

NO: R047

COUNCIL DATE: March 22, 2010

REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: **Mayor & Council**

DATE: **March 18, 2010**

FROM: **Deputy City Manager**

FILE: **7450-30**

SUBJECT: **City of Surrey Beautification and Bylaw Enforcement Strategies**

RECOMMENDATION

The City Manager's Office recommends that Council receive this report as information.

INTENT

The development and implementation of beautification and by-law enforcement strategies is a significant priority for the City and considerable resources are expended each year to ensure these strategies are successful. The City has developed a comprehensive, balanced approach to addressing the root causes of crime and criminal behaviour and is continually seeking to implement new and innovative programs that will result in a measurable reduction in crime. The effective enforcement of City by-laws, and implementation of new beautification measures are part of an overall goal of creating safe, liveable communities. The intention of this report is to inform Council of the current beautification and by-law strategies being employed to enhance the City of Surrey for the benefit of all residents.

DISCUSSION

Research indicates that peoples' perceptions and beliefs about nuisance, bylaw infractions and crime are as important as actual crime and disorder rates in neighbourhood health. If people perceive an area to be healthy then they are likely to act accordingly. Managing people's impressions of their neighbourhood, including what they see and feel when they are in public spaces, is a vital component of maintaining healthy and vibrant neighbourhoods.

The City of Surrey expends a significant amount of effort and resources in beautifying the City and its neighbourhoods and in enforcing the City's by-laws with a view to ensuring that the citizens of Surrey enjoy a high quality of life.

BEAUTIFICATION

In 2007, Council adopted a Five-year Financial Plan that provided additional resources for City Beautification. The objective was to develop a comprehensive 'Civic Beautification Program' designed to address both short and long term beautification objectives. Funding was included for a City Beautification Coordinator position to develop the program, build partnerships and ensure

that relevant guidelines and policies are developed to support the goals and objectives of the program.

The following highlights current beautification initiatives to enhance a positive image for the City of Surrey and its communities and neighbourhoods:

Graffiti Mitigation

Surrey Anti-Graffiti Committee - City graffiti strategies are discussed at regular meetings by a Graffiti Task Force, a multi-departmental and inter-agency group chaired by the Beautification Coordinator. Throughout 2010 the Beautification Coordinator will be working with the Committee to further enhance the City of Surrey's approach to addressing graffiti promptly and effectively.

Graffiti Hot Line - The "one-stop" graffiti hot line has been operating for the past year and is being managed by the City's Bylaw Department. The objective of the hot line is to make it easier to report graffiti and allow the City to better monitor service levels with respect to graffiti removal. This centralized service is publicized on the City's website which also contains an area for the public to report or request information in relation to graffiti.

Enforcement - The RCMP and By-law Enforcement staff work with community stakeholders to facilitate the removal of graffiti.

Surrey RCMP employs one full-time officer whose portfolio is graffiti enforcement and education. This officer has developed a catalogue of photographic images of graffiti which assists in identifying vandals that are responsible for graffiti and supports their prosecution based on matching individuals with their unique individual "tags". Surrey RCMP officers make referrals of individuals to the Restorative Justice or Youth Intervention programs to assist in building an understanding in these offenders of the harm associated with their actions. Youth are either expected to clean up the graffiti, pay for its removal or provide other agreed upon remediation.

A National RCMP E-mail Communication Group was established in 2009 for the purpose of information sharing and networking. The Surrey RCMP "Anti-Graffiti" Officer also participates as a member of local enforcement teams designed to increase collaboration on enforcement projects throughout the lower mainland. As a result, partnerships have been established with other RCMP detachments, the Vancouver Police Department, the Washington Police, the Delta Police Department, the Canadian National Railroad Police, and the Transit Police. Specialized RCMP target efforts have been successful in identifying prolific vandals in Surrey as well as in the lower mainland locations.

Graffiti clean-up on private property is managed under the City's Property Maintenance and Unsightly Property By-law No. 16393. Upon receiving a complaint of graffiti on private property, a Bylaw officer attends the site within 2-3 days and issues a notice for clean-up. Residents and businesses that are unable to clean-up their property are referred to Surrey Crime Prevention Society for assistance. If action is not taken in a reasonable timeframe, the City can remove the graffiti and recover the costs through the property tax process.

Assessment and Monitoring - City staff monitors for graffiti and takes immediate action to remove it from civic property and the public is also encouraged to report incidents of graffiti through the City's website or via the hotline as described above. City Departments are managing the removal

of graffiti within their respective areas promptly. Graffiti on civic facilities is removed within 48 – 72 hours of being reported. In instances where we receive a report of “distasteful” graffiti, we endeavour to have it removed immediately (within the same day). It is estimated by the Bylaw Department that clean-up of private properties takes an average of 15 days and includes follow-up inspections by By-law officers to ensure it is completed. Recent discussions with BC Hydro and Telus have been positive with both utility companies agreeing to improve their graffiti mitigation performance levels on their infrastructure in the City.

Utility Cabinet Wrapping – The City is installing wraps on traffic signal cabinets as part of a long-term preventative solution to graffiti. The program has been very successful in reducing random and reoccurring incidences of graffiti on these cabinets. If a wrap has been hit with graffiti, it is much easier to remove due to the material of the wrap. In addition to reducing both incidences of graffiti and costs of removal, vinyl wrapping improves the civic landscape through display of photography and art work. The City has wrapped 44 cabinets to date with a further 60 wraps planned for 2010. BC Hydro has agreed to wrap their utility boxes in key areas of City Centre and the other town centres.

Preventative Landscaping – Climbing vines have been planted along hundreds of meters of sound barriers on Highway 10 to deter graffiti. Coniferous trees have been planted along sections of King George Boulevard to deter fence line graffiti. Additional locations are presently being reviewed for specialized landscaping applications at private-public interfaces.

Partnerships – Surrey Crime Prevention Society (SCPS) has been a long-standing partner with the City of Surrey assisting in a number of different crime prevention strategies. As a key community partner, SCPS has been instrumental in developing unique community based approaches to address graffiti. The Society employs an Anti- Graffiti Coordinator, provides clean up kits to the Parks department for the Partners in Parks program, and supplies the public with kits in support of informal neighbourhood clean-up efforts. It is estimated that SCPC contributes well over 1,000 hours of volunteer time each year to graffiti intervention, removal and education within the City.

For the past twelve years, the SCPS has operated a summer student work experience project called the “Spirit of Youth Mural program” in partnership with the Sullivan Heights Secondary School art program and Human Resources Skills Development Canada. Research demonstrates that areas displaying public art such as murals are less likely to be tagged. The North Surrey Recreation Centre Mural was restored over the summer of 2009 under this program. Also, a celebration in recognition of student artists was held at the Bell Centre for Performing Arts on October 30, 2009 for the “Unveiling of the Winter Games Banner and Mural” project.

The number of volunteers involved in the graffiti removal program within the Parks Division has recently increased significantly. This volunteer program has been achieved through “Partners in Parks” recruitment efforts and is promoted on the City’s website and by City staff on an on-going basis.

Graffiti Hot Spots – The City recognizes that there are certain areas that are challenging. These graffiti hot spots require additional attention and resources to keep graffiti problems contained. Communication with SCPS to assist in graffiti removal efforts is important to place a priority on these hot spots. Another strategy is the recent implementation of a graffiti crew dedicated to graffiti removal with particular emphasis on graffiti hot spots. Current graffiti hot spots include the following:

- Fraser Highway – 184 Street to 188 Street;
- 64th Avenue – 148 Street to 132 Street;
- 108th Avenue – 150 Street to King George Boulevard;
- 96th Avenue – 140 Street to 132 Street; and
- Transit exchanges such as Newton.

City Banner Program

The City Banner Program provides visually attractive and community-oriented graphics that enhance the streetscapes of Surrey. Banners create a welcoming atmosphere and help celebrate special City events and programs. Banners are displayed in locations that highlight gateways and main arterials and showcase City attributes to build civic pride and public appreciation of prominent features of the City. The City has expanded the banner program to 750 poles involving over 1,500 banners. The following banners are included within the Banner Program:

- *'Future Lives Here' Banners* – Approximately 500 banners were produced and will remain in rotation throughout the City with other banners until the end of 2011.
- *'Olympic' Banners* - A total of 512 Olympic banners have been installed at key Central City, town centre and gateway locations. They will remain until after the Olympic Celebration period.
- *'Right to Play' Banners* - Three designs were created to celebrate the City's partnership with the Right to Play Charity. They will remain in place until the end of 2010.
- *'Surrey City Centre' Promotion Banners* - Approximately 150 new banners will be manufactured for rotation on City centre poles from 2010 through 2013.
- *'City Art' Banners* - Installation of these banners will coincide with the Surrey Art Centre's Robert Davidson exhibition following the completion of the Olympic Celebration period.
- *Community Group Banners* - Various community groups are currently involved with the banner program. This element of the program is expected to expand as more community organizations become involved to further complement the number of banners on poles throughout the City.

Trees Planted

In 2009 the employed a variety of programs to plant new trees throughout the City. These included allocations from general revenue funding, cash contributions from developers, direct planting in new developments by developers. There were over 5,200 new trees planted on streets and in parks throughout the City in 2009. These trees add significantly to the green landscape of the City and have been planted strategically so that they will remain in place on a long term basis.

Transit Shelters

The City is replacing all of its transit shelters which have been a target for graffiti and vandalism. The City has entered into a 20 year contract for the supply and installation of at least 480 transit shelters, 230 of which are being installed by April 2010. These contemporary high quality glass and stainless steel transit shelters were designed exclusively for Surrey by Pattison Outdoor

Advertising. They have a timeless design and incorporate the City's new logo. Each shelter is well illuminated for transit user safety and attractiveness. The contract with Pattison Outdoor Advertising calls for the highest quality maintenance and repair standards, with service taking place within 24 hours, including graffiti removal. The new shelters provide an enhanced streetscape in comparison to the former shelters.

Litter

Staff has developed and implemented a maintenance program to monitor and clean up litter. There is little illegal dumping of garbage on City road allowances but it continues to be an ongoing issue in some of the parks. In addition to household garbage, the most common items are furniture and home electronics. Fines are imposed if staff is able to determine an address within the household garbage that is found or is otherwise able to determine the offender. Dumped refuse is picked up within two working days from parks following reports, or when found by Parks staff during routine maintenance activities (e.g. grass cutting or horticulture work).

BYLAW ENFORCEMENT STRATEGY

The City's strategy with respect to by-law enforcement has two components as follows:

1. **Parks, Public Open Spaces, Roads and Road Allowances:** The City's inspectors and traffic commissionaires proactively monitor for by-law infractions and takes timely action to have them corrected; and
2. **Private Properties:**
 - a. The City's inspectors monitor work for which City permits are issued to audit for compliance with relevant by-laws;
 - b. The City's By-law enforcement inspectors respond to complaints received from the public; and
 - c. With respect to immediate hazards to public safety, the City's by-law inspectors act proactively to eliminate the hazard as soon as possible.

The City's by-law inspectors generally work with property owners to achieve resolution of by-law infractions without the need to take legal action. This approach assists in developing healthy community relations and saves tax dollars on expensive court proceedings. However, where compliance is not achieved on a voluntary basis, the City takes legal action where appropriate.

Bylaw Enforcement Activity Levels

The effort that the City expends related to enforcement of City bylaws is extensive. The following table illustrates the type and volume of bylaw enforcement for the City of Surrey in 2009:

Type of file	Number of files opened/inspections	Number of files closed
Graffiti	2,209	1,878
Unsightly Premises	1,016	971
Drug houses identified	228	194 *
Signage infractions	425	420

Parking infractions	33,593	25,938
Commercial vehicle inspections (side of road truck inspections)	2,173	2,173
Taxi inspections	1,249	1,249
Crime Free Multi Housing – sites visited	42	27
Parking lot inspections	97	97
Soil removal/placement	168	163
Marijuana grow operations	228	194

* File closed either due to demolition of house or appropriate remediation of the property.

Bylaw Enforcement Resources

Staff recently reviewed historic Bylaw Enforcement Officer (BEO) staffing levels and then compared these staffing numbers to population as well as to other lower mainland local governments.

This information is summarized in the following tables:

Number of Budgeted By-law Enforcement Officer Positions in Surrey by Year Since 2001

Year	# of Budgeted FT BEO's*	Est. Surrey Population	% Population Growth	% Increase in Full Time BEO Positions
2001	29	375,164		
2002	29			
2003	31			
2004	32			
2005	34			
2006	36	433,101	15.4% increase in comparison to 2001	24% increase in comparison to 2001
2007	37			
2008	39			
2009	40**	462,516	23.3% increase in comparison to 2001	38% increase in comparison to 2001

*In addition to the full time positions, there is an allotment of part time funding that is typically used to provide additional BEOs in the summer period. Typically, 6 BEOs are hired to patrol City Parks during the summer of each year, which is the equivalent of 1 FTE's.

**In 2009, the City added 6 Animal Controller Officers, which are not included in this number. Prior to 2009, the SPCA provided animal control services on a contract basis to the City using approximately the same number of positions.

Bylaw Enforcement Officer Positions - Comparison with Other Municipalities as of 12/31/2009

The population to BEO ratio for Surrey is 11,600:1 which compares favourably to other municipalities in the region (Abbotsford, Burnaby, Delta, Langley Township, Richmond, and

Vancouver) which had ratios ranging from 16,000:1 to 26,000:1. (Note: Some municipalities did not respond to our request for information).

Activity Levels – Building Inspections

Building inspections are required to ensure building developments adhere to building code requirements and are designed to ensure the health and safety of building occupants. The table below summarizes the numbers of inspections performed by the Building/Electrical/Plumbing Inspectors in 2009:

Building inspections	25,984
Electrical inspections	17,967
Plumbing inspections	29,984
Total Inspections Performed	73,935

Secondary Suites

Staff in Community Planning are currently working on developing a Housing Action Plan which will include information on secondary suites including an inventory of how other communities are allowing (or not) secondary suites. The plan will also include proposals for consultation with the public and ultimately make recommendations for Council’s consideration. The intent is to have a draft housing action plan for Council’s consideration by September 2010.

Education and Community Awareness

The City engages the services of a consultant to work with grade school children to educate them on the importance of waste reduction/diversion with a strong message of ensuring a clean and litter free environment. The Program is called “SWAP for 5” which means Surrey Waste Action Program for 5th graders – the program is presented exclusively to 5th graders across the City (71 Surrey primary schools receive the 2-hour long presentation throughout the school year). The rationale behind this approach is to instil the values of waste reduction/diversion, anti-littering, within an age that is old enough to absorb and comprehend its significance and carry those principles into adolescence and adulthood. The City has also carried out a number of anti-littering campaigns over the years in an effort to increase public awareness.

The City is also developing educational pamphlets that will be used to advise commercial tenants and property owners about some of our by-laws pertaining to illegal signage, graffiti and unsightly property. The materials will be strategically distributed to address the major issues of each area – for example in City centre we have an issue with sandwich boards, in Fleetwood with landscaping maintenance and in Newton with graffiti – the materials will advise the reader on the general do’s and don’ts and will provide links to the pertaining by-laws and any resources available to assist. We will use a variety of methods to communicate our message.

CONCLUSION

This report outlines the City of Surrey's multi-agency, practical approach to by-law enforcement and beautification. To date, our efforts to reduce crime in Surrey are succeeding and drawing interest from other agencies who are looking for a successful model. In addition, the City is also actively engaged in improving public involvement and awareness around the by-law enforcement and beautification strategies that are underway. The City believes that by working together, we can maintain healthy, vibrant communities and build a stronger Surrey.

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