



Corporate

NO: R062

Report

COUNCIL DATE: March 26, 2001

REGULAR COUNCIL			
TO:	Mayor & Council	DATE:	March 22, 2001
FROM:	General Manager, Planning & Development	FILE:	2152-13200
SUBJECT:	OPTIONS Transitional Housing Project		

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council:

1. Express general support for the Housing the Homeless Initiatives being funded by Human Resources Development Canada; and
2. Provide direction as to whether it is prepared to consider rezoning and Development Permit applications for a transitional housing project that includes short-stay beds, "cold/wet weather beds" and supportive housing, on a 3,600-square metre (0.9 acre) site on 132 Street at 112 Avenue in Whalley (Appendix II).

BACKGROUND

At the Monday, March 12, 2001 Regular Council Meeting, City Council adopted the following resolution:

That the Planning and Development Department and the Real Estate Division work with representatives of OPTIONS Society with a view to locating a suitable site for the development of a housing project for which funding has been allocated by the senior government under Housing the Homeless Initiatives and that a report be brought forward for Council's consideration as soon as possible so as not to jeopardize the funding available for implementation of such a project under the Human Resources Development grant.

In response to Council's resolution, the Planning & Development Department has met with the representatives of OPTIONS, and is bringing forward this report at this time at the request of OPTIONS (Appendix III) as HRDC funding, which has already been extended for the project, appears to be in jeopardy if there is no

indication by March 31, 2001 that Council is prepared to consider the project.

DISCUSSION

OPTIONS: Services to the Communities Society (OPTIONS) is a non-profit society and registered charity that has been delivering social services in Surrey since 1973. OPTIONS has approximately 250 employees, 200 volunteers and, is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors.

Since 1993, OPTIONS has operated two existing short stay housing facilities in the Whalley area for persons who would be otherwise living on the street or at risk of becoming homeless. These short stay housing facilities are funded through the Ministry of Social Development and Economic Security.

OPTIONS is proposing to close the two existing short stay housing facilities and consolidate their operations into a larger, new facility on 132 Street, just to the north of Surrey City Centre. The new facility is intended to provide 35 short stay beds as well as an additional 15 "cold/wet weather" beds. In addition, OPTIONS is proposing to construct 20 units of supported housing. The supported housing will take the form of bachelor apartment units that will provide short-term, low cost housing to assist individuals to reintegrate into the community. The project will also contain a kitchen and dining facilities for short term stay clients, as well as multi-purpose areas and space for counsellors and other staff members.

The subject site is presently zoned Single Family Residential (RF) Zone. In order to accommodate the proposed transitional housing project, the site will have to be rezoned to a Comprehensive Development (CD) Zone that would be a combination of the Special Care Housing 2 (RMS-2) Zone and Multiple Residential 30 (RM-30) Zone. A Development Permit will also be required in connection with the project. At this point, no application has been submitted and no Public Information Meetings have been conducted.

The subject site was chosen because it is located in an isolated corner of the community while still being close enough to public transit and other amenities required by those who use the facility (Appendix I).

The subject site comprises a triangular piece of property that is isolated from other parts of the area by physical barriers (Appendix II). The northern portion of the site slopes steeply down towards King George Highway that forms separation between the site and other areas of Whalley to the north. The SkyTrain guideway also runs along the northern edge of the site creating a visual barrier between the site and lands to the north.

The western edge of the site abuts 132 Street, which bends westward at the northern edge of the subject site, turning into 112 Avenue. The lands along the north side of 132 Street, as it turns to become 112 Avenue, drops sharply down to the SkyTrain guideway and to King George Highway, further isolating the site. With the realignment of 132 Street several years ago this section of 132 Street has become a local road only and is no longer part of the remainder of 132 Street which forms part of Surrey's arterial road network.

Directly across 132 Street from the subject site (on the west side of the street) are a number of older, smaller, single family homes. The three existing lots to the south of the subject site (on the east side of 132 Street) are occupied by a number of smaller, older buildings, some of which are in a poor state of repair.

Although the site is physically and visually isolated from other parts of Whalley, it is still close enough to bus stops along King George Highway and the Gateway SkyTrain station to be accessible by public transit. As well, the site is in reasonably close proximity to the commercial uses and services in Surrey City Centre.

OPTIONS has also advised that, for economic reasons, the different residential uses need to be consolidated at a common site.

Public Feedback to Date

Although there is no formal application for the site, an article in the local newspaper regarding the project resulted in phone calls to the Planning & Development Department from several area residents expressing strong concerns with the impact of such a project on the community. Based on the preliminary feedback, it appears that this site may not meet with support from the local community.

Funding Availability

OPTIONS has received approximately \$1 Million in funding from Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) under the Housing the Homeless Initiatives, principally for the short term stay component of the project. This funding is site-specific and is not transferable to any other site. The monies received from HRDC were to have been spent by the end of the fiscal year ending March 31, 2001. If Council provides clear direction before March 31, 2001 that the proposal has merit, HRDC has indicated that they are willing to give an extension to the March 31, 2001 deadline to allow OPTIONS to obtain fourth reading to the rezoning by-law and begin construction of the facility. If Council does not indicate that it is prepared to consider the project on the subject site prior to March 31, 2001, staff understand that OPTIONS will be required to return the monies to HRDC (Appendix III).

Funding for the construction of the supported housing component of the project is being provided by British Columbia Housing Management Commission (BCHMC), who is also funding similar projects in New Westminster and Vancouver. Should Council not indicate that it is prepared to consider the project by March 31, 2001, staff understand that this funding will no longer be available from BCHMC for the OPTIONS facility.

As a result of the funding circumstances described above, Council is being requested to express their support of the Housing the Homeless Initiatives being funded by HRDC and provide direction to staff regarding whether it is prepared to consider the rezoning and Development Permit for a transitional housing project on the subject site at 132 Street and 112 Avenue.

CONCLUSION

On March 12, 2001, City Council passed a resolution requesting the Planning & Development Department and the Real Estate Division to work with OPTIONS to find a suitable location for a transitional housing project and to do so in a timely fashion that would not jeopardize funding currently available from senior levels of government.

OPTIONS is considering a site in Whalley that meets the location criteria of a transitional housing project but which, at the same time, is physically and visually isolated from other parts of the Whalley area. The isolation of the subject site should help to minimize any impact of the facility on the community.

It is recognized that locating a suitable site for a facility such as the one proposed by OPTIONS is challenging, given the site attributes that are necessary to properly support the facility and the expectations of the surrounding community.

HRDC funding for the project is contingent on the facility being built on the subject site only. Staff understand that the funding cannot be transferred to another location. Further, HRDC needs confirmation by March 31, 2001, that Council is prepared to consider the project or funding will be withdrawn. Similarly, BCHMC also needs to be assured that Council is prepared to consider the project or funding for the BCHMC portion of the facility will also be in jeopardy.

OPTIONS provides a service to the community with respect to providing housing for those who have no other alternatives for shelter. OPTIONS is proposing to close down the two existing short stay facilities in Whalley and to consolidate operations into a larger facility in a more isolated part of the community. At the request of OPTIONS, the Planning & Development Department requests that Council provide direction as to whether it is prepared to consider a rezoning and Development Permit process, including public consultation, for a transitional housing project on the subject site at 132 Street and 112 Avenue.

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Planning & Development Department

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Appendix I - General Context Plan

Appendix II - Subject Site

Appendix III - Letter from OPTIONS

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