



Corporate NO: C419

Report COUNCIL DATE: Mar. 22, 1999

COUNCIL-IN-COMMITTEE

TO: Mayor & Council **DATE: March 2, 1999**

FROM: General Manager of Parks, FILE: 8096-001
Recreation and Culture

SUBJECT: Surrey Museum and Archives Plan

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That Council receive and endorse the proposed concepts in the New Surrey Museum and Archives Strategic Plan, subject to future capital funding approvals.
2. That Council endorse the further exploration of the development of the proposed Surrey Learning and Discovery Centre, including the identification of the site and partners.
3. That Council appoint a liaison representative to serve on a committee to further develop the Surrey Learning and Discovery Centre concept.

BACKGROUND

The facility and operational needs of the Surrey Museum and Archives have been reviewed since 1990 in order to provide recommendations for physical improvements and future service levels. The comprehensive facility assessment concluded that the current building was inadequate to protect and preserve the City's artifacts and archival documents. The building lacks the environmental controls, fire suppression systems and structural soundness required in a modern museum and archives. Further, the current building and site are too small for the expansion which is needed to house the collections, to host traveling displays, and to expand exhibit, programming and reference room spaces.

From 1996 to 1997, an extensive public consultation process was undertaken to examine the Museum and Archives future needs. Four well-advertised public workshops were facilitated, with 107 participants attending. Questionnaires were circulated and replies were compiled. Community groups, organizations, businesses and individuals were interviewed. The results of the public feedback were distributed to participants for further refinement. Since 1997, a series of newsletter articles have been distributed to keep the public

informed as the recommended concepts have evolved.

DISCUSSION

The information received from all these sources has formed the basis of the concept proposal for the new Surrey Museum and Archives. The concept of a dynamic, inclusive, interactive, hands-on facility, with relevant permanent exhibition themes, changing exhibits of current topics, integrated program spaces, and a leading edge archives with computer and internet connections to other collections was developed. Featuring special collections and traveling exhibitions, the proposed new 55,000 square foot facility is projected to increase attendance and use significantly. The proposed facility will also enhance the provision of decentralized heritage services and programs in Town Centre facilities. Through a comprehensive and varied delivery system, public access to heritage resources throughout Surrey will be expanded.

The overwhelming public consensus was to locate the new facility somewhere where it could be successfully partnered with other cultural facilities, particularly the City Library, the Genealogy Collection, gallery facilities and arts programming spaces. Close working relationships with the education sector were highly supported, particularly opportunities to work with Kwantlen University College, the new Technical University, the Surrey School District and Immigration, Skills and Apprenticeship services. It is also anticipated that business partners will be attracted to the proposed facility where they will provide support services in the hospitality, retail and entertainment areas. This destination complex was recommended to be centrally located, highly accessible to public transit systems, supported by adequate parking, possess indoor and outdoor options for year-round programming and special events, and be a visible and marketable place where residents and tourists would like to be.

The emerging concept, the Surrey Learning and Discovery Centre, has inspired excitement in the public. The review of market and fundraising opportunities indicates that the Surrey Museum and Archives located in this type of a facility could attract 100,000 annual participants. The potential to develop strong business partnerships and to offset new operating costs has also been identified. An ideally positioned museum and archives could recover over 50% of its operating expenses. This recovery level is well above the provincial and national recovery rates for cultural institutions. In addition to operating cost projections, fundraising in support of the capital program has been estimated to be in the region of \$2,550,000 for a building program which has preliminary cost estimates in the \$12,000,000 to \$15,000,000 range. The Museum and Archives Advisory Board is working on the establishment of a Friends of the Museum and Archives Society to advocate and to raise funds for this new facility.

The Business Plan identifies that it is first necessary to confirm both project partners and a location. This next phase of investigation will place the City in an excellent position to finalize its decision on plans to replace the current Surrey Museum and Archives.

The need to replace the Surrey Museum and Archives building has been under consideration for over a decade. The Parks and Recreation Master Plan, 1996-2006 reaffirmed the urgency and identified a construction start date of 2003. The implementation of the proposed concepts will resolve long outstanding deficiencies and create an important cultural destination both for Surrey residents and for visitors from outside the community. It will provide a variety of exhibitions which will highlight the city's unique historical collections, while providing current and relevant connections to today's issues and topics. The facility's programs will be hands-on, interactive and participatory. New technologies will be employed to appeal to learners of all ages. The archival collections will be integrated into exhibits and programs and made accessible to researchers.

Preliminary discussions with potential cultural partners, such as the City Library and the Royal British Columbia Museum, have been positively received. There is significant excitement about the concept and the partnership possibilities. The opportunity to create a significant destination in Surrey has the potential to

stimulate tourism, attract support businesses, focus public transit routes, and provide new leisure recreation and learning opportunities suitable to the entire community.

At their regular meeting of Wednesday February 17, 1999, The Parks, Recreation and Culture Commission received a presentation from the Project Steering Committee and passed the following motions:

1. That Commission receive and endorse the concept proposals for the improvements to the Surrey Museum and the City of Surrey Archives pending capital project funding approval.
2. That Commission endorse the further exploration of the development of the Surrey Museum and the City of Surrey Archives as part of the proposed Surrey Learning and Discovery Centre to identify site and partners.
3. That Commission appoint a liaison representative to serve on a committee to develop the above concept and partnership strategies.

It was further noted that the future new facility should ensure that the exhibition space is large enough to host national or international traveling displays and that the future site selection should consider the need for phasing for future expansion requirements. There was general enthusiasm and approval for the exciting new interactive concepts for the proposed new facility.

CONCLUSION

The endorsement of the concept proposals will validate the public input and establish the vision for the improved facilities. The exploration of the Learning and Discovery Centre concept will identify a suitable location and confirm partnerships for this development. As Surrey enters the new millennium, this proposal for a new cultural destination will support the development of the City of Surrey as a community which values its past, celebrates its present, and is confident and proactive in its approach to the future.

This project has been lengthy and comprehensive. The Project Steering Committee has been dedicated and hard working. The community has indicated enthusiasm and a readiness to proceed to the next phase of decision-making and the ultimate realization of a new Surrey Museum and Archives.

Donald Hunter, General
Manager of Parks, Recreation
and Culture