

NO: R036

COUNCIL DATE: **FEBRUARY 24, 2014**

REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: Mayor & Council **DATE: February 24, 2014**

FROM: General Manager, Planning and Development **FILE: 6950-01**

SUBJECT: Partnership with University of British Columbia Master of Urban Design Program

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Planning and Development Department recommends that Council:

1. Receive this report as information;
2. Endorse, in principal, entering into a three year partnership agreement with the University of British Columbia ("UBC") to support urban design studios focused on City of Surrey issues and sites, as documented in this report; and
3. Authorize staff to enter into a detailed partnership agreement with UBC.

BACKGROUND

The UBC School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture (SALA) is launching a new program in urban design at the masters level, commencing in September 2014. The new Master of Urban Design ("MUD") degree is offered as a compressed 11-month program and students in this program are mid-career professionals from around the world with a previous degree in architecture or landscape architecture. The program is focused on engaging in real-world urban issues, with an emphasis on innovation and sustainable design solutions. As such, UBC is proposing to partner with cities to address contemporary urban design challenges, provide students with direct experience and provide the partner community with "cutting edge" ideas and perspectives.

SALA has approached the City of Surrey with a proposal to enter into a three year partnership, wherein a sequence of three studio courses each year will be focused on Surrey issues and sites (see Appendix 1). SALA has selected Surrey as the "inaugural" partner community for the program due to the diversity of urban conditions, the opportunity of shaping an emerging metropolitan centre and the relevance of Surrey's situations to growing cities around the world.

The proposal is for a sequence of three studio courses per year at successively more detailed scales, addressing key design challenges, including a:

- a regional studio, focused on integrating light rail rapid transit into the urban fabric of Surrey;

- district-scale studio, focused on innovative housing and development forms to retrofit suburban areas into integrated neighbourhood centres; and
- local-scale studio, focused on place-making and contemporary public space in Surrey's emerging City Centre.

The City of Surrey has had previous experience with Professor Patrick Condon, the Director of the MUD program, including the South Newton Charette project (1995), the East Clayton NCP (1999-2003) and the Sensitive Infill Charette/Study (2012). These projects have had a significant impact on the ways in which the City has developed and have introduced innovative practices.

DISCUSSION

The Planning and Development Department sees a benefit to the City in entering into a partnership with UBC's Master of Urban Design program. Engaging a cohort of professional graduate students in the urban issues facing Surrey will provide the City with creative solutions and ideas that can influence and improve policies, plans and practices. The work of the studios is akin to consultant services, at a very efficient level of funding. Exposing City staff to the work of the graduate students will provide a positive learning and professional development experience, and inspire innovative approaches. The exposure the results of the studios will receive through publication and promotion will bring an enhanced profile to the City and its efforts to build a sustainable and livable urban community.

Funding

The proposed support for the Surrey studio courses is a contribution of \$80,000 per year for three years. These funds will be allocated from within the existing Planning and Development Department budget. Staff is of the opinion that the benefits of the partnership exceed the proposed level of contribution.

SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS

The proposed partnership with the UBC MUD program responds to a number of objectives and actions in the Sustainability Charter, including:

- building a sustainable community;
- encouraging innovation in design to enhance neighbourhood and community identity;
- focusing growth in Town Centres to reduce greenhouse gas emissions; and
- pursuing greener development practices.

CONCLUSION

Based on the above discussion it is recommended that Council:

- endorse, in principal, entering into a three year partnership agreement with UBC to support urban design studios focused on City of Surrey issues and sites, as documented in this report; and

- authorize staff to enter into a detailed partnership agreement with UBC.

Original signed by
Jean Lamontagne
General Manager,
Planning and Development

DL:saw

Attachment:

Appendix 1

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THE MASTER IN URBAN DESIGN AT THE SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE AND LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

Prepared for the City of Surrey

December 2013

UBC in the Community

The University of British Columbia (UBC), established in 1908, educates a student population of 50,000 on major campuses in two cities and holds an international reputation for excellence in advanced research and learning. UBC was ranked 30th in the Times Higher Education Supplement in 2012, and for the past five years has been among the top 40 institutes in the world, as ranked by the Shanghai Jiao Tong University.

The University of British Columbia creates an exceptional learning environment that fosters global citizenship, advances a civil and sustainable society, and supports outstanding research to serve the people of British Columbia, Canada and the world. In

2009, UBC created its Strategic Plan, *Place and Promise*, which rests its goals on three main pillars: Student Learning, Research Excellence, and Community Engagement. This third pillar aims to use UBC research and learning to enhance economic, social, and cultural wellbeing in all the communities UBC serves: local, provincial, national and global. We view ourselves as an integral part of these communities, and we aim to enter into relationships where decisions about means and ends are collaboratively made, costs and benefits are shared, and learning is reciprocal.

SALA in the community

The School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture, established in 1946, has a long history of community engagement. The School has for many years led a series of public lectures that facilitate dialogue and engagement around design and community development, in Vancouver and beyond. Further, the research and community partnerships of many of our faculty have made an indelible impact on Metro Vancouver -- Professor Patrick Condon, for instance has been involved in several community projects that will make systemic changes in the way cities are built and operated, in Surrey, North Vancouver, Burnaby, Maple Ridge, and many other BC Communities.

The latest development in education from SALA is the Master of Urban Design. This field, which involves public policy, professional practice, and academic inquiry,

is at its core the artful and purposeful shaping of cities and their conglomerate parts. Where this program diverges from others of its kind, however, is our commitment to community engagement -- not only for UBC's own vision, but to the betterment of our students and our communities. In each of the studios offered to our students, we want partnerships of real, growing cities to contribute the real sustainability problems that affect real people for our students to use as they learn and hone their skills as professional Urban Designers. Community partnerships play a central role in the MUD program in SALA. The studios that form the foundation of the MUD program will link the research foci of SALA to the concerns of our community partners. Each studio can examine a range of scales from region to block, such as surgical suburban retrofits in North

We would like to work with the City of Surrey on three studios focussed on the following areas.

Regional Studio

Transportation and land use; the City of Surrey as an Urban Region

The City of Surrey is swiftly converting from a 20th century suburb to 21st century regional scale urban center city. Master of Urban Design students can fruitfully examine this transformation with a particular focus on the ways in which transportation choices can lead to sustainable and livable community form. The City has made it clear that given its extent, as well as the desirability of making transit choices to shape city form, a system of rapid but affordable surface rail is the right transit choice. Relevant questions that this studio can explore include: what is the influence of surface rail on real estate economics astride the line? What types of urban districts are most attractive and marketable within the districts impacted by this form of transit? What building

typologies are most suited to creating attractive places to live and work, and what assurances would we have that these forms would be viable in the marketplace? What is the role of green infrastructure in this matrix, and how can higher density urban forms be integrated with Surrey's highly sensitive existing streams and habitat? What would such a world look like and how can we be sure that such a world will appeal to Surrey's citizens?

This studio will produce lavish illustrations of these possibilities, all of which will be grounded in firm market analysis and will benefit from inputs from regional experts in the field.

America, informal community development in South America or the design of entirely new towns in China -- and the partnership of real-world city planners, architects, and landscape architects, not to mention communities, will bring into sharp focus the wide range of issues that must be addressed for successful and sustainable urban design.

The partnership of our community is paramount to student success. By examining in real-world scenarios, students engage in a distinctive, project-based curriculum that explores cutting-edge, real-world urban design concepts, while learning about the distinctly reciprocal and experiential learning environment that exists between professional architects and community stakeholders. This format allows students to gain real world exposure and forge both national and international connections before graduation.

Moreover, the partnership feature of the MUD program presumes that projects may endure for more than one studio term and in some cases for more than one year. In a real world scenario, urban design and planning is not a problem that is addressed, solved, and forgotten; it is an ever evolving and changing scenario, as communities grow or shrink, or new demands are made on population, environment, or transportation, to name only a few. As such, the partnerships formed through this program are a great advantage not just to students, but to community partners, who will have continued discussion and input into ongoing and evolving issues, both from up and coming students and from SALA's renowned and experienced faculty members.

Each year, the work from the studios and with partners will culminate in an international design forum which features

the work of the studios, part of which can take place within the community of our partners. This forum will bring top thinkers from around the world to join a dialogue with our students and prominent thinkers and practitioners from our region. Public lectures, seminars, presentations, and panel sessions provide a wide array of contact and conversation between students, academia government officials and practitioners. The School will also create a series of publications by the invited guests and students.

District Scale Studio

Retrofitting Urban Areas for the 21st Century; Suburbs into Communities.

Existing Surrey communities have seen substantial growth in population, with rapid change in demographic compositions of resident families. Meanwhile new forms of jobs are emerging which require new thinking about regulations governing work and means of moving around. Housing types, neighbourhood types, and street engineering standards appropriate for the 20th century need to be re-examined. What would such a world look like and how might policy tools be deployed to allow its emergence over time? This studio will connect with community stakeholders to graphically illustrate what is both economically and politically achievable in existing districts, and how existing trends can be capitalized on to create a more resilient, appropriate, and attractive world.

Local Scale Studio

Innovation and Community in the Emerging Metropolitan Centre.

A new regional centre is emerging in Surrey. While much of the form of this new centre is known, several issues still exist that must be examined and illustrated. Surrey City Centre and The Innovation Boulevard Corridor present distinctly 21st Century opportunities for urban design investigation. As the centre expands, how would Surrey capitalize on the tendency of creative individuals and companies to flock to high quality urban environments, and what are the physical characteristics of these environments? How does the composition of buildings, sidewalks, parks, natural areas, transit hubs, job sites, and entertainment enterprises combine to make a great city, and what would such a city look like here in Surrey? Our skilled students will utilize solid technical, economic, and environmental

understanding, with a concern for the subtle features that constitute great and attractive communities, to illustrate a high quality and achievable world class city centre — one capable of attracting the creative people and the necessary investment capital to build a center to be proud of.

The University of British Columbia would like to invite the City of Surrey to support the Master of Urban Design program in SALA, with a contribution of \$80,000 per year for three years. This funding would be used to support three individual student studios at \$20,000 each, and an additional \$20,000 would be used to support the annual forum.

Partnerships between UBC and members of the community are essential to the success of the Master of Urban Design program. Your partnership will enable us to offer students a leading-edge program within an internationally recognized university, complete with unique and collaborative curricular and extra-curricular components, all on a global stage. Together, we can build tomorrow's urban design leaders who will make positive and meaningful contributions to the cities of the future.

Thank you for your consideration of support for the University of British Columbia and the Master of Urban Design.

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