



# Corporate Report

NO: R136

COUNCIL DATE: July 14, 2008

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## REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: Mayor & Council DATE: July 7, 2008

FROM: General Manager, Parks, Recreation and Culture FILE: 0800-20/F

General Manager, Planning and Development

SUBJECT: Adaptive Reuse of Former Fire Hall No. 10 at 13552 – 72 Avenue

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## RECOMMENDATION

The Parks, Recreation and Culture Department and the Planning and Development Department recommend that Council:

1. Receive this report as information;
2. Authorize staff to proceed with all necessary actions in relation to the renovation of former Fire Hall No. 10 as arts office, rehearsal, exhibition, meeting and programming space as generally described in this report;
3. Direct that the \$1.5 million, which was included in the 2008 Capital Budget for arts space, be allocated to this project; and
4. Authorize staff to negotiate an operating agreement with the Arts Council of Surrey for the fit out, operation, management and administration of the new Fire Hall Arts Centre.

## INTENT

The intent of this report is to advise Council of the costs associated with the retrofit of former Fire Hall No. 10, to seek authorization to proceed with such a retrofit and to seek authorization to proceed with negotiations toward an agreement with the Arts Council of Surrey to fit out and operate the retrofitted facility.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Arts Council of Surrey (ACS) is a non-profit organization with a mission “ to promote and foster the arts - literary, performing and visual - in the City of Surrey”. It has been in existence for over 40 years.

The ACS is the main umbrella group for the city’s artistic community. It works on behalf of its 315 individual, business and arts group members, which collectively represent over 5,000 individual members. The ACS is involved in many initiatives including: advocacy, programming, provision of grants to support new art projects, student bursaries and the production of a monthly newsletter. The number of local people benefiting from the activities and projects of the ACS and their member groups including the Surrey Festival of Dance, Surrey Sings Choral Festival, the annual juried art exhibition, Youth Arts Council projects and other events, is in the tens of thousands annually.

The ACS is currently headquartered in a 2000 sq. ft. of leased office space located at #203 – 13541 – 102 Avenue, in Surrey City Centre. The space is located on the second floor above retail space and is used as office and meeting space. Their lease expires in 2009.

The ACS has an annual operating budget of approximately \$100,000; their funding comes from the BC Arts Council, a Direct Access grant, membership fees, sponsorships and a small annual grant from the City.

The ACS has reported that many artists and performers who reside in Surrey are seeking venues outside the city for practicing, preparing, displaying and performing. To address the need for additional arts space, the goal of the ACS is to establish and operate a community art centre. The community arts centre will also assist the ACS to build support, awareness and appreciation of the arts.

## **DISCUSSION**

Earlier this year staff began meeting with representatives of the ACS to discuss their needs and possible solutions. On February 28<sup>th</sup>, staff and representatives from the ACS toured former Fire Hall No. 10 to assess the site and building’s potential use as a community arts centre. In April, the City received a letter from the Arts Council expressing a serious interest in working with the City to restore and operate the Fire Hall as a location for their offices, rehearsal space and cultural meeting rooms. The Fire Hall would act as home for the ACS until the development of cultural spaces in the City Centre area and ultimately continue to be a community arts facility for Newton. (See ACS Letter - Appendix 1).

### Surrey Arts Centre and Surrey Art Gallery Utilization

Bookings for the two theatre spaces at the Surrey Arts Centre (SAC) have increased from 317 days in 2003 to 508 days in 2007. The building is designed to primarily focus on hosting performances. Therefore, arts groups can only book the SAC for their formal performances. Auditions and rehearsals must take place at other locations.

There are permanent public art displays at the Surrey Arts Centre and 5 distinct exhibit spaces for visual arts. The Main Gallery, Small Gallery and Tech Lab exhibitions are programmed more than two years in advance and over 100 proposals per year are received from professional artists requesting exhibitions. The Youth New Media Gallery is a currently on temporary exhibit. The Community Rail Exhibition space located in the theatre lobby area hosts 5 to 6 shows per year and is also programmed two years in advance. Some exhibitions in this space are based on historical relationships established by the Gallery with groups such as the Surrey School District - Elementary and Secondary School Art Exhibitions, Surrey Arts West Society and the Crescent Beach Photography Club. New relationships have also been established with groups including the White Rock and South Surrey Art Society, the BC Landscape Architects and BC Underwater Photographers who have presented exhibitions in this space.

The Surrey Arts Centre (SAC) cannot meet all of the needs of a large, growing community. In accordance with the recommendations of the draft Parks, Recreation and Culture Strategic Plan, de-centralized facilities are needed for on-going arts development including exhibition, rehearsal and programming space in support of the cultural sustainability of the City of Surrey.

#### Former Fire Hall 10

Fire Hall No.10 was constructed in 1962 on a .72-acre lot located on 72 Avenue near King George Highway in the Newton Town Centre. The building is 6,000 sq. ft. in floor area with 4,700 sq. ft. on the ground floor and 1,300 sq. ft. on the second floor. The building was decommissioned, as a Fire Hall in the spring of 2007 with the opening of the new Fire Hall No. 10 on 132 Street. The building has remained empty since that time.

In April, the City hired Proscenium architects to review the Fire Hall facility and assess the required work and related costs to bring the structure up to current Building Code standards for use as office and programming space for arts groups and meet the basic needs as expressed by the ACS. Representatives from Proscenium held a workshop with City staff and representatives from the ACS to determine space requirements and options within the Fire Hall building.

The building has experienced some vandalism but is structurally sound. The estimated costs to prepare the building for occupancy as office and arts space, including exterior envelope repair, washroom, electrical, heating, ventilation and seismic upgrades, safety needs and basic restoration including a reasonable contingency is \$1.5 million dollars. The ACS has indicated they will provide the interior furnishings, fittings and equipment for the facility.

The construction of a new 6,000 sq. ft. building would cost in the range of \$2.7 to \$3 million; therefore the restoration of former Fire Hall No. 10 is less costly than building a new facility. An adaptive reuse of an existing building is consistent with the City's sustainability objectives. A Community Arts Centre will be a positive contribution to the Newton Town Centre and contribute to the areas beautification and revitalization plans. The Fire Hall site is very visible and will be in close proximity to transit service on King George Highway and, ultimately, the proposed King George Highway rapid bus transit line.

## CONCLUSION

Surrey has one of the most active, vibrant Arts Councils in the province. The long-term vision of the ACS is to have a permanent home in Surrey City Centre; however, they understand that this may take a several years. In the interim, the ACS is interested in re-locating to a retrofitted building that was formerly occupied as Fire Hall No. 10. The facility will be used for administration, exhibition, rehearsal and programming space for the arts. In the longer term, following the development of cultural facilities in the City Centre, the retrofitted building will remain as a community arts facility to serve the Newton area.

The adaptive reuse of former Fire Hall No. 10 is consistent with the City's sustainability objectives and will satisfy demands for arts space in the City. This project will also assist with adding vitality to the Newton area. On this basis it is recommended that staff be authorized to retain consultants to design the adaptive reuse of Fire Hall No. 10 as an arts facility with funding for the construction of the renovation works being the \$1.5 million allocation made in the 2008 for arts space. It is further recommended that staff be authorized to negotiate an agreement with the ACS for the fit out, operation, management and programming of the renovated arts facility. Further reports will be provided to Council, as necessary, in relation to the award of a contract for the construction of the renovations and for approval of the agreement with the ACS.

Jean Lamontagne  
General Manager,  
Planning and Development

Laurie Cavan  
General Manager,  
Parks, Recreation and Culture

Attachment – Appendix 1 – ACS Letter



*cc. Ellen Hepner*

April 29, 2008

Laurie Cavan,  
General Manager, PRC  
14245 – 56<sup>th</sup> Avenue,  
Surrey, B.C.,  
V3X 3A2

Dear Laurie Cavan

The Arts Council of Surrey and its members are pleased to express serious interest in leasing the property known as Surrey Fire Hall #10, and for taking possession as soon as it can be ready for occupancy.

The Arts Council of Surrey, now in its 42nd year, is arguably the most active, effective, and vibrant community arts organization in BC. Our vision is of a city in which the arts are supported, nurtured, and promoted, by government, business and community.

By providing the Newton property as a temporary home for the Arts Council, the city will be providing a much needed rehearsal hall, gallery space and cultural meeting rooms for many of our emerging artists and cultural groups.

We wish to thank you and Council for playing a leadership role in our cultural development, and for helping to create a supportive environment for the arts community. We, as members of this community, would welcome the opportunity to continue discussions with the city with respect to future planning and development of cultural strategies.

In our discussions with Council, and with you, we have stressed the immediate needs of the Arts Community as a whole; fire hall #10 will address these immediate needs as part of a short-term solution. Council also indicated that further discussions would be held with respect to the growing demand for a permanent facility.

We understand that City Hall will, within the next few years, be relocated to the City Centre core, and that, as part of that relocation, space will be found for a permanent arts facility that will house administrative space for the Arts Council, and rehearsal, office, and theatre space etc. for our emerging arts community and cultural groups. Fire hall #10 could, in that event, become one of many satellite centres for the arts in Surrey.

The next ten years will bring about enormous growth and change in our city. Council, Parks Recreation and Culture and the Arts Council need to collaborate in the development of a comprehensive arts delivery system throughout the city, and to define our respective roles. It is important that the City recognizes the role of the arts in revitalizing neighborhoods, in creating economic opportunities for tourism, for creating a sense of place, and for attracting new business and investment.

Respectfully submitted,

  
Carol Girardi  
Executive Director

