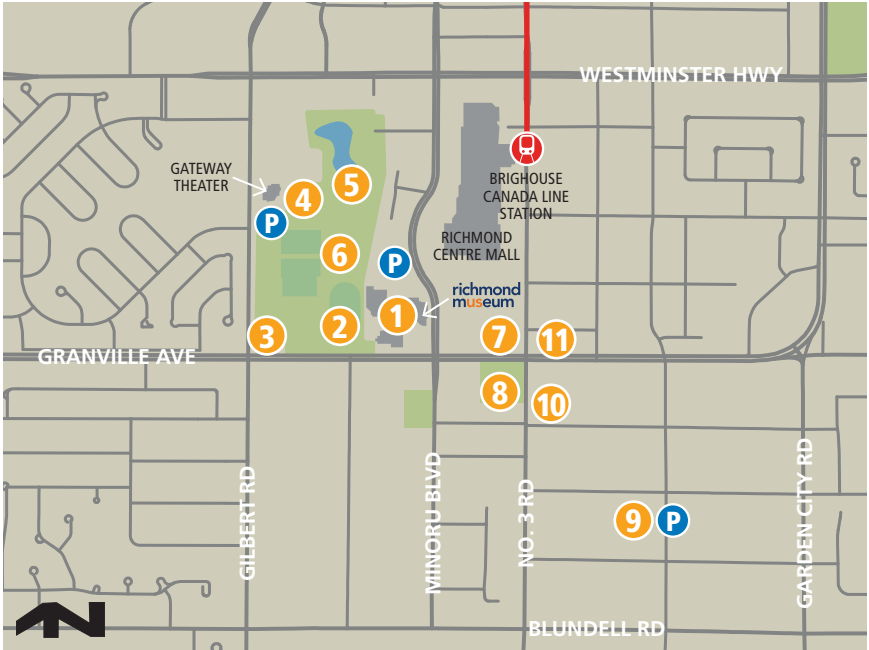


Brighouse District

Self-Guided Historical Walking Tour



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A Civic Legacy

Welcome to the Brighthouse District! This is a fascinating place.

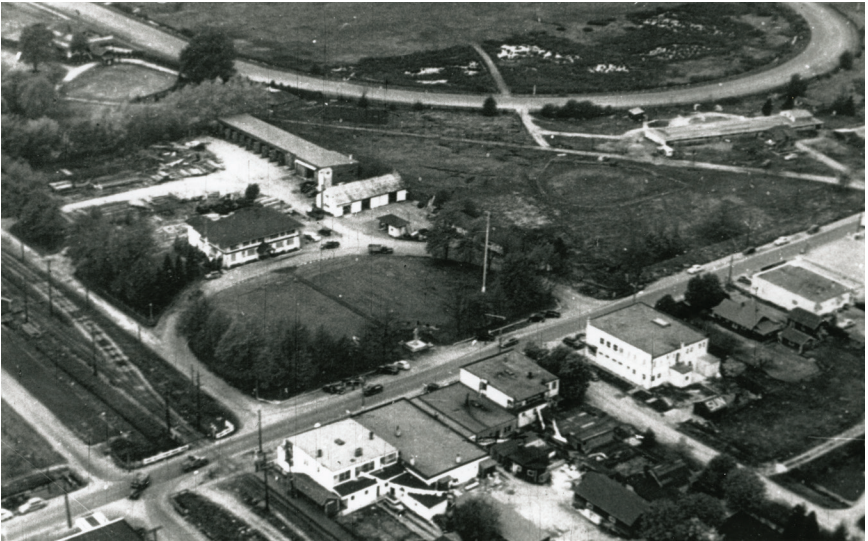
The Richmond Museum invites you to explore the history and diversity of the Brighthouse District through this self-guided historical walking tour.

This is a family friendly walking tour and will take approximately 1-2 hours. Please respect private property and obey all posted signs while enjoying your tour. We recommend starting the tour at the Richmond Cultural Centre (7700 Minoru Gate) as free full day parking is available at its parking lot.

1 Brighthouse District

The Brighthouse District grew from a crossroads in the midst of agricultural fields to become the centre of Richmond's early rural community, servicing farms in the area.

In 1956, the municipality's Planning Commission approved the Brighthouse District's conversion from a rural community serving the farms in central Richmond, into a modern growing commercial town centre. The plan called for, a new town hall, school board office, health unit and library, commercial district, and large multi-use park. Many of the structures and services you can still see today although most buildings have been upgraded or rebuilt.



Aerial photograph depicts Brighthouse racetrack and area showing the Municipal Hall, Granville Avenue and No. 3 Road; 1956.

City of Richmond Archives #1977 2 63, Donated by Greta Cheverton.

2 Minoru Racetrack

On opening day August 21, 1909, over 7,000 horseracing fans packed the Minoru Racetrack's grandstands and clubhouses, arriving from all over the Lower Mainland in vehicles and on special Interurban trams.

Named after King Edward VII's 1909 Epsom Derby winning horse, Minoru, the one-mile oval track was known as the best thoroughbred horse racetrack on the Pacific Coast. Barns holding hundreds of horses lined the west side of No. 3 Road where the Richmond Centre Mall now stands.

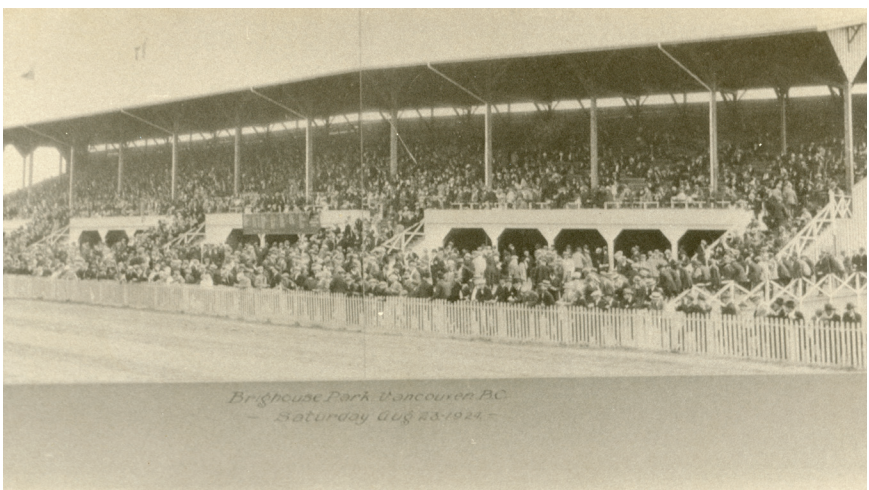
The Racetrack closed during World War I, but reopened in 1920. Racing continued until the 1940s when aging facilities and competition from Hastings Park in Vancouver forced it to close for the final time.

3 Brighthouse Fire Hall No. 1.

In 1922, a public meeting of the Brighthouse-Garden City area residents was held with the purpose of forming a volunteer fire department. Three days later this became a reality.

In 1923, the Brighthouse Volunteer Fire Department moved into the modern age, installing a police telephone for emergency calls and racing to emergency scenes in two of the volunteers' Model T Fords.

The current Brighthouse Fire Hall No. 1 station was completed in 2018. It replaced the previous 50-year-old fire hall. The new facility is also home to Richmond Fire-Rescue's administrative offices, Fire Prevention and Community Relations, and the Emergency Programs Department.



Racegoers in the grandstand at Minoru Park, 1920s.

City of Richmond Archives #1978 11 1]

4 Minoru Chapel

The Minoru Chapel wasn't always in Minoru Park. The Chapel, Richmond's oldest remaining church, was moved to this location from the intersection of Cambie and River Roads in 1967. Since then, the "Chapel in the Park" has been a popular site for weddings.

If you look closely at the windows, you will see how they celebrate the spirit of some of Richmond's early residents. The window to the left of the main door is dedicated to the memory of pioneers who built this church in 1888 for the Richmond Methodist Mission congregation.

5 Minoru Park

You are currently standing in Minoru Park among some the original trees that surrounded Minoru Racetrack, planted around 1925. These include a mixture of elms and oaks.

Building on the existing Centennial Park, Minoru Park was established with the adoption of a planning study and dedication of sixty acres in the mid-1950s. Upon completion, Minoru Park was officially named in 1960. Greenspaces, pleasure gardens, lake water features, pedestrian trails and sports facilities replaced the former racetrack and occasional airstrip.

The much-loved park has been host to numerous athletic events and festivals, and was the site of the hugely successful Richmond O Zone during the 2010 Winter Olympic Games.

Today, Minoru Park is the green heart of Richmond's City Centre and serves as a 45-acre recreational and cultural park site. It continues to evolve with new facilities and upgraded playing fields. The Minoru Centre for Active Living is the most recent addition to the Park.



Minoru Chapel (United Church) at Westminster Highway and Minoru Boulevard on its way to the new location at Minoru Park, June 27, 1967. City of Richmond Archives #2010 36

6 First Aircraft Flights

Minoru Park—called Centennial Park till 1960—was home to a number of aviation ‘firsts’ long before the Vancouver Civic Airport was built on Sea Island. The flat, open landscape here made it an ideal place for early planes to take-off and land.

In 1910, Charles Hamilton piloted the first powered flight in western Canada from Centennial Park. It was a true community event, with over 3,500 people turning out to cheer Hamilton on and watch him make two flights overhead. Other ‘firsts’ soon followed: the first airplane constructed in greater Vancouver flew from here (1911), the first airplane passenger flight in British Columbia (1912), the first solo flight in Canada by female pilot Alys McKey Bryant (1913), and finally, the first airmail flight left from this Park across the Rocky Mountains to Calgary (1919).

7 Richmond City Hall

Richmond’s first town hall was a one-room building on Sam Brighthouse’s property near the corner of Cambie and River Roads, which he donated to the municipality for this use. Later, Brighthouse swapped the original town hall property for another site in his vast land holdings, at No. 3 Road and Granville Avenue.

The second town hall was a two-story building with a curved drive and landscaped grounds facing No. 3 Road. In 1957, Richmond’s rapid urbanization resulted the building of a third larger hall on the same site. The building you see today is the fourth city hall and was constructed in 2000.



Charles Hamilton's Curtiss biplane on Minoru, 1910.

City of Richmond Archives #1978 15 18

8 Brighthouse Park and Lacrosse Box

Brighthouse Park was a gift from Richmond's Agricultural and Industrial Society. The Society, formed in 1891 and within a decade began organizing agricultural fairs and May Day celebrations for the citizens of Richmond. In 1923, they purchased this six-acre parcel of land to use as an athletic field, later donating it to the municipality in 1939.

The lacrosse box in Brighthouse Park was home of local teams as early as 1910. Lacrosse has been a popular and important sport in Richmond since the beginning of the twentieth century, and the City still serves as a major centre for box lacrosse in British Columbia. The Richmond Milkmaids, formed in 1917, became the first women's lacrosse team in Canada.

9 General Currie School

General Currie School was named after General Sir Arthur Currie, the first commander of the Canadian Corps in World War I, and opened as a one-room school in 1919. Built in a Tudor style with Craftsman Influences it is the only protected heritage school in Richmond and is still in its original location.

The school was one of many built after World War I to serve a growing population with access to transportation. During its early years, the school was heated by a pot-bellied stove.



The Richmond Milkmaids, 1929.
City of Richmond Archives #1977 7 3

10 First McDonald's in Canada

This McDonald's was the first to open outside the United States on June 1, 1967. The original restaurant at this site was a reproduction of the hundreds of similar futurist-style McDonald's drive-ins that could be found across the United States.

When it opened, customers lined up to order 18-cent hamburgers at the small drive-in and walk-up business with two take-out windows. That same year, the stand-alone restaurant with indoor seating was launched.

The opening of the new McDonald's symbolized Richmond embracing the future.

11 Brighouse Tram Station

The Brighouse Station once stood here, near the northeast intersection of Granville Avenue and No.3 Road. The station was a key stop on the Interurban tram line which connected Richmond to Vancouver, and beyond to Chilliwack.

On race days, trams known as "Specials" ran from downtown Vancouver across the Fraser River and directly to the Minoru and Lansdowne Racetracks. They sped along at 40 kilometres per hour, often with flags and bells to distinguish them from the regular trams. After delivering their passengers, they parked on sidings to wait for the rush at the end of the day.



Interurban tram on Granville Avenue passing Richmond Town Hall, 1955.

City of Richmond Archives #1978 12 10

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