



Corporate Report

NO: C018

COUNCIL DATE: September 10, 2007

COUNCIL IN COMMITTEE

TO: Mayor & Council

DATE: September 5, 2007

FROM: City Manager

FILE: Livability Accord

SUBJECT: Livability Accord Between High Growth Municipalities

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council:

1. receive this report as information;
2. approve the “Livability Accord” (the “Accord”) that is attached as Appendix I to this report;
3. authorize the Mayor to sign the Accord on behalf of City Council; and
4. authorize the City Clerk to forward a copy of this report and Council’s resolution to the other local governments that are parties to the Agreement.

INTENT

The purpose of this report is to provide information to City Council regarding discussions that have taken place between the Mayors and City Managers of Abbotsford, Coquitlam, Langley Township and Surrey regarding how the collective interests of these local governments could be best served through working together on some key areas and to seek Council approval of a “Livability Accord” between the four local governments.

This report and the related Livability Accord are being considered on September 10, 2007 by the City Council of each of the local governments that is a party to the Accord.

BACKGROUND

In early 2007, Michael Harcourt met with the Mayor of Surrey to discuss a report that had been prepared by the External Advisory Committee on Cities and Communities, for which Mr. Harcourt acted as the Chair. The Committee was appointed by the Federal government. The report is titled *“From Restless Communities to Resilient Places: Building a Stronger Future for all Canadians”*. The report:

- discusses the role that cities and communities should play in sustaining Canada’s quality of life;
- provides advice on development of federal policies concerning cities and communities; and
- provides advice on how the federal government can best engage provincial, territorial, and aboriginal governments on major issues affecting Canada’s cities and communities.

It was concluded at that meeting that there would be merit in engaging the Mayors and City Managers of the high growth communities of Abbotsford, Coquitlam, Langley Township and Surrey (hereafter called the HGCs) in a discussion regarding the merits of collaborating in developing strategies and plans that would better position each respective local government and the area represented by the group of local governments to better meet the opportunities and challenges of future growth while enhancing the livability and sustainability of each community. It was recognized that such a process would provide information that could act to influence other orders of government to make better decisions regarding the needs of the HGCs.

The Mayors and City Managers of the HGCs met on a number of occasions with Michael Harcourt, who was acting as an advisor and facilitator, and all agreed that there was merit in working together and the City Managers were requested to work as a group with Mr. Harcourt in developing a draft “Livability Accord” between the respective municipalities for consideration by each City Council.

DISCUSSION

Why is this initiative important?

The areas represented by the HGCs will absorb 65% of the population growth of the lower mainland/Fraser Valley over the next 10 years and the majority of the population growth in the lower mainland/Fraser valley over the course of the next 25 years. The four local governments will grow collectively at a rate of approximately 20,000 people per year or by a total of 500,000 by the year 2031. Collectively, the population of the four HGCs currently totals approximately 750,000 with this number expected to grow to 1.25 million in 2031. A population of 1.25 million would currently rank as the fourth largest city in Canada.

The key differences between the HGCs and the other municipalities in the lower mainland/Fraser valley are documented in the following table.

Aspect	High Growth Municipalities	Other Larger Lower Mainland Municipalities
Population growth rate	High	Moderate
Type of development	Larger “green field” areas designated for development	Fully developed with redevelopment occurring
Public Transit	Limited public transit in most areas	Extensive/well developed public transit system to most areas
Infrastructure	Rapidly expanding infrastructure	Fully developed infrastructure
Tax Base	Primarily Residential	Balanced between residential and business
Local Employment	Lower jobs to workforce ratio	Higher jobs to workforce ratio

The above attributes of the HGCs that are different from other larger local governments in the lower mainland present significant challenges in relation to ensuring a sustainable future for each of the HGCs.

What opportunities are presented through working together?

Currently, although dialogue between local governments in the lower mainland occurs from time to time on an issue by issue basis and to some extent through Council and staff attendance on Regional committees, broad-based discussion and focus on the issues faced by the high growth local governments has not occurred in a consistent manner to date.

By working together, the HGCs will be able to better capitalize on the following:

- the creation of **comprehensive strategies and plans** crossing municipal boundaries that are more defensible in a broader context;
- **increased influence** through the scale of the “collective” and as a result of the development of comprehensive strategies and plans;
- **better positioned to assist other orders of government in making effective decisions** related to the four HGCs and the lower mainland/Fraser valley; and
- **better positioned to request and capitalize on federal and provincial funding** when it is available.

What action is appropriate?

As a result of the discussions between the Mayors and City Managers of the HGCs, it was agreed that the HGCs should work together to develop a high-level strategy and action plan for the four local governments as a group that will position each local government to be sustainable with:

- a prosperous economy;
- a complete and well maintained infrastructure;
- a healthy environment;
- social inclusion and stability; and
- a culture rich in creativity and innovation.

First Step:

The Mayors and City Managers have agreed that an appropriate first step in the action plan is for the four local governments to enter into an agreement that spells out in broad terms the intentions of the local governments in working together. An agreement has been drafted, titled a “Livability Accord”, which is attached to this report as Appendix I.

The Livability Accord contains:

- background information regarding the growth that is expected over the next 25 years in the four local governments that are parties to the agreement;
- statements regarding the intention to work cooperatively with one another on identified key issues;
- a basic framework by which to develop strategies and plans to address the common opportunities and challenges of the HGCs; and
- a brief listing of the potential benefits/outcomes.

What benefits are available through collaboration?

It is expected that by working together, the four local governments can achieve the following:

- Establish how best to address our common needs and interests;
- Align our positions and messages to influence more effective decisions by others, particularly other orders of government;
- Assist in ensuring that strategies and plans across local government boundaries are complementary to one another and are positioned to provide for the collective prosperity of the areas served by the HGCs and the lower mainland/Fraser valley;
- Assist in bringing more funding for infrastructure from other orders of government; and
- Most importantly, the citizens and areas represented by each local government that is a partner to the agreement should realize enhanced livability and sustainability over time.

Results of the Work Related to the Accord

It is expected that the work associated with the Agreement will result in:

1. sustainable strategies to manage growth in each of our respective communities; more specifically in the areas of:
 - a. Sustainable land use (economic, social/cultural and environmental);
 - b. Public transit and transportation infrastructure;
 - c. Public safety and social infrastructure;

- d. Re-defining the relationship between cities and with other orders of government; and
 - e. Developing new partnerships between cities and with other orders of government to achieve common objectives;
2. more effective decision-making by the other orders of government in relation to decisions that will affect the future of the four HGCs; and
 3. cooperation between the HGCs in implementing the actions identified in the strategies.

Expected Timeline

The following is an estimated timeline for the work identified in the Accord:

- September 2007 – Livability Accord signed by four HGCs
- December 2007 - Working position papers on key issues completed
- Early 2008 – Citizen Engagement process
- Spring 2008 – Papers updated based on public input
- Spring/Summer 2008 – Consultation with Provincial and Federal Government
- September 2008 – Sustainable strategies adopted by four HGCs
- 2008 Forward – Implementation of the partnerships and actions identified in the sustainability strategies

Michael Harcourt as Facilitator

Michael Harcourt has offered to facilitate the work that is envisaged in the Accord and to communicate on behalf of the HGCs with others including the other orders of government about the Accord and any related findings that emanate from the work associated with the Accord. Mr. Harcourt's experience in relation to sustainability planning and urban issues along with his extensive network of contacts are considered to be desirable attributes in relation to making the initiative a success. Each of the local governments that are a party to the Agreement will share the costs of Mr. Harcourt's involvement in the process.

CONCLUSION

Based on the above discussion, it is recommended that City Council:

- approve the "Livability Accord" that is attached as Appendix I to this report;
- authorize the Mayor to sign the Accord on behalf of City Council; and
- authorize the City Clerk to forward a copy of this report and Council's resolution to the other local governments that are parties to the Agreement.

Murray Dinwoodie
City Manager

Appendix I

“Livability Accord”

between the

**City of Abbotsford,
City of Coquitlam,
Township of Langley, and
City of Surrey**

WHEREAS the cities of Abbotsford, Coquitlam, Langley Township and Surrey, hereafter referred to as the High Growth Communities (the HGCs), have a combined population of 750,000 residents;

WHEREAS 65% of the population growth in the lower mainland/Fraser Valley over the next 10 years will occur in these HGCs; and

WHEREAS the population growth in these four HGCs is expected to average more than 20,000 people per year or more than 500,000 people over the next 25 years resulting in a cumulative population of 1.25 million people by 2031; and

WHEREAS this significant growth requires the collective focus of the HGCs on the following areas:

- I. Sustainable land use (economic, social/cultural and environmental);
- II. Public transit and transportation infrastructure;
- III. Public safety and social infrastructure;
- IV. Re-defining the relationship between cities and other orders of government; and
- V. Developing new partnerships between cities and with other orders of government to achieve common objectives;

to create well-managed, balanced, livable and sustainable communities in support of the region, the province and the country;

THEREFORE, the municipalities of Abbotsford, Coquitlam, Langley Township, and Surrey agree that we will:

Develop a supportive and collaborative relationship to address the above referenced issues and opportunities of mutual concern/benefit;

Focus our collective efforts to:

- identify and address the gaps and inconsistencies between the various plans and programs of the HGCs and of the regional, provincial and federal governments;
- identify and address the challenges and opportunities that will be faced by each HGC and collectively by the four HGCs as growth occurs; and
- produce sustainable strategies to build upon and expand the planning done by each individual HGC;

Engage our citizens, including all ethnicities and age groups such as seniors, youth and families in support of this Accord;

Work together to:

1. create sustainable strategies to manage growth in each of our respective communities, more specifically in the areas of:
 - I. Sustainable land use (economic, social/cultural and environmental);
 - II. Public transit and transportation infrastructure;
 - III. Public safety and social infrastructure;
 - IV. Re-defining the relationship between cities and other orders of government; and
 - V. Developing new partnerships between cities and with other orders of government to achieve common objectives;
2. continue building a positive working relationship with other Local Governments, the GVRD, FVRD, First Nations, and Provincial and Federal Governments to influence effective decision-making by the other orders of government in relation to decisions that will affect the future of the four HGCs; and
3. implement the actions identified in the strategies and plans; and

Report to the respective Councils of the four HGCs on a quarterly basis, as a minimum, with a view to having sustainable strategies and a work plan in place by September 2008.

The signatures of the Mayors of the City of Abbotsford, the City of Coquitlam, the Township of Langley, and the City of Surrey affixed below signify the understanding and acceptance by the respective Councils of these municipalities of this "Livability Accord".

George Ferguson
Mayor, City of Abbotsford

Date: _____

Maxine Wilson
Mayor, City of Coquitlam

Date: _____

Kurt Alberts
Mayor, Township of Langley

Date: _____

Dianne Watts
Mayor, City of Surrey

Date: _____