
Present:

Councillor Kooner, Chair
Councillor Stutt, Vice Chair
C. Izsak
J. Cuenca
J. Gosal
M. Mubanda
M. Rooney
N. Atwal

Absent:**Staff Present:**

T. Waterhouse, General Manager, Community Services
A. Murphy, Acting Manager, Housing and Social Development
S. Wu, Manager, Economic Development
C. Breton, Social Planner, Housing & Social Development
S. Lee, Administrative Assistant

Guests:

M. Oger, Morgane Oger Foundation
J. Marchbank, Simon Fraser University, Surrey Pride, and Youth 4 A Change
A. Zbar, Medical Health Officer, Fraser Health

A. ADOPTIONS**1. Adoption of the Agenda**

It was Moved by J. Gosal
Seconded by M. Rooney
That the agenda of the Livability and Social
Equity Committee meeting held on November 15, 2023, be adopted.
Carried

2. Adoption of the Minutes – October 18, 2023

It was Moved by C. Izsak
Seconded by J. Gosal
That the minutes of the Livability and Social
Equity Committee meeting held on October 18, 2023, be adopted.
Carried

B. DELEGATION**1. Morgane Oger, Morgane Oger Foundation**

The delegation provided a presentation on restraining hate signage in Surrey. The following information was highlighted:

- The presentation was a joint effort of Surrey Pride Society, Sher Vancouver, Youth 4 A Change, and Morgane Oger Foundation. It is supported by Surrey Teacher's Association, Diversecity, and Trans Alliance Society.

- The BC Human Rights Code Section 7 states that it is forbidden to advertise intent to discriminate or advise others to do the same on explicitly prohibited grounds. Discrimination includes ethnicity, place of origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, and disability. BC Human Rights Code is a provincial statute; municipalities are obligated to uphold provincial statutes. The City has the authority to limit signage content but requires the passing of a bylaw.
- Reported hate crimes have increased by 72% from 2019 to 2021. A 2020 study showed that hate propaganda caused a surge of violent acts against a specific group of people. Incendiary remarks from high profile individuals also fuel hate crimes. The study advocated for government to counteract hate speech by promoting the idea of speaking to the issue but not to the identity of the group.
- The delegation suggested that the City of Surrey Sign Bylaw be amended to prohibit hate speech. In Surrey, law enforcement is currently unable to take down discriminatory signage due to lack of right to act. The BC Human Rights Code permits a criminal charge be laid against hate signage; however, it is a process that can take two years and requires a large amount of evidence. An updated sign bylaw will enable bylaws officers to remove hate signs immediately. To address concerns regarding discriminatory signage, the delegation suggested that the Committee recommend Council to update the City of Surrey Sign Bylaw by requiring compliance with the BC Human Rights Code for all signs displayed in Surrey and to encourage the mayors of other municipalities in Metro Vancouver to do the same.

In response to questions from the Committee, the delegation provided the following information:

- Human Rights Commission publishes guidelines of prohibited discrimination that defines what is hate.

The Committee noted the following comments:

- There are legal issues that the City needs to further research before making recommendations to Council.

It was

Moved by M. Rooney
Seconded by M. Mubanda
That the Livability and Social Equity

Committee receive this presentation for information and that staff provide a report on current bylaws and options for the City.

Carried

J. Cuenca joined the meeting at 6:24 p.m.

C. STAFF PRESENTATIONS

1. Manager, Economic Development, City of Surrey

Staff provided a presentation on social equity and the City's economic strategy. The following information was highlighted:

- Economic Development created the first economic strategy in 2017 with seven main themes, aiming to be the second downtown core in Metro Vancouver and a metropolitan center. In 2023, the aim had shifted for Surrey to become the most modern and livable city, a nexus of commerce, and a nationally recognized center of innovation. The finalized economic growth strategy is expected to be sent to Council for approval in the first quarter of 2024.
- After community engagement with international corporations, more than 90 organizations, and over 1,300 individuals, a new updated plan is being created with the following four strategic objectives to better align with the new goals - investment readiness and attraction, employment lands optimization, future economy and innovation, talent and workforce development, and local business vibrancy, and distinct and competitive communities.
- Firstly, investment readiness and attraction is divided into four major components - livability, foreign investment, infrastructure, and marketing. Companies have expressed the desire for a livable city where their employees work and live in the same city. Foreign investment is often the major funding source in facilities such as hotels, convention centres, and arts and culture buildings. Having these facilities in the city not only increases investment readiness, but factors such as livability, power, transportation, and healthcare infrastructures maintain and attract businesses. Secondly, employment lands optimization included concepts of efficient, innovative land use, and streamlined and transparent permitting processes. Surrey currently does not have enough office and industrial space to accommodate more manufacturers which are essential economic drivers.
- Thirdly, future economy and innovation, talent, and workforce development is a theme focused on retaining a local workforce since Surrey is the regional workforce hub. The City should play a significant role in building partnerships by leveraging existing relationships with various organizations, businesses, and institutions. It was also advised to purposefully innovate, using innovation to address local challenges, actively promote Surrey's innovation both nationally and internationally, and recognizing the need to enhance the city's profile beyond the lower mainland. And fourthly, the concept of local business vibrancy, and distinct and competitive communities means that each Surrey town center is developed according to their unique characteristics. The developments will emphasize attracting different types of talent. Surrey has a diverse small business base, industry associations, and social groups that can benefit from increased connection between groups.

- Overarching themes from the open community engagement are immigration and refugee support, housing and homelessness, access to work opportunities and amenities, and access to healthcare. Skill training for newcomers to the city is vital in attracting talent and helping the growing population to become competitive. Housing affordability is important to retain workers in the city as there is a trend to work near where they live. As Surrey is quite large, some businesses in more remote areas struggle to employ staff. Surrey is home to the second largest group of pharmacists, and there is effort to attract more to create a group of healthcare practitioners with understanding of diverse cultural backgrounds. Surrey has many partners focused on increasing social equity and resident inclusion. The City is looking for opportunities to strengthen partnerships to grow a culture of equity, diversity, and inclusion.

In response to questions from the Committee, staff provided the following information:

- If the required investment amount is over 50 million dollars, it will very likely be a direct foreign investment. The team is working on having foreign companies strategically invest in Surrey. Local investments are often involved with foreign businesses which increase the portion of foreign investment in the city.
- Currently there is an outflow of talent to other municipalities that is reducing the ratio of job to resident worker. The trend is people wanting to work where they live; however, increasing population is outpacing local job creation speed. Since investments of over 50 million dollars create 100 to 200 jobs per investment, it is important to seek these investments as volume of jobs and the investments will begin to balance the ratio.
- Foreign direct investment is important for improving infrastructure and arts or culture space. The focus should not only be on high tech industry but also on manufacturing and trades.

The Committee noted the following comments:

- The City can work with local business associations to become a job hub and enable applicants to connect with businesses that need talent.
- Campbell Height is lacking in hydro and transportation infrastructure. Translink is planning to have a bus rapid transport route that will go to South Surrey in two to three years.

2. **Social Planner, Housing and Social Development Division,
Community Services Department, City of Surrey**

Staff provided a presentation on the 2023 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count. The following information was highlighted:

- The Homeless Count is a population count that occurs every three years in Metro Vancouver since 2002. It is a 24-hour snapshot of the minimum homeless population. The count is useful in identifying trends and to obtain a demographic profile. It is considered an under-count of the population as it only accounts for people encountered within the 24-hour period and does not account for women, teens, or others that remain in precarious locations or couch surfing. The 2023 count was conducted by the Homelessness Services Association on March 7 and 8 this year. It was found that 4,821 individuals were homeless in Metro Vancouver, an increase of 32% compared to 2020. All regions in Metro Vancouver saw an increase in the homeless population compared to the 2020 count, with the highest increases being in communities outside of Vancouver.
- Surrey had 1,060 homeless people in the 2023 count, a 65% increase from 2020. Within the population, 62% were sheltered, 10% were in extreme weather response shelters, and 28% were unsheltered. Comparing to the greater Vancouver region, Surrey experienced the highest increase in the number of homeless. Demographics of Surrey's homeless population is 8% are under the age of 25, 69% between 25 to 54 years old, and 23% are over 55 years old. In Surrey, the data for first time experiencing homelessness is 42% under the age of 25 when they first experienced homelessness, 49% between 25 to 54 years old, and 10% above 55 years old. This emphasizes the importance of preventing homelessness with the younger demographic. 31% of the surveyed homeless population had experienced government care (in foster care as a child or youth).
- As for gender identification, 64% were male, 33% were female, and 3% were identified as another gender identity. However, this does not paint an accurate picture as there are likely females who are not counted or among the "hidden homeless". 30% of respondents were identified as Indigenous. Surrey's total census Indigenous population is only 2%, which is another significant group of people experiencing homelessness. In respect to years spent in Surrey, 90% of respondents have been in Surrey for more than one year, 78% of those 90% for more than five years, and 37% of those 90% have always lived in Surrey.
- In terms of health concerns, 70% of the surveyed population reported substance use issues and 61% reported more than one health concerns, including mental health issues. As for reasons for loss of housing, 44% stated not enough income, 35% said substance use issues, and 21% reported mental health issues. In response to the homelessness issue, 365 new shelters and supportive housing units have opened in Surrey since 2020. The units include 57 apartment units for women and children, 15 of which are for young Indigenous females. Of the 153 new shelter beds, 60 beds are for women and children.

- The City is developing a new Homelessness Prevention and Response Plan which will be completed in quarter one of 2024. Two new modular housing projects are currently under development. A 30-unit supportive housing project for youth will be completed in spring 2024 and a 60-unit co-ed supportive housing project will be completed in late 2024 or early 2025.

In response to questions from the Committee, staff provided the following information:

- The Homeless Count is only done once every three years because engaging with the homeless community without them seeing changes in living situation is disheartening. The period is chosen for balancing data gathering and respecting the experience of street entrenched residents. There are also resource considerations. The count is funded by federal government with many volunteers and resources involved.
- In the survey, there is a question on transgender identity which resulted in the 3% gender identity response. In Surrey, there is currently no trans-specific housing.
- The modular housing project that will open in quarter one of 2024 will be for youth up to about 25 years. Many of its residents are expected to be young people that are transitioning out of government care. The project will be staffed 24/7 and provide the young residents with the supports they need to thrive.
- Council is advocating across different levels of government for funding to address homelessness. Current funding programs for housing are on a project-by-project basis.

The Committee noted the following comments:

- There is rising homelessness everywhere and not just Surrey. More housing for transgender people is needed in Surrey as there is no specific housing for them.
- Surrey does not have any permanent encampments common in some other municipalities which makes it more difficult to track the unhoused population.
- More housing units in which the rent is geared to income reduce the homeless count as 44% respondents cited insufficient income as the reason why they are homeless.
- When the rehoming project began for the homeless population that was encamped at 135A Street from 2016 to 2018, there was 100% resistance due to lack of trust in the project. As people saw temporary modular housing being built and trust was built via consistent outreach, the general attitude changed. In the week that 250 housing units became available, individuals were matched to each unit by BC Housing. The relationship that the outreach team built with homeless encampment population allowed for 100% acceptance of being rehomed.

J. Cuenca left the meeting at 7:26pm.

D. OTHER BUSINESS

1. Verbal Update on a Proposed Presentation by Healthy Communities, Parks, Recreation, and Culture Staff on the City's New Accessibility Action Plan

At the October 18, 2023 Livability and Social Equity Committee meeting, the Committee directed staff to report back at the next meeting on a presentation plan regarding the accessibility policy in Surrey.

Staff reported that the Parks, Recreation, and Culture Department is developing an accessibility action plan to identify, remove, and prevent barriers around Surrey environment and services. The plan is expected to be completed in the first quarter of 2024.

It was

Moved by C. Izsak

Seconded by M. Rooney

That staff from Parks, Recreation, and Culture

Department be invited to provide a presentation on the City's new Accessibility Action Plan at a future Livability and Social Equity Committee meeting.

Carried

2. Verbal Update on the Surrey Healthier Communities Partnership

Dr. Ariella Zbar, Medical Health Officer, Fraser Health provided the following updates on the Surrey Healthier Communities Partnership (HCP):

- HCP is arranging a strategic planning process for the committee. The purposes of the process are to refresh membership and terms of reference, and to review or refresh the purpose and mandate of the HCP.
- HCP established a child and youth mental health working group focussed on prevention and promotion. HCP recognizes the importance to have high quality mental health care in conjunction with prevention measures. Prevention measures can be placed in pre-natal support, parenting support, high quality childcare, and transitioning out of government care infrastructure. HCP is planning on expanding existing mental health initiatives and scaling them up to increase outreach.

In response to questions from the Committee, Dr. Zbar provided the following information:

- HCP would be interested in connecting with groups doing work related to autism.

- HCP is currently working with Surrey Schools to find a term that does not associate mental health and mental illness negatively for kids. Surrey School District created separate videos for secondary and elementary students that use appropriate terms for each developmental stage to reduce stigma associated with mental health.
- In primary care, there is a childhood screening that looks at literacy and mental health, but standardization is difficult for children under 12 as they are still premature in development. Vulnerable groups are prioritized since resources are very limited in children screening and enhanced education.

E. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Livability and Social Equity Committee is scheduled for Wednesday, January 17, 2023.

F. ADJOURNMENT

It was

Moved by Councillor Stutt
Seconded by J. Gosal
That the Livability and Social Equity

Committee meeting be adjourned.

Carried

The Livability and Social Equity Committee adjourned at 7:52 p.m.

Jennifer Ficocelli, City Clerk

Councillor Kooner, Chairperson