



Corporate Report

NO: R043

COUNCIL DATE: March 6, 2006

REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: **Mayor and Council** DATE: **March 1, 2006**
FROM: **General Manager, Planning and Development** FILE: **5080-01**
SUBJECT: **Delegation before Council by Tracy Schmidt – Concerns in City Centre**

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council:

1. Receive this report as information;
2. Authorize the City Clerk to forward a copy of this report, together with the original correspondence from Tracy Schmidt, to the Whalley Integrated Services Team for consideration of actions to address her concerns; and
3. Authorize staff to forward a copy of this report and the related Council resolution to Tracy Schmidt.

INTENT

This report is in response to Council's direction, subsequent to hearing a presentation by Tracy Schmidt, owner of the property at 10635 King George Highway, during the Council-in-Committee meeting on December 12, 2005. This report provides information on actions and initiatives that are underway to attempt to address these issues and concerns raised by Ms. Schmidt.

BACKGROUND

During a presentation to Council-in-Committee on December 12, 2005, Tracy Schmidt advised that she has owned the property at 10635 King George Highway for one and one-half years. The current tenant in the building, Beamriders Sound and Video, who have been tenants in the subject building for eight and one-half years, have given notice that they wish to end their lease due to their concerns with ongoing problems in the area. These problems include loitering and drug transactions taking place in the area, garbage,

needles and condoms littering the area, and people sleeping, urinating and defecating in the area. She expressed concern for the safety of employees and customers.

The delegation stated that the concentration of social services in one area, as well as programs by Nightshift Ministries to feed homeless people on the street, have contributed to the problems being experienced by businesses in the area. She advised that a community meeting was held by area business owners to discuss their concerns. The meeting resulted in a number of suggestions to the City to help improve the situation in the short and medium term.

Short-term suggestions included:

- Continue to use the Community Impact Study;
- Spread out any new (*social*) services and re-distribute existing (*social*) services into smaller pockets;
- Mayor and RCMP superintendent should visit area without notice;
- Work with Fraser Health Authority and College of Pharmacists to ensure (*social*) service providers are accountable;
- Increase visibility of police to deter some people from loitering in the area; and
- Garbage clean-up.

Medium term and ongoing suggestions included:

- Promote affordable housing and facilities for people with mental illness; and
- Work with the Federal and Provincial governments to address the underlying issues that lead to crime and anti-social behaviours in the community.

Minutes of the Council-in-Committee Meeting, as well as an e-mail letter from the delegation outlining these issues, are attached as Appendix I and Appendix II, respectively.

Council received the delegation and requested that staff provide a report on the matters raised in her presentation.

DISCUSSION

It is recognized that the issues raised by this delegation cannot all be remedied immediately or by one solution. These social issues, which are complex and inter-related, require separate actions on a number of fronts and will take time to remedy. The City of Surrey and others are taking action in a variety of ways with a view to enhancing the City Centre area. These actions are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Continued Use of Community Impact Studies

In May 2005, Surrey Council approved amendments to the Business License By-law, to require that each applicant for a business license for a new or relocated Community Service use in the City Centre area, prepare a Community Impact Statement and related study regarding the proposed use, for consideration by City Council, prior to the business license being issued. Council at the same time adopted a "Policy for Consideration of Business License Applications for Community Service Uses in City Centre" that included a Terms of Reference for the preparation of a Community Impact Statement and related study.

A Community Service Use is defined as "a use by a non-profit society providing information, referral, counselling, advocacy or physical or mental health services on an outpatient basis, distributing aid in the nature of food or clothing or providing drop-in or activity space".

The adoption of by-law amendment and related policy followed the compilation of a comprehensive inventory of social service agencies located throughout the City for the purpose of gaining a more complete understanding of the distribution of these facilities across the City. This inventory demonstrated the significant clustering of community service organizations in the City Centre area.

The Community Impact Statement and related study involve an assessment of the social consequences anticipated from the operation of the proposed community service use, the potential impacts (both positive and negative) of the use, identification of ways and means to mitigate any negative impacts and a requirement for the proponent to consult with the neighbourhood as part of the process of identifying the potential impacts of the proposed use.

It is anticipated that, over time, the by-law and related policy will have the effect of ensuring that community service uses are located and operated such that negative impacts to the neighbourhood are minimized.

By-law Enforcement Efforts

The City of Surrey has assigned five By-law Enforcement Officers to District 1, which encompasses the City Centre/Whalley Area. These Officers patrol the area on a daily basis. The same Officers are consistently assigned to the same zone so that they develop a familiarity in dealing with the issues and the people in the area. The RCMP are mandated with the responsibility of dealing with issues/crimes related to persons, and By-law Enforcement Officers primarily address issues related to property (e.g.: the use of property for inappropriate purposes or purposes in violation of City by-laws and regulations). City By-law Enforcement staff was instrumental in bringing about the relocation of the NightShift Ministries operation from the parking lot adjacent to the delegation's property to a new location near 107 Avenue and 135 Street. Nightshift Street Ministries provides meals for homeless people.

The Whalley Integrated Services Team (WIST)

The Whalley Integrated Services Team is made up of members of the RCMP, Surrey By-law Enforcement, Surrey Engineering Operations, Parks Recreation and Culture Department (and other staff, as needed), the Whalley Business Improvement Association, the local Block Watch, Surrey Crime Prevention, South Fraser Community Services, ICBC, TransLink Security, SkyTrain, Central City Volunteer Patrol and private security companies working in the area. This Team meets monthly, with the mandate to share information and to take an integrated and creative approach to solving specific problems and issues that arise in the area.

Whalley Revitalization Strategy

In May 2003, the City of Surrey initiated a number of initiatives in the City Centre area aimed at enhancing and revitalizing the area. Over \$5,000,000 was earmarked for capital programs and for the expansion of leisure services in the area. The capital improvements included major renovation to the North Surrey Recreation Centre, improvements to and the development of a synthetic turf complex at Tom Binnie Park, pathway and roadway improvements and beautification, Holland Park redevelopment, upgrades to the Whalley Library, and landscape improvements to the Sunrise Pavilion and adjacent City land. Initiatives such as the Tom Binnie Park improvements are intended to attract significant numbers of sports participants to the heart of the Whalley area throughout the day and evening, adding activity and vibrancy to the area. Community Development Program Initiatives have been developed by staff of the Parks, Recreation and Culture Department and the Surrey Library to encourage resident participation in recreational opportunities in the City Centre and to help build a sense of belonging for local residents. Programs include value swims and skates, low cost programming for pre-school age children, youth and seniors, safe activities for families, community art events and access to fitness activities.

Plan for the Social Well-Being of Surrey Residents

On February 20, 2006, City Council adopted the Stage 2 Action Plan for the Social Well-Being of Surrey Residents. The Stage 2 component of the Plan addressed those areas for which the City has limited or no direct responsibility, but has a role in understanding these issues, advocating with other levels of government and agencies to seek solutions to community issues and concerns and supporting the implementation of solutions through actions that are within the City's mandated responsibilities (i.e., land use control, zoning, development permits, etc.). The Stage 2 Plan, as adopted, identifies specific actions that the City can take in relation to issues under the broad categories of Housing and Homelessness and Substance Abuse and Addictions. Staff is commencing the process of implementing the recommendations of the Social Well-being Plan.

The Surrey City Centre Urban Enrichment Initiative

As an initial step toward the implementation of the Plan for the Social Well-Being of Surrey Residents, at its meeting of February 20, 2006, City Council endorsed the establishment of a Surrey City Centre Urban Enrichment Initiative. Council authorized staff to proceed to form an Interim Community Advisory Committee to provide broad

based input and direction to the development of an Urban Enrichment Agreement focused on the Surrey City Centre. This initiative will bring representatives from all orders of government and other key agencies together to assist in enriching the Surrey City Centre area. The primary objective for the Initiative will be to encourage partnership arrangements involving all orders of government and others, to make effective use of the collective resources available to promote and support sustainable economic, social, cultural and community development in the Surrey City Centre. A set of Guiding Principles has been endorsed by Council, which are intended to form the basis for the Initiative. These guiding principles speak to fostering understanding and cooperation among parties, making more effective use of resources, expanding opportunities and pursuing new initiatives to promote and support sustainable economic, social, cultural and community development, providing strength through long term partnerships, focussing on a strategic approach to community development, seeking broad based community input, and having an orientation for action.

The Interim Advisory Committee will bring together City representatives with representatives from the Provincial Ministries of Children and Family Development and Employment and Income Assistance, BC Housing, the Federal Ministries of Western Economic Development and Service Canada (formerly HRDC), the United Way and business partners, including Coast Capital, VanCity and Terasen Gas, along with the Surrey School District, Kwantlen University College, Simon Fraser University, the RCMP, the Fraser Health Authority, the Whalley BIA, the Surrey Chamber of Commerce and several social service agencies that are active in the City Centre area. The Interim Advisory Committee will be tasked with developing a partnership agreement involving all orders of government and others that will work collectively to bring significant benefits to individuals, businesses and other community organizations in Surrey.

Other Initiatives

The Urban Transportation Showcase proposal, which has been under development for some time, is nearing completion and a report on this plan will be forwarded to Council shortly. This study focuses on the development of a transit-oriented village in the immediate vicinity of the Surrey Central SkyTrain Station, but also explores ways to bring redevelopment and positive uses to the area. As this component nears completion, staff will be bringing forward terms of reference to engage the larger City Centre community in a review of the 1991 Plan for the broader City Centre area, and a closer examination of other key sub-areas within the City Centre area.

There are currently 29 applications for new development under review for sites in the City Centre area, involving approximately 2,700 residential units and 19,000 square metres (200,000 square feet) of commercial space. Simon Fraser University is continuing to expand and is expected to have 1,500 full-time equivalent students at the Surrey Campus by this Fall, with ambitious expansion plans for the future.

As well, the Mayor's Task Force on Housing and Homelessness is being formed to address issues of housing and homelessness throughout the City, including the City Centre area, and will work toward solutions for some of the issues raised by Ms. Schmidt.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the above discussion, it is recommended that Council authorize the City Clerk to forward a copy of this report, together with the original correspondence from Tracy Schmidt, to the Whalley Integrated Services Team for consideration of actions to address her concerns and to forward a copy of this report and the related Council resolution to Tracy Schmidt, who appeared before Council as a delegation.

Murray Dinwoodie
General Manager
Planning and Development

JM/kms/saw

Attachments:

- Appendix I Excerpt from the December 12, 2005 Council-in-Committee meeting
- Appendix II Correspondence from Tracy Schmidt dated October 12, 2005

A. DELEGATIONS**1. Tracy Schmidt**

File: 5080-01; 0550-20-10

Tracy Schmidt was in attendance to discuss concerns with respect to the Nightshift Ministries Society, the ongoing problems as a result of the Front Door Needle Exchange Program, and the impact on tenant businesses in the area.

Ms. Schmidt stated:

- That she purchased the building at 10635 King George Highway 1.5 years ago and at that time the City stated the area was being revitalized and improved.
- That in the last 18 months the opposite has happened.
- That Beamriders Sound & Video have been tenants in the building for 8.5 years and have another 1.5 years left on their lease, with an option to renew.
- That they have advised her that they want out of their lease due to ongoing problems in the area.
- That Beamriders is a well-established business in the Lower Mainland with 5 locations, and draws people to the Whalley area.
- That individuals are loitering in the area, and there are numerous drug transactions.
- That there is garbage, needles, condoms and defecation all along the side of the Beamriders building.
- That there are people sleeping under the overhang.
- That she has personally witnessed drug transactions and individuals smoking crack and urinating on the building in broad daylight.
- That on November 24th businesses in the area met to discuss concerns with people's behaviour, policing, and social services.
- That there is concern for the safety of employees of businesses in the area.
- That they do not want to create a fortress, as customers will not come to areas with barbed wire and security style fencing.
- That when police do arrest drug dealers they are back out on the street fairly quickly.
- That there is a cluster of people in vacant lots on 135 and 135A Street which is creating a ghetto.
- That taxpayers and others who follow the rules pay the cost, and there does not appear to be a consequence for those who do not follow the rules.
- That all three levels of government have not been able to deal with problems in the area.
- That concentrating social services in one area is not good for any area, and has resulted in a one-stop shop where people can get food, drugs and hang out.
- That Nightshift Ministries feeds the homeless which brings more people into the area.
- That feeding people on the street is not good because it allows them to use the little money they have for drugs.
- That there are no washrooms on the street.
- That they have some suggestions for the City to help improve the situation in the medium and short term:

- Promote affordable housing and facilities for people with mental illness.
- Ongoing liaison with the Federal and Provincial Governments to address underlying issues that lead to crime and antisocial behaviours in the community.
- Continuation of the community impact study.
- Spreading out new services and redistribute existing services into smaller pockets.
- Work with the Fraser Health Authority and College of Pharmacists to ensure service providers are accountable.
- Increase visibility of police to deter people.
- Garbage clean-up.
- RCMP Superintendent and Mayor to visit the area without notice and at different times of the day.

Ms. Schmidt concluded that they understand street people need help, but those trying to help are making the problem worse, and the businesses feel they are sacrificing their own livelihood.

Ms. Schmidt distributed copies of her submission.

It was

Moved by Mayor Watts
Seconded by Councillor Higginbotham
That the information be received.
Carried

-----Original Message-----

From: Tracy Schmidt [mailto:Tracy.Schmidt]
Sent: October 12, 2005 9:17 PM
To: Palmer, Susan
Subject: 10635 King George Hwy. Beamrider Sound & Video Bldg.

The following information was submitted from the City of Surrey website:

Councillor: Mayor and Council
Subject: 10635 King George Hwy. Beamrider Sound & Video Bldg.
Message: Mayor and Council, I would like to request a meeting with you regarding my concerns with the "Nightshift Ministries Society" feeding the homeless nightly right next store to my property and the effects it is having on my tenants business, as well as the ongoing problems in that area as a result of the "front door/needle exchange program" on 138a street.

My name is Tracy Schmidt and I am the owner of the building located at 10635 King George Highway in which "Beamriders Sound @ Video" are the tenant and have been leasing the property for 8 1/2 years with 1 1/2 years left on their current lease and an option to renew for another 5 years. A month ago they told us they want out of the lease because they can no longer do business in that location. Things have gone from extremely bad to extremely extremely bad with the Nightshift Society feeding the homeless nightly next door for the past three months. In keeping with your plan to revitalize the area you want to attract businesses to the area not see them leaving. Beamriders is a very well established business in the lower mainland with 5 locations (and plans to expand). Beamriders actually draws people to the Whalley area, their leaving the area would be a huge loss for business in general.

Beamriders leased the building because of promises that the area was going to be cleaned up. My husband and I purchased the building for the same reasons. The area has not been cleaned up and the problem is getting worse.

There are two issues I would like to discuss with you:

First: the ongoing problem with the neighbourhood. Specifically with the "needle exchange clientele and their acquaintances" from now on referred to as "the problem". My tenant has been patiently waiting for years for this area to undergo the planned transition. In the meantime my tenant endures on a daily basis a fairly constant stream of "the problem" passing through the laneway between the Beamrider building and the MCC Thrift Store building. Many of "the problem" loiter there, smoking crack and shooting needles as well as performing numerous drug transactions. They leave their garbage, needles, condoms and they defecate all along the side of the building. On the afternoon of Friday October 7th within a couple of hours I personally witnessed 3 drug transactions and several "problems" smoking crack and one urinating on the building, several "problems" loitering (one lying down to sleep) and a garbage bag of clothes dumped on

CLERKS DEPT
5080-01
0550-20-

the Beamrider sidewalk. This was all in the afternoon in broad daylight. I ask you ...would you do business at a store that has this going on? I know the answer and neither would I.

Next door to the MCC Thrift Store there is a brand new 3 story building being developed which will be leased to many different businesses including store fronts on the first floor and other businesses above. This building will have a difficult time attracting tenants with the neighbourhood the way it currently is.

Second: to exacerbate the already existing problem the Nightshift Ministries Society are now feeding the homeless next door to my property. "Nightshift" obtained approval from the Bob Granholm, Manager of the MCC Thrift Shop, to feed the homeless nightly on their property. The Nightshift Society did not ask the neighbouring businesses in advance if they approved. The MCC Thrift Shop is right next to the Beamrider building and feeding the homeless in that location has caused my tenant even more problems than he already had. During the feeding time among many other issue such as smoking crack, shooting up and sitting to eat along the side of the Beamrider building, one night a customer came out of Beamriders to find a "crack head" asleep in his car. Not good for business! It has always been a struggle for Beamriders to attract customers to this location because of the homeless/drug addicts etc and the owner is now suffering an additional loss of customers and profits because of the Nightshift Society's nightly homeless feeding.

The following quote from the City of Surrey website has given us full confidence that the area will improve.
"Mayor McCallum is also the driving force behind the Whalley Revitalization Strategy. With an unwavering belief in the potential of Whalley, Mayor McCallum is committed to doing whatever possible to stimulate positive change in the area."

While we are waiting to meet I would like to request having the Community Policing Department monitor the area between the Beamrider Building and the MCC Thrift Store a couple of times per hour each day. As I mentioned earlier I witnessed 3 drug transactions and numerous drug offences in the afternoon within a couple of hours ...that laneway is where the drug deals are going on....this area needs some focused attention by the police.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to meeting with to discuss my concerns, solutions and plans for the area.
Tracy Schmidt.

Name: Tracy Schmidt
Address:

Phone Number: 604 761-6055
Email Address: TracySchmidt@shaw.ca