricultural land being perceived as less valuable than other land uses.

Typically, the urban-rural fringe is pushed further into rural lands as urban centres expand (Pryor, 1968). In British Columbia, the precedent-setting creation of the ALR unwittingly created a de facto urban containment boundary and unintentionally created a more fixed peri-urban fringe (Condon et al., 2011). While the unintended creation of a spatially fixed peri-urban fringe has been a positive outcome for agricultural land protection in British Columbia, there are increasing development pressures on this fringe especially when located adjacent to growing populations centres such as Metro Vancouver. Traditionally, agricultural policies in fringe areas have applied the same best practices planning techniques used in rural settings; however, the peri-urban fringe requires a distinctive planning approach that is able to capture the unique realities of the area (Zasada, 2011). The Backlands Policy, while potentially created with non-agricultural uses in mind, has the potential to become a policy which does uniquely address the strengths and weaknesses to planning within the urban-rural fringe.

Chapter 2.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study uses three primary bodies of literature to assess how different perceptions of agricultural land use influenced both the creation and subsequent implementation of the Backlands Policy. The first body of literature examined will define the concept of peri-urban areas and why the Backlands Policy area can be defined as such, as well as explore how the complexities of the peri-urban fringe, especially related to land use values, plays a critical role in agricultural land use planning. The second body of literature examined explores general provincial, municipal, and public perceptions surrounding agricultural land use in peri-urban areas and their influence on local food policy and protection. As the focus of this study is how different perceptions of agricultural land use shape the Backlands Policy, the second body of literature will create the basis for my research to build upon. The third and final body of literature examined will be multifunctional agriculture and the role this concept can have in navigating the complexities of land use planning and agricultural protection within peri-urban environments. Although the Backlands Policy may have not been explicitly created as a multifunctional agriculture policy, the Policy does incorporate elements of multifunctional agriculture to better manage the urban-rural fringe.

2.1. Importance of Peri-Urban Areas for Local Food Production

While the peri-urban fringe differs depending on its local context, it can generally be defined as the built-up area directly adjacent to an urban centre, where a city meets the countryside (Pryor, 1968). Peri-urban areas signify a change in land use and social characteristics, such as population demographics or political beliefs, between the dense urban centres and the rural hinterland (Scott et al., 2013). However, changes in land use or social characteristics are not necessarily defined by clear boundaries. Instead, the peri-urban environment is usually defined by blurred borders between urban and rural land use which creates a hybrid landscape where both urban and rural pressures intertwine (Gallent, 2006b). The Backlands Policy applies to lands located along No. 5 Road in the City of Richmond. The properties along the westerly side of No. 5 Road can generally be defined as urban, and not within the Backlands Policy area, while the lands

located within the Backlands Policy area along the easterly side of No. 5 Road were intended for agricultural use. Although the properties developed under the Backlands Policy are still within the ALR boundary, and are limited as to what land uses can occur without provincial approval, the boundaries between rural and urban use have become more blurred as the City of Richmond developed (Newman et al., 2015). While the Backlands Policy area may not have been defined as a peri-urban area during policy conception in 1986, urban development adjacent to (and sometimes within) the Backlands Policy area has transformed it to become part of the City of Richmond's peri-urban fringe.

Most literature describes peri-urban areas as in-transition, destined to eventually be developed and pushed further into the rural hinterland due to urban pressures and expansion (Pryor, 1968). However, the creation of the ALR, working as an urban containment boundary, has counteracted the urban creep. Urban containment boundaries are geographically based lines indicating the divide between land available urban development, and land to be preserved for green infrastructure (e.g. wetlands, forested area, farmland) (Smart Growth British Columbia, 2008). Urban containment boundaries guide future land use planning by defining the limit of urban infrastructure servicing, such as areas outside the urban centre relying on septic systems instead of municipal wastewater servicing. Although it is argued that urban containment boundaries increase land prices within the urban core through limiting the amount of land available for urban development. This supply and demand argument does not consider external factors to land values, such as the strength of the land market for housing development. When implemented, and maintained, urban containment boundaries can deliberately shape growth patterns in, and adjacent to, urban centres by clearly defining urban and non-urban areas (Pendall & Martin, 2002).

To ensure urban containment boundaries are effective there needs to be strong support from both provincial and municipal governments (Smart Growth British Columbia, 2008). Planning policies, at both levels of government, which promote compact urban development accompanied by non-negotiable containment boundaries, also referred to as greenbelts, can be effective in protecting agricultural land (The Neptis Foundation, 2013). These policies need to be consistently upheld by governing bodies and implemented in the long term to reduce pressure on farmland. When government policies allow for redesignation of land outside the established urban area, this weakens

the containment boundary. Although the creation of the ALR mitigated some of these development pressures by establishing a defensible boundary which limits non-agricultural development, urban development pressures on agricultural land use still occur within the peri-urban fringe (Newman et al., 2015). If not mitigated by strong planning policy by municipal and provincial governments, these pressures can weaken the ALR and result in urban creep into agricultural areas.

Despite the constant pressures from two contradictory and competing uses, the peri-urban fringe area has the ability to play an integral role in local food systems and contribute to local food production (Olsson et al., 2016). As large-scale farming practices often rely on mass production systems, requiring large areas of farmland, they are typically located in rural areas where large amounts of land are available (Condon et al., 2011). Peri-urban areas are usually smaller areas that cannot support large-scale practices due to land availability or land cost. While urban containment boundaries and greenbelts can influence the cost of land through delineating urban and non-urban development areas (Newman et al., 2015), land speculation – especially in the peri-urban fringe - increases land prices (Nixon & Newman, 2016). However, agricultural practices within the peri-urban fringe that focus on intensive human-scaled agriculture can be successful, becoming known as urban agriculture. Although British Columbia is currently reliant on the global food system, smaller-scale urban agriculture can provide increased access to affordable local food for urban dwellers (Pearson, 2011).

Due to the proximity to urban centres, urban agriculture in peri-urban areas is able to provide more sustainable food options than products imported from the global food system as there is a reduction in travel distance from farm to table (Opitz et al., 2016). The current global food system relies heavily on fossil fuels to transport goods to international markets (Metro Vancouver, 2011). Reducing the travel distance from agricultural producers to consumers can reduce the use of fossil fuels, as well as provide more opportunity for alternative fuels (e.g. electric transport vehicles). Historically, land adjacent to urban centres were used for food production and were typically located on fertile soil. As urban centres grew, the peri-urban area was pushed further into rural food producing areas. As a result, peri-urban areas are often located on fertile soils, benefiting from not only favourable growing conditions but also from proximity to market and the workforce. Proximity to markets and a reduction in travel time often equates to less food waste when compared to the global food system. Proximity to markets also

has social ramifications as urban dwellers become more aware of where food comes from and how it is produced, leading to more sustainable farming practices and increased public awareness of food systems.

To reduce the conflict between urban and rural land uses, agricultural uses within the peri-urban area should be limited to unobtrusive practices. Unobtrusive agricultural practices, also known as “small farms”, means either scaling back conventional size farms (e.g. limiting the number of livestock or area of a greenhouse) or not permitting known disruptive commodities, such as livestock or mushroom production which produce unwanted odours and/or noise (Ministry of Agriculture, 2015). Conventional, large scale agricultural practices often lead to noise, odour, and visual disruption in peri-urban spaces (Condon et al., 2011). These disruptions cause conflicts and the potential for reduced public support for agricultural land use in close proximity to urban centres.

Perceptions surrounding local food production and farmland have shifted, especially for those living in urban environments who are seeking a stronger connection with local food systems (Newman et al., 2015). The peri-urban environment, while limited in terms of large-scale farming practices and large-scale food production, has the ability to provide educational experiences regarding local food systems that many people within urban centres are seeking (Olsson et al., 2016). By allowing urban dwellers to reconnect and learn about the origin of their food, local food systems help increase sustainability and support for local agricultural production, which can in turn help develop stronger agricultural protection policies at the municipal level. By increasing food literacy and dialogue regarding the role of food in urban communities, peri-urban agricultural production can play a key role in how broader food systems are planned and how agricultural policies are perceived at different governmental levels (McClintock et al., 2021).

While urban agriculture in peri-urban areas may have the ability to increase food literacy in urban communities, the ability of peri-urban agricultural production to realistically reduce the threats currently affecting the global food system is questioned by some scholars. Because of the blurred and ever-evolving nature of peri-urban areas there are arguments that other activities will compete and subsequently overshadow agricultural production (Kassis et al., 2021). Typically, as urban centres grow the peri-urban fringe is pushed further into the rural hinterland resulting in agricultural protection

becoming dominated by non-farm uses. However, the creation and ongoing preservation of the ALR distinguishes the situation of fringe areas within British Columbia from peri-urban regions elsewhere. The ALR boundary significantly reduces the creep of urban uses into the rural hinterland through agricultural land preservation policies, as well as clear boundary delineation between urban and agricultural land uses (Newman et al., 2015). While the peri-urban fringe is still present in areas throughout British Columbia, as showcased through the Backlands Policy, the threat of other uses overshadowing agricultural production is reduced due to the ongoing protection of the ALR by the provincial government.

2.2. Multilevel Governance

Instead of one centralized authority being the sole decision maker, multilevel governance spreads power and decision making across multiple government agencies (Hooghe & Marks, 2003). Unlike typical government structures which rely on power concentrated at a specific level, multilevel governance introduces a different power dynamic (Curry, 2018). Governance can become non-hierarchical, with power dispersed across multiple heterarchical government levels. Although there are no set parameters for a multilevel governance structure, beyond the fact that power must be dispersed across multiple levels of government, there are two general structures for multilevel governance and how power can be dispersed. The first structure working within existing Canadian political systems and the second moving beyond fixed levels of government to a more flexible model.

The first type of multilevel governance builds upon the current Canadian political governance structure, which is broadly based on federalism, where there are a limited number of government bodies working at different levels (i.e. federal, provincial, and municipal) (Curry, 2018). This multilevel governance structure is primarily concerned with spreading power over different government levels, but still containing each level to a specific function (Hooghe & Marks, 2003). This means that while two levels of government can work on a policy, they remain within their government organization and structure. Because of the fixed governing structure, intersection or overlapping relationships between different government bodies is limited, especially intersection between governments at different tiers. For example, both provincial and municipal governments can work on a specific policy together, but the two governing bodies would

remain as separate entities instead of joining together. While the first type of multilevel governance works well in the Canadian context, as it operates within existing political structures, there are still rigid boundaries between different government bodies which do not invite cross-communication or collaboration.

The second type of multilevel governance approaches the boundaries between different government bodies much differently (Curry, 2018). The second type of multilevel governance breaks away from the federalism structure, and instead envisions multiple jurisdictions which are flexible and function specific (Hooghe & Marks, 2003). These jurisdictions can change depending on the nature of the policy or political issue and can overlap at different tiers of government, instead of being limited to territorial or tier distinctions. The second type of multilevel governance has typically been evident at the local level, as municipal governments tend to be more flexible and cover a wider range of services when compared to federal or provincial government agencies, which are more siloed and focused on a single theme (i.e. Ministry of Agriculture). While the second type of multilevel governance allows for greater flexibility and communication between different levels of government, it can become complicated due to the lack of structure (Curry, 2018). Unlike the first type of multilevel governance, which relies on clearly defined government bodies, the second type advocates for government organization to be based of policy needs or political issues.

Municipal governments in British Columbia can respond to, and benefit from, the second type of multilevel governance which allows for greater flexibility and collaboration (Curry, 2018). However, the current governance structures are still very hierarchical, especially at the provincial government level. The province's ingrained governance structure limits how far multilevel governance can go in terms of decentralizing power and restructuring governing bodies. However, unlike the existing governance structures which are rigid, multilevel governance can increase collaboration between governments without requiring a complete overhaul of the governing structure (Benz, 2021). Multilevel governance can move beyond the two general approaches and become a matrix, categorized by degree of hierarchical structure and policy transfer between governing bodies. In British Columbia, multilevel governance can operate within the existing political system, but have increased flexibility for policy collaboration (Curry, 2018).

This change needs to come from the local government level, as municipal governments already have more flexible systems in place and can more easily transition (Curry, 2018). However, these changes require support from the provincial government to be successful, as collaboration needs to happen between two governing bodies. If there is tension between the existing, hierarchical government structure and movement towards more flexible approaches to governance, it can result in increased difficulty when implementing policies as well as increased frustration at the local government level. As local governments are expected by their constituents to implement land use policies, the inability to affect policy development due to provincial regulations becomes frustrating. The relationship between provincial and municipal governments is increasingly important when creating land use policies within the peri-urban area, as lack of communication or collaboration between governing structures has the potential to exacerbate the already prominent land use issues.

2.2.1. Multilevel Governance – Policy Creation and Coordination Impacts in Peri-Urban Areas

While unique depending on locational context, peri-urban areas share the common issue that they are generally not considered to have intrinsic value (Aalbers & Eckerberg, 2013). Peri-urban areas are usually perceived as a solution for urban problems, extra land waiting for development and expansion. These perceptions of peri-urban areas highlight the need for agricultural land use policies which protect the land base and attempt to minimize land speculation. However, the complexity within peri-urban areas can create issues with policy creation, the locational differences between each peri-urban fringe need to be reflected in each policy (Torres-Lima et al., 2022). Peri-urban areas are known for their complexity, and are heavily influenced by the adjacent urban area. General land use policies and best practices fail to capture the site-specific needs of the peri-urban area. These policies have traditionally focused on limited land uses to preserve the existing landscapes and do not adequately address the complexities of the peri-urban fringe (Burton & Wilson, 2006).

Local governments are a key element to creating policies in peri-urban areas, as they are better suited to balance the various needs - such as economic, agricultural, and cultural - within land use policies (Aalbers & Eckerberg, 2013). The key barrier many local governments face when trying to create innovative policies is the lack of

collaboration at the provincial level and inability to fully control the land base. In a British Columbian context, the provincial governing body of the ALR, the ALC, is often viewed as rigid (Ayers, 2023). The ALR legislation is unable to evolve to respond to new agricultural land use pressures or needs. In contrast, local government policies are much more flexible, can respond to the specific needs of that local community, and more quickly respond to local pressures or land use conflicts (Torres-Lima et al., 2022).

Policy innovation, which can be defined as new policy development processes, tools, or practices that result in better problem solving of complex issues (Brookfield Institute, 2018), also modifies the policy regime and can result in significant institutional change (Benz, 2021). Peri-urban areas often require innovative policy in order to fully capture the range of dynamics, uses, and pressures (Torres-Lima et al., 2022). While local governments have the ability to better address the needs of the peri-urban area, they lack other resources often found at provincial levels. In British Columbia, local governments have been known as “creatures of the province”, as they are created and regulated by the provincial government (Young, 2013). For example, the *Local Government Act*, the overarching legislation which gives local governments their power to create and implement land use planning tools such as zoning, was created and is amended by the provincial government (Ministry of Municipal Affairs, 2023). Many local governments lack the power to introduce innovative policies, especially within the ALR which has an overarching provincial decision-making body.

Local governments also lack economic resources which would aid in policy creation and implementation (Young, 2013). Provincial and federal governments have access to the tax bases which produce the greatest revenue, such as sales tax and income tax. Whereas local governments mostly rely on property tax which typically results in lower revenues when compared to the provincial taxes. Due to the economic and authoritative limitations that local governments experience, they can work with higher tier government bodies under the multilevel governance structure to increase access to resources (Galvin, 2019). Because multilevel governance advocates in the decentralization of power, it provides local governments the ability to introduce locally-specific policy while having the support of higher tiered governing bodies that have more power and economic resources (Aalbers & Eckerberg, 2013).

Dividing power throughout different levels of government can also produce more locational-specific policies, which is especially important in peri-urban areas. Multilevel governance, especially the second type, advocates for policy creation to be completed by experts in that field or location rather than based on which governing body has jurisdiction (Maggetti & Trein, 2019). Although multilevel governance, in a British Columbian context, is more likely to follow the first type of multilevel governance centred around existing governance structures (Curry, 2018). Providing more power and resources to local governments can result in policies that better address the challenges and opportunities in a specific location.

Some concerns regarding multilevel governance include inconsistency between different municipalities and the short horizon for policy creation due to the frequent change in local government councils (Aalbers & Eckerberg, 2013). However, British Columbia's current political structure and realities for multilevel governance may reduce these concerns (Curry, 2018). Because of the provincial government's tendency to favour hierarchical government structures, multilevel governance will still operate within the established tiers. Meaning that the provincial government will still have influence and some degree of control in policy creation, resulting in increased consistency between municipalities and more certainty regarding long-range planning and policy creation.

2.2.2. Relationship between Multilevel Governance and Perceptions of Peri-Urban Areas

As outlined above, for multilevel governance to be successfully implemented in British Columbia requires trust and collaboration from local and provincial levels of government. When correctly used, multilevel governance can be used as a tool to increase problem solving as it can make sense of the interaction between different levels of government as well as manage the different priorities surrounding land uses (Maggetti & Trein, 2019). However, multilevel governance operating within existing government structures, which is argued to be the case for British Columbia (Curry, 2018), needs to account for how different perceptions of agricultural land use affect policy creation and implementation. Different perceptions between governing bodies can result in misalignments of policies and practices, as well as ineffective flows of resources and knowledge between governments (Helfgott et al., 2023). To mitigate differences, there

needs to be ongoing collaboration and communication between governing bodies during policy creation and subsequent implementation.

Intergovernmental relationships can be a useful tool when approaching complex policy issues, such as policies within peri-urban areas which try to balance competing land uses. Interjurisdictional collaboration can lead to innovative policy creation through better harnessing the strengths different levels of government have (Maggetti & Trein, 2019). At the provincial level, the ALC has displayed a consistent vision for agricultural land use, that agricultural land should be preserved and protected for future use. However, the ALC's ability to dedicate resources to agricultural policy development has fluctuated depending on which political party is in power. Municipal governments have the ability to better tailor agricultural land use policies, balancing the different land use needs and locational realities, but are subject to increased public scrutiny (Buxton & Butt, 2020). The below sections outline the role that provincial, municipal, and public perceptions of peri-urban areas have in multilevel governance. With a specific focus on agricultural land use policy creation within peri-urban spaces.

The Role Provincial Perceptions of Peri-Urban Areas Play in Multilevel Governance

Provincial governments within a multilevel governance context have two main strengths, more resources and longer-term policy outlooks when compared to municipal governments (Aalbers & Eckerberg, 2013). However, in an ALC specific context, which is an independent administrative tribunal operating within the Ministry of Agriculture (Agricultural Land Commission, 2023), the resources allocated to the long-term protection of British Columbia's agricultural land base varies depending on the political party in power. While the ALC has had a consistent, long term, vision for policy creation and land use planning within the ALR, the number of resources provided by the provincial government has varied over time. The below section will outline how different political parties have not only influenced the ALC's perception of agricultural land use, but also the ability and willingness to collaborate with other government jurisdictions.

While power struggles and changes in provincial majority governments over time may have led to certain modifications in the structure or governance of the NDP's 1973 *Land Commission Act*, the idea that the ALR should be protected from urban development has been an entrenched theme held by the ALC regardless of which

provincial political party had a majority government (Newman et al., 2015). Although political parties have the authority to amend ALR legislation, the ALC operates as an independent administrative tribunal, autonomous from the provincial government (Runka, 2006b). Regardless of the ruling political party, the ALC has maintained a commitment to strong policies which protect the ALR land base for agricultural use (B. E. Smith, 2012). Even when the center-right Liberal government restructured the ALC in 2001, to promote regional responsiveness and deregulation through delegation of decision-making power to local governments, the ALC continued to uphold its ideals regarding farmland protection.

While the NDP held strong ideals and best practices for land use policy in large-scale agricultural settings when creating the *Land Commission Act*, the legislation did not explicitly address land use policies in peri-urban areas (Rawson, 1976). By applying uniform land use policies to all areas of the province, the *Land Commission Act* failed to account for the inherent complexities within peri-urban environments (Huang & Drescher, 2015). Although policies protecting agricultural land use may benefit rural areas of British Columbia, peri-urban areas require different policies to accommodate the multifaceted uses that occur in these spaces (Olsson et al., 2016). Presently, the provincial government's best land-use practices and guides suggest establishing buffers between urban and rural land uses. However, these buffers typically focus on physical barriers, such as fences or roadways, and do not consider mixed-use properties which are becoming increasingly common in peri-urban areas (Newman et al., 2015). As a result, the current agricultural land use policies, focusing solely on protecting the agricultural land base, lack the flexibility necessary for peri-urban areas to preserve agriculture and support the local food system in non-traditional ways.

The relationship between the *Land Commission Act* (now known as the *Agricultural Land Commission Act*) and local government policies further highlights this agricultural land use stance, focused on protection of the land base. Although the *Land Commission Act* allowed municipalities to create their own policies for farmland within the ALR, in cases of inconsistency between provincial and municipal policies the *Land Commission Act* takes precedence (B. E. Smith, 2012). Despite attempts by the Liberal Party to deregulate elements of the ALC in 2001, the ability for the *Land Commission Act* to supersede municipal policy was never removed. Furthermore, although the ALC had the power to delegate decision-making authority to local governments, it only entered

into one delegated agreement, which has since been terminated (Commission, 2021). The provincial perception of agricultural land has largely centered on the importance of food production but often overlooks the significance of flexibility required in peri-urban areas. This oversight is partly attributed to both provincial and municipal governments not fully understanding the socio-spatial complexities of the peri-urban environment (McClintock et al., 2021).

The Role Municipal Perceptions of Peri-Urban Areas Play in Multilevel Governance

Administration of peri-urban areas located within the ALR, such as the Backlands Policy area, are under the ALC's control; however, municipal governments play a vital role in agricultural land use planning and protection (Zink et al., 2022). While municipal governance of urban agriculture has changed over time, whether through informal oversight or formal regulation, the rising interest in local food production has resulted in increased formal regulation in more recent years (McClintock et al., 2021). Municipalities have more opportunities and challenges in policy creation when compared to provincial regulatory bodies (Dollery & Crase, 2004). How a municipality navigates these opportunities and challenges directly affects policy creation and what a municipal government deems as important.

Since the 1990s there has been growing public interest in municipal government (Allmendinger et al., 2003). Concerns regarding accountability, management, efficiency, and service delivery have driven the public's interest to advocate for a better municipal governing system which better reflects their needs. These concerns and public interest have resulted in increased transparency at the municipal level. Elected officials are more closely scrutinized over potential personal or financial gain during decision making (Campbell & Marshall, 2000). Further, there is less reliance on 'professional power', relying on staff members to make policy or planning decisions based on their expertise. Instead, decision making power lies with elected officials, as it is perceived by the public that they will have more influence over elected members of the municipal government (Allmendinger et al., 2003).

The decrease in professional power and increased reliance on elected officials being the sole decision maker has had a significant impact on the planning function of municipal governments. Municipal government intervention in private property can be

perceived by the public as a threat to land values and, by extension, personal wealth (Higgins & Allmendinger, 1999). There has been mounting pressure on municipal planning departments to avoid policies that would negatively impact the economic value of land. While the pressure to avoid planning policies that would economically impact land values are also prevalent at the provincial government level, increased public scrutiny at the municipal level can heavily influence planning decisions (Dollery & Crase, 2004). Municipalities govern a much smaller area than provincial bodies, generally resulting in less complex operations and increased transparency with the public. Further, the public is more likely to have increased direct contact with municipal elected officials when compared to provincial governments. Although increased public contact often results in increased scrutiny and pressure, it can also result in planning and policy that more accurately reflects public values.

Food policies, decisions regarding the way food is produced, obtained, consumed and disposed of, are a prime example of how closer relationships between municipal governments and the public can be beneficial. Because of reliance on the global food system, the majority of food policies have typically fallen within national or global policy jurisdictions (Mansfield & Mendes, 2013). While having national or global oversight of food policies focused on the global food system makes the most operational sense, these policies fail to account for local values or needs (Mullinix et al., 2018). The rise in local food system popularity has resulted in food policies becoming more prevalent in municipal government jurisdictions and land use planning practices (Mansfield & Mendes, 2013).

Local food policies and policy creation are important tools in protecting the agricultural land base and promoting its use for agricultural production. Agricultural planning has complex links to broader policy considerations, such as transportation, economic development, ecological sustainability, social equity, and cultural diversity (American Planning Association, 2007). Agricultural land use planning, especially in British Columbia, has the added complexity of multiple levels of government involved in the planning process. Not only can local food policies help identify and balance the needs of agricultural land use to these other policy considerations, but can also include multiple levels of government and their priorities into a cohesive plan. A comprehensive approach to agricultural land use and food systems often results in better protection of

the agricultural land base, as it can better manage the various land use complexities that agricultural land experiences instead of focusing on one issue (B. Smith, 1998).

Often municipalities will focus on the land use planning topics which are historically familiar to them and more directly within their sole jurisdiction (Zink et al., 2022). In more recent years there has been a shift in how municipalities view agricultural land use and protection, from limiting the impacts agricultural production on urban areas to protecting agricultural land from urban redevelopment (McClintock et al., 2021). This shift highlights how municipal perceptions of agricultural land use still influence how these lands are protected, especially in sensitive areas such as the peri-urban fringe. Municipalities have incorporated long-range protective and supportive policies surrounding agricultural land use within overarching planning documents such as Official Community Plans, in part due to recent public interest and concern over food systems. However, they still struggle to translate high-level policies into implementable tools such as zoning bylaws (Zink et al., 2022). Especially when the multi-jurisdictional complexity of food system planning is combined with the high number of stakeholders typically involved.

Part of the disconnect between high-level policies and implementation can be attributed to the difficulty of planning within the peri-urban fringe. As the peri-urban is neither urban or rural, municipalities struggle to create policy that can balance competing uses (Huang & Drescher, 2015). Further, many municipal perceptions of land use and associated planning best practices focus on what is considered “highest and best use”, valuing the land base solely on projected economic return. As agricultural use land values are almost always less than competing land uses, such as residential or industrial, focusing land use planning on “highest and best use” prevents agricultural land from being considered a priority. The very nature of the peri-urban fringe already invites land use conflicts and competition (Gallent, 2006b).

The growth of urban areas, and the conflicting land use considerations associated with that growth, have been a concern for planning practice and policy since the 19th century (Buxton & Butt, 2020). Greenbelts and urban containment boundaries, such as the ALR, have become common, yet contentious, land use planning tools to try and contain urban sprawl. Municipal governments have grappled with planning within the

urban containment boundary, whether permitted land uses should preserve the existing conditions, or if a greater range of multi-functional uses should be introduced.

For peri-urban areas, integrated policy thinking, which incorporates a pluralistic view of land use planning from various policy sectors, can better address the competition between different uses (Buxton & Butt, 2020). However, municipalities would need to shift land use planning practices to allow a range of uses in addition to the existing landscapes. Due to the threat of urban development overshadowing agriculture or green landscapes, planning in the peri-urban fringe has been limited to protection of land uses instead of land use innovation. However, multi-functional uses within the peri-urban area have been successful in the non-urban framework. For example, agricultural lands can provide non-market benefits such as wildlife habitat or aesthetically valued landscapes. Applying the same concepts under the non-urban framework to multi-functional urban uses could be successful. Municipal land use planning and policy has the ability to better balance the needs of urban and agricultural land uses within the peri-urban fringe; however, to achieve this, the way in which peri-urban policies approach conflicting land uses needs to shift to an integrated policy thinking approach instead of focusing on traditional planning practices.

The Effect of Public Perceptions Regarding Peri-Urban Areas and Multilevel Governance

Due to the complexities of the public's perception of peri-urban land use, land use policies within peri-urban areas need to accommodate a wider range of values besides agricultural land use. However, the recent rise of public interest in local food production does provide more focused values for future policy creation. Although the initial creation of the ALR was controversial, public opposition slowly turned into acceptance and then support (Runka, 1977). The twenty-first century and the rise of awareness of environmental and security issues related to global food systems brought further public interest in food production, especially for urban dwellers seeking a greater connection and understanding as to where food comes from (Newman et al., 2015).

Knowing where food comes from and how food is produced, environmental sustainability, community connection, reconnection with the land, and a sense of place have all been factors in the recent rise of public interest in local food systems (Newman et al., 2015). Within the City of Richmond, the public interest in local food systems

resulted in the creation of the Farming First Strategy in 2021 to respond to current and future issues, trends and challenges facing the agricultural industry (City of Richmond, 2021). While food production in peri-urban areas will likely have limited capacity to support large-scale food production, like public perceptions of food production in peri-urban areas, the importance of these systems go beyond food security (Valley & Wittman, 2019). Education and increased public perceptions of food systems often lead to progressive food-related policy at municipal and provincial levels of government which can in turn help better protect the local food system as a whole.

Land use patterns often encapsulate more than one value perceived as important to an individual. While rural land use can provide space for agricultural production, a wider, less tangible, range of values is often also associated (Ives & Kendal, 2013). Both tangible and intangible values can be associated with rural land use, therefore a landscape's value to an individual can greatly differ depending on what the individual deems important (Zube, 1987). The way in which rural landscapes are valued is largely due to what people do in them. Rural landscapes are often perceived as important as they provide non-market benefits such as pleasing aesthetics and natural beauty, dominated by greenspace with little human occupation (Ives & Kendal, 2013). Rural landscapes can also be perceived as being important as a place for leisure and activity, greenspace also provides opportunities for nature trails and parks. Finally, rural landscapes can be valued by the public for ecological purposes, providing wildlife habitats which have been eliminated from urban centres.

Rural land uses are often associated with positive values, whether that be tangible values such as food production or intangible values such as aesthetics or recreation. In comparison, urban land use has had a more complicated relationship with the public and their perceptions of it. Safety, aesthetics and attractiveness, or uniqueness are frequent values the public seeks in urban spaces; however, determining if an urban space is perceived as valuable depends on how an individual perceives that urban environment (Porzi et al., 2015). The number of sidewalks, evidence of graffiti, or maintenance of buildings can all be contributing factors towards the public's perception of safety in urban landscapes. Due to increased physical factors in urban landscapes, which can foster different perceptions depending on the individual, measuring the public's perception of them becomes much more complicated (Wei et al., 2022).

Similar to the public's perception of urban land uses, the perception of peri-urban areas is often more complicated to define when compared to urban or rural land uses due to the multitude of factors and values that could be attributed to that space. The blurred boundaries between urban and rural land use results in a multitude of different values of the peri-urban fringe held by the public; therefore, effective land use policy in peri-urban areas needs to anticipate what is valued by the public due to their perceptions (Ives & Kendal, 2013). Further, like rural and urban landscapes, the way in which a land use is perceived is dependent on what an individual wants to do in that space (Zube, 1987). Determining what is generally perceived as important in rural landscapes can be straightforward as rural land use is less complex. The added layer of individual values in urban or peri-urban spaces becomes immensely more difficult due to how complex that space already is (Wei et al., 2022). Not only is food production often identified as an important component of peri-urban areas; but aesthetics, environmental protection, recreation, and educational values are also held in high esteem by the public. Public perceptions of food often go beyond food security, especially in the peri-urban fringe where there are blurred boundaries between urban and rural land use, to encapsulate a broader range of values and what the public deems important. Determining how important food production is when compared to the other values becomes the challenge.

Increasing the public's perception of agricultural land use and interest in the local food system is an example of the non-market benefits that come with agricultural production in peri-urban areas. Non-market benefits, also referred to as non-trade benefits or non-commodity goods, are the positive, often non-tangible, outcomes which support broader goals beyond economic trade (McCarthy, 2005). For example, smaller-scaled farms, which are less intensive but more diverse, are more likely to provide valued aesthetic landscapes or wildlife habitat when compared to large-scale agricultural operations. Non-market benefits, in an agricultural context, emphasize positive externalities from agricultural production which cannot be bought or sold like traditional commodities. In the peri-urban fringe, these non-market benefits become increasingly important as public perceptions of agricultural land, especially in close proximity to the urban core, often goes beyond the tangible commodities produced.

Regardless of why public perceptions and interest in local food production has been increasing in recent years, these perceptions are driving farmland protection within peri-urban areas (Newman et al., 2015). In the Metro Vancouver context, there is

increased public support to limit how much of the ALR is removed for development of non-farm uses (Malatest, 2018). A provincial study completed by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food in 2018 found that British Columbians are generally supportive of farmland diversification to economically support farmers. Farmland diversification can include the introduction of non-farm uses into agricultural land, such as agri-tourism which is farm-based tourism like corn mazes or harvest festivals (Vaugeois et al., 2017). However, this diversification should help support agricultural production instead of overshadowing, which typically occurs when urban use is permitted within the peri-urban fringe (Spataru et al., 2020). The outcome of this agricultural land diversification, known as multifunctional agriculture, is discussed next.

2.3. Multifunctional Agriculture

Multifunctional agriculture, the ability to support multiple different land uses on one parcel, is a land use planning concept that can capture the realities of peri-urban areas where dedicated agricultural land uses may not have been seen as the highest and best use of land. In agricultural land use planning academic theory, multifunctional agriculture can introduce different land uses to achieve the perception that agricultural land has a higher value (Spataru et al., 2020).

In most municipalities, the prevailing land use approach in peri-urban areas is to create a clear separation or maximize the distance between urban and rural land uses as co-existence has historically led to conflict. However, the concept of multifunctional agriculture is challenging this traditional perspective by presenting a new paradigm in managing the urban/agricultural interface. Multifunctional agriculture proposes that farming can go beyond its traditional role of food production and also provide non-traditional benefits such as community education and raising awareness about the importance of farmland (Wilson, 2007). By promoting the idea that agriculture can have multiple roles in supporting communities, multifunctional agriculture has the potential to foster a greater understanding and appreciation of farmland's significance within urban environments. This could lead to improved public perception and support for agricultural land use, bolstering efforts to protect such lands from encroachment and development pressures.

Peri-urban areas, while under constant development pressures due to the proximity of the urban centre, are the opportune location to support diverse activities on farmland (Olsson et al., 2016). Large-scale agricultural land, located further away from the urban core, should be protected for farm use. However, peri-urban areas, which already function differently than rural farmland, could be sites of more unique land use policies. Multifunctional agriculture seeks to go beyond what is traditionally considered farming to include the integration of “other” land uses and functions (Zasada, 2011). Multifunctionality generally refers to the non-market benefits of agriculture and agricultural policies (Cocklin et al., 2006). In this model, what can publicly be perceived as important in agricultural areas such as esthetics, recreation, or environmental protection are intertwined with food production (Zasada, 2011). Scholars have noted that multifunctional agriculture is a “post-productive agricultural model” that is intended for local food systems in urban areas, not industrial scale farming (Spataru et al., 2020). This concept is integral when planning the peri-urban fringe.

The productivist era for agricultural production in North American placed emphasis on large-scale food production and protecting rural lands for agricultural use (Burton & Wilson, 2006). In comparison, the post-productivist era for agricultural production has had to grapple with a reduced emphasis on rural lands for food production, with the emphasis instead placed on these lands as a place of consumption. Recreation, environmental conservation, and urban development emerge as alternative uses for rural landscapes, which can directly conflict with agricultural production (Lowe et al., 1993). The post-productive agricultural model has had to diversify farm use in order to stay competitive, such as conservation land management or the introduction of non-farm use (e.g. agri-tourism). The shift from the productivist to post-productivist eras highlights how the shift in public perceptions can directly affect land use. With rural landscapes primarily reserved for food production, the productivist era saw policies that protected the agricultural land base. Whereas the post-productivist era introduced new values for rural land, resulting in changes to agricultural practices to stay competitive.

Multifunctional agriculture attempts to bridge the gap between the productivist and post-productivist eras. Instead of defining these eras as linear, which may not fully encapsulate the diversity or complexity between the two models, multifunctional agriculture acknowledges that productivist and post-productivist eras can occur simultaneously (Burton & Wilson, 2006). Rural landscapes can be reserved for intensive

and large-scale agricultural production under the productivist agricultural model. Whereas peri-urban areas, areas in close proximity to urban centres, can allow other values to be introduced to farmland as experienced in the post-productivist agricultural model. Allowing both eras to exist simultaneously can better portray the realities of modern agricultural production, which needs both protection and flexibility depending on locational factors. Further, understanding what values the public may attribute to different types of agricultural land, such as food production under the productivist model, can aid in policy creation and implementation by providing a base understanding of core values.

Unlike rural landscapes which are focused on large-scale agricultural production, peri-urban areas are often too small or too costly to support the same type of agricultural practices (Olsson et al., 2016). Multifunctional agriculture seeks to diversify peri-urban areas by introducing supplementary uses onto farmland, which can help increase what the public values for these spaces (Roberts et al., 2022). Allowing natural green spaces in addition to agricultural production, such as hedgerows or vegetation buffers between urban and rural land uses, provides refuge for wildlife. As urban cores can densify quickly, wildlife habitats are often destroyed. Preserving greenspace in peri-urban areas helps recover some of the habitat lost to development. By locating lesser values, from an economic perspective of highest and best use of land, in peri-urban areas there are increased opportunities for the public to perceive this area as useful. While food production or wildlife habitat alone could be perceived as less valuable than urban development, the addition of multiple “lesser” values into the area may increase perceptions.

Multifunctional agriculture can also provide less tangible benefits to peri-urban areas. Peri-urban greenspace can be perceived as contributing to the livability of urban centres through providing spaces for recreation, relaxation, aesthetic values, and perceived improvement in air quality (Roberts et al., 2022). However, multifunctional agricultural policies and planning practices need to be cognisant that not every value held by the public is compatible. While food production and wildlife habitats can be viewed as beneficial in peri-urban areas, these uses could conflict with recreation or aesthetic values of peri-urban areas. To be successful in the long term, multifunctional agriculture policies need to be able to respond to public perceptions and what is valued in peri-urban areas. These policies, like peri-urban areas, need to be unique to the

specific area they are intended to apply to. Planning in these areas needs to allow for flexibility and creativity instead of trying to force conventional policies onto an unconventional area.

As noted above, while there can be strong public perceptions of food production which influence municipal perception and planning practices, the complexities of peri-urban areas and trying to balance two competing land uses present a challenge to most provincial and municipal governments (Gallent, 2006b). The core principles of multifunctional agriculture; such as flexibility, smaller-scale production, and collaboration, can help guide food policies to better reflect the realities of peri-urban areas (Spataru et al., 2020). While multifunctional agriculture can fragment agricultural lands because it allows non-farm uses to enter rural lands, in peri-urban areas or in areas already impacted by urban uses, this model can help highlight the importance of agriculture without alienating other uses. Peri-urban areas play an integral, albeit untraditional, role in food systems protection and policy through educating and increasing perceptions of agriculture (Opitz et al., 2016).

Provincial and municipal policies in the peri-urban area often struggle to coordinate competing land uses, leading to one land use overshadowing another (Gallent, 2006b). This fragmentation of policies can lead to competition and conflict between urban and rural land uses within the peri-urban fringe (Zasada, 2011). Multifunctional agriculture has the ability to address the competing land uses, and perceptions of what is important in peri-urban areas, to respond to pressure while seeking opportunities to balance the complexities which operate within the peri-urban environment. Although multifunctional agriculture is not intended for rural planning, it can be an important policy tool in harnessing the non-market agricultural benefits from peri-urban areas.

Unlike large-scale farming practices that focus on increasing the scale of production, agricultural production within peri-urban areas needs to be scaled down due to land availability and pricing barriers (Olsson et al., 2016). When properly implemented, multifunctional agriculture offers additional economic opportunities for adapting and modernizing peri-urban farming (Valley & Wittman, 2019). These opportunities include direct product marketing to adjacent urban areas, on-farm diversification, and offering services related to education and healthcare. By

encouraging multifunctional approaches, agricultural production in peri-urban areas can maintain economic viability while also serving as a competitive alternative to urban development.

2.4. Conceptual Framework Summary

While peri-urban areas are often places of competition between different land uses and perceptions, these areas have the opportunity to become places where both urban and rural land uses can interconnect to create truly unique landscapes (Gallent, 2006b). Perceptions of peri-urban areas generally encapsulate more than just food production due to the blurred boundaries between urban and rural land use, especially public perceptions of these areas which tend to also value aesthetics or recreation (Ives & Kendal, 2013). However, while public perceptions go beyond the tangible food production benefits of peri-urban areas, these perceptions can often lead to stronger agricultural policies across the entire food system for a region. Increased public perceptions regarding the importance of agricultural land use within peri-urban areas can help push municipal planning priorities towards agricultural protection by bringing food protection into the political arena (McClintock et al., 2021).

Local governments are seen as crucial in developing agricultural land use policies for peri-urban areas due to their ability to balance different land use priorities, but they face barriers such as a lack of resources and limited control over the land base. Multilevel governance, which invites local governments to work with higher-tier governing bodies to access resources, can be used as a tool to introduce locally-specific and innovative policies. While multilevel governance can enable increased collaboration between local and higher-tier government bodies, multilevel governments need to consider how different perceptions of agricultural land use, specifically at the provincial, municipal, and public level, affect policy creation and implementation.

As showcased through the creation of the ALR and subsequent administration of the *Agricultural Land Commission Act* by the ALC, the provincial government often takes a stronger protectionist approach to agricultural land use planning than most municipalities (B. E. Smith, 2012a). However, this protectionist approach lacks the flexibility peri-urban areas need in order to balance competing land uses (Huang & Drescher, 2015).

Multifunctional agriculture is a planning concept that can be used at both provincial and municipal levels of government to go beyond traditional land use planning, which often is geared towards either urban or rural land use best practices, to create policies that capture the reality of peri-urban areas (Spataru et al., 2020). Moreover, multifunctional agriculture as a concept captures many of the intangible factors of peri-urban areas that the public often perceives as important, such as aesthetics or education (Zasada, 2011), further pushing for better food system policies at different levels of government.

Although the Backlands Policy was not created with the specific intent to embody the multifunctional agriculture planning framework, this thesis argues that the Policy was an early example of multifunctional agriculture by allowing both religious institutional and agricultural use on the same property. However, as explored in this thesis, the Backlands Policy made crucial missteps in both the creation and implementation of multifunctional agriculture that has mainly resulted in lackluster agricultural production within the Policy area. The intent of this study is to highlight what elements of the Backlands Policy were and were not successful to further the development of multifunctional agriculture literature and policy creation.

Chapter 3. Research Methodology and Design

The primary aim of this study is to examine the importance of multilevel government collaboration when creating and implementing multifunctional agricultural policies in peri-urban areas. Using the lens of the Backlands Policy, this study explores how the lack of collaboration between the ALC and the City resulted in a multifunctional agricultural policy which failed to protect agricultural land use. A mixed methods approach was utilized. First, I used archival and document analysis by examining government documentation, including informal notes and emails, as well as grey literature to gain a solid baseline understanding of the Backlands Policy. The archival and document analysis also provided insight to government and public priorities pertaining to agricultural land use at a certain point in time. Second, I conducted semi-structured interviews with the ALC, City of Richmond, and religious institution representatives, in order to gain first-hand experiences and perceptions of the Backlands Policy. Combining more traditional document analysis with semi-structured interviews provides a unique methodological framework for understanding how collaboration between different governing bodies, or lack thereof, can affect policy creation and implementation.

3.1. Archival and Document Analysis

The archival and document analysis method focused on Backlands Policy documents to both gain background knowledge on the Policy's history in advance of conducting interviews, as well as establish government and public priorities surrounding agricultural land use. It is important to note that, while this study is seeking to determine how multilevel governance and collaboration between governing bodies can affect policy creation and implementation, archival and document analysis cannot directly provide that insight. Archival methods, the study of historical documents and other resources, are a great tool to supplement other research strategies (Ramsey et al., 2010). This study utilized archival research methods to identify certain land use priorities at a specific point in time, then used the data collected through interviews to ascertain perceptions of agricultural land use and how those perceptions influence intergovernmental relationships.

In the context of this study, the archival and document analysis method was essential in creating an accurate timeline of the Backlands Policy. Because the documents were primarily collected from the ALC and City, the majority of the information was contained in staff reports, letters, and meeting minutes. The formal formatting of these types of documents meant that almost every piece of information was dated. Further, every title of the ALC and City documents clearly outlined the topic in each document, and a background section was generally included. This information was used to create an accurate timeline of the Backlands Policy and changes over time. Although I needed to supplement the historic research of the Backlands Policy with current data and research, the archival method provides excellent insight into the agricultural capability of Backlands Policy area prior to establishment of the Policy and how the Policy changed over time.

The majority of the information collected through the archival and document analysis method was not able to directly determine different perceptions of agricultural land use nor the relationship between different government levels. The staff reports, letters, and meeting minutes from the ALC and the City were all public-facing, meaning that anyone can have access to the documents and information contained within (Information and Privacy Commission New South Wales, 2020). These documents, while containing accurate information regarding the Backlands Policy, such as technical studies and proposed policy directions, did not contain personal or institutional comment on the benefits or shortcomings of agricultural land use. Although there were several internal ALC and City documents, meaning these documents are not made readily available to the public, there was not enough internal communication to accurately extract perceptions of agricultural land use or relationship between the City and ALC.

Instead, the data collected during the archival and document analysis method was able to provide insight into the ALC and City's priorities regarding agricultural land use at a certain point in time. The staff reports, letters, and meeting minutes often contained different options for the Commission and City of Richmond Council to consider. The staff reports would contain the ALC and City staff's opinion on which option was preferred, while the Commission and City Council's thoughts and opinions regarding the options were captured in meeting minutes and decision letters. The ALC and City's priorities surrounding agricultural land use were extracted based on staff's

discussion of each option, as well as how the Commission and City Council chose to proceed.

Additionally, while the archival and document analysis method was not used to determine the exact nature of the relationship between the ALC and City, such as being collaborative or more segregated into the different governing structures, the analysis did give insight into the frequency of communication. Because many of the documents were letters or faxes between the ALC and City, each containing a date, the communication amount between the two governments could be tracked. The information within the letters or faxes was still presented as if the document was public-facing, and gave little insight into the true nature of the relationship, but it did provide insight as to how often communication between the two organizations occurred. A table outlining the number of correspondence packages (which could contain letters, faxes, or other forms of communication between the ALC and the City) per year is provided in Table 1.1.1. An explanation as to what information is contained within a correspondence package is outlined below.

Table 3.1 Number of Correspondence Packages, Per Year, Between the ALC and the City

Year	Number of Correspondence Packages Between the ALC and the City	Year	Number of Correspondence Packages Between the ALC and the City
1985	3	2004	0
1986	1	2005	2
1987	6	2006	0
1988	3	2007	0
1989	0	2008	0
1990	8	2009	1
1991	4	2010	0
1992	3	2011	1
1993	2	2012	0
1994	7	2013	0
1995	2	2014	1
1996	9	2015	2
1997	11	2016	4
1998	5	2017	6
1999	3	2018	0
2000	8	2019	2
2001	1	2020	4

2002	0	2021	3
2003	0		

While this study notes that the actual number of communications between the ALC and the City could be much higher than the numbers outlined in the above table, as the numbers are based on a single correspondence package which could contain a number of different documents between the two agencies, this analysis provides a general understanding of the communication between the ALC and the City. Further analysis regarding the amount of communication between the two governing agencies is provided in Chapter 4.

In order to gain access to the provincial and municipal documentation, a Freedom of Information request was submitted to the ALC and the City asking for all available documents, including memorandums and reports, related to the Backlands Policy. I also collected application approvals for the lands developed under the Backlands Policy which were available online via the City of Richmond’s website. I chose to submit separate requests to the ALC and City of Richmond for documents related to the Backlands Policy as each organization has separate internal documents, external minutes, and decisions relating to the Policy. Finally, grey literature sources such as newspaper articles and online media content were used to provide more personal context than what is contained within government-created documentation.

Table 3.1.2 below displays the type and quantity of the data collected and subsequently analyzed. For the purpose of this study, a Correspondence Package was categorized as the main correspondence, such as a letter or memorandum, as well as all the attachments related to that correspondence. For example, letters between the ALC and the City would often contain all previous correspondence, including letters or decisions, related to that topic as attachments. To create an accurate timeline, as well as avoid analyzing a document multiple times, all attachments remained with the “parent” document. Whether a Correspondence Package was classified as an ALC or City document was also reliant on the parent document. Whichever governing body authored the parent document determined which organization the Correspondence Package would be classified under.

Table 3.2 Type and Quantity of Data Collected

Correspondence Package Type	Quantity Collected
Agricultural Land Commission Documents	41
City of Richmond Documents	86
Grey Literature	70
Miscellaneous (e.g. individual maps and pictures)	10
TOTAL	207

To analyze data collected, I relied on analytical techniques used for historical and comparative research methods. While there is no straightforward path to analyze historical documents, I searched for patterns in the material, categorizing each conceptual idea (i.e. hierarchy of authorities, agricultural land use), in order to fully understand the background of the Backlands Policy and try to extract changes in priorities or key language and themes over time (Babbie, 2009). Concept analysis, while commonly used in historical document analysis, does come across issues of validity because conceptual ideas can often be interchanged or differently defined by a researcher on a given day (Mahoney, 2004). To avoid these issues, clear definitions for each conceptual idea were created and reviewed throughout my analysis to ensure I did not mis-identify or confuse ideas. While the ALC and the City had their own historical record of internal and external documentation related to the Backlands Policy, the two records were linked through a common topic. Because of this linkage I was able to use the same conceptual ideas and definitions between the two records. By using the same ideas, I could then create clear ties between the two data sets and have cohesive data themes to further analyze.

The primary challenge I came across when collecting and analyzing the historical documents was recording each piece of correspondence. Because the majority of documents included attachments, there was uncertainty as to how each document should be recorded. Recording the attachments separately from the parent document, in some cases, would have made assessment of the attachments more difficult. The parent document often gave essential background information needed to understand the attachment. For example, some attachments were letters from the public and other stakeholders (such as the City’s agricultural advisory committee) speaking to a specific

policy change. Without the parent document explaining the specific policy change, those pieces of correspondence would have been difficult to understand and further analyze.

However, there were times when a separate report or study was included as an attachment. In those cases, the parent document was not overly useful, typically containing a quick background section or general summary of the attachment. After analyzing each document, it became difficult to refer back to the report or study as it was not specifically referenced in the parent document title. A lot of time was spent trying to find attached documents to clarify quotes or information. In future research, I recommend having greater flexibility in when or how parent documents and attachments are kept as one document, or conversely split into multiple documents. I also recommend more explicit naming conventions when recording each document. If a researcher chose to keep parent documents and attachments together, the naming convention should note what attachments are included.

3.2. Interviews

As this study explores how perceptions surrounding agricultural land use and intergovernmental relations have affected the Backlands Policy creation and implementation, semi-structured interviews were used to provide insights into the lived experience of the representatives of the religious institutions, municipal, and provincial governing bodies. I conducted semi-structured interviews with representatives of the City, ALC, and the religious institutions that were developed and currently operate under the Backlands Policy. The purpose of these interviews was to determine if their organization's (religious or governmental) perception of agricultural land use influenced the Backlands Policy's creation and subsequent implementation. The interviews also provided insight into the nature of the correspondence between the ALC and the City, specifically if the working relationship was positive or if the correspondence only occurred due to obligations. I also wanted to understand if there are any challenges or barriers to conducting agricultural use on these properties, either through the Policy itself or other external factors. These interviews provided first-hand and personal experience of the Backlands Policy's history, information that would have been difficult to extract if I solely relied on the archival and document analysis.

I conducted seven semi-structured interviews with: two City of Richmond Planners; a City of Richmond Councillor; two ALC Planners; and two representatives from religious institutions. Although the religious institutions that had an individual participate in the interviews were developed under the Backlands Policy, the institutions did not pre-date (i.e. were established) prior to the Policy in 1986. Each interview was approximately 30 minutes to 90 minutes in length. This variation was due to the length of responses given and the willingness or ability of respondents to address certain questions. The interview script for the ALC and the City's staff members as well as the religious institutions are provided in Appendix C. The decision to create one interview script for both the ALC and the City staff members was due to the City and ALC having a similar relationship to the Policy, as governing bodies of both the City and ALC took part in creating and implementing the Backlands Policy. The religious institutions had a separate interview script given their very different relationship to the Backlands Policy: instead of being a governing body the institutions must operate within the Policy and have little control over creation and implementation.

In order to recruit participants, two methods were used; one for the ALC and the City and one for the religious institutions. To recruit participants from the ALC and the City an email was sent to the general Planning Department email address for both organizations. The email explained the general topic of this thesis and asked if there were any willing participants that either still worked for the organization or have since left the organization but may be willing to participate. The participants representing the City still worked in the City of Richmond's Planning Department. The participants representing the ALC were no longer with the organization, so separate emails were sent to each potential participant.

Participant recruitment representing the religious institutions began through email or a telephone call, depending on the information available. The religious institutions within the Backlands Policy area had a webpage which included general contact information. Each institution was contacted by email or telephone with information on this thesis's topic and if there was a representative willing to take part in an interview. After several weeks, religious institutions that had not responded to the original correspondence then received a follow-up telephone call, if a number was provided on the institution's website, or email.

Once agreeing to take place in this study, the participants had the option of having the interview take place via Zoom or in-person, all the participants elected to have the interview take place over Zoom. Additionally, each participant agreed to have the interview recorded. Once the interviews were completed, Zoom’s transcription tool was used to complete draft transcription of the conversations. Finally, using the recorded audio of each interview, the transcriptions were edited to ensure the information contained within was correctly transcribed by Zoom’s transcription tool and to ensure no information was missing.

Two methods were used to analyze the data collected during the interviews: coding and analytic memos. Axial coding, breaking down the information into subcategories, was applied to the interview transcripts to highlight key points and extract overarching themes (Flowerdew & Martin, 2005). Axial coding required that each interview transcript was reviewed to identify sentence(s) and issue the corresponding code in the margin. Each sentence and code were then exported into an Excel table for the sake of easy reference throughout the remainder of my research. After the axial coding was completed, I created two types of analytic memos to help organize data and approach it from different perspectives or themes (Saldaña, 2016). As the interviews were semi-structured, there was the possibility I could collect information on a wide variety of topics, the accompanying analytic memos helped identify what information is relevant to my research. The table below outlines each axial code used during this research.

Table 3.3 Research Codes – Interviews

Code Abbreviation	Code Category	Code Description
AP (red)	ALC Perception	This code is intended to identify the ALC’s perceptions related to the Backlands Policy or agricultural land use planning. These perceptions can be positive or negative in nature. Examples include; why the ALC entered into the Policy, if the ALC views the policy as successful, or what the ALC would change about the Policy.
RP (green)	City Perception	This code is intended to identify the City’s perceptions related to the Backlands Policy or agricultural land use planning. These perceptions can be positive or negative in nature. Examples include; why the City wanted to originally create the Policy, if the City views the policy as successful, or what the City would change about the Policy.

PP (blue)	Public Perception	This code is intended for comments about the Policy, farm use, or institutional development (both religious and school) from the public. This includes public committees and the landowners along No. 5 Road but does not include Richmond City Council. The public comments can be both supportive or against the policy.
PC (purple)	Backlands Policy Changes or History	This code is to highlight "official" changes to the Backlands Policy over time. This can include changes to conditions of approval, policy guidelines, or policy format (i.e. individual policy vs, incorporated into the OCP). This does not include changes to how the policy is interpreted or incentives that are not directly stated in the Policy, such as the taxation incentives for religious institutions.
GR (pink)	Government Relationship	This code highlights reference to the relationship, either positive or negative, between the ALC and the City. The intent behind this code was to determine how the relationship between the ALC and City changed over time. Examples include; the City and the ALC meeting to discuss encouraging agricultural use in the Backlands Policy area (positive), the ALC not trusting the City to be a responsible steward of the Policy area (negative).
LA (yellow)	Land Sharing	This code is intended for quotes or passages related to land sharing between religious institutions and farm use, whether it be positive or negative comments. Common themes in this code include landowner/tenant attitude towards farming, education and knowledge needed for farming, and concerns over eventual creep of the institutional uses into the backlands.
EC (orange)	Economic Concerns	This code highlights comments related to economic concerns and considerations related to the Backlands Policy. This can include economic barriers, such as the cost of irrigation upgrades or price of land. Perceived "highest and best use of land", such as statements urging the Backlands Policy area be developed into land uses other than agriculture can be include, but should be accompanied by one of the perceptions codes (ALC, City, public) depending on where the statement came from

The codes related to the ALC, City, and public perceptions of agricultural land use, as well as government relationships, were created to further explore the general perceptions outlined in my conceptual framework and the effect these perceptions had on policy creation and implementation within a multigovernmental context. The conceptual framework provided a base understanding of these perceptions and relationships, but the interviews provided insight into perceptions and relationships as they directly relate to the Backlands Policy. The code related to land sharing was also created to identify data directly related to the Backlands Policy, building upon the

multifunctional agriculture overview provided in the conceptual framework. The economic concerns code was not directly identified in the conceptual framework, but emerged throughout this research as major topics to further explore.

The first type of analytic memo created helped define the coding categories used and connect them to the broader themes of the interviews (Saldaña, 2016). For each code category chosen I created a short memo to remind myself why I established that specific code and how it should be applied to the transcripts. This type of analytic memo was useful as I could easily refer to the definitions and examples of each code chosen when working through data sets. The second type of analytic memo connected each code category to my broader research themes, instead of defining each code category individually. This analytic memo not only connected the interview data to my broader research topic, but also helped me stay on topic and identify what may or may not be directly relevant to my research. This is especially important given that the interview method used for each interview was semi-structured, which resulted in 'off topic' responses. The analytic memo provided the opportunity to critically examine these responses and make valuable connections to other themes.

Chapter 4. Analysis

This chapter seeks to analyze the data collected from interviews with the ALC, City, and religious institutions representatives to determine how the lack of communication and collaboration between the ALC and the City, as well as how different perceptions of agricultural land use, impacted the creation and subsequent implementation of the Backlands Policy. The below analysis interprets the data collected from the interviews, aiming to highlight emergent themes pertaining to government relationships and perceptions of agricultural land use. While it became evident that each organization—ALC, the City, and religious institutions—shared some common themes during the analysis, it was equally apparent that each entity held a unique perspective on agricultural land use. By examining the distinct lenses through which each organization views agricultural land use, this thesis aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how the lack of collaboration between the ALC and City resulted in the failure of the Backlands Policy.

4.1. Agricultural Land Use Perceptions

Analysis of the data collected during this study consisted of reviewing the provincial and municipal documents, grey literature such as newspaper articles, and interview transcripts, in order to identify emergent themes related to perceptions of agricultural land use. These perceptions of agricultural land use are important in understanding how the ALC and the City approach policy creation, as well as the willingness for each organization to collaborate with the other. Review of the documents and grey literature identified ALC, City, and public priorities towards agricultural land use at a specific point in time. While this study cannot directly ascertain perceptions of agricultural land use from the document analysis alone, these documents highlight an organization's priorities toward agricultural land use planning which can be built upon through interviews. The analysis of interview transcripts further expanded on the main themes already identified and provided greater clarity into the ALC, City, and religious institution's perception of agricultural land use.

Although each organization (ALC, City, and religious institutions) shared core themes during the analysis, each organization had a unique perception of agricultural

land use. A detailed summary of ALC, the City, and religious institutional perceptions of agricultural land use are outlined below. Generally, perceptions of agricultural land use stayed consistent at the religious institutional level, while elements of the ALC and City's priorities and perceptions regarding agricultural land use planning fluctuated over time. The change in priorities experienced by the ALC and City may be further influenced by changing provincial and municipal political parties. The below section will outline the ALC, City, and religious institutions' perceptions of agricultural land use with the additional focus on political influence over time.

4.1.1. Agricultural Land Commission Perceptions

The ALC's core priority for agricultural land use planning has stayed relatively consistent over the lifetime of the Backlands Policy, that the ALR should be preserved for agricultural land use in the long term. However, the ALC's relationship with municipal governments and perception of best land use practices in a multifunctional agriculture context has changed between inception of the Backlands Policy in 1986 and current day. While the ALC noted that the ALR should be preserved for agricultural use since 1986, the lack of support at the provincial political level led to the ALC feeling obligated to set aside their core value and perception of how agricultural land should be used in order to keep some control over the ALR and policies within.

During the interview with an ALC representative who worked on the original policy between 1986 and 2000, it was stated that the ALC entered into the Backlands Policy at the City's request. The policy was not something the ALC would have otherwise considered, because it was clear by ALC standards that religious institutional buildings did not constitute an appropriate land use within the ALR:

My impression was the Backlands Policy was being driven by Richmond. They came to the [ALC] saying that they were getting requests or interests in regional size institutions, religious institutional buildings, and [the City] didn't have any place to put them unless they put them on bare lot farmland. [The City] referred to it as a need. I remember and I question that. We need to eat, but we really don't need to put churches on our farmland. That's a desire, not a need, and there's a big difference. This was very reflective of Richmond and so many municipalities feeling that the only the only way of doing business was to go out to farmland. (ALC Representative, personal communication, 2023)

The ALC was not supportive of the Backlands Policy as it introduced non-farm uses into the ALR. However, instead of denying the City's request to develop the Backlands Policy, the ALC worked with the City between 1986 and 2000 to refine the Policy and eventually adopt it. Based on the data gathered during this study, the ALC's willingness to agree to a policy they do not support can be attributed to the ALC's lack of strong political support provincially. A timeline of key changes to the Backlands Policy, which political party was in power at the provincial level, and how the ALC perceived that political party's support of agricultural land protection is outlined in Figure 4.1 below.

In 1975, the Social Credit Party was elected to lead the provincial legislative assembly, taking over from the New Democratic Party which had recently created the ALR and ALC (Tennant, 1977). The Social Credit Party in power during the creation of the Backlands Policy was perceived by the ALC as not being a supportive overarching government. While the ALC is an independent tribunal within the Ministry of Agriculture tasked with making land use decisions within the ALR, the provincial government has complete power over the ALC's legislation and budget (Agricultural Land Commission, 2020). By administering the ALC's legislation and budget, the provincial government is able to hold onto control, despite the ALC's independence. One of the ALC representatives stated:

Most of my era was during the Social Credit Government years, a little bit of [New Democratic Party] in there, but mostly Social Credit. The [ALC] was always looking to the next election, are we actually going to have doors to open up after the next election? So that was a reality in the first ten to twenty years. And we knew that the Social Credit Government was just simply not friends of the concept of farmland preservation. And so that was always playing on the [ALC's] mind. (ALC Representative, personal communication, 2023)

Instead of being able to make land use planning and policy decisions based on the ALC's core perception of agricultural land, that it should be protected for only agricultural use, the ALC was making decisions considering any possible political ramifications. Over the Social Credit Party's time as leader of the provincial legislative assembly in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the party was a political vehicle for fiscal conservatives, with core ideologies based in free-market economics and limited government intervention (Evans & Smith, 2015). The Social Credit Party was reducing provincially led initiatives and funding, including funding for the ALC and programs that supported farmland preservation in British Columbia. Out of fear of further reduction in

services, the ALC was not making decisions free of political influence. In communication between the ALC and the City, the ALC noted that the lack of resources and reduction in provincial programs were key barriers to influence on agricultural production within the Backlands Policy area:

The Commission has limited means of carrying out a direct agricultural development policy in the area. At the time when the Commission still had the property management program, the option of purchasing the lands, reconfiguring the lots and improving the lands and services, and then extending leases to bona fide farmers would have been an option. This option is no longer available and Richmond has given no indication that it wishes to pursue such a role. (Agricultural Land Commission, Meeting Minutes, December 6, 1994)

In addition to reducing funding and provincially led programs, the ALC also had to contend with the provincial government overturning their decisions. In 1971, the New Democratic Party established the Environment and Land Use Committee (ELUC) (Tennant, 1977). The original intent of the ELUC was to recommend programs to increase public awareness of the environment, ensure that environmental concerns were fully considered during land and resource development, and to make recommendations to the legislative assembly. However, the ELUC was also tasked with acting as an appeal body for ALC decisions when the *Land Commission Act* was created in 1973. Specifically, the ELUC reviewed appeals related to the exclusion of land from the ALR for commercial, residential, or other uses (BC Archives, n.d.). Further, while the ALC was an independent tribunal, the ELUC was not. ELUC committee members were selected by and reported directly to the provincial legislative assembly, which would change when a new political party would win a majority in an election.

During the ALC's original consideration of the Backlands Policy in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Social Credit Party was the leader of the provincial legislative assembly, and also controlled who was a member of the ELUC (Evans & Smith, 2015). It is suggested that the ALC was concerned that rejecting the Backlands Policy would result in the City appealing to the ELUC. This would result in the Backlands Policy area being completely removed from the ALR, and by extension out of the ALC's control. During the interviews conducted for this study it was stated that:

I think the [ALC] would have in the back of their mind, and this is just my impression, that if the [ALC] really dug in their heels and said, "No go find some other place to put these big buildings", then the next step

of the process may have been for Richmond to suggest to the landowners, if you own the land and you want to put your church there, get it out of the [ALR]. And up until 1991 they would have been able to appeal a negative decision by the [ALC] to the [ELUC].

I think these things were playing on the [ALC's] mind. They said "Okay, let's see if we can find a way of doing business here and limit the damage to the greatest extent possible". I guess the [ALC] can have a bit of feel good by saying, "Yes, we allowed the front third or the front half or the front quarter, or whatever it is, to put a building on but we were preserving half or more of the property for agricultural purposes long term. We were largely doing what our objective is and why we're there as Commissioners". That wouldn't be a justification but that's sort of my impression of how things were happening at the time. (ALC Representative, personal communication, 2023)

The fear of losing control over portions of the ALR, due to an appeal to the ELUC, drove the ALC to agree to the Backlands Policy even though it went against the core land use planning priority, that the ALR should be preserved for agricultural use in the long term. The purpose of the Commission, the ALC's decision making body, is outlined in the *Agricultural Land Commission Act*:

6 (1) The following are the purposes of the commission:

1. to preserve agricultural land;
2. to encourage farming on agricultural land in collaboration with other communities of interest;
3. to encourage local governments, first nations, the government and its agents to enable and accommodate farm use of agricultural land and uses compatible with agriculture in their plans, bylaws and policies.

(2) The commission, to fulfill its purposes under subsection (1), must give priority to protecting and enhancing all of the following in exercising its powers and performing its duties under this Act:

1. the size, integrity and continuity of the land base of the agricultural land reserve;
2. the use of the agricultural land reserve for farm use.

(ALC Act, 2019)

The *Land Commission Act*, now the *Agricultural Land Commission Act*, has been amended approximately 34 times since creation in 1973. While the purpose of the Commission has changed over time, such as considering community needs or

preserving park land for recreational use, considering political ramifications of a decision has never been included. The above quote from an ALC representative notes that the ALC's decision to establish the Backlands Policy was done out of fear of the ELUC. This fear of political backlash is not a justification for the ALC to agree to a policy, as the Backlands Policy contradicts the ALC's land use planning priorities by allowing the establishment of non-farm uses in the ALR.

Although it is not within the ALC's mandate to consider political ramifications of a decision, it has been suggested in the interviews with ALC representatives that the ALC entered into the Backlands Policy to limit impact to the agricultural portion of the properties. If the ALC was involved in the Backlands Policy creation there would be the opportunity to provide input, whereas if the land was excluded from the ALR there would be no protection of the land for agricultural use. In analyzing communication between the ALC and the City regarding the Backlands Policy during this time, the ALC was clear that they wished the backland portion of these properties would be farmed but never made it a requirement. A letter written in 1990 from the ALC to the City regarding further refinement of the Backlands Policy and application requirements states:

In addition the Commission, when reviewing new applications for the assembly use of a portion of the properties along No. 5 Road will, as a matter of policy, request applicants to present an 'agricultural development plan' to accompany any plan for the assembly use of a given parcel. While there will remain no guarantee that the 'agricultural development plan' will be acted upon, it will have the positive influence of ensuring that applications give due consideration and are appreciative of the agricultural land use aspect of the Council and Commission Policy. (ALC, 1990)

The Social Credit Party was in power until 1991 when the New Democratic Party was elected as the leader of the provincial legislative assembly (Evans & Smith, 2015). During the New Democratic Party's lead from 1991 to 2000, the ALC had more political support at the provincial level to start making decisions without the fear of being overturned. While the ELUC remained as a committee, the ability for the ELUC to overturn ALC decisions was removed by the New Democratic Party in 1994. Instead, the New Democratic Party amended the *Agricultural Land Commission Act* to allow appeals to be heard by the general manager of the ALC (Plotnikoff, 2008). Without fear of being overturned, the ALC began to increase the agricultural requirements for religious institutions to develop under the Backlands Policy. In 1994, the ALC and the City issued a moratorium on new religious institutional development applications under the

Backlands Policy, due to concerns that the properties already developed under the Policy were not adequately meeting the agricultural production requirements. The religious institution had been constructed but no farming was occurring on the backland portion of the site. Further, in 1996 it was communicated to the City that the ALC would not support new development of religious institutions without a commitment to farm the backlands portion. A letter written in 1996 from the ALC to the City regarding the Backlands Policy states:

Furthermore, the Commission believes that there is a unique farming opportunity within the backlands due to the high capability of the soils and the locational circumstances. As a result, the Commission is taking the position that future applications for approval of additional institutional facilities will not be favourably received until there is a clear commitment from the land owners, institutional organizations, and other interested groups or farm organizations, that farming activities will be supported, encourage and established to the greatest extent possible over the long term. (ALC, 1996)

Although the ALC has consistently stated its desire to have the backland portion of the lots in agricultural production since policy inception in 1986, the ALC had not been so direct as to say an application under the Backlands Policy would be denied if there was not adequate evidence that farming would occur. Communication from the ALC in 1990 was less direct, the ALC requested that applications include an agricultural development plan, but acknowledged that these plans may never be acted upon. In comparison, the ALC's 1994 communication states that applications would be denied if there was not an intention to farm the property. It is clear that the ALC became more comfortable with including policy requirements surrounding agricultural use, instead of making policy requests.

Assured provincial support for the ALC came to an end in 2001 when the Liberal Party took control of the provincial legislative assembly, again changing the BC political landscape. The Backlands Policy had already been formally adopted in 2000, after years of amendments and changes. Unlike the years where the Social Credit Party controlled the legislative assembly, the Liberal Party's time as leader of the legislative assembly had little effect on the Policy. However, the Liberal Party's control of the legislative assembly resulted in multiple changes to the ALC's composition, such as how many Commissioners (decision makers) were appointed at a provincial versus a regional level, and attempts to deregulate the ALC (B. E. Smith, 2012a). During this time, there was

very little communication between the City and the ALC. However, this study is unable to determine if the lack of communication was due to the Liberal Party's attempt at weakening the ALC, or if it was a result of the ALC and the City not thinking additional communication was required. The Backlands Policy was in place and both organizations were making reasonably consistent decisions on development applications. It was only when decisions between the ALC and the City diverged that communications channels reopened.

The New Democratic Party came back into political power in 2017, bringing renewed support for the ALC and protection of the ALR. Once in power, the New Democratic Party established the Independent Advisory Committee for Revitalizing the ALR and the ALC (Malatest, 2018). The New Democratic Party's support for the ALC happened almost concurrently with the ALC and City reworking the Backlands Policy. In 2016, the City incorporated the Backlands Policy into the City of Richmond's Official Community Plan without obtaining official approval from the ALC. The ALC became aware of the changes in 2017, and both the ALC and City entered into discussions about the Policy and how it could be changed. However, now having support from the Provincial government, the ALC was able to take a stronger stance regarding agricultural protection and enhancement within the Policy. The introduction of new requirements by the ALC, mainly that religious institutions needed to show farm receipts to demonstrate they have successfully farmed for five years prior to submitting a development application, or entering into a five-year lease with an established farmer, showcases the shift in perceived governmental support. When the Backlands Policy was first created between 1986 and 2000, the ALC suggested changes to the City when needed. In 2017, by contrast, the ALC was direct and outlined what changes needed to occur to the Policy.

Further, when the ALC and the City were discussing potential changes to the Backlands Policy in 2021, instigated in 2016 when the City incorporated the Policy into the City of Richmond Official Community Plan, the ALC made it clear that they were in a very different political situation than when the Policy was first created between 1986 and 2000. Some Commissioners did not wish to renew the Backlands Policy at all as it does not reflect the ALC's core value, that the ALR should be preserved for agricultural land use in the long term. In a letter from the ALC to the City it was noted that:

Current Commissioners may also be unwilling to make decisions consistent with a previous Commission perspective or Resolution, particularly when it may be apparent that the conditions which led to the development of the policy direction have changed, or when it is apparent that the intended outcomes desired by the policy direction have not been achieved. (ALC, 2020)

In addition to the ALC's perception of political support at a provincial level, the ALC also changed its perception of what is considered a "good" agricultural land use policy between 1986 and 2021. However, this study argues that the change in perceptions of agricultural land use planning were also a result of provincial political changes. Prior to the Social Credit Party coming into power, the Ministry of Agriculture created the Property Management Program which was administered by the ALC. One of the study participants described the Property Management Program as:

I'll say this, but just so I don't forget, I have a comment to make about something called the Property Management Program, that the ALC used to run. It was actually run by the Minister of Agriculture, but it was the ALC's land in a way. [The Property Management Program] might have offered an opportunity to do just as you said, help those that were struggling that maybe would be willing to be involved in farming.

The original inventors of the Commission, when the Land Commission Act came into being, [NDP] government and so forth, they had lands that were in the ALR that the government owned and said "We're going to turn these over to the Commission to administer. It'll still be owned by the province, but the lands will come under the administration of the Commission to get them into farm use if they can possibly do it. (ALC Representative, personal communication, 2023)

When still active, the Property Management Program gave the ALC the ability to lease out farmland to either new or established agricultural operations on a five-year term. At the end of the term, if the farm operation was successful, the ALC would allow the agricultural operation to purchase the land at a reduced rate. The Property Management Program was terminated by the Social Credit Party during their leadership of the provincial legislative assembly from 1975 to 1991, and was never reinstated. However, the ALC remembered the benefits that this type of program provided for several years after termination. In 1994, the intent to have the backlands area managed by the City during the Policy's creation was further noted by the ALC:

City could try to require mandatory lease of backlands to the City (set up some structure to manage) so that it could be subleased to farmers. (ALC Note to File, 1994)

During creation of the Backlands Policy, the ALC suggested that a similar land management program be implemented; however, the leader of the program would need to be the City as the ALC did not have the funding or political support. As the Property Management Program was still a recent initiative during the Backlands Policy creation, and the ALC was able to see firsthand that the Program resulted in agricultural production in the ALR, the ALC advocated for a similar land use policy. This is contrasted with the 2016 policy changes when the City became interested in direct land management of the backlands, and allowed property owners within the Policy area to give their farmland to the City. At the time of the City's changes to the Backlands Policy in 2016, the provincial legislative assembly still had a Liberal Party majority, and the ALC was dealing with deregulation and limited support. This study argues that the ALC had been without similar land management programs for such a long period, the ALC had forgotten that these programs had been legitimate land use planning tools used to bring farmland into agricultural production.

Finally, while discussed in more detail in the below section, the lack of communication between the ALC and the City between 2000 and 2016 had detrimental effects to their relationship. The mishap with the City not gaining proper approval from the ALC for the 2016 integration of the Backlands Policy into the City of Richmond Official Community Plan only increased the ALC's mistrust, as the ALC thought that the City was trying to make substantial changes to the Policy without the ALC's input. This resulted in the ALC perceiving the City as an untrustworthy manager of the backlands. Further, the mistrust resulted in the ALC refusing to allow the religious institutions to give the backland portion of the lot to the City, even though this concept was supported by the ALC in 1994. A summary report prepared by the ALC noted the Commission's mistrust of the City and their ability to bring the backlands into agricultural production:

Adopting the [revised Backlands Policy] will result in a substantial change in how the policy has been implemented since 1986. It will permit subdivision of the institutional facilities from the backlands and release the landowners from the commitment (often not followed through on) to farm the backlands remainder. City of Richmond staff would like to note that this option would still require consideration and approval of the ALR non-farm use through the standard application process. It is uncertain whether the City will be a more reliable manager of the lands and may result in another city council seeking to optimize its ownership of these lands for another community benefit. (ALC, Summary Report, 2020)

The ALC's perception of agricultural land use has remained consistent over the duration of the Backlands Policy, emphasizing the preservation of agricultural land in the long term. However, the ALC's relationship with both the provincial body elected as head of the provincial legislative assembly, as well as municipal governments and their perception of best land use practices in a multifunctional agriculture context, have evolved over time. Overall, the ALC's perceptions and decisions on agricultural land use planning have been influenced by political changes and varying levels of support at the provincial level. The study also suggests that the ALC's perception of what constitutes a "good" agricultural land use policy evolved due to changes in provincial funding and land management programs in the past.

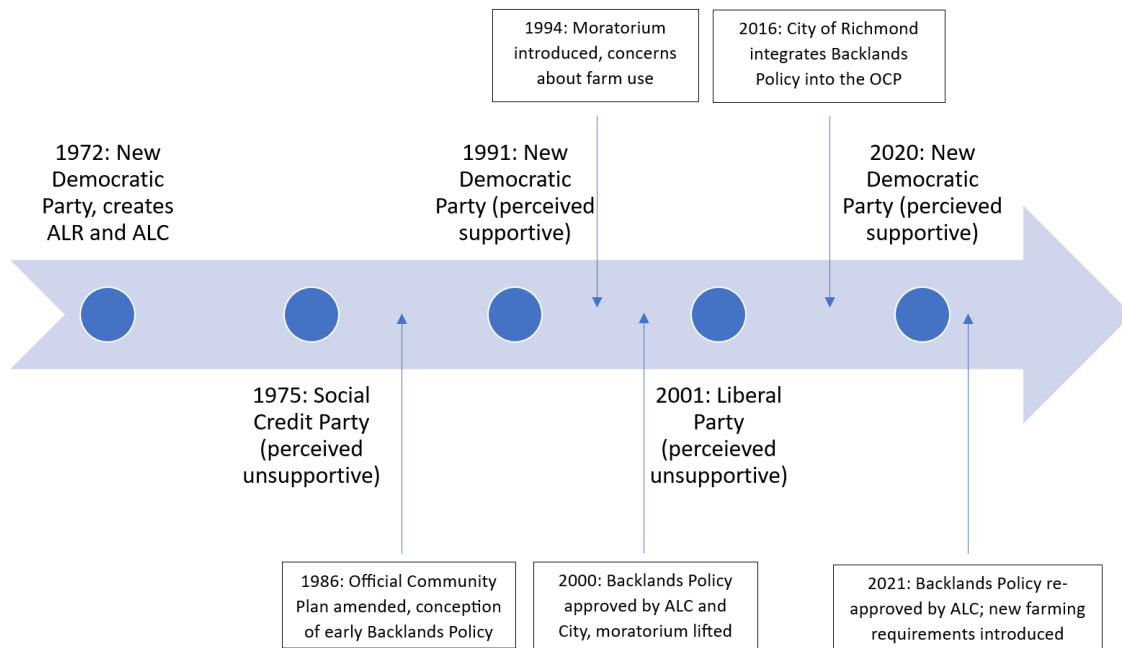


Figure 4.1 Provincial Government Timeline and Major Backlands Policy Decisions

4.1.2. City of Richmond

Unlike the ALC, where the change in perceptions surrounding agricultural land use can be mostly attributed to which political party was leader of the provincial legislative assembly, the City's change in perception occurred fairly early in the Backlands Policy timeframe and remained constant throughout the shifts in Council appointments. Prior to creation of the Backlands Policy the City undertook the McLennan Area Plan in order to assess the long-term planning needs of the McLennan community,

which also included the northern portion of the Backlands Policy area. During the ALC staff's review of the McLennan Area Plan in 1986, which was conducted as part of the ALC's local government planning and policy review role, it was noted that:

Objective 1 of the [McLennan Area] Plan, however, clearly enunciates the true short term nature within which agriculture is perceived in the McLennan ALR area. Agriculture "for now" but not "forever" is the obvious message. Even the short term support for agriculture appears largely based on the cost of servicing the area for urban development and current availability of other lands in the municipality to accommodate growth. However, the Preamble indicated that the feasibility of urban development will be reviewed periodically to determine whether the area should be considered for urban development. (ALC, 1987)

Objective 1 of the McLennan Area Plan is "To preserve the agricultural viability of the area east of Number Four Road in the short term". Instead of preserving agricultural land in perpetuity, the McLennan area plan intended for agricultural land to be converted into residential use as the City of Richmond expanded. While cost of servicing to agricultural lands was prohibitive in 1986, due to the locational gap between the urban and rural areas, as the City of Richmond expanded that gap would be reduced and servicing agricultural lands for urban uses would become economically viable. The intent for the City to slowly erode agricultural land for other uses was also described by an ALC participant during interviews conducted for this study:

[The McLennan Area Plan] was sort of like putting the Commission on notice, we're coming to get some land when we need it. That was the tone of the 1986 plan that I took away. (ALC Representative, personal communication, 2023)

The McLennan Area Plan was not well received by the ALC who made it clear that lands within the ALR were not reserved for residential development, these lands have been protected for agricultural purposes. Although the ALC communicated their lack of support for the McLennan Area Plan, the City adopted the plan as written. The perception that agricultural land use was seen as less valuable than other land uses, as outlined in the McLennan Area Plan, was mirrored during creation of the Backlands Policy. Objective 1 of the McLennan Area Plan states that Council should "support institutional and recreational uses on the east side of Number Five Road to Highway 99" (McLennan Area Plan, page 7). Although there were already religious institutions along No. 5 Road, due to previous ALC legislation and City zoning which permitted these institutions in the ALR until 1983, the McLennan Area Plan was drafted in 1986 and

adopted in 1987 after this provision had been removed. The Plan, and by extension the City, did not perceive agricultural production along No. 5 Road to be the best use of land and instead chose to commit this area to institutional and recreational uses.

However, historical context also plays a crucial role in the City's perceptions of land use along No. 5 Road. During the interviews it was stated that the Backlands Policy area, before the establishment of the Policy, was only in limited agricultural production. The Policy area had historically been marshland, agricultural use was limited due to the economic investment required to bring these lands into production. During the interviews conducted for this study, it was speculated by representatives from the City that the City of Richmond was unwilling to completely forfeit No. 5 Road for institutional and recreational uses. It was further speculated by study participants representing the ALC and the City, that to protect other ALR lands within the City of Richmond from urban development pressures, the Backlands Policy became the City's solution to focus religious institutional development in a confined area. The Backlands Policy also provided a solution to bringing these lands into agricultural production, without the ALC or City needing to provide funding themselves. The City rationalized that by permitting the religious institutions to develop within the ALR, the institutions in turn would upgrade and farm the land. This is further described by a representative from the City:

In order to incentivize farming, there kind of had to be this piece that would bring folks there. In the case of [the Backlands Policy] it was to allow religious assembly uses on the front lands subject to the backlands being actively farmed. I think a piece of that is also, as I mentioned, these areas were forested or kind of marshland so there was quite a lot of investment that had to be made in order to bring these parcels into agricultural production. And I think, in order to incentivize there had to be economic feasibility for [the religious institutions] to engage in those kinds of improvements. The idea was, since there were already a couple of religious assembly uses already established in this area, that [the City] could incentivize others to do the same. And then at the same time, hopefully, get those improvements to the backlands and get those areas farmed. I think there was a genuine attempt here to activate farming in this area. Now, we can talk about the results of that and how it ended up playing out, but I think the original idea was really to bring into production an area that wasn't being utilized from a farming perspective. (City of Richmond Representative, personal communication, 2023)

The City did not perceive the Backlands Policy area as productive agricultural land; therefore, the introduction of non-farm (religious institutional) uses was viewed as a reasonable trade-off. While not discussed during the interviews, this study theorizes that

if the Backlands Policy area was productive agricultural land, capable of supporting a wide range of crops, the ALC would have rejected the establishment of the Policy. However, because this area had limited agricultural capability, the Backlands Policy was perceived as a reasonable solution by the ALC to keep some control over the ALR. The City did not perceive these lands as being productive, and therefore the Backlands Policy area was perceived as “less-than” other ALR parcels within the City of Richmond.

In addition to perceiving the Backlands Policy area as less productive farmland compared to other ALR parcels, some participants during this study expressed their perception that the religious institutions could easily bring the backland area into agricultural production, should the institution choose to do so. The Backlands Policy, in its initial creation, was rooted in the belief that religious institutional development and agriculture could coexist, resulting in mutual benefits. The City expected that the religious institutions would bring the land into agricultural production out of goodwill for the broader community. A representative from the City that initially developed the Backlands Policy stated:

I pushed council to make some changes. There were a number of churches in Richmond that wanted to move over into the middle of the urban area. [I said] let's set aside No. 5 Road and make it a buffer between the farmland in East Richmond. That's how it all began. That was around 1988, I guess something like that, and it was all finalized around 1990.

I went to church, I taught Sunday school, gave money to the missionary fund, and we gave money to the poor and food for the children in Africa and all kinds of stuff. I made an assumption that churches and temples would just remember the chance to have farmland and produce food to feed the hungry, and that this would really be a good fit. Well, it turned out that it wasn't. (City of Richmond Representative, personal communication, 2023)

While supporting the broader community is a core value in many of the religious institutions within the Backlands Policy area, which is discussed in more detail in the section below, the City did not consider if the religious institutions actually wanted, or had the knowledge required, to farm land that historically had been marshland. The City assumed that the religious institutions would make the investment to improve the agricultural capability of the land to support farming, but did not provide a framework with support to the institutions to ensure this happened. While the ALC had advocated for the City to create a program similar to the provincial Land Management Program, at the time

of Policy inception the City did not have the desire to establish one. The City had made the assumption that the religious institutions would be capable of managing the land, despite the lack of interest and knowledge. Another representative from the City, who was not involved in the original creation of the Backlands Policy, described the Policy's creation as the following:

I think, when the policy was first created, it was probably a pretty, I'll call it an idealistic notion that development would magically result in farming of the land, and that there could be some mutually beneficial synergies associated with that. (City of Richmond Representative, personal communication, 2023)

The original intent behind the Backlands Policy was to support two different uses, providing an area for the religious institutions to develop while bringing a portion of the land into agricultural production. Unfortunately, this intent was incorrectly based on the City's perception that the religious institutions would farm the land, even though the institutions often did not have the know-how or desire to. As seen throughout the Backlands Policy's implementation from the 1990s to 2021, there has been consistent concern from the ALC and the City that agricultural production is not occurring.

Although the City was preparing for urban expansion into the ALR during the creation of the McLennan Area plan in 1986, the City's attitude towards agricultural production in the backlands area had shifted by the 1990s. Between 1994, when the ALC and the City entered into the moratorium on new applications while an agricultural feasibility study of the Backlands Policy area was undertaken, and official policy adoption in 2000, the City was consistently looking into solutions or implementation strategies to bring the backlands into agricultural production:

[City staff] feel a moratorium on ALC approvals for non-farm uses would be a good idea. [The City] noted that interest in sites has waned as price of land has risen, and that there is some concern in the Planning Department over having the whole [Backlands Policy] corridor go institutional. (Agricultural Land Commission, Note to File, 1994)

Staff met with No. 5 Road property owners and in September 1994, reported that notwithstanding the lack of interest by owners to farm their backlands, it was worthwhile to pursue the matter further because there was enough land in total and taxation measures could be utilized more effectively to induce farming. Council advised the Commission accordingly and requested their help to identify and implement measures for farming the backlands. (City of Richmond, Staff Report to Council, 1994)

The City's desire to bring the backlands into agricultural production was so great that new taxation measures were contemplated to incentivize property owners within the Backlands Policy area to farm. Ultimately, the City decided to forgo any tax incentives, and instead required that new applications for religious institutional development within the Backlands Policy area commit to both making the necessary improvements and farming the land. These requirements were incorporated into the 2000 Backlands Policy. Both ALC and City representatives question the effectiveness of requiring farming only after the religious institution has been constructed, precipitating the 2021 changes that require proof that a property has been farmed for five years prior to the submission of a development application. However, the City's perception toward agricultural land use shifted to no longer view agricultural land as space for future urban development. Instead, the City started to create more impactful agricultural policies which protected the land base. A representative from the ALC noted how dedicated the City had become to creating agricultural policies:

There were a lot of policies that [the City] was working on to really protect agriculture. There's a bunch of landlocked parcels [in the City of Richmond] that don't have road access. The City was working very hard to ensure that the road access would remain limited, because otherwise people could develop those parcels for residential or something else. [The City] really wanted to just keep them for soil bound agriculture and was really taking the initiative to develop these policies themselves. [The City] wasn't passing the buck to the Commission, like, "you deal with this", which [the ALC] saw all the time. It was great to hear that the City had dedicated people to those files, who really knew what was going on. (Agricultural Land Commission Representative, personal communication, 2023)

The shift in the City's perception of agricultural land use is displayed when the Backlands Policy, as well as broader agricultural planning initiatives, were re-integrated into the City's Official Community Plan in 2016. Prior to this integration, the City created an Agricultural Viability Strategy in 2003; however, this Strategy became forgotten and disconnected from the City's planning process. The re-integration of agricultural policies into the Official Community Plan, as well as the introduction of the new Farming First Strategy, aimed to replace the previous strategy while ensuring that agricultural policies remain prominent within the City's land use review moving forward. During this study City staff noted how support for agricultural policies and wide-scale agricultural planning have re-emerged as an important topic:

We used to have an Agricultural Viability Strategy, that I believe was adopted in early 2000s, and kind of got forgotten because it was this separate document that wasn't integrated into our official Community Plan. As you know, the City has progressed and moved forward. We went through a couple OCP updates and this document fell by the wayside. Our goal with the [new] Farming First Strategy was to create a new document to replace the Agricultural Viability Strategy, but to ensure that those policies were contained within the OCP so that they continue to be prominent in terms of our land use review moving forward. (City of Richmond Representative, personal communication, 2023)

I believe from a political standpoint there is still a strong understanding amongst councilors about the importance of agriculture and its role, in the local economy, regional economy, and global economy. I think, over the next 15 to 20 years, it'll be interesting to see with demographics and change in population, the boomer generation getting older and essentially being replaced by other generations, whether there's still that connection to that history. (City of Richmond Representative, personal communication, 2023)

Furthermore, the City's recent perception of agricultural land, and the value this land holds within a community, is evident in how the City creates and implements agricultural policies. As outlined in the conceptual framework, many municipalities rely on the provincial government (the ALC) to be the main decision-making body for ALR development applications, due to the perception that the ALC remains outside of political influence. In recent years the City has been proactive in developing their agricultural policies and taking the initiative on implementation, instead of solely relying on the ALC to lead the way. A representative from the ALC describes the current perception of agriculture planning and policy within the City of Richmond as the following:

I also found that [the City] was really taking the initiative to develop these policies themselves. They weren't passing the buck to the commission, which I think [the ALC] saw all the time. (Agricultural Land Commission Representative, personal communication, 2023)

However, this study argues that the recent shift in perceptions surrounding agricultural land use, as well as the City implementing policies which aim to protect the agricultural land base, is in part due to the public support surrounding this topic. The City of Richmond has historically been a prominent agricultural community within the Metro Vancouver region, there are still farmers and community members that support protecting the agricultural land base. A City representative describes the current agricultural policies, as well as the historical land use in the City of Richmond, below:

I think our land use policies are very strong. They're rigorous, but I would go back to my theme of some of my prior comments, it's because agriculture was here first. Our land use policies are strong because of that historical pedigree of our land. Our city was founded as a farming city. So when you had land use policy, when the ALR was established, and surrounding that you had many existing areas that were actively being farmed, you had land use policy to support that. I think policy becomes much more challenging if there has been no historical agricultural use of the property, and then you're trying to establish that. (City of Richmond Representative, personal communication, 2023)

The City's commitment to strong agricultural policies, and not relying on the ALC to make unpopular decisions, was not reflected in the 2021 changes to the Backlands Policy. As the Backlands Policy area has never been perceived as being a productive agricultural area, there is reduced community support to introduce more stringent policy requirements. The introduction of religious institutional use into the Policy area created the perception that those lands were not solely agricultural, and that their contribution to the local food network was less than large-scale agricultural parcels. Due to the lack of support, the City relied on the ALC to require the 2021 Backlands Policy changes instead of taking the initiative themselves. Luckily, the ALC had provincial political support to implement more protective agricultural policies than in previous years. Representatives from both the ALC and the City note how the ALC was able to separate the Backlands Policy from the political influence and make changes that would not be well received by the public:

It's interesting that you mention the political side of things as it really played a part in it. When I talked to the City of Richmond now, they were actually quite happy that the ALC sort of re-inserted themselves in 2021. They need some more stringent rules in order to develop in the backlands. You would have to show that you're farming for five years, or enter into a lease with an actual farming operation that's currently farming land in order to develop. [The City] was saying they're so happy that the ALC stepped in, because it takes that political pressure off the City. They always saw the ALC as sort of this separate body that could come in and stay outside of that political realm. (Agricultural Land Commission Representative, personal communication, 2023)

And for [the 2021 changes] to be led by the ALC, I think was also important. Rather than debating these issues back and forth locally, which you might have noticed in some previous reports that resulted in a lot of backlash from existing property owners along [the Backlands Policy area] stretch, not wanting any changes at all, especially removing education use, they were firmly against that. I think we had hundreds of submissions when the City first tried to do that. But with it being led by the ALC, it was a totally different approach, our hands were kind of tied, in a good way, because we can

make these changes with the support of the Commission, which I think also helped kind of convince property owners that this was the direction that was being made. (City of Richmond Representative, personal communication, 2023)

The City's perception of agricultural land use has shifted since the Backlands Policy inception in 1986. The McLennan Area Plan highlighted the City's short-term focus on agriculture, indicating a willingness to convert agricultural land into residential use as the urban area expanded. When the Backlands Policy was first conceptualized, it aimed at integrating religious institutions into the ALR as a solution to utilize unproductive marshland, as well as find vacant land for religious institutional development. However, the City's perception of agricultural land evolved, leading to stronger agricultural policies and proactive planning, as demonstrated by the integration of agricultural policies into the City of Richmond's Official Community Plan in 2016. While community support for the introduction of stringent policy requirements in the Backlands Policy area was lacking in 2021, prompting the City to rely on the ALC to implement more protective changes, farmers and community members support protecting the agricultural land base which is reflected in the City's more recent agricultural policies and planning practices.

4.1.3. Religious Institutions

Unlike the ALC and the City, the religious institutions within the Backlands Policy area have been consistent in their perception of agricultural land use within the Policy area. When discussing the history of the Backlands Policy with representatives from religious institutions along No. 5 Road, and why their institution developed within the Policy area, both representatives stated that the City pushed the institutions there. It was not the institution's choice, nor their want to farm the land. One representative stated:

I'll tell you why we farm it, so along No. 5 Road the City of Richmond basically wanted all the religious institutions to be on that road. And the reason they did that there is because of traffic and everything else, because you're not dealing with a community church, we don't have people that are walking from down the street. You're dealing with larger congregations where people are basically driving in so there was a lot of traffic that potentially could come to that area... The reason there that the majority of organizations along that area farm the land is because they have no choice. (Religious Institution Representative, personal communication, 2023)

This is further mirrored by a statement made by a representative from the City:

I pushed [City of Richmond] council to make some changes. There was a number of the churches in Richmond that wanted to move over into the middle of the urban area. [I said] let's set aside No. 5 Road and make it a buffer between the farmland in East Richmond, and that's how it all began. That was around 1987 and it was all finalized around 1990. So that's how it began and that way we changed the bylaws so they couldn't put [religious institutions] anywhere else in Richmond. (City of Richmond Representative, personal communication, 2023)

From the inception of the Backlands Policy, landowners within the Policy area expressed their concern and disinterest in farming. In 1994, when the ALC and the City were reviewing the Backlands Policy due to concerns that farming was not occurring on the developed properties, City staff members met with landowners within the Policy area to assess interest in farming. A report created by the City noted the following:

Landowners who attended the meeting were skeptical of the proposal, citing liability concerns, the need for drainage and soil improvement work, and the desire for other use options such as playing fields. Only 11 [land owners] completed questionnaires were returned. Of respondents, only 4 indicated that they were prepared to make their backlands available for farming, whereas 7 said they were not prepared to make their land available for farming.

Landowners interest in agriculture is scant. (Agricultural Land Commission, 1994)

Most religious institutions within the Backlands Policy area currently engage in agricultural activities out of necessity rather than commercial or communal interest. Data collected from BC Assessment, a provincial crown corporation which produces annual property assessments in British Columbia, was used to determine how many properties developed under the Backlands Policy were classified as a “farm” (Ministry of Finance, 2023). BC Assessment classifies farmland, also known as “farm status”, mainly for taxation purposes (BC Assessment, 2021). If an agricultural operation on the property is meeting certain thresholds for the sale of agricultural goods, thresholds which are set by the *Classification of Land as a Farm Regulation*, that property is exempted from certain property taxes. As shown on the table below, there are 27 properties within the Backlands Policy area. Of those 27 properties, 13 properties were developed under the Backlands Policy for religious institutional use, which does not include 2 properties which were developed for religious institutional use before the establishment of the Policy. Only 3 of the 13 properties developed under the Backlands Policy currently have farm status.

This study notes that the 2021 changes made to the Backlands Policy may result in more properties seeking farm status, as having farm status is a new condition of development application submission. However, no development applications for religious institutional use were submitted under the new Policy changes at the time of this study.

Table 4.1 BC Assessment Farm Class Data for Backlands Policy Area

Property Address	Developed Under Backlands Policy	Classified as a Farm	BC Assessment Use Description	Year Developed
12100/12180 Blundell Road	No	No	1 Storey House – Standard	n/a
8020 No. 5 Road	Yes	No	Church	1990
8040 No. 5 Road	Yes	No	Church	1998
8100 No. 5 Road	No	No	Vacant	n/a
8140 No. 5 Road	Yes	Yes	Church	2008
8160 No. 5 Road	No	Yes	Light Commercial Utility	n/a
8200 No. 5 Road	Yes	No	Church	1997
8240 No. 5 Road	Yes	Yes	Church	2005
8280 No. 5 Road	Yes	No	Church	2005
8320 No. 5 Road	No	No	Vacant	n/a
8480 No. 5 Road	No	No	Vacant	n/a
8760 No. 5 Road	Yes	No	Classroom	1998
8840 No. 5 Road	Yes	No	Relocatable Office*	2001
12280 Blundell Road	No	No	1 Storey House – Standard	n/a
12200 Blundell Road	Yes	No	Church	1993
12300 Blundell Road	No (pre-existing)	No	Church with Sunday School	1982
8580 No. 5 Road	Yes	No	Church with Sunday School	2000
8600 No. 5 Road	Yes	No	Church	1993
8720 No. 5 Road	No	No	Vacant	n/a
9220 No. 5 Road	No	Yes	Vegetable	n/a
9360 No. 5 Road	No	No	Vacant	n/a
9500/9560 No. 5 Road	No	No	2 Storey House – Standard	n/a
10060 No. 5 Road	Yes	No	Church	1998
10180/10220 No. 5 Road	No (pre-existing)	No	Church	1972

10260 No. 5 Road	Yes	No	Secondary School	2007
10320 No. 5 Road	No	No	2 Storey House – Semi-Custom	n/a
10640 No. 5 Road	No (Fantasy Gardens Development)	No	Day Care Centre	n/a

*Despite BC Assessment’s categorization, the property was developed for religious institutional use

Instead of commercial scale farms or community gardens, farming on the properties developed under the Backlands Policy is only conducted at a scale necessary to meet the agricultural requirements set out by the ALC and the City. Farming is not the primary focus of these religious organizations but rather a means of compliance. One participant representing a religious institution within the Backlands Policy area described the agricultural activity amongst the landowners as the following:

What you try to do is find the minimal crop where it's easiest to farm and not a lot of work because you don't really have farmers. You can basically generate your \$5,000 of revenue, sell the produce, and provide the receipts to the City of Richmond saying you are farming. That's about all we really do and probably the majority of the communities in the whole area probably really do.

It’s not really a commercial activity, you just kind of sell it because you have to do it. Otherwise, you’ll just be disposing of [the blueberries]. They charge a very low price per pound, but the main reason for this whole thing is not really for farming, it's just to meet your requirements. (Religious Institution Representative, personal communication, 2023)

Furthermore, while some religious institutions within the Backlands Policy area may express interest in farming the backland portion of their properties, they often encounter significant barriers due to the lack of farming expertise and necessary resources. Many of the religious institutions’ expertise lies in religious matters and community engagement, and while they may have a genuine desire to utilize the backland for agricultural purposes, they lack the agricultural knowledge and experience to do so effectively. A representative from one of the religious institutions within the Backlands Policy area highlights the challenges they face in trying to farm the backlands:

I don't think these institutions have expertise on farming, they're not going to know how to farm. They're going to have to outsource that to someone else. I think that doesn't necessarily make sense. I can understand having a lot or a site that was a community garden, that maybe the organizations work together and you had some funding from some sort of government source that you could have a government

community farm, that they would all use and share, but I don't think the individual organizations have the knowledge or ability to actually farm their own land. (Religious Institution Representative, personal communication, 2023)

Another barrier to farming the backlands discussed during the interviews was the agricultural suitability of the lands. As previously identified in the agricultural capability study commissioned by the ALC and the City in 1997, there are major drainage impediments within the Backlands Policy area. This impediment was never addressed by the City nor by the ALC, who instead expected each individual property owner to address. During the interviews, the size of the individual parcels was also identified as a barrier to farming the land. As many religious institutions did not have knowledge on farming, they instead looked to leasing the backland portion to an established agricultural operation. However, many institutions had difficulties finding agricultural operations interested in farming the land:

From what I understand hearing from [other religious institutions] nobody wants to farm this land. They've made efforts. In fact, I believe one organization, I won't name names, has offered to pay someone to come farm the land and no one was interested. I think, frankly, the policy is ridiculous. This land is not going to ever be farmed and it sounds like it's not really great farmable land anyway, from what I've heard. I think it's definitely imposing a pretty strong impediment for a lot of these organizations to be able to build or do what they need to do on their sites to satisfy the growing demand, especially the schools. (Religious Institution Representative, personal communication, 2023)

The lack of interest in farming the backlands is not streaming from agriculture not being valued, for many religious communities with the Backlands Policy area agricultural production aligns with their faith-based values of caring for the community and addressing poverty. As stated in the below quote, helping others through charity, donations, or soup kitchens is a significant part of their faith practices. However, instead of growing food to be donated, many religious institutions and members of the institutions prefer to donate store-bought goods or their time by volunteering. This perspective suggests that the focus lies more in direct assistance and social outreach rather than agricultural production.

It is a big part of the community overall, poverty and looking after people, so that's a big part of our faith and probably lots of faiths, but not by growing it and giving it. Many people will go buy groceries or they'll do whatever they have to do to donate to people or they go down and help people or do soup kitchens and stuff. They do that but it's not

farming. (Religious Institution Representative, personal communication, 2023)

Despite farming not being a popular option in which religious institutions give back to the community, the study participants associated with the religious institutions recognize the value of agricultural land use in terms of education, sustainability, and community support:

It's important to be able to grow a lot of our food ourselves and not rely on foreign food and importing what we what we need, it's obviously more expensive, it helps support the local economy and people domestically. Frankly, I think food that's locally sourced and farmed is often better or healthier. I mean, we love the fact that we can go in Richmond to the Richmond Farmer's Market, down there on Stevenson Highway there and get lots of locally grown fruits and vegetables. It's great. So I think it's really critical for economically and environmentally and health wise. (Religious Institution Representative, personal communication, 2023)

Especially in areas like the City of Richmond where boundaries between urban and rural land use can be blurred, many of the religious institutions value agricultural land for more than just food production. However, as many of the religious institutions do not perceive the Backlands Policy area as large-scale farmland, or even capable of agricultural production, these values are not associated with the Policy. When discussing the benefits of agricultural land with a representative from a religious institution, it was noted that farming within the Backlands Policy area was not feasible:

I know our school gets definite value out of the garden and learning about the plants and the trees and the fruits and the vegetables that are grown. And I mean, obviously, is a school with a religious background from the biblical sense and learning about that kind of stuff. Definitely, there's value. I think that just doesn't logistically doesn't make any sense where the schools are and sites are actually located. (Religious Institution Representative, personal communication, 2023)

In conclusion, the perception of agricultural land use by religious institutions appears to vary widely, ranging from minimal compliance-based farming to recognizing the potential benefits of local and sustainable food production. While some institutions prioritize other forms of community support and charity, others value the educational and environmental aspects of agricultural activities. Ultimately, the complexities of religious beliefs, community needs, and logistical constraints shape the diverse approaches to agricultural land use within different religious institutions.

Chapter 5. Discussion

Although the Backlands Policy has some components of multifunctional agriculture, such as allowing two uses to coexist on one property, I question its success in balancing two different land uses given the changes the City of Richmond made to the Policy in 2016. The changes made by the City in 2016, as well as the changes made by both the City and ALC in 2021, indicate that agricultural production was not occurring. For example, the change made by the City in 2016 which permitted the religious institutions to dedicate the backland portion of the property, intended for agricultural production, to the City to administer is one indicator that the Policy was not being implemented as originally intended. There are a number of factors which contribute to the outcome of the Backlands Policy, such as location, economic influence, or inter-governmental relationships which, as this study argues, were not adequately considered during the Policy's creation. Had these considerations been discussed earlier in the Backlands Policy creation, it may have led to a more successful balance between agricultural and urban uses on the properties.

The peri-urban fringe, where urban and rural land uses meet, is under constant pressure due to urban uses intersecting with agricultural land (Olsson et al., 2016). Unlike large-scale agricultural land use planning in rural areas, peri-urban areas require different policies to accommodate the multifaceted uses that occur in these spaces. The complexities of peri-urban areas, and trying to balance two competing land uses, can be challenging to provincial and municipal governments that have historically approached agricultural land use planning in terms of traditional practices (Gallent, 2006b). The peri-urban fringe has the unique ability to allow non-traditional planning practices, such as multifunctional agriculture, to introduce other values into agricultural land which may hold more value to the public. However, these types of land use planning policies must consider the nuances of the peri-urban fringe which make it unique, and venture beyond what has traditionally been accepted agricultural planning practice (Zasada, 2011)

Provincial perceptions of agricultural land use have historically been centred around productivist era thinking about agricultural production, focused on large-scale farming practices (Burton & Wilson, 2006). The productivist era is well suited for rural landscapes, as it advocates for the protection of agricultural land solely for food

production, but these policies often overlook the significance of flexibility required for effective agricultural land use planning in peri-urban areas. In contrast, municipal governing bodies have more opportunities to tailor policy to specific areas with multiple needs, when compared to provincial regulatory bodies (Dollery & Crase, 2004). However, whereas provincial governments are less directly in the public eye for policy that affects land use, municipalities need to contend with increased scrutiny from the public, which may not always attribute the same values to agricultural land use planning (McClintock et al., 2021). Multilevel government, the redistribution of decision-making power between different levels of government, could be a better tool to navigate the strengths and weaknesses of provincial and municipal policy creation (Young, 2013). However, multilevel governing requires collaboration between the different government levels to be successful, especially when creating innovative policy solutions to address complex problems as seen in peri-urban spaces.

Multifunctionality generally refers to the non-market benefits of agriculture and agricultural policies (Cocklin et al., 2006). In this model, what can publicly be perceived as important policy objectives in agricultural areas such as esthetics, recreation, or environmental protection, are viewed as potentially intertwined with food production (Zasada, 2011). The Backlands Policy exhibits many fundamentals of multifunctional agricultural land use planning, even if the policy was not designed with this intention. Primarily, the Backlands Policy creates the opportunity for two different land uses, non-agricultural and agricultural, to coexist on a property. The core principles of multifunctional agriculture such as flexibility, smaller-scale production, and multilevel government collaboration, can help guide agricultural land use policies to better reflect the realities of peri-urban areas (Spataru et al., 2020). However, these policy objectives need to be shared and the policies consistently upheld by all relevant jurisdictions of government, and implemented with a long-term view, if they are to successfully reduce pressure on farmland.

This chapter highlights the dominant themes expressed by municipal, provincial, and religious institution representatives during interviews. The results presented here are not exhaustive of all themes related to participant perceptions of agricultural land use, nor is this a comprehensive presentation of all data collected for this research project. Rather, the results presented here were selected based on the frequency discussed during the interviews, and the importance that study participants placed on

them. The focus on these selected themes allowed in-depth exploration of how different dynamics and pressures interacted and the varying perspectives of participants with regards to multilevel governance, agricultural land use, and the challenges of multifunctional land use within the peri-urban fringe through the context of the Backlands Policy. The following themes will be discussed in this chapter: (1) relationships between different levels of government, (2) economic influence and pressure on agricultural land use, and (3) land sharing as an academic theory compared to real-life practice.

5.1. Inter-Governmental Relationships

Cooperation and communication between different levels of government in addressing policy challenges has been acknowledged as an important tool when creating multifunctional agriculture policies (Woods & Bowman, 2018). When multiple governments approach a challenge with a desire to achieve a collective benefit, rather than focusing on individual gains, it can result in better policy creation than if one government tried to face the issue alone. Inter-governmental cooperation encompasses various attributes, such as the sharing of institutional knowledge, cost-sharing, and seeking ways to grow capacity rather than shift the burden of a given organization's own responsibility. The relevance of inter-governmental cooperation becomes particularly pronounced in the context of the Backlands Policy, given its jurisdictional implications involving both the ALR and the City. Consequently, collaborative efforts between these government agencies become crucial during the creation and implementation of the Policy.

Peri-urban areas are typically defined as having blurred boundaries between urban and rural land uses, making these areas susceptible to urban pressures and eventual expansion (Gallent, 2006b). Further, due to the increased complexity of balancing multiple different uses, policy creation within the peri-urban fringe is difficult and often results in one use overshadowing the other (Huang & Drescher, 2015). Policy creation within the Backlands Policy area is further complicated by the dual governance structure; the City and the ALC have to balance competing rural and urban land uses, while also balancing two different governing bodies' priorities and practices.

The significance of the relationship between the City and the ALC emerged as a prominent theme during interviews with participants from both organizations, and was

further corroborated through document analysis. Initially, the collaboration between the City and ALC demonstrated a united front, marked by open communication and shared objectives. During the inception and creation of the Backlands Policy between 1985 and 2000, meetings between the City and ALC were held, mutual inputs were sought, and discussions with community groups and Council members were conducted jointly to shape the Policy. However, over time this communication diminished, leading to a breakdown in communication and disjointed application of the Backlands Policy.

During the inception and creation of the Backlands Policy, not only were the ALC and the City in constant communication, but there was collaboration between the two organizations. As previously noted, the ALC entered into the Backlands Policy at the City's request, wanting to retain some control over the Policy area. Subsequently, the ALC worked with the City to refine the Backlands Policy to reflect the wants and needs of both organizations. The below excerpt from a letter from the ALC to the City highlights this collaboration:

We note that the Policy is designed to express the interests of both the City and the Commission in one document. Further, we note with appreciation that the current draft Policy incorporates those suggestions contained in the Commission's previous communications dated Nov. 27/98 (ALC Res. #769/98) and Jan. 6/99 (ALC Res. #139/99) respecting the need for a proponent to; prepare a farm plan, identify opportunities to achieve a net agricultural benefit, enter into a restrictive covenant limiting the back lands to farm use, where it is deemed appropriate, provide a financial guarantee and withholding final non-farm use approval until the farm plan has been executed. (ALC, 2000)

Although the City and ALC created the policy to incorporate both of their organizational interests, the City and ALC jointly recognized a lack of agricultural production on the backlands portion of the approved properties. Although not all communications were without disagreements, the dialogue between the City and ALC persisted despite these differences. In response, they collaborated by issuing a moratorium on new development applications and commissioned a study to assess the agricultural suitability of the Backlands Policy area. Following the completion of the agricultural feasibility study, both organizations engaged in further discussions to amend the Policy to better support agricultural activities.

Over the past two years, staff from Richmond and the Commission have addressed the issue of how to encourage farming of the backlands and

most recently, a proposal to carry out a feasibility study of the backlands has been offered for consideration by Council and the Commission. The idea for a study evolved from suggestions by the Commission, that a study which looked at the unique situation from both a traditional and non-traditional farming perspective, could eventually provide some guidance to Richmond, in implementing policy measures and incentives that would result in the lands being made available and attractive for farming purposes. (ALC, 1996)

In comparing the periods between 1985 and 2000 with 2001 and 2016, a significant decline in communication is evident. Between 2001 and 2016, communication between the ALC and the City was limited to a number of correspondences focused solely on reviewing applications submitted by religious institutions under the Backlands Policy. There was no communication regarding policy implementation, if Policy changes made in 2000 were successful, or how each organization administered the Policy. Communication between the two organizations was only revived in 2017 when the City revised the Backlands Policy, allowing religious institutions to dedicate the backland portion of the property to the City for programming, without official ALC approval. This led to a clash between the two versions of the Policy and a renewed sense of mistrust, resulting in shifting power dynamics between the two organizations. An ALC staff member who was involved in the Backlands Policy during this time noted:

I think of 2016, when Richmond did their [Official Community Plan] update and they did some language change, the ALC was like “we were not involved in this” and really got upset about that. I think it was a big low point there and then trying to build that relationship back up again. (ALC Staff Member, personal communication, 2023)

Notably, some of the changes made by the City to the Backlands Policy in 2017 were initially proposed by ALC staff during the policy's original creation in the late 1980s and early 1990s, but this crucial information was only captured in meeting notes from the earlier period. Had there been greater foresight in discussing changes with the ALC, the breakdown in trust in 2017 could have potentially been avoided.

Poor and sparse communication between the ALC and City was not the only reason for shifting power dynamics. The change in the provincial party and support the ALC had in 2017 also played a part in the relationship breakdown. Nevertheless, the absence of effective communication significantly influenced how both government organizations responded to the issue, with a focus on individual perspectives rather than adopting a collaborative approach.

The [ALC] disagreed. They thought, "we don't want the city on it, they may just sell it." It's unbelievable that the ALC would distrust the city, in terms of what [the City] would do with the land. Why not let the city have a chance to try and do it.

I think that's part of the problem the ALC had, they didn't know what the ALC said way back when setting up the Backlands Policy in the first place. They didn't know the role the city had played in trying to get [the religious institutions] to comply and weren't getting anywhere. [The ALC] just had a mistrust for local government. (City of Richmond Representative, personal communication, 2023)

The lack of communication and trust between the ALC and the City regarding the Backlands Policy, specifically between 2000 and 2016, was compared to the Garden City Lands development which began in 2017, also located within the ALR in the City of Richmond, by all representatives from the ALC and the City. The Garden City Lands development is a City-led project which transformed an unused parcel into a community park, which includes urban agriculture, environmental preservation, and cultural uses (City of Richmond, 2023). In contrast with the Backlands Policy, the City and ALC worked together to develop a plan for the Garden City Lands, which is perceived by both the ALC and the City as being a successful project that balances the needs of both the urban and rural uses within the space. The Backlands Policy, being perceived by both parties as unsuccessful, had a significant impact on the relationship between the ALC and the City. In contrast, the Garden City Lands development, perceived as a successful policy, mended some of the communication and trust barriers. An ALC representative described how the Garden City Lands development affected the ALC and City's relationship below:

It's interesting, when [the ALC] toured the Garden City Lands that did so much for, not only goodwill, but trust that the Commission then had in Richmond. [The ALC] all of a sudden saw that investment, this is an effort [the City is] putting in to combine agriculture and park space. (ALC Representative, personal communication, 2023)

The Garden City Lands development not only built trust between the ALC and the City, but highlights the importance of open communication and cooperation in addressing complex policy challenges. The City of Richmond endorsed the Garden City Lands landscape plan in 2014 (City of Richmond, 2023). This landscape plan was created through consultation with the public, agricultural and environmental experts, landscape architects, the ALC, and City of Richmond staff (The City of Richmond Community Services Department, 2014). The ALC involvement during initial creation of

the Garden City Lands landscape plan, before an official ALC application was submitted, allowed the ALC to provide input on the design and programming of the park in the early planning stages.

In 2017, the ALC approval for the non-farm use portions of the Garden City Lands proposal was obtained and construction of the site began (Mark, 2017). Not only was there collaboration with the City prior to submission of an application, but the ALC also conducted a site-visit to the property during the decision-making process. As noted above, the Garden City Lands proposal rebuilt trust between the levels of government through a common goal, to establish agriculture on the property. While the City may have approached agricultural use from a different perspective than the ALC, having the agricultural use integrated within the park instead of the main land use on the parcel, the common ground was able to re-establish communication and collaboration which was not occurring with recent discussions regarding the Backlands Policy.

During the inception and creation of the Backlands Policy, the City and the ALC worked together to develop a policy which reflected the interests of both organizations. This collaborative approach resulted in joint efforts to address challenges. Examples of this collaboration include identifying the lack of agricultural production on properties developed under the Backlands Policy, through measures like issuing a moratorium and commissioning an agricultural feasibility study. This early cooperation exemplified the benefits of inter-governmental collaboration, allowing for a more balanced and nuanced policy. However, over time, communication between the City and the ALC diminished, leading to mistrust and a lack of alignment in policy implementation. The lack of effective communication ultimately led to a shift in power dynamics and mistrust between the two organizations, resulting in challenges in implementing the Policy.

In summary, the case of the Backlands Policy underscores the significance of inter-governmental cooperation and effective communication when dealing with policy challenges in peri-urban areas. To create and implement policies that effectively balance urban and rural land uses, it is crucial for different levels of government to work together, share knowledge, and maintain open channels of communication. Only through such collaboration can multifunctional agriculture policies in peri-urban areas successfully address the diverse needs of all stakeholders involved. This is highlighted in the recent development of the Garden City Lands. The ALC and the City worked together during

the initial planning process of the park, as well as during the ALC's decision process, to create an innovative multifunctional agricultural policy which balances park, agricultural, environmental, and educational uses within the same space. As highlighted during the interviews with representatives from the City and ALC, the Garden City Lands project was a successful collaboration between the two governing bodies which built trust. Although this study did not analyze if the Garden City Lands development was more successful in balancing agricultural and non-agricultural land uses, the positive reactions from the ALC and City representatives during this study indicates a higher degree of success than the Backlands Policy.

5.2. Economic Influence

Although multifunctional agriculture was not the specific intent behind creation of the Backlands Policy, the Policy can be argued to be an early example of multifunctional agriculture by going beyond what is traditionally considered farming to include the integration of "other" land uses and functions (Zasada, 2011). However, this study argues that creation of a successful multifunctional agriculture policy, where both the farm and non-farm uses on a property are equally thriving without one use overshadowing the other, needs to take economic considerations adequately into account as a driving force. Realistic economic considerations are crucial to the success of a policy like the Backlands, especially because, in the peri-urban area of Richmond, urban and rural land use pressures are intertwined, and often in competition (Gallent, 2006b). During creation and implementation of the Backlands Policy, economic concerns were understood to be prevalent at the provincial and municipal levels and amongst members of the public, but they were never adequately addressed within the Policy. This study argues that failing to address economic factors explicitly within the policy design was a significant factor in the implementation failures of agricultural production within the Policy area.

Due to the proximity of the ALR to urban centres within the Metro Vancouver region, including the City of Richmond, the cost of land is simply too high within peri-urban areas for most forms of agriculture to be economically feasible (Condon et al., 2011). ALR lands are being purchased and held by non-agricultural organizations or landowners for speculative investment purposes. This pattern of land sale by farmers and holding by non-farmers is exacerbated by the favourable tax rate that speculative

developers are able to secure when holding agricultural land, because the tax rate has been set to encourage farming, although the speculators may have no intention of ever farming there. However, in 2016 agricultural land prices in Metro Vancouver ranged from \$150,000 to \$350,000 per acre for parcels less than 5 acres, and from \$50,000 to \$80,000 per acre for parcels more than 40 acres (VanCity, 2016). Once the price of agricultural land reaches \$80,000 per acre the financial viability of a farm business is at risk. New agricultural operations cannot afford to enter into the business while existing agricultural operations cannot afford to expand. While agricultural land is less expensive than land marked for urban development, the price of land in Metro Vancouver is prohibitive to many agricultural operations.

During the Backlands Policy's inception in 1986 the effects of high agricultural land prices were already a prevalent barrier for farmers. In 1987, the McLennan Community Planning Committee outlined the economic realities of farming:

[Farmers] cannot farm profitably, even if they had interest in doing so, because of the high cost of carrying land which was bought at inflated prices, and they want to realize their capital and if possible make the gain they anticipated. Longer established farmers want to sell their land at development prices and either get out of the industry or buy cheaper land "in the valley". (Letter to City of Richmond by Member of Public, March 19, 1987)

Peri-urban areas have often been questioned as to how effective these lands can be at supporting agricultural production. As noted by the McLennan Community Planning Committee, the Backlands Policy area was perceived as not being capable of supporting large-scale agricultural production, and therefore should be redeveloped into urban use. Although larger scale agricultural practices are often not feasible for peri-urban areas, due to the scale of land needed, peri-urban areas can be agriculturally productive in smaller-scale, more intensive production (Gallent, 2006b). Additionally, peri-urban agricultural areas play a vital role in providing non-market benefits to urban centres, such as aesthetic values or wildlife habitat. These non-market benefits help increase public support for peri-urban areas and agricultural land use, which in turn influence municipal perceptions and can result in planning practices which protect the agricultural land base.

Multifunctional agriculture is a relatively new concept within planning theory, and how it translates into land use plans is still not fully understood (Wilson, 2007). Although

multifunctional agriculture as a policy framework aims to bring a more holistic approach to how agricultural land is valued in peri urban areas, quantifying both commodity and non-commodity outputs, traditional land value economics need to be a consideration during policy creation. By permitting non-farm uses, which are often valued as having more importance than agriculture, multifunctional agriculture policies like the Backlands Policy are increasing the intensity of land use conflicts within the peri urban area (Zasada, 2011). While peri-urban areas will always be spaces of conflict, due to their location and the intersection of both urban and agricultural uses (McGregor et al., 2006), multifunctional agriculture increases this conflict by inviting the two different land uses to share the same space. Therefore, multifunctional agriculture policies need a strong framework dedicated to protecting the agricultural land base to ensure farm use is not overshadowed by urban speculation. From the beginning, the Backlands Policy lacked the framework needed to protect agricultural production. The Backlands Policy needed to balance the priorities given to the higher valued land use (religious institutional) and the lower valued land use (agriculture). Initially the Policy required an agricultural development plan from the religious institutions when developing a site, but neither the City nor the ALC required the plan to be implemented. While the importance of farming the backland areas became more prevalent when the Backlands Policy was officially adopted in 2000, the implementation of the agricultural development plans was never sought by either level of government.

Land prices and the role that land speculation plays in peri-urban areas is not the only economic consideration that should have been contemplated when developing the Backlands Policy. The cost of agricultural production and the inputs required to transform land into a productive area should have been a consideration from the Policy's inception. The agricultural feasibility study commissioned by the ALC and the City in 1997, before the Backlands Policy's official adoption as a stand-alone policy, highlighted the physical barriers to bringing the Policy area into agricultural production as well as the costs to alleviate these issues:

In addition to being a technical constraint, inadequate regional drainage also precludes the use of on-farm measures to promote agriculture on the No. 5 Road back lands. Adequate regional drainage needs to be in place before property owners may be expected to fully benefit from on-farm drainage improvements. The cost of regional drainage improvements is subject to engineering investigation, but is likely to include \$60,000 for a new culvert under Steveston Highway, up to \$160,000 to retrofit the Fraser

River flood gate, a flood gate structure (\$11,500), and possible deepening or widening of existing ditches. (Zbeetnoff Consulting, 1997)

The 1997 agricultural feasibility study also noted that:

The process requires commitments from all parties involved and includes the immediate need for regional and on-farm financial expenditures to secure the agricultural capability of the area. (Zbeetnoff Consulting, 1997)

Unfortunately, the ALC did not have the financial capability to address the drainage issues, and the City did not have the political will to take on the drainage project alone. The City and the landowners within the Backlands Policy area would have possibly been able to cover the regional drainage costs; however, the City was unwilling to bear the financial burden when the landowners had consistently shown little interest in farming:

The City notes that their discussion of implementation measures garnered little land owner support. As a result, the City is reluctant to proceed with the municipal share of the regional drainage improvements (\$232,000) if the land owners are not prepared to undertake appropriate on-farm drainage improvements (estimated \$2500 per [hectare]). (City of Richmond, 1999)

The purpose behind multifunctional agriculture is to support small-scale agricultural production, which typically results in less yields than large-scale agricultural production, through the introduction of non-farm uses to act as additional compensation (Zasada, 2011). Multifunctional agriculture enables farming to be an economically reasonable alternative to urban development. However, this study notes that the religious institutions and landowners within the Backlands Policy area did not have an interest in farming from the beginning, they were instructed to locate within the Policy area instead of agreeing to the Policy terms of their own volition. Further, the introduction of non-farm uses into agricultural areas is intended to be a supporting use, whereas the Backlands Policy framed agriculture as a condition of development. The religious institutions did not want to farm; therefore, it is reasonable to assume the institutions are not interested in making agricultural improvements to the land. The driving success behind multifunctional agriculture, based on the findings of this study, is ensuring the user of the land wants to farm. One of the participants noted during the interview that “farming is really hard, it's hard to integrate it into your operation”. If the

landowner or user is not interested in farming, then agricultural production is not going to flourish on the site.

Thinking about it as an applicant, if you flipped around the other way, where, say, a site's never been farmed and they're looking at it from a development standpoint, that's going to lead the way in terms of how they think about the parcel as a pure development parcel. And farming is really an afterthought. I think, trying to flip that equation over where farming is implemented first is really key. (City of Richmond Representative, personal communication, 2023)

I would say that's probably the largest criticism of the [Backlands Policy] since its inception, ensuring that farming is maintained and is legitimate, not just kind of like a hobby farm that some of the religious staff attend to here and there. (City of Richmond Representative, personal communication, 2023)

I think it's been the largest criticism, [the City's] ability to ensure that the backlands are farmed over time. Typically, these [religious] organizations don't have the know-how. They may have a keen interest in farming the backlands, but don't necessarily understand how much hard work it is to keep that up. I think giving [the religious institutions] a realistic expectation now, through [the 2021 Policy changes] is really important. That commitment to farming isn't sufficient anymore, that we actually need to see evidence of farming. (City of Richmond Representative, personal communication, 2023)

In comparison to the Backlands Policy, many interviews reference the Garden City Lands development which is also located within the City of Richmond. A key difference between the Backlands Policy and Garden City Lands development is the programming and ownership of the urban agriculture component. While the City and ALC put the onus on the landowners within the Backlands Policy area, the City partnered with Kwantlen Polytechnic University's Sustainable Agriculture Farm Program to cultivate the agricultural portion of the Garden City Lands development (City of Richmond, 2023). This ensures that the agricultural production will be supported by a user that is interested in farming, instead of forcing a non-farmer user to farm.

I think that what's happening down in Garden City lands in Richmond is an awesome example of amazing, well done, integrated urban agriculture. [Kwantlen] does their farmer training program, but it's also a bog. There's all kinds of stuff happening there. It's not like it's super intensively farmed, they had a lot of challenges with their soil because there was a lot of contamination there. I think it's amazing to have a less intensively operated agricultural space adjacent to urban centers. (ALC Representative, personal communication, 2023)

Ultimately multifunctional agriculture policy needs to account for the economic realities which occur within the peri-urban environment. Land speculation and non-farm uses that are perceived as having more value need to be considered when developing multifunctional agriculture policies, especially given the basis behind multifunctional agriculture is inviting competing urban uses in. In order to strengthen the perceived value of agricultural lands, multifunctional agriculture policies introduce supplementary uses onto farmland that may hold higher value to the public (Roberts et al., 2022). By understanding the preferences of urban residents, such as recreation or aesthetic values, multifunctional agriculture can introduce high value, non-farm uses into the peri-urban fringe. The effectiveness of multifunctional agriculture protecting agricultural land from urban development has been challenged, as it invites certain non-farm uses into agricultural land. However, multifunctional agriculture policies, when used in a post-productivist agricultural model, can better navigate the reality that peri-urban areas have a reduced emphasis on rural lands for food production (Burton & Wilson, 2006).

Multifunctional agriculture policies allow what can publicly be perceived as important in agricultural areas, such as esthetics, recreation, or environmental protection, to be intertwined with food production (Zasada, 2011a). However, these policies need to ensure that agricultural land use is not overshadowed by what can be perceived as a better use of the land base. While the Backlands Policy was amended several times in an attempt to promote agricultural production, these amendments, excluding the 2021 amendments as it is too early to ascertain the effects, failed to shift what is perceived as the best use of land. The religious organizations arguably were never going to value agricultural production more than religious institutional use, as these organizations never had an interest in farming the land. Multifunctional agriculture needs to consider who will be responsible for farming and ensure the individual or organization actually has an interest and the required knowledge of agricultural production.

5.3. Importance of Agriculture-First Policy

In agricultural land use planning academic theory, multifunctional agriculture can introduce, and balance the needs of, different land uses to achieve the perception that agricultural land has a higher value (Spataru et al., 2020). However, the introduction of higher-value perceived uses into an agricultural area can lead to the parcel being used

only for the higher value use. As outlined in the above section, economics plays a vital role in land use whether intended or not. The introduction of uses into an agricultural area that may produce more economic gains can lead to the chipping away of agricultural land (Zasada, 2011). In the context of the Backlands Policy, it is the view of this study that ensuring that agriculture is established as the primary use on a parcel, and non-farm uses are introduced as ancillary, is a key element to successful multifunctional agricultural policies.

This study argues that the reason the Backlands Policy was unable to successfully encourage the landowners along No. 5 Road to farm is because the Policy allowed the establishment of religious institutional use before agricultural use. Once the religious institutions had developed there was no incentive to farm or lease out the backland portion of the lot. The parcels within the Backlands Policy area are small, had known drainage issues, and restricted access dependent on where the parcel is located. Not only would it have been difficult to bring these parcels into agricultural production, but most religious institutions had little experience farming. With so many barriers and, as perceived by the religious institutions, very little incentive to farm the land, the backlands portion was destined to sit unused. In 1992 the ALC and the City received correspondence from a landowner within the Backlands Policy area who voiced concerns about the size and access of the parcels in regards to future agricultural use of the land:

Many of the large parcels of land, 5 acres on up, are being held for future development. They will not be available for use under the current permitted zoning. As a result, the backlands are not available. Without these properties, there is no possible way of connecting all of the existing lots, to create one large "farm" as you would like to. Instead, there will continue to be odd sized backlots, too small for viable farming, and many pieces that are, for all intents and purposes, "landlocked". My property is a classic example. When I sell it, you will have approximately 3 acres of land sitting between the golf course, and the 18 acres of "holding property" on the South side (property which is now fenced off, and unused). (City of Richmond Memorandum, 1992).

After the introduction of the Backlands Policy, it was speculated that some properties were purchased for future non-agricultural development. Since the Backlands Policy already introduced religious institutional use, other non-agricultural development was more likely to occur than on other ALR lots that were purely agricultural. The small lot size, lack of access, and speculation for future development meant that the

Backlands Policy area was not perceived by landowners within the Backlands Policy area as having agricultural value.

However, this study notes that the changes to the Backlands Policy made by the City and ALC in 2021 may improve how agriculture is viewed on these parcels. By the ALC and the City requiring that a parcel has either been farmed for a five-year period prior to submission of a development application for religious institutional use, or have entered into a lease with a farm operation prior to application submission, the City and ALC are ensuring agricultural use is considered by landowners. Although agricultural production may not be valued by the religious institutions as the highest and best use for the site, the 2021 amendment may be able to reverse what is perceived as the primary use for the Backlands Policy properties. Instead of agricultural production being a condition of religious institutional development, the 2021 amendments may be able to switch this perception to religious institutional use being permitted as an accessory use to farming. Additional research is required to determine if the 2021 Policy changes did achieve this result or resulted in other perception and land use consequences for this area.

In addition to multifunctional agricultural policies needing to emphasize agriculture as the primary use of the property and non-farm uses as ancillary, programming of the agricultural lands within these policies also needs to be conducted by a person or organization that values farming. This programming could be conducted by outside organizations or individuals who would not need to reside on the property, but have access to agricultural land. Educational institutions with agricultural programs, such as Kwantlen Polytechnic's programming on Richmond's Garden City Lands, or Community Supported Agriculture organizations, which connects agricultural producers and consumers through a subscription-based model (FarmFolk CityFolk, 2023), are examples of organizations that could take over programming of the Backlands Policy area. Had the Policy implemented the ALC's original suggestion to have the City program the lands, or followed a similar structure as the Garden City Lands where the land was leased to an educational organization, there could have been more opportunities for agricultural production to take place. Not only would government or another organization's intervention into the Backlands Policy area close the knowledge gap between the religious institutions and farming, this would also have been a better

indication of what agriculture use would be appropriate in close proximity to the urban edge.

As seen with the 2021 policy changes where the ALC acted as the final decision maker to separate the Backlands Policy from public and political influence, some members of the public are not supportive of the Policy and would rather have the area reserved for religious institutional use. Introduction of disruptive agricultural practices may result in less public support for the Backlands Policy and increased pressure on the City to allow non-farm use into the agricultural area. While the ALC is currently supported by the premier, another political party, less supportive of the ALR, could be elected in future. By having a municipal government or third-party organization programming the backlands area there can be more certainty about the land being used for agricultural production. Additionally, municipal or third-party organizations may result in a greater assurance that the agricultural use would be appropriate for being located within the peri-urban area. Due to the more intertwined relationship between local organizations and public opinion, a municipal or third-party organization is more likely to respond to public backlash over non-compatible uses. To avoid public scrutiny, there may be more thought at the local level into what agricultural uses are appropriate adjacent to the urban centre.

Although farming to date within the Backlands Policy area has not resulted in large-scale agricultural production, smaller-scale agricultural production can result in high crop yields. This can be partially attributed to the style of agricultural production. While large-scale farms typically rely on machinery for planting and harvesting, due to the amount of land that farm occupies it is more efficient to use machines, small-scale farming typically relies on manual labour which allows for high crop-planting density (McDougall et al., 2019). A higher crop-planting density not only results in more yields (sales), but also uses less water use due to the proximity of the crops (Djaman et al., 2022). Manual labour also allows for a variety of crops to be planted, whereas machinery is typically calibrated for one crop-type at a time (McDougall et al., 2019). Planting a variety of crops in one field can lead to “overyielding,” where the yield (sale) of many different crops exceeds the yield (sale) that one singular crop would be able to produce. Manual labour is less efficient than machinery when compared to farming large areas but is well suited for smaller-scale farming.

The Backlands Policy area could be the ideal location for small-scale agricultural operations. Because the Policy is located within Richmond's peri-urban area, there is access to both a larger labour force and urban markets when compared to large-scale agricultural land (Buxton & Butt, 2020). With proximity to a larger labor pool and urban markets, small-scale agricultural operations in peri-urban areas can benefit from increased efficiency and economic viability. Instead of relying on large-scale forms of agricultural production, which are not always well suited for closer proximity to the urban core, policy creation within peri-urban areas should consider more innovative land use options. By fostering a shift towards more modern agricultural practices, policymakers can leverage the advantages of peri-urban locations, such as proximity to urban markets, through small-scale, high-yield agricultural operations. Policy makers at all levels of government need to implement policies that not only recognize the distinct attributes of peri-urban areas, but also capitalize on their potential to shape an agricultural landscape that may appear different from historical production.

In conclusion, the concept of multifunctional agriculture holds great promise for managing peri-urban areas where dedicated agricultural land use may not be considered the highest and best use of land. However, the successful implementation of multifunctional agricultural policies requires careful consideration of the order in which different land uses are introduced to a parcel. The Backlands Policy serves as an example of the challenges that can arise when the order of land use priorities is not carefully considered. By allowing the establishment of religious institutional use before agricultural use, the policy inadvertently led to a lack of incentives for farming or leasing out the backland portion of the lots. With small parcel sizes, limited access, and speculation for future non-agricultural development, the agricultural value of the Backlands Policy area was undermined, hindering the preservation of the agricultural land base for food production in the long term.

To enhance the success of multifunctional agricultural policies, programming of agricultural lands within these policies needs to be conducted by individuals or organizations that prioritize farming and have the necessary expertise. Although it is essential to prioritize agriculture as the primary use when creating multifunctional agricultural policies, also allowing for different forms of agriculture to take place is equally as important. While large-scale agricultural production is generally the most efficient option, small-scale agricultural production can be better suited in peri-urban

spaces. Further, interventions by local government or other agricultural organizations can bridge the knowledge gap between non-farming institutions and agricultural practices, ensuring appropriate and sustainable agricultural use in close proximity to urban areas. This allows for the implementation of multifunctional agricultural policies that are compatible with the adjacent urban land uses.

Chapter 6. Conclusion

6.1. Strengths and Limitations

This study has examined how the varying perspectives on multilevel governance, agricultural land use, and the challenges of multifunctional land use within the peri-urban fringe affected the creation and implementation of the Backlands Policy. This research uses testimonials of representatives from the ALC, the City, and the religious institutions within the Backlands Policy area as well as historical documentation to provide first-hand experience with creating and implementing an early iteration of a multifunctional agriculture policy. Grounding these testimonials and documents in the conceptual framework, this study sought to understand how perceptions of agricultural land use can affect multifunctional agriculture policy as well as understand what elements of the Backlands Policy can be used to further multifunctional agriculture research.

The research presented here found that collaboration between different levels of government is critical when creating policies which address complex problems. By reviewing a specific policy that has been amended over time, this research was able to dive into the nuances of the Backlands Policy which resulted in an in-depth understanding of the Policy's strengths and weaknesses. The focus on a singular policy also allowed this research to consider specific contextual factors behind policy creation and implementation. These contextual factors include political, social, and economic elements that may significantly influence the Backlands Policy's effectiveness. Finally, this research was able to conduct in-depth interviews with ALC, City, and religious institution representatives which provided rich qualitative data on the overall success of the Backlands Policy for analysis. While future comparative research should be considered to examine other multifunctional agricultural policies, such as the Garden City Lands, this research provides a base understanding regarding the failure of the Backlands Policy and provides insight into how a similar policy could be more successfully implemented in future.

While this study is grounded in theoretical research as well as interviews and historical documentation, there are limitations in the scope and generalizability of this study. Firstly, this study focuses solely on perceptions of agricultural land use and multilevel governance as they relate to the Backlands Policy. While general themes or

observations may be relevant to similar policies, the conclusions presented in this thesis cannot be directly extended to other policies or situations without consideration of site-specific factors. Multifunctional agriculture policies, especially in unique landscapes such as peri-urban environments, need to allow for flexibility and creativity and cannot take a “one-size-fits-all” approach to policy creation (Opitz et al., 2016).

Secondly, this research captured a narrow range of perspectives from representatives from the ALC, City, and religious institutions; there are undoubtedly others whose opinions were not represented. This can include other representatives from the ALC, City, or religious institutions who hold different opinions or memories of what previously transpired with the Backlands Policy, and other organizations not represented at all, such as the Ministry of Agriculture, other community stakeholders (e.g. farmers), and local not-for-profit or advocacy groups (e.g. Richmond FarmWatch). Furthermore, accuracy of the current study could be limited due to biases in participant responses, as each participant will have biases regarding agricultural land use and the Backlands Policy depending on which organization they represent. This study also acknowledges that participant perspectives cannot be generalized to the remainder of the ALC, City, or religious institutions.

Finally, this study was unable to determine what effects the 2021 changes to the Backlands Policy had on perceptions of agricultural land use, especially the religious institutions as they are the organizations most affected by these changes, and how they may affect the implementation of the Policy in future. While this study can make predictions of how the 2021 changes will affect the Policy area, further research is required.

6.2. Future Directions

One opportunity for future research would be to analyze how the 2021 changes to the Backlands Policy has affected land use within the Policy area. As the ALC and the City introduced more stringent requirements about bringing a site into agricultural production the intended and unintended consequences of that change should be studied. Because the 2021 Backlands Policy changes were introduced relatively close to this study’s commencement the effects of the changes could not be captured. At the time of data collection and analysis for this study, no application to develop a religious

institution under the 2021 version of the Backlands Policy had been submitted to the City.

An additional research opportunity would be the analysis of the Garden City Lands development as a multifunctional agriculture policy. Although this study did not intend of comparing the Backlands Policy to the Garden City Lands development the two sites naturally intersected through the interviews, with the Garden City Lands viewed by respondents as the “successful” policy and the Backlands Policy as “unsuccessful”. However, this study did not evaluate the Garden City Lands development nor if the policy and development framework resulted in increased agricultural production. Future research could examine the Garden City Lands development to determine if perceptions of that project are correct, or if there are further considerations policy makers should contemplate when developing multifunctional agriculture policies.

6.3. Final Remarks

This research examined how different perceptions of agricultural land use at the provincial, municipal, and public level, as well as the lack of collaboration between the ALC and City, affected the creation and implementation of the Backlands Policy. While the Backlands Policy was not created as a multifunctional agriculture policy, the Policy embodied the basic intent of multifunctional agriculture by integrating non-farm uses onto agricultural land within the City of Richmond’s peri-urban area. The conclusions drawn from this research highlight what considerations policy makers need to take into account when creating multifunctional agricultural policies. While these considerations may not be applicable to all policies, especially given the complexities of peri-urban spaces and the relationship between different levels of government, these considerations may prove useful in the right context.

The Backlands Policy highlights the importance of cooperation and communication between different levels of government when creating multifunctional agriculture policies. During the Backlands Policy's inception, both the City and the ALC worked collaboratively to create the policy. However, over time, communication diminished, leading to a breakdown in policy implementation as well as a breakdown in trust between the two government organizations. When multifunctional agricultural policies are created and implemented by multiple organizations or government bodies

under the multilevel government framework, all parties must work collaboratively. This collaboration can not only lead to innovative and creative land use policies, but also ensures that a policy is fully understood by all parties and implemented fairly.

The Backlands Policy also highlights the importance of implementing an agriculture-first policy. Policies should prioritize agriculture as the primary use, with non-farm uses introduced as secondary, to ensure the preservation of agricultural land and its successful integration with urban land uses. Furthermore, the programming of agricultural lands in these policies should be conducted by individuals or organizations that prioritize farming and have the necessary expertise. Additional government intervention or collaboration with agricultural organizations can bridge the knowledge gap and ensure appropriate and sustainable agricultural practices in peri-urban areas. While the religious institutions within the Backlands Policy area generally are supportive and perceive local agricultural production as a positive, these institutions often do not possess the knowledge or the drive to farm. As seen with the Backlands Policy, the lack of agricultural knowledge and willingness to farm resulted in the backlands area sitting unproductive. Multifunctional agricultural policies need to consider who will be farming the land once the policy is implemented and, most importantly, do they want to farm.

Finally, the Backlands Policy emphasizes the need for consideration of economic factors when creating multifunctional agriculture policies in peri-urban areas. The Backlands Policy failed to address the economic barriers properties within the policy area faced, the small size of each individual backland area and the required drainage improvements. When the City and the ALC were originally refining the Backlands Policy in the 1990s it was noted the backland portion of the lots is not large enough to support a commercial farm. Without the economic incentive to farm this area neither the religious institutions nor a commercial farmer sees value in agricultural production. If the backlands portion of all properties within the Policy area were consolidated into a contiguous agricultural area there may be an increase in the economic value, and by association perceptions of these lands, resulting in agricultural production taking place. While there are still underlying physical barriers to farming these lands, such as drainage improvements, the cost could be shared between the landowners and the City instead of each property needing to pay for the improvements.

The research evaluates the impact of different levels of perception regarding agricultural land use, as well as different levels of collaboration, effected the creation and implementation of the Backlands Policy. This study underscores the importance of collaborative efforts and communication between government bodies when formulating multifunctional agricultural policies. Prioritizing agriculture as the primary use, with non-farm uses as secondary, ensures effective preservation of agricultural land and reduces the risk of urban creep. Further, involvement of knowledgeable agricultural organizations when implementing multifunctional agricultural policies can help increase the probability that the agricultural production will take place, and not be overshadowed by a perceived “better” use. Finally, economic factors should be considered when creating multifunctional agriculture policies. Multifunctional agriculture, when implemented correctly, can support agricultural production in peri-urban spaces by diversifying activities. These policies should explore ways to improve the economic value of agricultural lands while supporting agricultural production.

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Appendix A.

Backlands Policy – March 22, 2000

 City of Richmond Policy Manual		
Page 1 of 3	Adopted by Council: Mar. 27/00	POLICY 5037
File Ref: 4105-04	NO. 5 ROAD BACKLANDS POLICY	
<p>POLICY 5037:</p> <p>It is Council policy that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The area outlined in bold lines as “Area Proposed for Public and Institutional Use” on the accompanying plan dated 01/24/00 may be considered for non-farm use.2. The types of non-farm use which may be considered are:<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ “Assembly District” uses, and➤ Certain “School / Public Use District” uses (i.e., public park, public recreation facility, municipal works, health and safety measures, community use).3. The amount of land on each property which may be developed for approved non-farm uses is limited to the westerly 110 m (360.892 ft) for properties fronting onto No. 5 Road. The remaining back land portion of each property shall be retained for farm use only.4. Satisfactory sanitary sewage disposal is required as a condition of Development Permit approval.5. Continue to strive for a partnership approach, with back land owner prepared farm plans to achieve farming, but allow for a limited infrastructure component (e.g., little or no regional and on-site drainage, irrigation or access roads), where a full infrastructure component is not practical.6. The current moratorium on non-farm use approvals (initiated by the Land Commission and adopted by Council in February, 1996) should be retained and may be lifted on an individual lot basis for owners who:<ol style="list-style-type: none">a) prepare farm plans;b) explore farm consolidation;c) commit to do any necessary on-site infrastructure improvements;d) co-operate as necessary to remove constraints (e.g., required infrastructure) to farming the back lands, in partnership with others; ande) commit to legal requirements as may be stipulated by Council to achieve acceptable land uses (e.g., farming the back lands).f) undertake active farming of the back lands.7. The following procedure will apply when considering applications for non-farm use and Assembly District rezoning.		
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Approvals Procedure

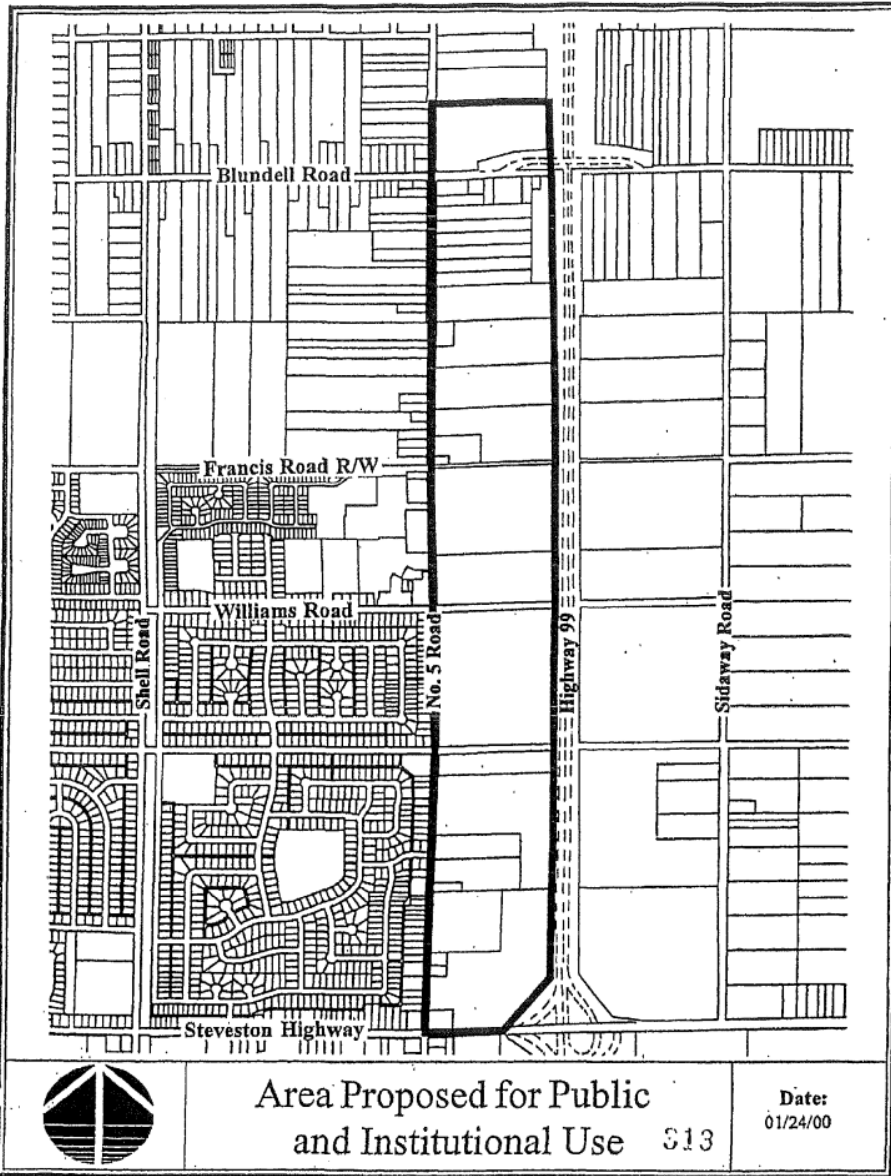
Proponent applies to City and Commission for non-farm use approval.
Commission reviews proposal and may give approval in principle for non-farm use based on the proponent:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • preparing an acceptable farm plan; • entering into a restrictive covenant; • providing a financial guarantee to farm; and • agreeing to undertake active farming first
Proponent undertakes active farming based on the approved farm plan.
Commission gives final approval for non-farm use.
Proponent applies to City for rezoning of site to Assembly District (ASY).
City approves rezoning application after proponent meets all City requirements.

Amendments to the above policies

If either the City or the Land Commission intends to amend any of the above procedures, the initiating party will advise the other party of this intent and seek comment on the proposed amendments prior to concluding any approvals.

Co-ordination of review process

The City and the Commission will co-ordinate efforts when reviewing applications for non-farm use, in order to ensure that the interests of each party are addressed. This co-ordinated effort will be done prior to granting any approvals.



Area Proposed for Public and Institutional Use 313

Date: 01/24/00

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Appendix B.

Backlands Policy – 2021

Agriculture and Food



d) support programs that encourage children and families to learn healthy eating habits.

OBJECTIVE 5:

Find ways to recover food waste.

POLICIES:

- a) support the efforts of community groups and the private sector to establish initiatives that divert recoverable food from the pre-waste stream for redistribution to local food banks;
- b) develop strategies to encourage organic waste diversion from multi-family housing and commercial properties;
- c) support the recycling and re-use of organic waste;
- d) develop an educational program to promote awareness around food production, health, and impacts on the community.



Credit: Richmond Food Security Society

Bylaw 9506
2016/02/15

7.3 No. 5 Road Backlands Policy

OVERVIEW:

Since 1990, the City and the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) have agreed that, within the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR), there shall be a unique area called "No. 5 Road Backlands Policy Area" as shown on the attached No. 5 Road Backlands Policy Area Map.

Bylaw 10258
2021/05/17

The purpose of the Policy is to allow Religious Assembly uses on the westerly 110m ("Frontlands") of the properties located on the east side of No. 5 Road between Blundell Road and Steveston Highway (the area outlined in bold lines on the No. 5 Road Backlands Policy Area Map), if the remaining portions ("Backlands") are actively farmed.

For the purposes of Section 7.3, "Religious Assembly" shall have the same meaning as given to that term in the Use and Term Definitions section of Richmond Zoning Bylaw 8500 (Section 3.4), as amended.



Bylaw 10258
2021/05/17

OBJECTIVE:

Religious Assembly uses may be permitted in the Frontlands if the Backlands are actively farmed.

POLICIES:

Bylaw 9506
2016/02/15

Bylaw 10258
2021/05/17

Bylaw 9506
2016/02/15

Bylaw 10258
2021/05/17

- a) in the Frontlands, Religious Assembly uses may be considered subject to the agricultural development of the Backlands, which is to be considered and approved by the City and the Agricultural Land Commission through the necessary land use approval process;
- b) in the Frontlands, uses that are clearly ancillary to a Religious Assembly use may be considered and approved by the City and the Agricultural Land Commission through the necessary land use approval process;
- c) residential uses (e.g., congregate housing, community care facility, multiple-family housing, housing for older adults) are not permitted in the Frontlands or the Backlands;

- d) the City will continue to strive for a partnership approach with property owners to achieve farming of the Backlands (e.g., based on the approved farm plans);
- e) in the Backlands, a limited infrastructure component (e.g., little or no regional and on-site drainage, irrigation or farm access roads) could be allowed, where a full infrastructure component is not practical;
- f) in the Frontlands, satisfactory sanitary sewage disposal is required as a condition of non-farm use or rezoning approval;

- g) all applicants proposing to develop new Religious Assembly facilities on the Frontlands or expand an existing Religious Assembly facility must either:
 - provide evidence of Farm Status under the BC Assessment Act to demonstrate that the subject parcel has been farmed for the five consecutive years preceding the ALC’s consideration of an application, or (if no ALC approval is required) the City’s processing of a rezoning application; or
 - provide evidence that the Backlands portion of the subject parcel is currently available for farming via a lease registered on title between the property owner and a legitimate farming enterprise for a term of at least five years, and either:
 - provide evidence that the parcel is currently being farmed; or
 - provide a plan for how it will be farmed;
- h) applicants shall submit the necessary reports to the City to achieve and maintain farming with all costs to implement works associated with an approved farm plan to be paid by the applicant;

Development Application Procedure and Requirements

- a) all proposals for Religious Assembly development are subject to City and ALC approval through the necessary development application process to be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and in accordance with the OCP;
- b) consideration of Religious Assembly development in the Frontlands is generally subject to:



Bylaw 9506
2016/02/15

- i) submission and approval of an ALR Non-Farm Use application that is required to be endorsed by the City prior to being considered by the ALC. If the City endorses the ALR Non-Farm Use application, it will be forwarded to the ALC for consideration;
 - ii) pending the outcome of the ALR Non-Farm Use application, a rezoning application will also be required and subject to the required statutory process;
 - iii) other Development Applications (i.e., Environmentally Sensitive Area Development Permit, Development Variance Permit) may also be required based on the proposal or site context;
- c) in certain cases, a rezoning application will not be required following approval of an ALR Non-Farm Use application. Under these circumstances, any specific requirements to be secured through the ALR non-farm use application are to be confirmed through the necessary resolution of Council upon consideration of the application;
- d) in considering development proposals (i.e., ALR Non-Farm Use applications or rezoning application) in the No. 5 Road Backlands Policy area, the City requires the applicants to:
- i) prepare farm plans with access;
 - ii) explore farm consolidation;
 - iii) commit to do any necessary on-site infrastructure improvements;
 - iv) co-operate as necessary to remove constraints (e.g., required infrastructure) to farming the Backlands, in partnership with others;
 - v) commit to legal requirements as may be stipulated by Council to achieve acceptable land uses (e.g., farming the Backlands);
 - vi) provide financial security to ensure the approved farm plan is implemented;
 - vii) undertake active farming of the Backlands;
 - viii) register a statutory right-of-way on title for a future farm access road along the eastern edge of the property along the Backlands, to the satisfaction of the Director of Development;
 - ix) comply with such other considerations or requirements by Council;

Reporting Requirements

- a) all property owners who are required to farm the Backlands must, in a form acceptable to the City, report to the City on a yearly basis regarding the current status of the farm by providing clear evidence (e.g., detailed description of the farming activities conducted in the Backlands, photos, farm tax records) that the Backlands are actively being farmed in accordance with the approved farm plans, to Council and the ALC's satisfaction;

Amendments to the Above Policies

- a) amendments to these policies in the 2041 OCP is subject to the required statutory process, which will include consultation between the City, ALC and other stakeholders as deemed necessary;

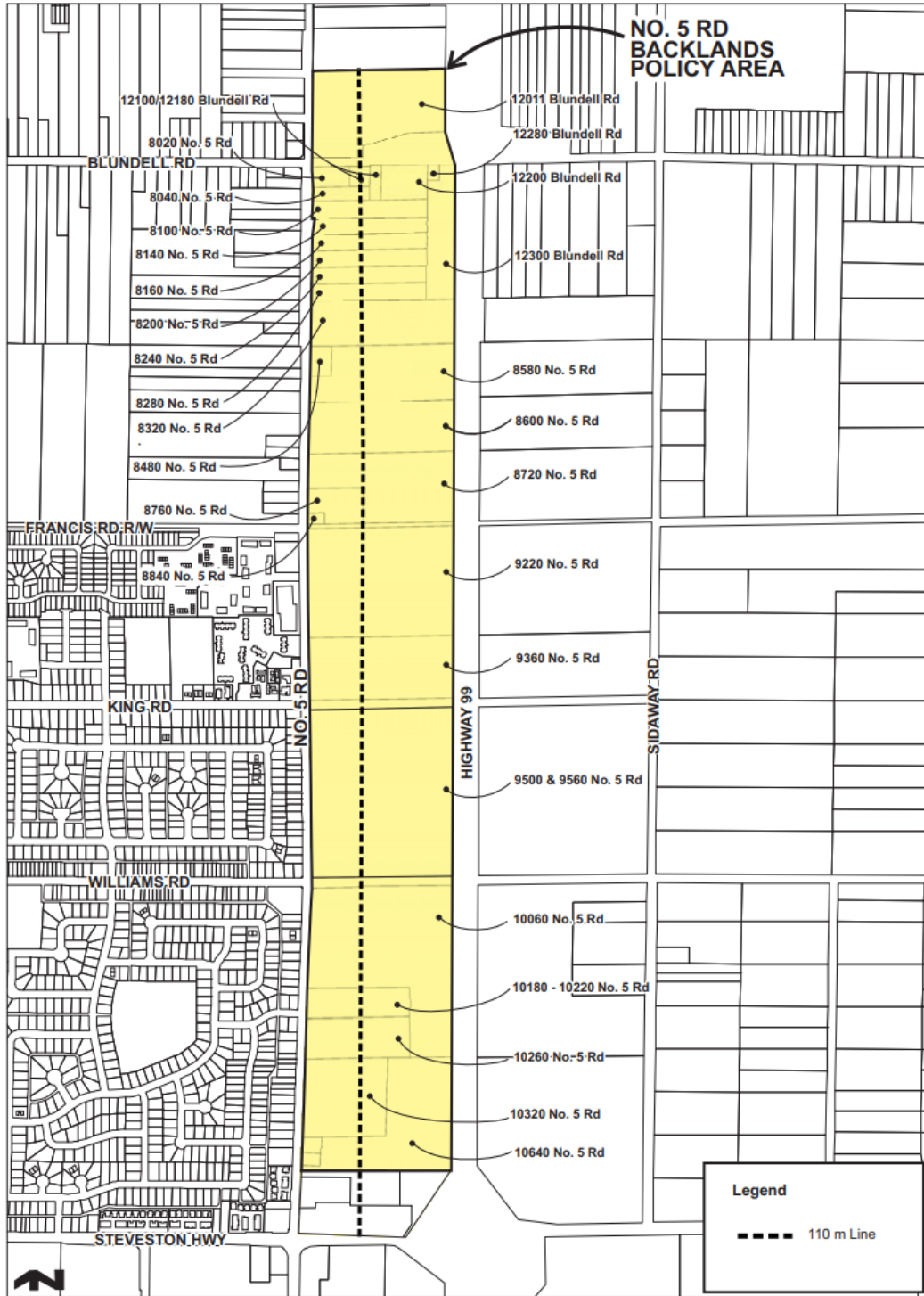
Co-ordination of Review Process

- a) the City and the ALC will co-ordinate efforts when reviewing applications for ALR non-farm use and subsequent rezoning applications, in order to ensure that the interests of each party are addressed. This co-ordinated effort will be done prior to granting any approvals.



Bylaw 9506
2016/02/15

No. 5 Road Backlands Policy Area Map



Appendix C.

Interview Scripts

Semi-Structured Interview Script - ALC and City of Richmond

STUDY DETAILS

Ethics Application Number: #30001454

Project title: Perceptions of Agricultural Land: A Case Study of the Number 5 Road Backlands Policy in the City of Richmond.

Student Lead: Tory Lawson

Email: [REDACTED]
Phone: [REDACTED]

Principal Investigator: Meg Holden

Email: [REDACTED]
Phone: [REDACTED]

INCLUSION CRITERIA

To participate in this interview, participants from the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) and City of Richmond must meet the following criteria:

- Have experience, in-depth knowledge, or a combination of both on the Number 5 Road Backlands Policy.
- Be a former or current staff member at the ALC or City of Richmond.
- Be willing to participate in this study.

SCRIPT

Hello, thank you for talking with me today, my name is Tory Lawson and I hoping to speak with you today about your thoughts and experiences with agricultural land use within the City of Richmond, specifically the Number 5 Road Backlands Policy. This conversation should take between 30 to 60 minutes of your time. I wanted to remind you than you can choose to skip any questions that I ask and that you can ask to stop the interview at any time with no consequences.

Could you confirm that you received and signed a copy of the consent form?

Did you have any questions about anything?

And, are you okay with me audio-recording this conversation?

Questions to be asked (no particular order):

- What is your professional experience working with the Backlands Policy?
- Why do you think the Backlands Policy was created, who or what influenced the creation?
- Do you think the Backlands Policy has changed since it was first created in 1988? If so, how?
- What factors do you think contributed to those changes?
- Do you see those changes as strengthening or limiting agricultural production within the Backlands Policy area?
- Is there a change to the Backlands Policy that, in your opinion, has drastically changed the implementation of the policy? Why was that change so impactful?
- Overall, do you think the Backlands Policy has benefited agricultural production within the policy area, why or why not?
- If you could change the Backlands Policy to better support agricultural production, what would you change?
- What do you think is the largest barrier the Backlands Policy has in supporting agricultural production?
- Is a policy like the Backlands Policy beneficial or a good use of land? Should different uses (such as agricultural and religious) operate on a single property, why or why not?
- In your opinion, should there be a buffer between agricultural land and other uses? If yes, what form does that buffer take (a hard line or softer transition)?
- Is it beneficial to have agricultural lands adjacent to urban centres? If not, where should these lands be?
- Overall, what is your opinion on the City of Richmond's agriculture policies, beyond the Backlands Policy? Has it changed over the years and if so, how?

Semi-Structured Interview Script – Religious Institutions

STUDY DETAILS

Ethics Application Number: #30001454

Project title: Perceptions of Agricultural Land: A Case Study of the Number 5 Road Backlands Policy in the City of Richmond.

Student Lead: Tory Lawson

Email: [REDACTED]
Phone: [REDACTED]

Principal Investigator: Meg Holden

Email: [REDACTED]
Phone: [REDACTED]

INCLUSION CRITERIA

To participate in this interview, participants from the Religious Institutions must meet the following criteria:

- Must be a representative of a religious institution.
- The religious institution must have been developed under the Number 5 Road Backlands Policy.
- Be able to participate in an interview in English or agree to have a translator present.
- Be willing to participate in this study.

Hello, thank you for talking with me today, my name is Tory Lawson and I hoping to speak with you today about your thoughts and experiences with agricultural land use within the City of Richmond, specifically this institution's experience with operating under the Number 5 Road Backlands Policy. This conversation should take between 30 to 60 minutes of your time. I wanted to remind you than you can choose to skip any questions that I ask and that you can ask to stop the interview at any time with no consequences.

Could you confirm that you received and signed a copy of the consent form?

Did you have any questions about anything?

And, are you okay with me audio-recording this conversation?

Questions to be asked (no particular order):

- Do you currently live, or have you ever lived, in the City of Richmond?
- Are you familiar with the Backlands Policy? If so, could you provide a quick summary of your knowledge?

- Does farming currently occur on the property?
- If so, can you describe the type and size of the farming uses including estimated harvest size, if irrigation is used, and who harvests the products?
- If so, can you describe what the farm products are used for? (i.e. are they sold off site or given to members of the religious institution or public?)
- If so, at the end of this interview, or at a later time, would it be possible for me to have a quick tour of the farm use taking place on the property?
- If not, can you tell me what barriers the religious institution faces to farming on the property?
- Is there any support that could be offered, either by the City of Richmond or a third-party organization, that would help farm uses on the property?

- How important is either growing food or feeding people to your mission as a place of worship/religious institution?

- If there is a holy place or religious site that is significant to [Insert Religion] does food have a presence or a role to play?

- Either in your childhood or adult life, have you had experience with food production (local or at a larger scale)? If you grew up somewhere other than Metro Vancouver, are there big differences or similarities to local food production?

- When you think of farmland, what benefits does this land serve?

- Do you see any value in mixing farming and religious use? Could the two uses ever benefit one another (such as a community garden or education for younger members)?

- Do you think having two different uses on a property, such as farming and religious use, is a good use of land? Why or why not?

- In your opinion, does the Backlands Policy benefit farm uses or production?
- If so, how?

- If not, why is it difficult to establish farm use or production on the property?

Thank you so much for taking the time to talk with me today. Just a final reminder that you can contact me via phone or email if you have any questions about today, have any information that you forgot to add and want to share, or have anything you want me to remove from my notes that you said.

Is it alright if I contact you again in a couple of weeks to ask any follow up questions I may have?