RIVERVIEW HOSPITAL:
ITS PAST, PRESENT, AND ITS FUTURE?

Centennial Year for West Lawn Building. Opened in 1913, West Lawn was the first facility in operation at the new Essondale Hospital. Designed as part of an architectural competition, West Lawn was intended to be a monumental building which incorporated contemporary features such as natural lighting, ventilation and open verandahs to promote a healthy contact with nature. Inside the building are spectacular wrought iron stair railings, marble bathrooms and a grand sense of architectural design. West Lawn was closed in 1983.

The opening of West Lawn was followed by Centre Lawn (1924), East Lawn (1930) and the Crease Clinic (1932). In addition to these massive and significant heritage buildings, Riverview is also graced by building’s natural features and landscape features such as stone walls and curved driveways. Riverview now hosts western Canada’s most significant collection of mature trees (over 1800 inventoried trees) which adds tremendous visual appeal for those who stroll through its majestic grounds. From 1911-1925, it hosted western Canada’s first Botanical Garden, which is now located at the University of British Columbia. The Hospital has a remarkable history, with outstanding heritage buildings and a graciously-designed site to support mental wellness in the midst of a world class collection of trees.

Current Uses of the Riverview Site. The Fraser Health Authority operates three small facilities (Connolly, Cottonwood and Cypress Lodges) that together provide about 65 long-term beds for mental health care. The movie industry has a major presence on the site and uses the Crease Clinic and East Lawn. In addition, a few volunteer groups have short-term leases for the use of some buildings. The provincial Forensic Psychiatric Institute and some non-profit mental health care groups also use some of the older buildings as halfway homes or treatment facilities for their clients. We support all of these uses.

Riverview has great potential to continue to meet mental health care needs in this community as well as support compatible uses and provide a place of quiet refuge open to all who wish to enjoy its beautiful trees and tranquil landscapes.

What does the Future hold for Riverview Hospital? In the summer of 2012, Riverview Hospital finally closed. Since then, the provincial government has kept the buildings “warm, safe and dry”. However, the buildings have been emptied of their contents which makes their re-use somewhat challenging. In 2012, The Heritage Canada Foundation listed Riverview in the Top Ten of Canada’s most endangered heritage sites.

Future Land Use Planning for Riverview. In spring 2012, the provincial government initiated a Heritage Conservation Planning Process for Riverview. Open houses were held where people were encouraged to submit comments regarding what they valued most about Riverview. This led to an outpouring of heartfelt comments from hundreds of people across the province (posted at www.riverviewvalues.info/).

The next step is land use planning for future uses of the 100 hectare site. Public participation during the land use planning process will be critical to ensuring a successful outcome. There is little doubt that developers, who see the Riverview site as an ideal place for residential development, are waiting in the wings. We need to speak up regarding our vision for Riverview’s future.

These Lands are Your Lands!! The Riverview site is owned by the province; the management of the site and facilities is funded by taxpayers. Thus, these lands belong to all of us. The site is open to the public to visit the “Naturescape” award-winning Finnie’s Garden, go for a relaxing stroll on the grounds or join a Tree Tour hosted by the Riverview Horticultural Centre Society. Tree tours are offered once a month from March to October on Sunday afternoons (see www.rhcs.org). The Burke Mountain Naturalists also offer tours of Riverview’s more natural areas as well as heritage tours (see www.bmn.bc.ca). The TreeFest celebration will be held on Saturday, September 13 2014 from 11am-4pm with displays and special tours.

This brochure has been produced by the Burke Mountain Naturalists (www.bmn.bc.ca) with the hopes that all those who visit Riverview will gain a greater appreciation for the site’s majestic landscapes, significant history and quiet, contemplative spaces where contact with nature can bring the gift of peace and tranquility.

Please remember when walking at Riverview that it remains a mental health care site. Respect the privacy of patients by not taking photographs.

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**Centre Lawn**, originally known as the Acute Psychopathic Unit—Admissions building. Built in 1923-4, with a capacity of 300 beds.

**West Lawn**, originally known as the Male Chronic Building, built 1910-13. This was the first permanent building on the property. It was considered the best in hospital design in its day; each floor used contrasting woods, for trim and furniture. It has been closed since 1983.

**East Lawn** was originally known as the Female Chronic Building. This is the largest building on the property. Built 1929-30. East Lawn was closed in 2005, and leased to the movie industry.

**Pennington Hall** 1950-1. “Penn Hall” as it more commonly known, was the social hub of Riverview. It contained a gymnasium, kitchen, bowling alley, tuck shop. This came to an end in 2009, when a small fire broke out in a gymnasium store room.

**North Lawn** originally contained 230 beds for people with tuberculosis and mental illness. It was closed after 52 years of service in 2007, but was quickly renovated the same year to potentially house patients from the Forensic Unit at Colony Farm, which was under threat of flooding. In 2010 the Sheriff’s department used a portion of the building, before moving into the Roadside Building. Today North Lawn stands empty, awaiting another use.

**Henry Esson Young Building;** commonly called the “HEY building”. Built in 1957-8, the 6-storey portion originally housed 100 nurses. The 2-storey portion is the education centre; it contains classrooms and three auditoriums.

**Administration – Nurses Home #1**, 1930. Portions of the Botanical Garden were still used for gardening in 1949 when this picture was taken.

**Firehall**. The 3-storey portion was built in 1930-1, with later additions. Today it is used by the grounds-keeping crew.