

Coquitlam's Draft Thematic Framework

July 2020

What is a Thematic Framework?

A thematic framework is a structure that uses themes to help conceptualize past events and to place sites, people and events into their historical context. Historical themes are defined as key ideas for describing a major historical force or process which has contributed to the history and evolution of a place.

Thematic frameworks have a number of interconnected uses in the identification and management of heritage resources.

They are an important tool for both the contextual overview of heritage resources and the comparative analysis of the significance of individual resources. Themes guide judgements about what types of heritage resources might exist on a site or in an area, and assist in the assessment of their heritage significance. The use of major themes can draw attention to gaps in existing histories.

Thematic Frameworks...

Reflect the Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• They succinctly encapsulate the history, physical character and central stories of a community
Help show Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• They create a web of relationships and storylines linking the community's history, heritage values and heritage resources
Draw attention to gaps	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• They examine the 'representativeness' of heritage resources and draw attention to gaps in existing histories
Are Key Ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• They're key ideas for describing major historical forces or processes which have contributed to the history and evolution of a place
Provide Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• They help to conceptualize past events and place sites, people and historical understanding into their historical context
Attempt to be Relatable to all	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Resonate with all people, places and time periods found in a community's history
Promote a Deeper Understanding of a Place	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Allow greater depth of on site interpretation through an understanding of many stories and a wide range of viewpoints

Thematic frameworks support value-based heritage conservation currently considered best practices in Canada. The organizing of a community's heritage into themes is an excellent fit for values-based conservation and heritage management because it supports a broad, layered and inclusive perspective of heritage values and resources.

Linking heritage resources with one or more themes helps to determine a site's comparative significance in a local, regional, national and international context, assisting in the process of determining which sites should be conserved or protected.

A thematic framework helps communities to identify and manage a range of sites that represent aspects of local, regional, national or international history. Gaps in the stories of particular neighbourhoods can be identified, facilitating the management and interpretation of additional heritage resources.

The concept of representativeness can also be used as a tool to select the best examples of a particular type of heritage resource, given that capacity for the management and interpretation of historic sites will always be limited.

Theme 1: Uplands to Lowlands: Geography Shapes a City

This theme explores the significance of Coquitlam's natural history to its identity and development, particularly the importance of the Coquitlam River, an iconic and defining geographical feature of the city that tangibly and abstractly creates a thread that resonates throughout the city's history.

Fed by numerous tributary creeks and streams, the Coquitlam River originates in the Coast Mountains near Indian Arm and flows south into Coquitlam Lake, a watershed region behind the Coquitlam Dam, and into the Fraser River. Coquitlam Lake and its associated reservoir provide the city's source of drinking water.

The Coquitlam River has been a source of life for the Kwikwetlem for millennia, a defining feature of the Nation's large territorial lands. The name, *kʷikwəłəm*, refers to "red fish up the river," a small early sockeye salmon that once ran in great number in the Coquitlam River and spawned in Coquitlam Lake. Elders talk of these sockeye as running so thick that it was difficult to navigate canoes.¹

Coquitlam is uniquely situated with its southernmost boundary in the floodplain of the Fraser River, and its northern boundary deep within the wilderness of the Coast Mountains. The city sits within a glaciated landscape including a still-existing glacier created by the final Fraser Glaciation that impacted the region between 10,000 to 14,000 years ago. Other significant natural features include DeBoville Slough, a wetland ecosystem linking the Pitt River with Hyde Creek, and the Pitt-Addington Marsh Wildlife Area, both home to eagles, osprey, herons and other birds, and large and small mammals.

With the Fraser and Pitt rivers forming two of the city's boundaries, nearby mountain peaks that include Burke, Eagle and Coquitlam mountains, and the presence of Mundy, Lost, Como and Lafarge lakes - the last two as former gravel pits restored as significant and beautiful ecological assets - as well as numerous creek corridors, nature plays a significant role in defining Coquitlam's character and identity.

The regional climate and geography have produced a rainforest ecosystem in the Coastal Western Hemlock biogeoclimatic zone, with vegetation that is dominated by western hemlock, Douglas-fir, western red cedar, red huckleberry, Alaskan blueberry and ferns, all resources contributed to the flourishing of Indigenous cultures.

Coquitlam's geography has influenced its settler history, sometimes with significant impacts. Dam construction to provide the city's water has been devastating through its impact on natural waterways and Kwikwetlem traditional lands, particularly for decimating the sockeye salmon run which gave the city its name and remains a key issue for Kwikwetlem today. Coquitlam river flooding over the last century necessitated dyking projects beginning in the 1990s.

The city is fortunate to be infused with nature. The new City Centre connects nature and culture, while Mundy Park epitomizes this theme as a significant link between the city's uplands and lowlands, playing a role in the regional green network and providing a critical heart of green infrastructure. Parks abound, the city's dykes are recreational amenities, and the nearby mountains, historically supporting skiing, today host mountain biking, hiking and other outdoor recreational opportunities. Coquitlam can truly claim "fun is in our nature."



1. DeBoville Slough



2. Coquitlam River

¹ "Kwikwetlem First Nation", *Coquitlam Watershed Roundtable*, <https://www.coquitlamriverwatershed.ca/kwikwetlem-first-nation/>

Theme 2: A Regional Nexus

Understanding Coquitlam's distinctiveness as an emerging regional focal point, its history of governance and the institutions found within its city boundaries is significant in addressing the city's civic future. As the centre of the Tri-Cities area, Coquitlam's systems, institutions and human relationships are, and will be, instrumental in creating an important central place within the wider region.

A profound institutional system, Indian reserves were established by the Colonial government after B.C. became a colony in 1858. This had severe impacts on local Indigenous communities' land use, rights and access. Coquitlam Reserves #1 and #2, located on the Coquitlam River within city boundaries and allocated to the Kwikwetlem First Nation, are small areas of land within the larger territory where Kwikwetlem have resided and stewarded since before remembered time.

The city had its beginnings as the Corporation of the District of Coquitlam, incorporated in 1891 as an outgrowth of Westminster Junction, a sparsely populated community on the Fraser River. The independent District of Fraser Mills was incorporated in 1913, a 390-acre company town along the Fraser River, the same year Westminster Junction ceded to become Port Coquitlam. In 1971, Fraser Mills and Coquitlam amalgamated and then incorporated as a city in 1992.

While Maillardville emerged early as the city's civic core, the need for representation throughout the larger city resulted in an active decision in the 1970s and 80s to shift the city's commerce and administrative hub to a more centralized location. Coquitlam's Regional Town Centre, providing a diversity of retail, office, cultural, recreational and educational services, serviced by a centralized transportation system at a regional scale, is becoming the new heart of the city. Its central location and amenities has made the Town Centre one of eight designated Regional Town Centres under Metro Vancouver's Regional Growth Strategy.

Government institutions also influence Coquitlam's character and identity. Some of these include Riverview, the location of a provincially-owned, now closed mental health asylum, and a significant heritage site and public open space in the city. The agricultural component of the institution is now Colony Farm Regional Park, located alongside the provincial Forensic Psychiatric Institute. Coquitlam is home to a more recent and unique post-disaster oriented building, the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure's Transportation Management Office.

School District No. 43 (Coquitlam) supports the city's 32,000 students in a system of 34 elementary, 14 middle and 11 secondary schools. Each school possesses its own personality and qualities that make each a unique representation of its students, staff, and community. Douglas College, the largest public degree-granting college institution in B.C., is located on the edge of City Centre. The city has two cemeteries, the civic Robinson Memorial Park Cemetery and the Riverview Cemetery. As an example of Coquitlam's regional nature, critical health services are provided by nearby Royal Columbian Hospital in New Westminster.

Coquitlam's heritage, including built, natural and intangible heritage, artifacts and documentation is considered critical to understanding the city's past and contributing to its present and future. The City of Coquitlam Archives, Coquitlam Heritage and other cultural and heritage institutions support heritage as a foundational part of the city.



3 Coquitlam City Hall



4. East Lawn Building at Riverview

Theme 3: Diverse Landscape, Diverse People

This theme identifies the diversity of Coquitlam's people, human geography and settlement that has occurred within its distinctive landscape between the Fraser River and the mountains, and why people have chosen to come here and stay here. This is reflected in the city's multiculturalism and connected yet diverse heritage values, stories and points of view. These untold stories of the past can reveal how the city can look to its future.

Prior to settler arrival, there has been a continuous post-glaciation record of human occupation dating from the early Holocene period, 5,000 to 10,000 years ago. The Kwikwetlem use the land to collect medicinal and food plants, berries, and to harvest fish and game.

The city's geography has influenced much of its settler history, including settlement and agriculture on the flatter lowlands, logging on the mountain slopes, and river and roadway transportation. North Road was constructed to connect two key water bodies, Indian Arm and the Fraser River, and while built to provide access to Port Moody's port facilities, North Road effectively opened up the wilderness area to settlers that would become Coquitlam.

Early settlers were drawn to the potential for work in the logging industry and sawmills and for the agricultural potential of the area, establishing numerous homesteads and farms along the municipalities main roadways. In the early decades of the 20th century, ads appeared in the local newspaper encouraging investors to buy land, promising that Coquitlam was to be the "industrial centre of greater Vancouver." People lived in Burquitlam, Maillardville and other pockets of settlement occupying vibrant compact neighbourhoods within a large piece of relatively uninhabited land.

Throughout its history, people have been attracted to Coquitlam to settle and stay here. In the 1930s, there was a wave of migrants from Saskatchewan and other prairie provinces escaping agricultural drought and the Depression, often of Francophone, Ukrainian or Scandinavian descent.

Throughout Coquitlam's history there has been continued immigration of people of a variety of cultures. Chinese and Japanese immigrants found work at the sawmill at Fraser Mills. South Asians, mostly Sikhs from the Punjab, arrived in the early 20th century to clear land, farm, and work in the lumbering industry. The Francophone community at Maillardville eventually formed the largest Francophone centre west of Manitoba. More recently, an Iranian community has been established in the city, while an area known as Little Korea thrives in Burquitlam.

The city also identifies with less positive aspects of immigration such as discrimination. The early Asian workforce at Fraser Mills was replaced for racial reasons. Japanese Canadians were removed from the community during World War II, while the Komagata Maru incident is remembered by the city's South Asian community. Legacies of these cultures are ongoing contributors to the city's identity today.

Southwest Coquitlam comprises the original settler core of the city, with the community of Maillardville and the Fraser River industrial sector giving way to the residential areas of Austin Heights with high and flat plateau topography. In between, residential neighbourhoods associated with different settler groups have evolved into places with modest houses and individual character. The city and its people have evolved and changed over the course of its history, and is today one of the fastest growing cities in the province.



5. Mr. and Mrs. Arcade Pare wedding in Maillardville, 1938



6. Seafood store in Burquitlam's Korean neighbourhood

Theme 4: Sustenance Economy to Commercial Centre

This theme focuses on the ways in which Coquitlam's economic history and diversity has grown and evolved over time.

The Kwikwetlem First Nation utilized the abundant rivers, floodplains and hillsides around today's city to hunt, fish for salmon and eulachon and gather medicinal and food plants.

From its transformation from an early mill and forestry town to a major regional centre, economic activities in Coquitlam have included hunting, food gathering, trapping, fishing and logging, to agriculture, gravel mining, small business, retail and new contemporary ways of making a living. Coquitlam's evolving economy from sawmills and agriculture, its emergence as a regional commercial and corporate centre, to its filming and tourism potential has influenced the form and character of the city we see today.

Coquitlam's warm summers, mild winters and fertile soil were factors that provided land highly suitable for farming. From large farms such as Colony Farm, the family-owned Booth and Brehaut farms and the Whiting and Pollard greenhouses, to smaller-scale homestead farms and family garden plots, Coquitlam has sustained itself agriculturally throughout its history. Most Coquitlam families had fruit trees and vegetable gardens in their back yards or cultivated a designated allotment nearby. There were Chinese market gardens, ubiquitous poultry farms and mushroom and strawberry growing operations. The Poirier Street Farmers Market, established in 1996, is the longest running suburban farmers market in the Lower Mainland.

The Canadian Western Lumber Company, known as Fraser Mills, became one of the largest sawmill enterprises in the Commonwealth and Coquitlam's first and major employer.

Immigrants have long been a part of the work force in Coquitlam. Until 1909, the majority of the mill's labourers were of Chinese, Japanese and South Asian descent who faced discrimination in the workplace and in the community. As a result of race riots in Vancouver, Fraser Mills management provided incentives for French Canadians to relocate to Coquitlam to replace the mainly Asian work force subject to severe discrimination.

From the 1940s to the 1970s, Coquitlam developed into a shopping mall destination, contributing to its suburban character. The Cariboo Shopping Centre, Westwood Mall, Lougheed Mall and Coquitlam Centre drew shoppers from all of the neighbouring communities. Tourism Coquitlam is a key supporter of the city's economy, through entertainment, dining and retail, Town Centre Park, Silver City Cineplex theatre, cultural events such as Canada Day and Festival du Bois and arts and outdoor activities.

While Coquitlam is still mainly a residential suburb, new economic opportunities are arising through the evolution of City Centre and enhanced regional transportation options. Some large industries remain, including gravel extraction, wood products production, wholesaling and warehousing, and transportation and trucking, while new and exciting initiatives include major mixed use development, Qnet, and major headquarters and employers.

Today, the Kwikwetlem First Nation operate successful entrepreneurial projects such as the Kwikwetlem Business Park and KFN Enterprises LP, economic development initiatives committed to promoting self-determination and long-term growth of the Nation.



7. Richard Whiting in the family greenhouse on Rochester Avenue, 1922



8. Poirier Street Farmers Market

Theme 5: Convergence of Nature and Community

A sense of belonging and a sense of community is highly significant in Coquitlam. Community support, social and cultural institutions, the prevalence of nature and arts and local events play major roles in the city.

Kwkwetlem cultural practices, artifacts and cultural identities have been inherent in the region over millennia, creating a diverse material and textual culture. Settlers and newcomers brought their own traditions.

Despite discrimination, members of immigrant and marginalized groups managed to establish themselves in the community. The Chinese community created market gardens, restaurants and shops. The Sikh community built a gurdwara at Fraser Mills, with lumber provided by the company. And the Francophone community and culture continues to thrive.

Churches of all faiths formed an integral part of the social fabric of early Coquitlam. Apart from fulfilling the spiritual needs of the residents, much of their socializing revolved around the church, in the absence of community centres and other recreational facilities. Dances and craft fairs took place at the Agricultural Hall.

Social and community life in Coquitlam encompasses outdoor activity and culture that has been a part of everyday life here from the early days up to the present. The network of recreational trails throughout the city for urban walking, mountain bike and hiking on Burke and Eagle mountains in particular are particularly important, and the Trans Canada Trail has a presence in the city. There are numerous parks, including Mundy Park, the largest civic park, Coquitlam River Park, Minnekhada and Colony Farm regional parks, a regional park reserve at Widgeon Marsh and the southern portion of Pinecone Burke Provincial Park.

A variety of recreational, cultural and civic institutions are part of the fabric of Coquitlam. Long a Coquitlam landmark, the Vancouver Golf Club opened in 1911, becoming one of the finest championship courses in the nation. Westwood Plateau opened after the race track closed down.

Sports and recreation represent the convergence of nature and community. The Westwood Racing Circuit opened on the Westwood Plateau in 1959, an area that at that time was far removed from the region's population centres, and was operational until 1990. In the late 1960s, Burke Mountain Ski Resorts offered transportation up the east Coquitlam mountain, a lodge and rope tows for two seasons. More than 100 families held leases on the mountain, building their own ski cabins. Today, the mountain slopes are home to extensive mountain biking trails.

Significant sporting events have taken place in Coquitlam. The B.C. Summer Games were held in the city in 1991, while the torch relay for the 2010 Olympics featured Coquitlam residents as torch bearers. The city's large community sports program, including soccer, lacrosse, track, softball and baseball, is significant from not only a recreational perspective but as part of the city's identity.

Other annual events of note include the Highland Games, Teddy Bear Picnic, Kaleidoscope Festival, Lights at Lafarge, Coquitlam Crunch, Terry Fox training route and the Man in Motion Tour (Thermal Drive), as well as ongoing features such as casino performances and the city's international food scene.



9. B.C. Summer Games Opening Ceremonies, 1991



10. Cabin in the Burke Mountain ski village

Theme 6: Canoe Route to Sky Train

This theme focuses on the importance of transportation and communication, historical and current, to the Coquitlam area. The Coquitlam and Fraser rivers have provided a travel route for the Kwikwetlem First Nation (kwikwəłəm)'s since before remembered time, with the village site of slakəya'nc located near where the Coquitlam River meets the Stó:lō (Fraser) River.

River transportation and rail and road construction have been fundamental to Coquitlam's settlers and city's development and character. The city's growing forest and agricultural economies required transportation routes, and the physical environment influenced the ways in which people travelled and how goods were shipped.

The city's position with easy access to the Fraser River made it a choice location to settle and develop settler economies. The first shipments of lumber from Fraser Mills were by ship from the company's docks on the river.

The first roadway, the Pitt River Road, was constructed in 1862 by the Royal Engineers linking a ferry landing used for crossing the mouth of the Coquitlam River to New Westminster. The construction of North Road between Indian Arm in Port Moody and the Fraser River waterfront in New Westminster provided access for the settlement and development in Coquitlam, and today remains a major transportation corridor.

The Coast Meridian Road was formed out of the original survey line that aligned with the Dominion Survey system and was located approximately 122°45 west longitude. Coquitlam's Townships 39 and 40, surveyed in 1874-75, lie west and east of the Coast Meridian respectively, establishing the gridded lot pattern of the city.

Another major impetus to the creation of the municipality was the establishment of the Westminister Junction spur line of the Canadian Pacific Railway to the Fraser River port of New Westminster in 1911. With the completion of the spur line offering another transportation option, the area's farming and logging industries began to thrive.

Coquitlam received a major boost in the mid-20th century with the 1953 opening of the Lougheed Highway to Vancouver along the north side of the Fraser River, making the city more accessible and setting the stage for increased residential growth. The original Pitt River Bridge was opened in 1957 by Premier W. A. C. Bennett, extending the new highway eastward. The completion of the Port Mann bridge in 1964, helped turn Coquitlam into the modern suburb it is today.

Plans to reroute the Lougheed Highway in 1972 were met with mixed reactions because of impacts to agricultural lands. The Coast Meridian Overpass, constructed in 2010, connects Coast Meridian Road and Lougheed Highway the north with Kingsway Avenue and Broadway Street (Port Coquitlam) on the south.

As part of the burgeoning city centre, the long-awaited Evergreen Extension of the Millennium SkyTrain Line opened in 2016, running from Lougheed Town Centre in Burnaby to Lafarge Lake-Douglas in Coquitlam. The city has four SkyTrain stations on the Millennium Line that are a part of the extension. Another modern and sustainable transportation mode, the West Coast Express, was an important addition to the city's commuter culture in 1995.



11. Kwikwetlem First Nation canoe at Healing Spirit House



12. Skytrain on Clarke Rd.

Theme 7: Evolving Community Identity

This theme explores Coquitlam's distinctiveness, through key city elements such as arts and culture, significant achievements, and urban and neighbourhood character. Understanding the city's unique social, cultural and physical context can assist in more people in the community seeing themselves reflected in the city's heritage.

Indigenous culture is a critical part of Coquitlam's roots and identity. Acknowledging Kwikwetlem traditional lands and creation stories that establish the earliest and ongoing relationships to the land are essential for reconciliation.

As the greater Vancouver metropolitan area grew, Coquitlam became a new place to live. While some felt that Coquitlam would never thrive as a bedroom community, developers building residential subdivisions found buyers for the large treed lots and modern houses on newly created streets up the mountain slopes.

Coquitlam's geographical situation with its southern boundary next to the Fraser River and its northern boundary within Coast Mountains has created an urban and human geography that varies from the southwest to the northeast, resulting in microcosms of diverse history and culture across the city. The histories of Maillardville, Riverview and Little Korea are different from the northeast's proximity to nature or the urban City Centre. Acknowledging that the city's different neighbourhoods - Austin Heights, Burke Mountain, Burquitlam, Central Coquitlam, City Centre, Eagle Ridge/Westwood Plateau and Maillardville - are individual entities contributes to Coquitlam's identity. These historic neighbourhoods, each with its own heritage, physical and cultural context, and landscape and architectural traditions are evolving into modern communities designed for the future.

Coquitlam's identity is defined in part through its arts and culture context. This is found in community arts organizations and places such as the Place des Arts and the Evergreen Cultural Centre, public art and the city's many individual artists. Hosted by the Kwikwetlem First Nation, a historic canoe dedication ceremony took place on the Riverview Lands at həyχwət kʷθə ɛxʷhəliʔ leləm or Healing Spirit House. Understanding the importance of filmmaking is part of Coquitlam's character, from an economic perspective and for revealing how the city is portrayed and understood in film, and the City has recently completed planning for a new South West Arts & Heritage Centre as a priority. While there are others, these examples illustrate the diversity of Coquitlam's arts and culture scene, and its contribution to city livability and character.

Other City initiatives that contribute to Coquitlam's identity is the creation of destination green space in Town Centre Park, a former gravel pit and the sustaining of a robust urban tree canopy, both of which underscore the importance of nature in the community. Coquitlam Centre, a Tri-Cities retail hub since 1979, now being master planned as a new town centre, reinforces Coquitlam's urban core as a destination and not a through route to elsewhere. Iconic and remembered places such as the mall, the Westwood Racetrack and others are ongoing contributors to the city's identity.

The city's distinctiveness can be found in its celebration of high-profile residents who have made significant achievements in their respective fields, including Academy Award winners, musicians, architects, medical professionals, politicians, social change-makers, athletes and others.



13. Gathering outside Our Lady Fatima Parish



14. Coquitlam Summer Concert Series