

## **Fantasy Gardens: Back on Firm Ground**

*Famed Horticultural Theme Park Returns to Local Ownership, as Townline Completes its Purchase of the 22-acre "Richmond Gateway"*

**(March 11, 2008 — Richmond, B.C.)** Fantasy Gardens, the landmark horticultural theme park established by former premier Bill Vander Zalm at No. 5 Road and Steveston Highway in Richmond, is back under local ownership. The 22-acre property was purchased in December by respected Richmond developer Townline. Once celebrated for its European village theme park and botanical show gardens, in recent years Fantasy Gardens has been described as "decaying and crumbling." Townline plans a series of community consultations starting this spring to help guide the redevelopment of what's widely considered "Richmond's Gateway."

"We are very excited about creating a new sustainable community at this key entrance to Richmond," says Rick Ilich, president of Townline Ventures. "We're committed to working with the community to determine Fantasy Gardens' future. Ultimately, our goal is to create a neighbourhood that provides real value for the larger community and sets an example of sustainable development for the region."

The City of Richmond's Official Community Plan designates the site for "mixed-use development." Half of it is currently contained within the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR), with zoning that permits botanical gardens—the only such property in Richmond. Ilich says the site provides an exciting opportunity to showcase the agriculture heritage of Richmond and enhance its reputation as the Garden City. "By initiating open consultation early," adds Ilich, "we feel we'll be best able to incorporate the needs of the community, the city, as well as the market." After the series of community consultations and citizen feedback, Townline will submit a development application consistent with the property's existing mixed-use designation.

Townline has a proven track record of working with communities across the Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island, and is at the forefront of developing sustainable building solutions. Townline recently received unanimous support from Victoria city council, after working closely with the local community, to redevelop and restore that city's iconic Hudson's Bay building. In 2007, Townline won a prestigious Urban Development Institute Award for the best midrise multifamily development in Vancouver. For more information on the upcoming neighbourhood meetings to determine Fantasy Gardens' future, please visit the website at <http://www.gatewaytorichmond.ca/>.

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