

NO: F009

COUNCIL DATE: April 18, 2011

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## FINANCE COMMITTEE

**TO: Mayor & Council** **DATE: April 18, 2011**

**FROM: General Manager, Planning and Development** **FILE: 5080-01**  
**General Manager, Finance & Technology**  
**General Manager, Parks, Recreation and Culture**

**SUBJECT: Neighbourhood Small Grants Program - A Partnership Project with the Vancouver Foundation**

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## RECOMMENDATION

The Planning and Development Department, Finance & Technology Department and the Parks, Recreation and Culture Department recommend that the Finance Committee recommend to Council that Council:

1. Receive this report as information; and
2. Approve the provision of a \$30,000 grant to support the Oak Avenue Neighbour Hub Society in the delivery of the Neighbourhood Small Grants Program, which amount will match the grant of \$30,000 to the Society from the Vancouver Foundation for the development and implementation of the Program in the Whalley community.

## INTENT

The purpose of this report is to seek Council's approval to provide a grant to the Oak Avenue Neighbourhood Hub Society (OANHS) for a one-year pilot of a Neighbourhood Small Grants Program (NSGP) to serve the Whalley community. The Vancouver Foundation has approved a grant of \$30,000 toward this initiative that is conditional upon the City of Surrey matching the Foundation's contribution. The Surrey Foundation has also indicated an interest in being a funding partner on this project. The Surrey Foundation Board will make a decision regarding funding the program during their April 18, 2011 Board meeting.

## BACKGROUND

Neighbourhood grants programs have proven to be an effective approach for strengthening neighbourhoods in many jurisdictions. In this region, since 1999, the Vancouver Foundation's NSGP has funded hundreds of small resident-driven projects in Vancouver and Burnaby. The Vancouver Foundation is interested in expanding their investment in this Program into Surrey.

Working with community organizations and local residents, the OANHS is proposing to develop and implement a community-driven NSGP. The program will fund a person that will assist in building social connections and a sense of belonging by providing local residents with

opportunities to assume leadership and engage with their neighbours in local projects. The pilot will be undertaken in Whalley – an area that is in transition and home to some of the City's most vulnerable and diverse residents.

Building neighbourhood capacity and promoting a sense of belonging among Surrey residents is consistent with priorities identified in the:

- Plan for the Social Well-Being of Surrey Residents – "Community development and inclusion" is one of Social Plan's five priorities; and
- Child and Youth Friendly City Strategy – The Strategy identifies "building social connections" as one of the goals for creating a child and youth friendly city.

The Vancouver Foundation is committed to building strong communities across BC. For over a decade, the Foundation has been funding NSGP in Vancouver and Burnaby. In the spring 2010, City of Surrey staff approached Vancouver Foundation staff to explore the possibility of expanding this program to Surrey.

### **Vancouver Foundation**

The Vancouver Foundation's Vision is "healthy, vibrant and liveable communities across BC." With assets of more than \$660 million and 1,200 funds under management, it is the largest community foundation in Canada.

### **Neighbourhood Small Grants Program**

Since 1999, the Vancouver Foundation's NSGP has been "strengthening neighbourhoods from the ground up". Grants of up to \$500 have funded hundreds of resident-driven projects in Vancouver and Burnaby. A key feature of this program is that decisions on the awarding of grants are made by a committee composed of local residents. Both Vancouver Foundation staff and the neighbourhood houses involved in the program report on its positive impacts in connecting residents and building community.

### **Neighbourhood Small Grants Program in Surrey**

City of Surrey staff, along with the coordinator of Surrey's Office of Early Childhood Development, Learning & Care ("OECDLC"), met with Vancouver Foundation staff to explore whether the Foundation would consider expanding their NSGP to Surrey. Since the Vancouver Foundation relies on neighbourhood houses to administer the grants program at the local level (and Surrey only has two neighbourhood houses), it was proposed that a model be developed that does not necessarily require the presence of a neighbourhood house to oversee the program. To engage the Vancouver Foundation in this initiative, staff indicated that the City may consider making a contribution toward a pilot neighbourhood small grants program.

City staff and representatives of the OECDLC brought together community agencies to gauge interest in the concept of a Neighbourhood Small Grants Program in Whalley. Vancouver Foundation staff, along with the Executive Director of the South Burnaby Neighbourhood House, participated in the meeting. The outcome of these discussions was that the Vancouver Foundation invited an application from Surrey.

Recipients of Vancouver Foundation grants must be a registered charity. As one of Surrey's two neighbourhood houses, the OANHS was determined to be the most appropriate agency to oversee the community development work involved in engaging the community in a pilot neighbourhood grants program in Whalley. OANHS submitted an application to the Vancouver Foundation in January 2011. City staff assisted in preparing the application and developing a model that has the potential to be adapted to neighbourhoods in Surrey that do not have a neighbourhood house.

On April 5, 2011, Vancouver Foundation staff informed the City that the Foundation's Board of Directors has approved a grant of \$30,000 to pilot a Neighbourhood Small Grants Program in Whalley. The grant is conditional upon the City of Surrey also contributing \$30,000 toward the Program.

In early January 2011, City staff approached the Surrey Foundation to gauge their interest in this initiative. At that time, the Surrey Foundation indicated a strong interest in the potential of being a funding partner. A decision regarding the Surrey Foundation's contribution will be discussed at their April 18, 2011 Board meeting.

## **DISCUSSION**

For a variety of historical reasons, Surrey has limited neighbourhood infrastructure in comparison to older, more well-established cities. While Surrey has many assets, including strong city-run recreational and library services, there are fewer community-driven, neighbourhood-based activities that support neighbourhood development.

The goal of the NSGP is to build social connections in neighbourhoods. The "made in Surrey" program will be based on the NSGP that operate in Vancouver and Burnaby. It will involve a worker that will be responsible for community building activities and will also encourage resident-driven projects with grants of up to \$500 per project. The decisions about the awarding of grants will be made by a Committee of local residents. A unique feature of the Surrey program will be the engagement of community agencies. This is intended to both increase the involvement of diverse residents in the program, as well as create a model that can be adapted to Surrey neighbourhoods that do not have a neighbourhood house.

### **Oak Avenue Neighbourhood Hub Society**

OANHS was identified as the most appropriate agency to undertake the community development work and in developing and implementing the pilot NSGP. OANHS is a neighbourhood house that evolved out of Oak Avenue United Church in 2004. It is a not-for-profit society, providing a range of services for people of all ages in the community, and also serves as a hub for other organizations and agencies to offer programs.

Current programs offered at the OANHS include:

- a licensed daycare, family place drop-in program and Mother Goose program (operated by Options BC), and clothes closet that provides free clothing for children under 12 years old;
- seniors' computer classes, senior herb garden, free luncheon and drop-in tea programs for seniors;
- community dinners and various community kitchen/cooking club programs for seniors, new immigrants, low income and refugee families; and

- coordination of a monthly farm trip for a group of refugee families (transportation sponsored by the North Surrey Recreation Centre).-

### **Whalley as the Pilot Site**

Whalley was selected as the pilot site for the NSGP because it is a diverse community that is home to many of Surrey's most vulnerable households. As well, redevelopment is bringing a new demographic of one and two-person households into the area.

Whalley is a diverse community in terms of age, income, ethnic and cultural background, and household composition. It is an area of young families with children, as well as seniors. Compared to the Surrey average, Whalley has a higher proportion of low-income households. A significant number of new immigrants, Aboriginal families and government-assisted refugees live in Whalley. New residential development in the City Centre has brought almost 4,000 new one and two-person households into the City Centre area in the past decade. The NSGP will offer an opportunity to develop a sense of connection and community amongst these diverse residents who all call Whalley home.

Although Whalley was chosen as the pilot site for the Program, the long term vision is to encourage the Vancouver Foundation to invest in Surrey by expanding their highly successful NSGP across Surrey. Surrey's contribution to the Program demonstrates the City's continued commitment to strengthening neighbourhoods for citizens to become active in their neighbourhoods and build community from the ground up.

### **Project Partners**

The Surrey Neighbourhood Small Grants Program will include three partner groups:

1. ***Oak Avenue Neighbourhood Hub Society*** will be responsible for coordinating and administering the Program. This will involve extensive community development work to engage the diversity of community stakeholders and residents in the process. Activities will include:
  - developing all the resource materials and evaluation tools;
  - facilitating the Agency Coalition and Resident Grants Committee; and
  - working with resident groups that are awarded grants to undertake projects.
2. ***Agency Coalition*** will oversee the development of the Neighbourhood Small Grants Program. The Coalition will:
  - include public, non-profit, business and community agencies that work with the diversity of residents in Whalley;
  - advise OANHS on the program model, resources and evaluation process;
  - identify residents who will form the Resident Grants Committee; and
  - support the OANHS in promoting and marketing the grants program to local residents.

To date, the Agency Coalition includes:

- public sector partners - City of Surrey, Surrey Public Library, Office of Early Childhood Development, Learning & Care, Surrey School District, and Ministry of Children and Family Development;
- non-profit partners - Options Community Services, DIVERSEcity, Surrey Food Bank, South Fraser Community Services Society, and Alexander Neighbourhood House; and

- Whalley Community Association and Downtown Business Improvement Association.

Additional agencies that will be invited to participate in the Coalition include: Kla-how-eya, Umoja, Surrey Urban Mission, and SFU Surrey. Others may be identified as the project gets underway.

3. **Resident Grants Committee** will review applications and make decisions about the awarding of the neighbourhood grants to local residents. OANHS staff will support the Committee. City staff will act as advisors to the Committee (to assist with any linking of projects to City resources).

## **Project Activities**

The Project will include three phases.

### ***Phase 1 - Development (April 2011 - June 2011)***

Activities during the development phase will include:

- Participating in the "Stake in Your Community" event on April 30, 2011. Jim Diers, the founder of the Seattle neighbourhood grants program, is the keynote speaker. The event is being hosted by the Surrey Public Library, Whalley Community Association, Downtown BIA, and City of Surrey. This will offer an opportunity to learn about the Seattle neighbourhood grants model;
- Establishing and convening the Agency Coalition;
- Reviewing resources and consulting with existing Neighbourhood Small Grants Programs in Vancouver and South Burnaby. The Surrey model will be based on these programs, and resources such as policy manuals and grant application forms will be adapted for use in Surrey; and
- Developing the grants process and materials (e.g. Terms of Reference for the Agency Coalition and Resident Grants Committee, the manual of policies and procedures for the grants program, application guidelines and forms, marketing materials, evaluation tools, etc.).

### ***Phase 2: Implementation (July 2011 – January 2012)***

Activities during the implementation phase will include:

- Recruiting and orienting the Resident Grants Committee. The Agency Coalition will appoint the members of the Residents Grants Committee. Committee members will be oriented on the neighbourhood grants purpose, policies and procedures (developed in Phase 1 of the project);
- Conduct one granting cycle which will include:
  - issuing the Request for Applications and assisting residents in the development of project ideas and completion of the application for a grant;
  - convening the Resident Grants Committee to review applications and make decisions on the awarding of grants; and
  - allowing for the completion of the neighbourhood projects for which grants are awarded.

### ***Phase 3: Evaluation (February 2012 – March 2012)***

Evaluation of the pilot of the Neighbourhood Small Grants program will include:

- Organizing a celebration event that brings together residents involved in all the projects;
- Evaluating the Grants Program – Did the program engage a diversity of residents? Did it create an increased sense of belonging and trust, etc.;
- Evaluating the Role of the Partners:
  - Agency Coalition role - What were the benefits/lessons learned from involving an agency coalition? Would an agency coalition enable a small grants program to be implemented in neighbourhoods where there is no neighbourhood house, etc.;
  - Neighbourhood Hub role – What were the benefits of having the program coordinated and administered by a neighbourhood hub? What was done well – what could be improved? Could other agencies with a different mission undertake this role in neighbourhoods where there is no neighbourhood house, etc.?
  - Resident Grants Committee role - Did the Committee represent the diversity of Whalley? Was the Committee satisfied with the support they received, etc.; and
  - Prepare a report documenting the results of the pilot complete with recommendations

The lessons learned will be documented as part of the Evaluation Phase of the project. This information, as well as the actual resources developed, could be made available and shared with other Surrey neighbourhoods interested in initiating a NSGP.

The desired outcome of the pilot NSGP is that the Vancouver Foundation will continue to provide funding to Surrey neighbourhoods from its on-going Neighbourhood Small Grants Program.

### **Comparison of the Proposed Program to the Current Community Enhancement Partnership Program**

In January 2010 Council adopted the Community Enhancement Partnership (CEP) Program, which is intended to provide financial support for projects focussed on community engagement and neighbourhood beautification. Under the CEP Program, residents and community groups may apply to the City for a grant under either of two separate categories; these being:

- **Small Project Grants** - to support planning, organizing and implementing projects intended to directly improve the physical aesthetic appeal of a neighbourhood; or
- **Partnership Grants** - to support projects that build community relationships through celebration and activity.

The NSGP differs from the CEP Program, particularly from the perspective that the NSGP is focussed on improving social well being and on community capacity building and will support community development initiatives and programs beyond the categories identified in CEP. For example, Community Kitchen initiatives, and programs targeting isolated community members, etc.

The City's Beautification Coordinator will coordinate with the OANHSS to ensure there is no overlap between the CEP Program grant awards and the NSGP grant awards in the Whalley Community.

## **Budget**

The \$60,000 project budget includes the funds required for the OANHS to assist in community building activities in addition to providing grants for small resident-driven neighbourhood building projects (up to \$500 per project). If the Surrey Foundation contributes to the program, the additional funds will increase the number of grants that can be awarded.

Funding for the recommended contribution from the City (\$30,000) is available in the approved 2011 budget.

## **SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS**

The NSGP will support the City's Sustainability Charter; more specifically "Action SC12: Adapting to Demographic Change – (3) Encouraging and facilitating volunteerism and participation in community activities by persons of all ages, abilities and cultural communities".

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the above discussion, it is recommended that the Finance Committee recommend that Council award a grant of \$30,000 to the Oak Avenue Neighbour Hub Society to match a similar amount that has been granted by the Vancouver Foundation for the development and implementation of a pilot Neighbourhood Small Grants Program for the Whalley community.

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