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City of Surrey Economic Development Strategy

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Prepared for:
City of Surrey



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Surrey's economic development vision is to support a high quality of life for its residents, workforce and visitors through sustainable development that carefully integrates economic, environmental and social/cultural interests.

Economic development expands society's resources that are used to support the public amenities and services that are fundamental to quality of life, including parks, arts and culture amenities, and health care and education programs. There are many other ways in which economic growth supports the environment and social/cultural interests. For example, growth in Surrey-based employment gives more residents the opportunity to work in their home community, which reduces the need for commuting outside of their home community (environmental benefit) and gives residents more time to spend in the community with their families (social benefit).

Economic Development Objectives

The Economic Development Strategy builds upon many other initiatives, including the City's Official Community Plan, Sustainability Charter, Livability Accord and Employment Lands Strategy. The economic development objectives aim to create greater local employment opportunities and a more balanced tax base, with special attention given to Surrey's unique duality as a growing urban city and a major centre of agriculture.

Objective 1: Expand and diversify employment opportunities, including higher-value jobs.

Expanding local employment is the key to achieving many of Surrey's aspirations. It will enhance social benefits by creating a more complete community, will occur in tandem with increased investment in industrial and commercial facilities that will help to strengthen Surrey's property tax base, and will lead to more intensive uses of industrial and commercial lands, which is not only more environmentally sound but will support Surrey's evolving image as a major urban centre.

Objective 2: Establish Surrey as a premier investment location.

Surrey has many of the necessary attributes of a premier investment location that is attractive to a wide range of employment-supporting and high-value investment. Continuing to strengthen these attributes and communicate them to the world will support Surrey's growing image as a premier place for business investment.

Objective 3: Strengthen Surrey's dual roles as a vibrant urban economy and a centre of agricultural production.

Surrey is currently the 12th largest city in Canada by population and is on pace to surpass Vancouver as BC's largest city in the foreseeable future. Surrey's land area is one-third agricultural, giving it a unique duality among the country's largest cities. City Council has demonstrated strong support for both the urban and rural parts of Surrey's identity, each of which receives special emphasis in this Economic Development Strategy.

Priorities for Action

There are a total of 17 strategies that support the above-listed economic objectives. All are important, but given the City's many competing demands for financial and other resources, there should be a focus on the strategies and actions that are likely to yield the greatest economic benefits. The five most important strategic priorities for City action are:

1. Ensure an appropriate supply of serviced industrial land on an on-going basis. (Strategy 10)

Surrey's supply of employment-supporting land, including industrial land, is one of the city's key competitive advantages within Metro Vancouver.

Maintaining an inventory of serviced, "ready to build on" industrial land is a critical element of being fully ready for business investment.

Key Initial Actions

- Adopt a Council policy that conversion of Surrey's industrial land to non-employment uses will not be supported.
- Review the City's timelines and process for zoning industrial land.
- Review industrial zones in Zoning Bylaw with focus on providing for increased densities and greater flexibility, preferably through reducing the number of zones and broadening the range of permitted uses within each zone.

2. Focus on developing City Centre as an important catalyst for broader economic development in Surrey. (Strategy 16)

Identified as the region's "2nd Metropolitan Core" in Metro Vancouver's draft Regional Growth Strategy, Surrey's City Centre is of strategic importance at both a local and regional level. A strong City Centre will act as a catalyst for the development of and investment in the entire city by projecting a strong positive image of Surrey.

The pro-active role the City has already taken in shaping and stimulating City Centre development should be continued. Initiatives such as the creation of the Surrey City Development Corporation, plans to relocate City Hall to City Centre, and a recently signed Memorandum of Understanding between the City and Simon Fraser University - Surrey to further expand the local campus and to work together on attracting business opportunities are all properly directed. These initiatives are an important part of creating a critical mass that will accelerate private sector interest in the City Centre and will naturally lead to accelerated business investment in the City Centre and the City.

Key Initial Actions

- Finalize and clearly communicate to the business investment and real estate industry the new plan for Surrey City Centre.
- Develop an identity/brand for City Centre that defines its place and function in Surrey and in the region.
- Locate higher order public buildings, amenities and services in the City Centre, including City Hall, as opportunities arise, as this will build investor confidence.
- Encourage and, where appropriate, partner through the Surrey City Development Corporation in private sector business developments that are consistent with the plan/vision for City Centre.

3. Continue to protect Surrey's agricultural land base and enhance the viability of agricultural enterprise. (Strategy 17)

Agriculture is fundamental to Surrey's identity and part of the city's unique duality as a thriving urban city *and* a major centre of agriculture. Approximately one-third of Surrey's land base is located within the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR). There is significant potential for expansion and greater utilization of the agricultural land in the city and for expanding the agricultural economy in Surrey.

The City has demonstrated its commitment to agriculture through significant investments in dyking and irrigation and the establishment of an Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC) in 1995. The ACC, in their 1999 Surrey Agricultural Plan identified as a key objective the need to develop a comprehensive Agricultural Development Strategy that would fully explore ways to support agricultural land efficiency, support demand for local agricultural products and marketing of those products, and support vital agricultural service industries. To date, this strategy has not been completed.

Key Initial Actions

- Complete the Surrey Agricultural Development Strategy with the assistance of a task force on enhancing agricultural productivity.
- Implement the recommendations of the Agricultural Development Strategy.
- Continue and enhance events such as the “Flavours of Surrey” which showcase local producers and restaurants.

4. Continue to operate the business retention and expansion (BRE) program. (Strategy 1)

The majority of the new jobs that will be generated in Surrey in the coming years will be created by companies/businesses that are already in the community. Understanding and assisting owners with the issues and challenges facing Surrey’s existing business community is fundamentally important to ensuring that existing businesses thrive and expand to their full potential.

The Economic Development Office already has a business retention and expansion program and will be enhancing this program with new staff resources. The program is based upon a regular series of in-depth interviews with local companies that assists in identifying competitive issues, provides notification to the City of plans for expansions and retractions, and allows for quick and proactive responses to business challenges as they arise. This program demonstrates the City’s interest in and support for local business investment and encourages businesses to stay and grow in Surrey.

Key Initial Actions

- Develop and maintain a regular program of business visitation with Surrey companies and track interview results through a BRE software program (the City currently uses e-Synchronist).
- Proactively respond to important business competitiveness issues that are identified through the BRE program and through other dialogue with businesses and organizations that represent Surrey businesses.

5. Continue to build the education and skill profile of Surrey’s resident workforce. (Strategy 11)

Maintaining a strong local pool of skilled labour is among the most important factors in ensuring Surrey’s long-term future as a thriving centre of high-value employment and knowledge-based industries. Expanding the availability of post-secondary places of learning, promoting the value of education, and supporting life-long learning are all initiatives the City should support in cooperation with the Surrey School District, Kwantlen Polytechnic University, and SFU Surrey. The City also has a key role in facilitating a close working relationship between the education sector and the business community to ensure education programs are harmonized with the needs of the market.

The City is already involved in multiple projects with its educational partners, including a Memorandum of Understanding with SFU Surrey to cooperatively work toward expanding its presence in City Centre, and development of a joint promotion of Surrey’s post-secondary facilities as a business advantage for Surrey.

Key Initial Actions

- Support the continued expansion of student seats in post-secondary institutions in Surrey and nearby communities.
- Facilitate partnerships among post-secondary institutions, Surrey School District, and the business community to ensure close alignment of labour market needs and educational programs.
- Work with business organizations and educational institutions to promote to students and the broader community the benefits of education, skill development, and life-long learning.

Additional Key Points and Conclusions

The Strategy contains additional recommendations related to marketing and investment attraction programs, the need to ensure efficient policies and regulations, the transportation network, and growth opportunities in areas such as home-based business, entrepreneurship, tourism, the film industry, and the health services sector.

The City of Surrey has already taken many positive steps to enhance the community's economic development prospects and this Strategy builds upon these initiatives. However, success in reaching Surrey's economic development objectives will not be achieved without partners. Many of the actions require cooperation and leadership from other community organizations, including business groups, major institutions, and other governmental organizations.

Implementation of the Strategy will be measured through a comprehensive performance monitoring report, to be produced annually, that will help ensure that progress continues. Economic development is a long-term endeavour and requires patience and diligence to realize the desired results. Surrey is well on its way to becoming a major urban city with plentiful and sustainable job and investment opportunities, while maintaining an exceptional quality of life and a thriving agricultural sector that provides economic benefits and food security into the future.

1. INTRODUCTION

Surrey has been the fastest-growing municipality in British Columbia over the past decade, reaching its current population of 452,500 people by absorbing nearly one-third of total population growth in Metro Vancouver. This growth creates economic opportunities through the increased demand for goods and services locally, as well as adding many skilled workers to the resident labour force. But it also creates economic challenges, such as ensuring that new residents can find local employment without having to commute elsewhere in the region.

The City of Surrey has entered into a Livability Accord with three other “High Growth Communities” of Coquitlam, Langley Township and Abbotsford. The Livability Accord serves as an umbrella document with economic sustainability, including job creation, as one of its primary elements. The Accord commits the partners to work collaboratively to ensure that the projected shared growth of 500,000 residents and the related local jobs by 2031 will be accommodated in a sustainable manner. The actions recommended in Surrey’s Economic Development Strategy are specifically designed to assist in reaching this goal.

It is also vital that economic development is sustainable over the long term and this Economic Development Strategy has been formulated with sustainability as its foundation. The City’s Sustainability Charter defines sustainability in the Surrey context to be:

the principle of meeting the needs of the present generation in terms of the environment, the economy and social systems while promoting a high quality of life, but without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

How is this Strategy sustainable?

By seeking to increase Surrey-based employment and support the production of higher-value goods and services in the community, it directly targets the economic dimension of sustainability. Furthermore, there are a myriad of ways in which economic growth is synchronous with, and supportive of, the environment and socio-cultural systems. For example, the goal of increasing Surrey-based employment will give more Surrey residents the opportunity to work from their home community, which reduces the need for commuting (environmental benefit) and gives residents more time to spend in the community with their families (social benefit).

At a fundamental level, economic growth expands society’s resources, some of which are used to support the public amenities and services that are fundamental to quality of life. These include locally provided services such as parks, arts and culture amenities, community centres, and the transportation network, as well as health care, social assistance, and education programs. Expanding society’s resources also helps governments and everyday citizens make more environmentally sound choices, with these choices creating new markets for “green” products and services.

The connections between the different dimensions of sustainability are a recurring theme in this report. These linkages also highlight the City of Surrey’s vital interest and role in economic development.

Purpose of the Economic Development Strategy

This Strategy is an action-oriented document that builds on many other City initiatives, plans and partnerships with an economic development component. Examples include the Official Community Plan, the Sustainability Charter, the Employment Lands Strategy and the Liveability Accord.

The Strategy defines activities that will foster economic growth and promote Surrey as a premier investment location, while supporting social, cultural and environmental sustainability. Rather than considering the balance of these factors, which suggests that gains in one dimension must come at the expense of another dimension, the emphasis needs to be on integration so that gains in one dimension are supportive of gains in another dimension.

Context Provided by Existing City Directions

The principles that have guided the preparation of this Strategy, all of which are based on existing City initiatives, include:

- Building a sustainable, livable, healthy community.
- Making efficient use of employment lands (i.e., higher intensity versus lower intensity uses, higher value/knowledge based jobs, more jobs per acre).
- Creating a strong urban character and community image.
- Building a green community.
- Promoting Surrey as a premier business location.
- Continuing to build a “business friendly” environment.
- Cultivating an economy of diverse and higher value jobs.
- Building and enriching partnerships (business and industry associations, higher education).
- Building a strong business base in City Centre.

The City’s Official Community Plan also contains a number of goals and long term objectives that relate directly to economic development, most notably:

- Balancing the number of local jobs with the resident workforce to provide local employment opportunities for residents and to reduce regional commuting. A ratio of 1 job per resident in the workforce is desirable. .
- Increasing business land use and development within the City to achieve a balanced assessment and revenue base to support public infrastructure, facilities and services. Reaching a tax base revenue ratio of 60% residential sources to 40% business sources is the objective for the City.

Consulting Team and Consultation Process

This Strategy was developed over a seven-month period from February to August 2008 by the consulting team of Vann Struth Consulting Group Inc. and Eric Vance & Associates. Research assistance was provided by Dragana Vojakovic.

Input to the Strategy as it developed was received in a number of ways, including:

- Two focus group sessions with representatives of a wide range of private and public sectors of the Surrey economy. Twenty-one people participated.
- Two meetings with a Stakeholder Committee comprised of 16 members representing local business groups and public institutions.
- Key informant interviews.
- A progress meeting with City Council to present an overview of the process, findings and recommended strategies.
- A number of meetings with a staff committee comprised of representatives from the Economic Development, Planning & Development, Finance and Engineering Departments.

A list of participants in the consultation process is contained in the Appendix.

2. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT VISION, MISSION STATEMENT AND OBJECTIVES

Economic Development Vision

The City of Surrey strives to support a high quality of life for its residents, workforce and visitors through sustainable development that carefully integrates economic, environmental and social/cultural interests. From an economic development perspective, this includes:

- Encouraging a diverse economy that provides a broad range of quality employment opportunities suited to the evolving education and skills of local residents.
- Positioning the city as an attractive and welcoming location for investment.
- Creating a network of vibrant town centres, with a strong City Centre.
- Protecting the city's large agricultural land base and supporting more intensive use of these lands for food production.

Mission Statement

Surrey will be known as the premier city for business investment and job creation in the Metro Vancouver Region.

Economic Development Objectives

Taken together, the following three objectives build upon the City's many existing initiatives. They aspire toward greater local employment opportunities and a more balanced tax base, with special attention given to Surrey's unique duality as a growing urban city and a major centre of agriculture.

Objective 1:

Expand and diversify employment opportunities, including high value jobs.

Objective 2:

Establish Surrey as a premier investment location.

Objective 3:

Strengthen Surrey's dual roles as a vibrant urban economy and a centre of agricultural production.

3. STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

This chapter of the report outlines the specific strategies and actions that support the City's three economic development objectives.

Under each objective is a series of strategies, each of which contains specific actions, identifies the organization with lead responsibility for implementation, and lists potential partner organizations. Many of Surrey's economic development opportunities can only be successfully pursued with partnerships.

The strategies and actions are based in part on feedback from industry representatives and community stakeholders who participated in focus groups and stakeholder meetings. Significant input was also provided by other City initiatives and consulting studies, including several occurring concurrently with the preparation of this Strategy.

Objective 1: Expand and diversify employment opportunities, including higher-value jobs.

The first objective of Surrey's Economic Development Strategy is very straightforward - create more jobs in the city, including a greater share of "higher-value" jobs that will diversify and strengthen the local economy.

Expanding employment is the key to achieving many of Surrey's aspirations. Job growth will:

- Enhance social benefits through creating a more complete community where residents, rather than spending time commuting, have more time for their families and for being active members of the community.
- Occur in tandem with increased investment in industrial and commercial facilities, which will help to strengthen Surrey's property tax base.
- Lead to more intensive use of Surrey's existing industrial and commercial lands, which is more environmentally sound and will support Surrey's evolving image as a major urban centre.
- Reduce the environmental costs of commuting by giving Surrey residents more opportunities to work close to home.

Surrey's current ratio of jobs to employed residents is 0.68. The following strategies aim to improve this ratio and to move toward the long-term OCP goal of an even balance of jobs and workers.

Strategy 1. Continue to operate the business retention and expansion program.

The creation of new jobs in a community can generally be attributed to one of three sources:

- Jobs created by existing companies/businesses (business expansion).
- Jobs created through the birth of new companies/businesses (entrepreneurship).

- Jobs created by existing companies from elsewhere either moving to the community or establishing a new satellite facility (investment attraction).

Of these three options, the greatest source of new jobs is existing companies in the community that successfully expand their operations. Of equal importance in growing local employment opportunities is ensuring that current jobs in the community are maintained (business retention).

A business retention and expansion (BRE) program is therefore a vital component of an overall economic development program. The City's Economic Development Office already has a business retention and expansion program and will be enhancing this program with the addition of new staff resources.

The BRE program is based upon a regular series of in-depth interviews with local companies, with the following benefits:

- Demonstrates the City's interest in and support for local business investment and encourages businesses to stay and grow in Surrey
- Enhanced and timely understanding of issues facing local businesses and industries, thus leading to proactive initiatives to address problems.
- Notification of future company plans for expansions or retractions in the community, allowing for quick and proactive intervention to preserve or enhance local employment.
- Unique local information for tracking overall economic performance and the effectiveness of specific events, programs and policies (e.g. it can be reported that companies interviewed through the BRE program plan to create X number of jobs in the next year).
- Increased profile for the Economic Development Office in the business community as a source of assistance and a positive agent of change.

The value of the BRE program is further amplified by publicizing the results to Council, to other City departments, and to the broader community as part of an annual performance monitoring report. This report can highlight key issues identified in the previous year, actions that were taken to support the retention and expansion of employment, key trends and other intelligence on the local economy that is uncovered through the interviews, as well as any metrics that can be reported related to job creation or company expansion, etc.

Actions

- Develop and maintain a regular program of business visitation with Surrey companies, including regular visits with the largest companies and a rotating focus on other companies, industries and sectors.
- Track interview results through a BRE software program (the City currently uses e-Synchronist) which can assist in identifying trends and common issues across industries.
- Proactively respond to important business competitiveness issues that are identified through the BRE program and through other dialogue with businesses and organizations that represent Surrey businesses.
- Incorporate BRE interview results into annual reporting on the City's economic development program and performance monitoring (see Chapter 4 for further discussion of performance monitoring).

- As per the MOU recently signed between SFU Surrey and the City of Surrey, through the City’s Economic Development Office, and through SFU Surrey’s University/Industry Liaison Office and Office of Continuing Studies, develop initiatives targeted at retaining and growing Surrey businesses and attracting new businesses to Surrey and South Fraser.

Lead Responsibility

- Economic Development Office

Partnerships

- SFU Surrey
- Business associations, including the Surrey Board of Trade, Cloverdale and White Rock/South Surrey Chambers of Commerce, Cloverdale and Downtown Surrey Business Improvement Associations, that can help promote the program and identify companies to be included.

Strategy 2. Direct targeted sales and marketing efforts at desirable businesses that fit Surrey’s competitive strengths.

Investment attraction can provide a significant boost to a community’s employment growth, supplementing the growth that is generated by existing businesses. The number of jobs moving in from outside a community ultimately depends on how the market views the quality of its investment opportunities. Local governments have the opportunity to influence the environment for investment and job creation, and Surrey continues to bring forward a variety of initiatives designed to do just that.

Fortunately for Surrey, it has a broad range of attractive investment opportunities that build upon a series of clear competitive strengths, including available land, the emerging City Centre, a growing new University and a diversifying polytechnic university, location and transportation connections, and a large resident labour force.

The key to successfully attracting investment (and jobs) from outside the community is to identify and target companies that require the attributes that Surrey has to offer.

The common approach is to pick industry sectors, such as high technology. Yet these sectors are typically so broad, and include so many different types of companies, that only a fraction are actually a good match for the community’s competitive strengths. The recommended approach for Surrey is for the Economic Development Office to carefully identify specific companies that are both desirable targets for Surrey (due to the quality of jobs they provide, their environmental friendliness, etc.) and have competitive requirements that match Surrey’s strengths.

If Surrey becomes identified with a particular market “niche”, it will develop organically over time in response to the community’s strengths, including land availability, local supply of labour, and location. The City can accelerate this process by continually monitoring emerging trends, with the help of local post-secondary and research institutions and business organizations, to identify new competitive niches that can be capitalized upon for investment attraction and community marketing purposes. Examples include innovations by local researchers, specific educational or training programs that support a rapidly growing industry (e.g. Interactive Arts and Technology program at SFU Surrey supporting new media industries), or a growing “green” technology sector supported by the City’s commitment to sustainable development practices and procurement policies. It is likely, however, that Surrey will continue to welcome jobs in a wide variety of industries, maintaining a diverse range of employment and business opportunities (similar to Metro Vancouver overall, which does not have a single dominant industry).

Desirable characteristics of companies that Surrey may want to attract include:

- Job creation, particularly “high-quality” jobs that are well-paying, secure, and a good match for Surrey’s resident labour force.
- High-value or knowledge-based companies that will expand the diversity of Surrey’s economy.
- Export-oriented companies that would form part of Surrey’s economic base and generate spinoff employment in supplying industries.
- Companies with growth potential.
- Companies that are committed to minimizing their environmental impact.

Actions

- Develop and maintain a “prospect list” of companies that appear to be favourable investment attraction targets, based on their desirability to Surrey and their fit with Surrey’s competitive strengths. Information on prospect companies can be gathered from any and all sources, including company databases, the media, personal and business contacts, referrals, etc. There should also be no geographic limit to the prospect companies, who may be located elsewhere in Metro Vancouver, in other parts of Canada and the United States, or around the globe.
- Liaise with post-secondary and research institutions and business organizations to continually monitor emerging trends that may create new competitive niches for Surrey.
- Make personal contact with the prospect companies to establish a relationship and ensure that if companies are considering relocation or expansion, they are aware of Surrey’s competitive attributes. Over time the prospects are managed as with any sales function – those that show no potential are dropped, and others are added.
- If there is a good fit between the types of target companies and a particular trade show or industry organization, ensure that Surrey is appropriately promoted to these audiences.
- Research the regional office market and seek office users that would be attracted to the attributes of Surrey City Centre, including competitive lease rates and a local, diverse labour force.

Lead Responsibility

- Economic Development Office

Partnerships

- Full range of business and community organizations, post-secondary and research institutions, private companies, and any other sources of business development leads.

Strategy 3. Pursue external investment beyond Metro Vancouver in partnership with other municipalities and senior levels of government.

Despite Surrey’s clear strengths as an investment attraction location, proactively pursuing investment from outside Metro Vancouver is a high-cost activity. It is costly to gain the attention of international investors and there is no guarantee of success.

It is therefore recommended that Surrey continue to engage in external investment attraction activities in partnership with other municipalities and senior levels of government. The City has already initiated such a partnership as a founding member of Metro Vancouver Commerce (MVC) formerly known as Tredo (Taskforce on Regional Economic Development Opportunities), which is a partnership of Metro Vancouver municipalities¹ who have agreed to jointly pursue economic development and investment attraction opportunities.

One of Metro Vancouver Commerce's initial activities was undertaken in partnership with Western Economic Diversification, the provincial Ministry of Technology, Trade and Economic Development and the 2010 Commerce Centre and was focused on business investment attraction through the BC/Canada Pavilion in Beijing. Looking past the Olympics, Surrey and its MVC partners should continue to leverage the investment promotion efforts of the provincial and federal governments in their international initiatives.

The Province has recently expanded their international investment attraction presence by establishing in-market trade representatives in key cities in Asia, Europe and the United States. The federal government similarly has trade promotion officials through the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) and at consulates throughout the world. Feedback from the consultation phase of this project suggested that there is opportunity to raise awareness with these agencies regarding Surrey's competitive strengths.

Actions

- Continue to collaborate on international investment attraction marketing and other initiatives with partner municipalities in Metro Vancouver through Metro Vancouver Commerce, with the support of the provincial and federal governments.
- Ensure that international trade representatives for both the provincial and federal governments are well informed of Surrey's investment opportunities and competitive strengths, and are provided with promotional materials that can be shared with their contacts.
- Continue to explore opportunities through Linx BC, which is a partnership of about 20 BC municipalities (primarily in the interior), to participate in investment attraction initiatives that are consistent with Surrey's opportunities.
- Pursue business development and trade promotion opportunities through partnerships with a broad range of business organizations, including South Asian groups and post-secondary institutions. There are many organizations in Surrey and throughout Metro Vancouver that share an interest in promoting international trade and investment linkages, therefore the City should explore the possibility of joint initiatives, potentially in partnership with other local municipalities.

Lead Responsibility

- Economic Development Office

Partnerships

- Metro Vancouver Commerce

¹ As of August 2008, six municipalities have joined Metro Vancouver Commerce. The four original partners were Surrey, Richmond, Vancouver and the District of North Vancouver. They have subsequently been joined by the City of North Vancouver and New Westminster. A number of other municipalities are currently considering joining MVC.

- Local business associations such as the Surrey Board of Trade, Cloverdale and White Rock/South Surrey Chambers of Commerce, Cloverdale and Downtown Surrey Business Improvement Associations, Indo-Canadian Business Association.
- Provincial Ministry of Technology, Trade and Economic Development, including its Asia Pacific Trade Council.
- National and international business associations such as the Indo Canada Chambers of Commerce, Canada India Business Council, Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters and the Indus Entrepreneurs.
- SFU Surrey, Kwantlen Polytechnic University, Port Metro Vancouver and other business and community organizations with well-established international contacts.

Strategy 4. Maintain information and promotional tools that strongly and clearly emphasize Surrey's competitive strengths within Metro Vancouver.

The City's Economic Development Office requires effective information and promotional tools to support its various business development initiatives. Examples include a comprehensive and up-to-date community profile, an informative and accessible economic development website, and custom promotional pieces highlighting specific investment opportunities and competitive strengths.

Many of these tools are already in place, but each should be reviewed and updated regularly to ensure that new data and information is incorporated as it becomes available and as Surrey's competitive position changes.

The City already provides an excellent range of data on its economic development web pages, including not only general statistical data but also real estate availability, leading employers, transportation connections, and quality of life factors (such as schools and hospitals). Key competitive attributes should be highlighted as much as possible.

As a further step, the City should develop a series of stand-alone promotional pieces that focus on a specific opportunity or competitive strength and provide detailed information that supports the quality of this opportunity/strength in Surrey. So rather than simply stating that a particular opportunity exists (e.g. availability of industrial land) it can be supported with facts.

Actions

- Regularly review current information and promotional tools and ensure they remain up to date.
- Develop stand-alone promotional pieces that highlight Surrey's best investment opportunities and competitive strengths through supportive statistical data and other information.
- Tailor promotional materials to support specific investment attraction initiatives, as required (e.g. translating materials to another language, incorporating Surrey information into Metro Vancouver promotional materials as part of a Metro Vancouver Commerce initiative).

Lead Responsibility

- Economic Development Office

Partnerships

- Metro Vancouver Commerce
- Real estate companies and other local sources of information that share an interest in promoting Surrey's business location strengths.
- Planning and Development Department

Strategy 5. Support the development of a vision and strategy to expand health services employment and investment.

There are currently planned and underway several expansions to Surrey's health services sector at or near Surrey Memorial Hospital (SMH)

In addition to SMH receiving an expanded emergency centre and a new Minor Treatment Centre, both of which will reduce demands currently placed on emergency services, a new Surrey Outpatient Facility will be built nearby to relieve overcrowding at Surrey Memorial Hospital.

Health services will continue to be a growth sector in Surrey as its population expands. Surrey was home to about 9,200 health care jobs in 2006 (including hospitals, ambulatory care, and nursing and residential care facilities), or 8% of total employment in the city. Most of these jobs are precisely the type of high-paying and knowledge-based jobs that the City is targeting, and they also provide strong social benefits with little environmental impact.

It is likely that health services will continue to receive significant investment in Surrey in the years to come and therefore present an opportunity to leverage this public investment to create spinoff employment in specialized health services, research, biotechnology, and other related fields.

This opportunity has been recognized by the community and a process has been initiated to develop a vision for the future development of the health services sector. The Industry Committee of the Surrey Board of Trade, working in partnership with Fraser Health Authority, SFU Surrey, and other community partners, expects to conduct a visioning process and produce a strategy in the fall of 2008 to address health-related opportunities.

In addition, the update of the Surrey City Centre Plan identified a Hospital/Health Care Precinct within and adjacent to the Plan, noting the possibilities for the synergies between Health Care Facilities and SFU Surrey. Surrey Memorial Hospital is also a teaching hospital for the medical program at the University of British Columbia.

Actions

- Support the visioning process for health services employment and investment that was initiated by the Surrey Board of Trade.
- Depending on the outcome of this process, incorporate the development of the health services sector into economic development marketing, investment attraction, and business retention programs.

Lead Responsibility

- Economic Development Office

Partnerships

- Surrey Board of Trade
- Fraser Health Authority
- SFU Surrey
- Kwantlen Polytechnic University
- Planning and Development Department

Strategy 6. Continue to support expansion of home-based businesses.

Over the five-year period from 2003 to 2007, the City of Surrey issued more than 11,000 new business licenses with 64% of them being issued to home-based businesses. With nearly 7,500 new home-based businesses in that time period, Surrey has already proven to be very successful in promoting and supporting this type of business. And for good reason – working at home has a range of environmental and social benefits, including reduced transportation congestion, more efficient use of land, and more time for family and community activities. Expanding the number of home-based workers will also help to improve Surrey’s job-per-resident ratio.

The City should therefore continue to support home-based businesses in order to ensure ongoing growth in this important area.

Actions

- Continue to ensure that City regulations (e.g. business licenses, signage) are supportive of home-based businesses and newer live/work types of development, and that the information on legal requirements is easily accessible.
- Promote the City’s support for home-based businesses and live/work development, in partnership with other organizations that support Surrey entrepreneurs.

Lead Responsibility

- Economic Development Office

Partnerships

- Planning and Development Department
- Self Employment and Entrepreneur Development Society
- Surrey Board of Trade, White Rock/South Surrey and Cloverdale Chambers of Commerce

Strategy 7. Continue to provide resource material to entrepreneurs interested in starting a business in Surrey.

Providing new entrepreneurs with one-to-one counseling and business assistance is an important and necessary service. This service, beyond provision of basic information and referral, is not typically

provided by municipal economic development functions. Many well-established organizations, which include Small Business BC, Business Development Bank of Canada, and local agencies such as the Self Employment and Entrepreneur Development Society (SEEDS) and the Board of Trade's Business Resource Centre, exist to provide this assistance.

Beyond providing basic print and web-based resource material, the City should continue to refer inquiries from entrepreneurs to organizations that specialize in providing extensive entrepreneurial support.

Actions

- Continue to provide referrals to other established organizations that specialize in providing extensive entrepreneurial support.
- Continue to provide basic resource material and referral information through the City's economic development website as well as in print form.

Lead Responsibility

- Economic Development Office

Partnerships

- Small Business BC
- Self Employment and Entrepreneur Development Society (SEEDS)
- Surrey Board of Trade, Chambers of Commerce
- SFU Surrey, Kwantlen Polytechnic University
- Business Development Bank of Canada

Strategy 8. Continue to support expansion of filming activity.

Surrey has been a regular filming location in recent years with a variety of television series, feature films, and commercials being shot in the city. In 2007, Surrey hosted 12 feature films, 16 television series or pilots, and 22 commercials, requiring a total of 75 permits from the City.

The diversity of natural and built locations gives Surrey potential to increase filming activity in the future as the regional film industry expands. Filming activity generates positive economic benefits through the rental of sites, purchases of local goods and services, improvements to open spaces and employment of local residents.

The film industry is highlighted for special attention in this Strategy because of its unique level of involvement with local government. Many location shoots require some temporary use of public space, such as a park or a street, and therefore require the regulatory involvement of the municipality. The benefits of filming are also widespread, meaning there is no single company or industry in Surrey that would naturally take a leadership role in attracting filming to the city, thereby leaving the City to carry out that role.

Actions

- Strengthen direct marketing efforts of Surrey as a filming site to location scouts, managers and production companies both by developing more promotional materials and conducting more in-person networking.
- Continue to maintain an up to date inventory of filming locations in databases relevant to the filming industry (BC Filming Commission, Vision Net).
- Encourage the owners of filming locations, including homeowners, to provide access to film companies for a reasonable price so that Surrey continues to be known as a cost-effective filming location.
- Explore the feasibility of Surrey as a location for much needed studio space.
- Ensure that Surrey's municipal processes remain filming friendly (e.g. applications processing, fee structure), as the competition from both local and international locations is strong.
- Continue to raise awareness in the local community about economic benefits to Surrey.
- Work with local business associations to support relationship-building with film companies (Cloverdale BIA and Chamber of Commerce are a good model) and to further strengthen a network of potential local suppliers to filming locations.

Lead Responsibility

- Filming and Special Events Office

Partnerships

- Economic Development Office
- Planning and Development Department
- Local business organizations, including Surrey Board of Trade, Cloverdale and White Rock/South Surrey Chambers of Commerce and Cloverdale and Downtown Surrey Business Improvement Areas
- Tourism Surrey
- BC Film Commission
- Owners of unique facilities in Surrey, including major institutions and private companies.

Strategy 9. Continue to support expansion of tourism.

Surrey has many existing tourism advantages and the Surrey Tourism and Convention Association (Tourism Surrey) is positioning the city to build on these assets, particularly in the areas of golf, sport tourism, and as a home base location from which to explore Surrey and other areas of the Lower Mainland.

Surrey is home to 10 golf courses, offering excellent quality and variety. In combination with Surrey's mild climate, these courses have the potential to attract visitors from other provinces with shorter golfing seasons, particularly Alberta and Ontario. The city is also fortunate to have a number of state-of-the-art

sporting facilities that continue to successfully host a wide variety of local, national and international events and sports competitions.

Surrey also has an abundance of parks, hiking trails and natural greenspace offering a variety of recreational and related opportunities in the area of ecotourism, such as bird watching, which is one of the most popular outdoor activities in North America. As well, agri-tourism is an area ripe for tourism growth with attractions such as corn mazes and educational farm tours/greenhouse tours.

Surrey could capitalize on its central location by promoting the city as a natural home base for tourists wanting to explore the region (particularly from City Centre with its proximity to Skytrain).

There is also potential to expand tourist visitation by targeting Metro Vancouver residents for day trips and by encouraging tourists to add secondary stops in Surrey as complements to other activities in the region.

Tourism Surrey recently enhanced its website, providing visitors with a new look and feel as well as deeper, richer content. Tourist information is also available on several other local and regional websites including Hello BC, Tourism Vancouver and Vancouver Coast and Mountains. Securing greater exposure for Surrey in additional provincial/regional promotional sources would also be beneficial.

Tourism is a focus area in this Strategy due to its unique relationship with the public sector. What is usually called the “tourism industry” is actually comprised of many different types of businesses, from accommodation properties to restaurants and airlines to arts festivals, so there is no single company with the incentive, or the resources, to market an entire community to tourists. As with the film industry, this role is filled by the public sector or a publicly supported association of industry representatives.

Actions

- Continue to promote Surrey as a destination for golfing and sports and as a central point for exploring the Lower Mainland.
- Consider the feasibility of developing a convention venue, further accommodation facilities, a performing arts centre, and additional sporting facilities to attract national and international events and competitions.
- Explore the ways in which local businesses can be further encouraged to market themselves and target potential visitors.
- Ensure that local websites (e.g. City of Surrey, Chambers of Commerce, etc) link to the Tourism Surrey website to ensure consistent information and messages about Surrey’s tourist attractions and events.
- Encourage tourists who are traveling to other parts of the region to extend their stay or stop in Surrey through visitor centres operated by Tourism Surrey.
- Promote Surrey’s attractions to both the short haul and long haul markets based on current Tourism British Columbia research with particular focus on residents of Alberta and other provinces, northern Washington and the Lower Mainland.
- Explore potential for other features that could be developed in Surrey such as campgrounds, agri-tourism related, eco-tourism related, etc.

Lead Responsibility

- Surrey Tourism and Convention Association (Tourism Surrey)

Partnerships

- Economic Development Office
- Parks, Recreation and Culture Department
- Local business associations, including the Surrey Board of Trade, White Rock/South Surrey and Cloverdale Chambers of Commerce, Downtown Surrey and Cloverdale Business Improvement Areas

Objective 2: Establish Surrey as a premier investment location

Surrey has many of the necessary attributes of a premier investment location that is attractive to a wide range of employment-supporting and high-value investment.

Continuing to strengthen these attributes and communicate them to the world will support Surrey's growing image as a premier place for business investment.

Strategy 10. Ensure an appropriate supply of serviced industrial land on a timely basis.

The City's Employment Lands Strategy projects that 19,300 (16%) of the 120,600 new jobs that could be created in Surrey by 2031 will require industrial land. Ensuring there is an adequate supply of industrial land available to accommodate these jobs is critical to the future well-being of the City.

Some of the businesses that seek industrial land, while not labour intensive nor perceived as particularly "leading edge", are critical components of the Surrey and Metro Vancouver economies – warehousing and water-borne industries being examples – and should be reasonably accommodated, including as part of supporting initiatives such as the Greater Vancouver Gateway. Many of the jobs that are created on industrial land are in the mid-range of the salary scale and there is clear market demand for Surrey locations. It should also be emphasized that as land values continue to increase over time, and as the educational profile of Surrey's labour force continues to improve, there will be a natural transition to denser and higher-value jobs. It is simply a matter of time.

Surrey should send clear signals to the rest of Metro Vancouver that, while it is prepared to accommodate a share of regional industrial development, other municipalities must also share the load. Communities such as Surrey should not be viewed as the presumed recipients of all the industrial businesses being dislocated elsewhere in the region by municipalities that have been allowing the large-scale conversion of their industrial lands to other uses.

Protection of the vast majority of Surrey's industrial land base is one of the most important actions the City can take to ensure a healthy future economy, including employment growth and a diverse property tax base. This means that industrial land should not be re-designated for uses such as retail commercial (e.g., big box retail) and residential. Surrey offers many opportunities for development to meet residents' shopping and housing needs without encroaching on industrial land. Allowing commercial development on industrial land also dilutes the effectiveness of Surrey's town centres and other commercial areas and contributes to sprawl.

However, even with the protection of its industrial land base, Surrey's supply is finite, with an estimated 1,416 acres of vacant industrially designated land. This is 19% of the total of 7,375 acres currently designated for industrial purposes in Surrey. Of the 7,375 acres, another approximately 1,480 acres of industrially designated land is not vacant, but currently occupied by other uses such as residential or agricultural uses. While this may appear to be a large amount of vacant land, not all of it will necessarily be developed due to location, site constraints and other factors.

The Employment Lands Strategy estimates that much the city's vacant industrial land will be developed within the next 20 years. More efficient use will need to be made of Surrey's industrial land to accommodate new businesses and jobs. This is already occurring to some degree as the cost of industrial land increases, but the City can keep out in front of this change by ensuring that its land use plans and regulations encourage and support efficient industrial land use. This includes allowing, for example:

- Higher floor area ratios (FARs) and building heights;
- Greater site coverage (e.g., the Business Park IB and IB-1 business zones in Campbell Heights only allow 45% site coverage); and
- Office uses not suited to locate in Surrey City Centre or the town centres.

Surrey's current industrial parking standards are in line with those of most other Metro Vancouver municipalities. However, they could potentially be reduced with better transit service provided to some of the key industrial areas. This is recognized to be a longer-term solution but is a critical part of creating more sustainable developments with reduced automobile dependence and less hard surface area dedicated to parking.

The industry consultation identified the lack of serviced industrial land as one of Surrey's most important barriers to economic development. It is therefore important to ensure an inventory of serviced, "ready to build on" industrial land is available to meet demand, now and in the future. This helps ensure that industrial businesses seeking to locate or expand in Surrey can be accommodated.

Actions

- Adopt a Council policy that conversion of Surrey's industrial land to non-employment uses will not be supported.
- Encourage continued use of Surrey's waterfront industrial lands for marine/port activities.
- Review the industrial zones in Surrey's Zoning Bylaw, with a focus on increasing densities and enhancing flexibility, preferably through reducing the number of zones and broadening the range of permitted uses within each zone.
- Review the City's timelines and process for zoning industrial land.
- Take a leadership role in the region as a municipal voice for how industrial land is preserved and utilized.
- Encourage improved transit service to Surrey's major industrial areas.
- Explore ways to secure servicing of industrial lands by the City and the private sector.

Lead Responsibility

- Planning and Development & Engineering Departments

Partnerships

- Economic Development Office
- Greater Vancouver Gateway Council and Port Metro Vancouver
- Metro Vancouver

Strategy 11. Continue to build the education and skill profile of Surrey's resident workforce.

Maintaining a strong local pool of skilled labour is an important factor in ensuring the ongoing transition of Surrey's economy toward higher-value employment and more knowledge-based industries. SFU Surrey and Kwantlen Polytechnic University are critical partners in this process

It is important that the City continue to work in partnership with and support the efforts of SFU Surrey and Kwantlen Polytechnic University to expand and ensure an adequate number of seats and relevant programs are available at these institutions to meet the needs of students and ultimately the evolving needs of the local economy.

Even before reaching post-secondary education, the future needs of a knowledge-based Surrey economy require a special focus on the mathematics, science, literacy, and communication skills of students in primary and secondary school. Promoting the benefits of acquiring these skills to both parents and students (e.g. showcasing some of the interesting and well-paying jobs that require these skills) would be beneficial. This requires partnerships between the local business community, post-secondary institutions, and the Surrey School District to coordinate these learning and information-sharing opportunities.

The increasingly knowledge-driven economy also requires life-long learning. Workers require opportunities to upgrade and acquire technical skills, to improve literacy and numeracy, or to learn English, ideally in the community where they live and work. No single post-secondary institution can meet all of these needs, but through partnerships that build upon the complementary strengths of each school, the community's learning capacity is enhanced.

The final ingredient in encouraging a more educated and skilled Surrey workforce is for each of these dimensions of the education system to be harmonized with the needs of the labour market. There are already multiple mechanisms in place for this to occur, such as co-op programs and industry advisory committees for specific programs, yet additional ongoing and meaningful communication between the education sector, the business community, and other community stakeholders supportive of education, skills acquisition, and economic development should be encouraged.

Actions

- Support the continued expansion of post-secondary institutions in Surrey and nearby communities (which the City is already doing through its recently signed Memorandum of Understanding with SFU Surrey, for example).
- Continue to facilitate partnerships among post-secondary institutions, Surrey School District, and the business community to ensure close alignment of labour market needs and educational programs.
- Encourage and support educational institutions to access funding from senior governments for training and re-training programs.
- Encourage greater involvement of business community in promoting entrepreneurship among students (e.g. Surrey Board of Trade mentoring programs, Junior Achievement, presentations to students, business plan contests, etc.).
- Work with business organizations and educational institutions to promote to students and the broader community the benefits of education, skill development, and life-long learning.

Lead Responsibility

- Surrey School District and post-secondary institutions (SFU Surrey, Kwantlen Polytechnic University)

Partnerships

- Economic Development Office
- Surrey Public Library
- Local business associations which are already working with students such as Surrey Board of Trade and the Society of Punjabi Engineers and Technologists of British Columbia.
- BC Industry Training Authority

Strategy 12. Continue to pursue transportation system improvements to facilitate the movement of goods and people.

The regional transportation system in Metro Vancouver is in the early stages of billions of dollars of upgrades, much of which directly affects Surrey's connections to the rest of the region and beyond. Some of the major improvements will include twinning of the Port Mann Bridge, construction of the South Fraser Perimeter Road, expansions and improvements to the Douglas/Peace Arch and Pacific Highway border crossings, extension of rapid transit to the Guildford, Newton, Fleetwood and Semiahmoo areas, and the new Golden Ears Bridge across the Fraser River to Pitt Meadows and Maple Ridge.

As for public transit, several of Surrey's major bus routes are part of TransLink's expanded "Frequent Transit Network" that guarantees service at least every 15 minutes every day of the week.

Despite these improvements, there is still opportunity for further positive change. Public transit options are limited in many outlying parts of the city, including industrial areas, which limits access to employment for individuals without a private automobile. Traffic congestion increases costs and lessens efficiencies for businesses attempting to access other parts of the region, or simply to move people and goods within Surrey. The goods industry focus group for this study identified Surrey's east-west transportation connections as particularly in need of improvement.

Improving the local and regional transportation systems, including expanded public transit, would produce a multitude of economic, environmental and social benefits. These include greater efficiency and lower business costs, lower greenhouse gas emissions, and greater transportation access for all members of society. Transportation advances should also be made to enhance the viability of some of Surrey's industrial areas that are not located near major transportation corridors.

Actions

- Support the updated Surrey Transportation Strategy with the goal of ensuring the efficient movement of both goods and people throughout the City.
- Support the updated Surrey Transportation Strategy with the goal of addressing missing road linkages, particularly east-west routes within Surrey.
- Continue to participate in the Roberts Bank Rail Corridor program that supports road/rail grade separation projects in the Roberts Bank Rail Corridor.

- Continue to advocate provincially and regionally for improvements to the transportation network that enhance the economic viability of Surrey’s employment areas and lessen dependence on the automobile for personal transportation.

Lead Responsibility

- Engineering Department (Transportation Division)

Partnerships

- Economic Development Office
- Planning and Development Department
- Greater Vancouver Gateway Council and Port Metro Vancouver
- Metro Vancouver
- TransLink
- Provincial Government
- Transport Canada

Strategy 13. Continue to utilize marketing and public relations opportunities to enhance Surrey’s image.

The City of Surrey is rich with enviable attributes that including excellent post-secondary educational institutions, cultural diversity, impressive parks, golf courses and beaches, a broad range of housing choices and available land for both business and residential growth. The City should therefore make conveying Surrey’s positive attributes a conscious goal of all marketing and public relations endeavours, from City Council down through all City departments, and with the support of business and community organizations.

Actions

- Promote Surrey’s positive attributes in all investment attraction and other promotional literature
- Provide City Council, senior staff, and all frontline staff with key messages to be communicated to the public and to everyday contacts that speak to Surrey’s many existing attributes.
- Continue to share the many positive initiatives and events happening in Surrey with the local, regional and provincial media.
- Enhance the City’s website to better highlight community achievements.
- Share information with partner organizations in the community so they can in turn incorporate these messages into their communications.

Lead Responsibility

- Economic Development Office

- Office of the Mayor
- Marketing and Communications Section of Parks, Recreation & Culture Department

Partnerships

- All other City departments
- Business and community organizations
- Major Surrey companies and institutions

Strategy 14. Ensure City has efficient policies and regulations.

It is good practice to review regulations and policies regularly to ensure they are still fulfilling their intended purpose and not causing undue costs or delays. Demonstrating its commitment to this principle, the City of Surrey recently adopted the BizPaL system, which is an online service that provides comprehensive, one-stop information on all relevant municipal, provincial, and federal permits and regulations for a variety of business types. It can be accessed through the City of Surrey website or through the provincial BizPaL site (www.bcbizpal.ca). Surrey has also taken the lead with Metro Vancouver Commerce in exploring with the Province the establishment of an inter-municipal business license (for mobile-type businesses only) in the Metro Vancouver region.

The City is also undertaking a comprehensive review of the land development process to ensure it functions as quickly and efficiently as possible, while still maintaining appropriate control over the type and pace of development. The review includes consultation with the development community, City staff and others affected by the land development process.

Future reviews of other types of City regulations should adopt a similar process that ensures the involvement of community members and businesses that are affected by the regulations.

Actions

- Complete the land development process review and implement the recommendations.
- Continually monitor the efficacy of City regulations and review regulations as necessary.
- Examine the need to make the City's existing regulations more transparent and easy to understand through such methods as "Guides to the City's Approval Processes" and use of the City's website.
- Ensure that the needs of the agricultural community are fully incorporated into all regulatory reviews.
- Continue to participate in the Metro Vancouver Commerce initiative to establish an inter-municipal business license (for mobile-type businesses only) in the Metro Vancouver region.

Lead Responsibility

- City Manager's Office

Partnerships

- Each City Department
- Metro Vancouver Commerce
- All organizations and individuals who regularly interact with City regulations and processes

Strategy 15. Develop and maintain regular points of contact for Mayor and Council and the business community.

The ability of the City to maximize its economic potential over time is enhanced through regular communication between City Council and the business community. Council becomes better informed about ongoing issues in the local economy and has the opportunity to discuss investment and job creation opportunities directly with business leaders.

It is therefore recommended that the City create a regular forum for interaction between Council and the business community. There are a variety of formats for such an event, including a quarterly Mayor's Luncheon, a regular CEO Summit, sessions with regional CEOs from inside and outside of Surrey who would provide a broad perspective on the city's economic competitiveness and opportunities, or a rotating presentation and discussion of particular industries or issues. Such events would also give the City a chance to recognize and celebrate business achievements and may also incorporate or build upon the Mayor's annual State of the City address.

A higher-profile event, such as the 2008 Surrey Regional Economic Summit, accomplishes many of these goals while also raising Surrey's profile in the region. Consideration should be given to holding this event on an annual basis.

Actions

- Organize an initial Mayor's Luncheon, CEO Summit or similar event with the cooperation of Council and local business organizations. Determine a schedule and format that maximizes the value of the event to all participants.
- Host a higher-profile, region-wide event like the 2008 Surrey Regional Economic Summit on an annual basis.
- Seek sponsorship and cost-sharing partnerships with local businesses and business organizations.

Lead Responsibility

- Economic Development Office

Partnerships

- Office of the Mayor
- Business organizations including Surrey Board of Trade, Cloverdale and White Rock/South Surrey Chambers of Commerce, Cloverdale and Downtown Surrey Business Improvement Areas

Objective 3: Strengthen Surrey's dual roles as a vibrant urban economy and a centre of agricultural production.

Surrey is rapidly urbanizing and on pace to surpass Vancouver as BC's largest city in the foreseeable future. Yet Surrey's land area is one-third agricultural, giving it a unique duality among the country's largest cities.

Recent global concerns over food prices, food safety and the sustainability of mass agriculture, have re-emphasized the importance of agricultural land. City Council has demonstrated strong support for both the urban and rural parts of Surrey's identity, each of which receives special emphasis in this Economic Development Strategy.

Strategy 16. Focus on developing City Centre as an important catalyst for broader economic development in Surrey.

Identified as the region's "2nd Metropolitan Core" in the draft Regional Growth Strategy, Surrey's City Centre is of strategic importance at both a local and regional level. A strong city centre will act as a catalyst for the development of and investment in the entire city by projecting a strong positive image of Surrey.

The increasingly pro-active role the City has taken in shaping and stimulating City Centre development should be continued. Initiatives such as the creation of the Surrey Development Corporation, plans to relocate City Hall to City Centre, and a recently signed Memorandum of Understanding between the City and SFU Surrey to further expand the local campus and to work together on attracting business opportunities, are all properly directed. These initiatives are important steps towards creating a critical mass that will stimulate private sector interest in the City Centre and will naturally lead to accelerated investment in the City Centre and the City overall.

Work undertaken for the City in 2007 by three different market analysis consultants identified some common themes on actions that can be undertaken by the City to stimulate development rather than only relying on market forces to drive the rate and type of change. Some of these same themes are picked up in the recommendations of the Employment Lands Strategy and are also expected to be part of the Surrey City Centre Plan update when completed.

A City Centre with a strong positive image will act as a catalyst for attracting greater attention to Surrey as a place to invest and do business, which will benefit the town centres and the city as a whole. From an economic development perspective, the following actions are seen as most important in helping City Centre reach its full potential by creating a critical mass. Further details on how to achieve some of these actions should emerge from completion of the Surrey City Centre Plan update, which is examining how to create the right market conditions to accelerate development.

Actions

- Finalize and clearly communicate to the business investment and real estate industry the new plan for Surrey City Centre
- Develop an identity/brand for City Centre that defines its place and function in both Surrey and in the region.

- Demand the highest quality urban design, with particular attention paid to the pedestrian environment.
- Continue to aggressively encourage residential development in City Centre to support a broad range of amenities and services, provided there is no loss of employment-supporting land.
- Support City Centre, Town Centres and commercial corridors as focal points for commercial development by preventing the expansion of commercial development into other areas (e.g. on industrial land).
- Locate higher order public buildings, amenities and services in City Centre, including City Hall, as opportunities arise. These actions will function as:
 - signals of confidence in City Centre’s future,
 - generators of activity,
 - important components of a quality downtown experience for residents, workers and visitors.
- Encourage, and where appropriate partner through the Surrey City Development Corporation in private sector business developments that are consistent with the plan/vision for City Centre (e.g. office buildings, hotel/convention venues, cultural facilities).
- Pursue additional major office developments.
- Provide City Centre promotional materials in other languages.

Lead Responsibility

- City Manager’s Office
- Planning and Development Department / Surrey City Development Corp.

Partnerships

- Economic Development Office
- Downtown Surrey Business Improvement Association
- Surrey Board of Trade
- SFU Surrey
- Other business and institutional partners

Strategy 17. Continue to protect Surrey’s agricultural land base and enhance the viability of agricultural enterprise.

As elaborated upon in the City’s Employment Lands Strategy, approximately one-third of Surrey’s land base is located within the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR). This land accounts for approximately 18% of Metro Vancouver’s ALR lands, which underscores its importance on a regional scale. There is significant potential

for expansion and greater utilization of the agricultural land in the City and for expanding the agricultural economy in Surrey.²

Surrey's agricultural land deserves continued protection as part of creating a more sustainable region that can meet a share of its food needs locally. This requires a long-term vision and commitment in view of increased pressure to convert agricultural land to other uses. In 2003 the City adopted the Policy for Considering Applications for Exclusion of Land From the Agricultural Land Reserve.

The City has also acknowledged the importance of its agricultural sector in a number of other ways. It has made significant investments in dyking and irrigation and over a decade ago established an Agricultural Advisory Committee. This committee was responsible for preparing the Surrey Agricultural Plan in 1999, which identified 16 key issues and objectives for the continued and enhanced viability of agriculture in Surrey. One of the tasks arising from the plan was to prepare an Agricultural Development Strategy focusing on four key issues and related objectives (to date this Strategy has not been completed):

1. Agricultural Land Efficiency
 - Increase new agricultural investment and development.
 - Increase efficiency in land use, servicing and investment costs.
 - Improve agricultural resource use and productivity along the rural-urban fringe.
2. Demand for Local Agricultural Products
 - Increase local demand for local agricultural products.
 - Attract business to the city and Lower Mainland that would use local agricultural products as raw materials in value-added processing.
 - Assist in developing new markets for locally produced agricultural products.
3. Marketing of Local Agricultural Products
 - Increase the share of Surrey agricultural products in the regional market.
4. Agricultural Service Industry Support
 - Ensure that essential agricultural support services located in Surrey are encouraged to stay.
 - Encourage essential agricultural support services to locate in Surrey.
 - Coordinate promotion of support services with the anticipated requirement of the Surrey agricultural strategy and preferred agricultural growth areas.
 - Promote a regional solution to agricultural servicing needs.

An example of an initiative that should be explored as part of preparing the strategy is the recently established EatBC! Campaign, which promotes the consumption of local produce by connecting local growers to retailers, restaurants, distributors and food processors and presents a good opportunity to promote food produced in Surrey. Another ongoing initiative, Get Local, brings together food producers and businesses to promote locally produced food in Metro Vancouver.

Surrey recently hosted its first "Flavours of Surrey" event where, among other activities, local chefs and businesses prepared and highlighted dishes featuring Surrey-grown ingredients. Surrey is also supportive of the Surrey Urban Farmers Market, a project of the Whalley Community Association, which features among other items, fresh local produce and farm products.

Agri-tourism is another opportunity that deserves close attention in helping promote Surrey's food producers directly to end consumers, as well as serving as another source of income for local farmers. Surrey currently has some agri-tourism oriented attractions that readily attract visitors. The potential for

² Land use statistics provided by the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands.

developing further agri-tourism activities that are not disruptive of agricultural production should be investigated with local farmers. Several ongoing initiatives in the Lower Mainland could serve as examples:

- A number of Lower Mainland communities participate in the Circle Farm Tours initiative. These are self-guided tours which provide directions to, and information regarding, participating farms and other rural businesses.
- The Farm Folk/City Folk society organizes Incredible Edible Tours during the summer that involves group visits to Lower Mainland farms.

Actions

- Complete the Surrey Agricultural Development Strategy with the assistance of a task force on enhancing agricultural productivity, and taking into account the new British Columbia Agriculture Plan.
- Implement the recommendations of the Surrey Agricultural Development Strategy.
- Designate a City staff person to serve as an “agriculture ombudsman” who would provide information and coordination between producers, agricultural associations, researchers, government, and other stakeholders.
- Include a staff member from the Economic Development Office as a member of the Agricultural Advisory Committee (the committee already includes representatives of the Engineering and Planning & Development Departments).
- Ensure that Surrey’s farmers are informed of programs such as the EatBC! campaign and Get Local initiative.
- Continue to host events such as “Flavours of Surrey” to promote locally grown products.
- Ensure that the Farm Fresh Guide produced by the City of Surrey is distributed to all potential partners who can help promote Surrey’s farmers.
- Investigate whether Surrey’s agricultural community is interested in agri-tourism and taking part in initiatives similar to Circle Farm Tours and Incredible Edible Tours.
- Investigate whether Surrey’s farmers could benefit from closer cooperation with the Fraser Valley Farm Direct Marketing Association.
- Encourage inclusion of Surrey’s farmers into publicly available databases of food producers/small scale food processors, such as BC Specialty Food Directory, BC Farms or BC Farm Fresh.
- Seek funding from the Investment Agriculture Foundation of British Columbia to assist in planning or with implementation of specific initiatives.

Lead Responsibility

- City of Surrey (partnership of Planning and Development Department, Economic Development Office, and other staff and departments as required)

Partnerships

- Surrey Agricultural Advisory Committee
- Surrey Famers Institute and/or individual agricultural producers
- Tourism Surrey
- EatBC! Campaign, Get Local, BC Specialty Food Directory, BC Farms, Fraser Valley Farm Direct Marketing Association
- British Columbia Restaurant and Food Services Association
- BC Food Processors Association

4. IMPLEMENTATION AND PERFORMANCE MONITORING

The City of Surrey, like all municipal governments, faces many competing demands for its financial and other resources. Therefore, the focus in implementing the Economic Development Strategy needs to be on those strategies and actions that have the potential to yield the greatest economic benefits for Surrey in the long run. It must be emphasized, however, that by virtue of being included in this Strategy, even the lower priority strategies are still important.

This implementation plan assumes that Economic Development Office staff, working in collaboration with other City departments and partners in the community, are responsible for developing detailed work plans on an annual basis. This plan is therefore not excessively prescriptive in allocating specific tasks to specific years. It identifies the highest priority strategies that should be the City's initial focus in rolling out the Strategy in 2008 and 2009, together with several key actions that will help to ensure an effective start. It is also recognized that economic conditions will change over time and the City will require flexibility to adjust its economic development priorities in response.

Highest Priority Strategies for Initial Implementation, 2008/2009

Making an effective start to the implementation of the Strategy is essential to its long-term success. A good start helps to build momentum among all of the partners, including City staff, Council, and partner organizations. These five strategies should be the City's highest priorities for initial implementation in the 2008/2009 period.

Highest Priority Strategies	Key Initial Actions
Strategy 1. Continue to operate the business retention and expansion program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop and maintain a regular program of business visitation with Surrey companies and track interview results through a BRE software program (the City currently uses e-Synchronist). ▪ Proactively respond to important business competitiveness issues that are identified through the BRE program and through other dialogue with businesses and organizations that represent Surrey businesses.
Strategy 10. Ensure an appropriate supply of serviced industrial land on a timely basis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Adopt a Council policy that conversion of Surrey's industrial land to non-employment uses will not be supported. ▪ Review the City's timelines and process for zoning industrial land. ▪ Review industrial zones in Zoning Bylaw with focus on providing for increased densities and greater flexibility, preferably through reducing the number of zones and broadening the range of permitted uses within each zone.
Strategy 11. Continue to build the education and skill profile of Surrey's resident workforce.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support the continued expansion of student seats in post-secondary institutions in Surrey and nearby communities. ▪ Facilitate partnerships among post-secondary institutions, Surrey School District, and the business community to ensure close alignment of labour market needs and educational programs. ▪ Work with business organizations and educational institutions to promote to students and the broader community the benefits of education, skill development, and life-long learning.

Highest Priority Strategies

Key Initial Actions

<p>Strategy 16. Focus on developing City Centre as an important catalyst for broader economic development in Surrey.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Finalize and clearly communicate to the business investment and real estate industry the new plan for Surrey City Centre ▪ Develop an identity/brand for City Centre that defines its place and function in Surrey and in the region. ▪ Locate higher order public buildings, amenities and services in City Centre, including City Hall, as opportunities arise, as this will build investor confidence. ▪ Encourage and, where appropriate, partner through the Surrey City Development Corporation in private sector business developments that are consistent with the plan/vision for City Centre.
<p>Strategy 17. Continue to protect Surrey's agricultural land base and enhance the viability of agricultural enterprise.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Complete the Surrey Agricultural Development Strategy with the assistance of a task force on enhancing agricultural productivity. ▪ Implement the recommendations of the Agricultural Development Strategy ▪ Continue and enhance events such as the "Flavours of Surrey" which showcase local producers and restaurants.

Medium Priority Strategies

These important strategies should be the City's next focus after the five highest priority strategies identified above. No specific timeline is assigned to these strategies as timing will depend on the availability of financial and staff resources after taking account of the first five strategies. Some will also begin immediately and some already have established timelines, such as the City's participation in investment attraction programs through the BC/Canada Pavilion in Beijing.

This category also includes several strategies that address vital economic development issues (education and transportation) but are not wholly under the City's influence.

Medium Priority Strategies

Key Initial Actions

<p>Strategy 2. Direct targeted sales and marketing efforts at desirable businesses that fit Surrey's competitive strengths.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continue to develop and maintain a "prospect list" of companies that appear to be favourable investment attraction targets and make personal contact with prospect companies to ensure they are aware of Surrey's competitive attributes.
<p>Strategy 3. Pursue external investment beyond Metro Vancouver in partnership with other municipalities and senior levels of government.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continue to collaborate on international investment attraction marketing with other Metro Vancouver municipalities through Metro Vancouver Commerce. ▪ Ensure that international trade representatives for both the provincial and federal governments are well informed of Surrey's investment opportunities and competitive strengths, and are provided with promotional materials that can be shared with their contacts.
<p>Strategy 4. Maintain information and promotional tools that strongly and clearly emphasize Surrey's competitive strengths within Metro Vancouver.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review current information and promotional tools and develop new promotional pieces as appropriate and required for specific opportunities and initiatives.

Medium Priority Strategies

Key Initial Actions

Strategy 12. Continue to pursue transportation system improvements to facilitate the movement of goods and people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the updated Surrey Transportation Strategy with the goals of ensuring the efficient movement of people and goods and addressing missing road linkages, particularly east/west routes within Surrey.
Strategy 13. Continue to utilize marketing and public relations opportunities to enhance Surrey's image.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote City's positive attributes in all investment attraction and other promotional literature. Provide City Council, senior staff, and all frontline staff with key messages to be communicated to the public and to everyday contacts that speak to Surrey's many existing attributes. Enhance the City's website to better highlight community achievements.

Lower Priority Strategies

The strategies in this category are important, but have a narrower impact. Some are focused only on specific sectors (film industry, health services) while others are recommended activities that are likely to have less long-term economic development impact than some of the higher-priority strategies.

Timing will also be variable for these strategies. Some, such as the development of a vision for the health services sector, are short-term, while others are already in place and should continue (e.g. providing resource material to entrepreneurs).

Lower Priority Strategies

Key Initial Actions

Strategy 5. Support the development of a vision and strategy to expand health services employment and investment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the visioning process for health services employment and investment that was initiated by the Surrey Board of Trade.
Strategy 6. Continue to support expansion of home-based businesses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to ensure that City regulations are supportive of home-based businesses and newer live/work types of development, and that the information on legal requirements is easily accessible.
Strategy 7. Continue to provide resource material to entrepreneurs interested in starting a business in Surrey.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to provide resource material and referrals to entrepreneurs.
Strategy 8. Continue to support expansion of filming activity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen direct marketing efforts of Surrey as a filming site to location scouts, managers and production companies. Ensure that Surrey's municipal processes remain filming friendly.
Strategy 9. Continue to support expansion of tourism.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to support Tourism Surrey in promotion to various geographic and customer markets.
Strategy 14. Ensure City has efficient policies and regulations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete the land development process review and implement the recommendations. Continually monitor the efficacy of City regulations and review regulations as necessary.
Strategy 15. Develop and maintain regular points of contact for Mayor and Council and the business community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organize an initial Mayor's Luncheon, CEO Summit or similar event with the cooperation of Council and local business organizations.

Performance Monitoring Regime

Performance monitoring is always a challenge in economic development. The economy is a complex system and there is usually no way to isolate the effect of a particular strategy on overall job growth. Alternatively, the City should adopt a comprehensive economic performance monitoring regime that involves tracking an assortment of external and internal data, supplemented with qualitative reporting on particular initiatives where appropriate.

The components of such a system include:

1. **External data** generated by reputable sources such as Statistics Canada, BC Stats, Metro Vancouver (GVRD), Ministry of Community Services, major realtors, etc. The advantage of external data is the regularity and consistency of the data over time (particularly for government sources) that supports trend analysis and also allows for direct comparisons between Surrey and other communities.
2. **Internal data** generated through business licensing, building permits, etc.
3. **BRE program results** generated through the e-Synchronist software system.
4. **Qualitative and quantitative results of economic development initiatives**, such as feedback received from a particular investment attraction initiative or improvements to the economic development website, feedback from community activities like the proposed Mayor’s Luncheon, etc.

The City’s Planning and Development Department and Economic Development Office already track much of this information, in which case it may simply require consistent analysis from an economic development perspective. ***To that end the Economic Development Office should produce an annual report on economic development in Surrey that incorporates performance monitoring results and an update on key economic issues in the community.*** This report should be widely distributed to the public and could be launched at a public event, such as a Mayor’s Luncheon or similar event developed by the City (see Strategy 15).

Table 1. Recommended Components of Performance Monitoring Report

Topic	Data Set	Source	Frequency
High-value employment	Average income in Surrey-based jobs	Statistics Canada Census (requires custom data purchase)	Every five years
	Employment in high-paying sectors in Surrey	Statistics Canada Census	Every five years
Home-based employment	Home-based jobs in Surrey	Statistics Canada Census	Every five years
	Business license counts for home-based companies.	City of Surrey	Monthly or Annual
Growth	Population estimates	BC Stats, Statistics Canada Census	Annual (BC Stats), Every five years (Census)
	Building permits of each type (residential, commercial, industrial, institutional)	City of Surrey, BC Stats (for comparable data)	Monthly (City), Annual (BC Stats)
	Business license counts, including home-based	City of Surrey	Monthly or Annual

Topic	Data Set	Source	Frequency
Balance of Jobs to Working Residents	Surrey-based jobs relative to working Surrey residents	Statistics Canada Census	Every five years
Tax Base Balance	Share of residential assessment and property tax revenue	City of Surrey, Ministry of Community Services (for comparable data)	Annual
Availability of Employment Land and Building Space	Available inventory and vacancy rates for industrial and office land and properties	Major realtors	Bi-annually (depending on the realtor)
	Absorption of industrial and commercial land and building space.	Major realtors, City of Surrey (for land absorption)	Annual
City Centre Development	Absorption of land and building space in the City Centre.	City of Surrey, major realtors and property owners in City Centre	Annual
	Building permit and housing starts in the City Centre.	City of Surrey	Annual
Tourism Visitation	Visitor Information Centre visits	Tourism Surrey	Monthly
	Custom entries	Canada Border Services Agency (data already collected by Tourism BC)	Annual
Post-secondary Education	Enrollment data	SFU Surrey, Kwantlen Polytechnic University	Annual or by semester
	Workforce educational attainment	Statistics Canada Census	Every five years
Employment and Investment Projections	Ad hoc information collected through e-Synchronist (note that this item is not intended to provide comprehensive projections, but rather an indication of major changes on the horizon for Surrey companies)	City of Surrey	Annual or as required
“Health” of Surrey Business Community	Indices produced through e-Synchronist for Growth, Value, Risk, Satisfaction (these indices are calculated by e-Synchronist based on interview results and provide an overall barometer of the state of the local economy on these four measures)	City of Surrey, possibly other BC municipalities (who could share data for comparative purposes)	Annual or as required

APPENDIX: CONSULTATION PARTICIPANTS

The following individuals provided input to this Economic Development Strategy through their participation in focus groups and committee meetings. The consulting team is grateful for the guidance they provided.

Focus Group for Goods-Related Industries

Dave Anderson, Southern Railway of British Columbia
Mike Bose, Surrey Agricultural Advisory Committee
Andrew Green, Cushman & Wakefield LePage
Glen Parsons, Coastal Pacific Xpress
Wayne Pennett, Giffels Design-Build
Vijay Tharmarajah, Surtek
Glen Todd, Pacific Custom Brokers
Ken Voight, S & R Sawmills
Kathleen Zimmerman, Ministry of Agriculture and Lands

Focus Groups for Services-Related Industries

Allen Aubert, Allen Aubert Architect
Warren Gill, Simon Fraser University
Gordon Harris, SFU Community Trust
Cathy James, Surrey Tourism & Convention Association
Shane Kerpan, Chase Cardmember Services
Judith McGillivray, Kwantlen University College
Judy Richards, Blackwood Partners Management Corporation
Rick Sair, Best Western King George Inn & Suites
Jamie Stewart, Hamilton Duncan Armstrong + Stewart
Bill Stilwell, Surrey Environmental Advisory Committee
Doug Strachan, School District 36
Alnoor Tejpar, Langley/Surrey Hampton Inn & Suites

Stakeholder Committee

The stakeholder committee met on two occasions to provide input into the Economic Development Strategy.

Joanne Curry, Simon Fraser University Surrey
Arthur Fallick, Kwantlen Polytechnic University
Catherine Ferguson, White Rock/South Surrey Chamber of Commerce
Randy Heed, Colliers International
Ray Hudson, Surrey Board of Trade
Aubry Kells, WestStone Properties
Paul Oraziotti, Cloverdale Business Improvement Association
Bill Reid, Cloverdale Chamber of Commerce
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Gordon Smith, Surrey City Development Corporation
Sharleen Suszezewicz, Port Metro Vancouver
Lesley Tannen, Downtown Surrey Business Improvement Association
Eric Trygg, The Foundation Group of Companies
Chuck We, Oxford Properties

Staff Committee

Suzanne Fillion, Manager, Financial Services
Donna Jones, Manager, Economic Development
Vincent Lalonde, Manager, Utilities & Transportation
Judy McLeod, Manager, Long Range Planning & Policy Development
Mary Ann Smith, Senior Economic Development Officer

Key Informant Interviews

The following individuals provided further input into the development of the Strategy.

Brandi Carr, Surrey Filming and Special Events Department
Joanne Curry, SFU Surrey
David Day, Self Employment and Entrepreneur Development Society (SEEDS)
Gordon Hardwick and Karen Lamare, BC Film Commission
Cathy James, Surrey Tourism
Bob Laurie, WRL Real Estate Advisors
Gordon Smith, Surrey City Development Corporation