



Corporate Report

NO: C003

COUNCIL DATE: March 10, 2008

COUNCIL IN COMMITTEE

TO: **Mayor & Council**

DATE: **March 11, 2008**

FROM: **Manager, Economic Development**

FILE:

SUBJECT: **Development of an Economic Development Strategy**

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council receive this report as information.

INTENT

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an overview of the process that is proposed to be followed in the development of an Economic Development Strategy for the City of Surrey and to seek input from Council with respect to the process.

BACKGROUND

With an anticipated population growth of 10,000 new residents per year into the foreseeable future, the City of Surrey requires enhanced business investment and growth to continue to increase the number, range and quality of local employment opportunities; and to build a more balanced tax base for the City. These are both important attributes of the City's sustainability goals.

Though significant effort and resources are being invested in progressive economic development initiatives in the City of Surrey, a clearly defined and comprehensive Economic Development Strategy is required. This Strategy will be developed with input from local and regional community and business stakeholders. The Strategy will include a vision, values, objectives, strategies, an action plan, resource requirements and measures of success.

With a number of direction-setting policy studies underway and nearing completion, such as the Employment Lands Strategy and the Sustainability Charter and progressive initiatives related to the Surrey City Development Corporation and the Task Force on Regional Economic Development Opportunities (TREDO), now is an opportune time for Surrey to develop a comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.

DISCUSSION

The Economic Development Strategy (the Strategy) will be a cornerstone document used to shape policy and establish priorities that will impact decision making, partnership opportunities, project development, planning and resource allocation in relation to the City's on-going development.

The Strategy will have a strong focus on enhancing Surrey's competitiveness in targeting and attracting new businesses, growing the existing business base, and increasing the number of jobs in our city, with an emphasis on bringing more higher value, knowledge-based jobs to Surrey. A high importance will be placed on incorporating principles of environmental and economic sustainability into the Strategy.

The Official Community Plan states numerous objectives for economic development that will be considered in the development of the Strategy, including:

- Maintain and increase the diversity of the local economy
- Increase the total number of jobs and total investment in Surrey
- Increase the quality and sophistication of the local economy
- Increase the average value of jobs in Surrey's economy
- Reach a ratio of 60% residential to 40% industrial/commercial assessment by 2021 from the current ratio of 70% residential to 30% industrial/commercial
- Move Surrey toward having one job per resident worker in Surrey from the current ratio of 0.7 jobs per resident worker

Consulting Team

As a result of an RFP process, Vann Struth Consulting Group in partnership with Eric Vance & Associates, have been hired to develop the Strategy under the guidance of a multi-departmental staff steering committee. With significant experience in the fields of economic development, economic and statistical analysis and strategic planning, the Vann Struth/Vance team is very familiar with the Metro Vancouver economic environment and have successfully completed similar studies for a number of cities within the region and the Province.

Terms of Reference

A more detailed terms of reference (TOR) related to the development of the Economic Development Strategy is attached as Appendix A to this report. The TOR is made up of the City's Request for Proposals documentation and the successful proposal received from the Vann Struth/Vance team.

Public Consultation

Seeking input from a broad range of business and community stakeholders is key to creating an economic development strategy that is relevant, practical and focussed on the long-term.

In response the consultants will conduct a visioning workshop with local and regional business stakeholders; two sector-based focus groups including both local and regional representatives; and individual key informant meetings with experts from government, academia, industry associations and business groups. In addition, the consultants will dialogue with Council early in the process and again when they present the final report to Council.

Timeline

The process is now underway with an anticipated completion date of May 31, 2008.

It is common for economic development strategies to take up to 12 months to complete due to the amount of data to be researched and collected and the critical need for sufficient public consultation. In this case, an accelerated process is possible, since much of the required data research and collection have already been undertaken as part of Surrey's soon to be completed Employment Lands Strategy. This information can be directly applied to the Economic Development Strategy.

SUMMARY

Over the last decade, Surrey has consistently been one of the fastest-growing cities in BC, absorbing nearly one-third of total population growth in all of Metro Vancouver. This growth creates economic opportunities due to increased local demand for goods and services. It also creates economic challenges, such as providing local employment for the City's residents, particularly high-value, export oriented services and technology jobs.

In collaboration with a broad range of stakeholders, an Economic Development Strategy is being developed that builds on Surrey's existing strengths and positions the City for an economically sustainable future.

Donna Jones
Manager, Economic Development

Attachment