

**SURREY CITY CENTRE:  
POTENTIAL FOR  
A SUSTAINABLE REGIONAL DOWNTOWN?**

by

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Bachelor of Applied Arts, (Urban Planning)  
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REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
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Degree: Master of Urban Studies  
Title of Research Project: Surrey City Centre, Potential for a Sustainable  
Regional Downtown?

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## **ABSTRACT**

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This research project compares the growth of Surrey City Centre with Burnaby's Metrotown and Richmond Town Centre to determine why Surrey's centre has not developed substantially as a sustainable regional downtown. The hypothesis is that Surrey City Centre has not developed as planned due to external competitive market forces. The study compared data from two other regional town centres to determine if their development has affected Surrey City Centre's anticipated growth. Interviews were conducted with municipal officials and developers to determine the effect of government policies and practices on town centre development. A review of town centre land development and population growth explored barriers against and opportunities for sustainable development. This research reveals reasons why Surrey's downtown has not evolved more fully and also provides a framework of policy prescriptions for guiding its future development in a sustainable manner.

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## **GLOSSARY**

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- Official Community Plan (OCP)
- Surrey City Centre (SCC) – Surrey’s regional downtown that contains a core area where land uses are focused at the highest development density. This area is also referred to as Surrey’s downtown or the downtown in this paper.
- Regional Town Centre (RTC)/Regional Downtown
- Livable Region Strategic Plan (LRSP)
- Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED)
- Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD)
- Smart Growth – “Smart Growth means using comprehensive planning to guide, design, develop, revitalize, and build communities for all”.
- Sustainable Development/“Sustainability is the capability to equitably meet the vital human needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs by preserving and protecting the area’s ecosystems and natural resources” (APA definition in planning policy guides 2000).

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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In accordance with Simon Fraser University's Ethics Commission guidelines, interview participants noted in this paper have not been named in order to provide anonymity.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

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Surrey City Centre is the area identified by the City of Surrey, British Columbia, as its regional town centre. It is planned to become the second downtown for the Greater Vancouver region. Surrey's downtown occupies 5.81 square kilometres (1,435 Acres) in the community of Whalley. It is situated on both sides of King George Highway extending from 96 Avenue in the south to just north of 108 Avenue. In 2001, City Centre was home to approximately: "17,945 people living in 8,095 dwellings"<sup>1</sup>. It contains a large mall and office tower complex (Central City), recreation facilities, two community parks, a Federal taxation centre and is served by an elevated mass transit system with three SkyTrain stations and a bus exchange.

While this regional town centre has developed, its growth has not met the expectations of city and regional officials. A sequence of plans has provided different visions for this regional town centre and adjustments have been made over time to refine its growth trajectory. This research project examines the impediments to Surrey City Centre's development by comparing it with Burnaby's Metrotown and Richmond City Centre, two similar regional town centres. Table 1.1 describes the dwelling unit and population growth of the three town centres. Through these comparisons and other investigation, this research study provides recommendations on approaches that can be used to guide the successful future growth of this regional downtown in a sustainable manner.

Surrey is one of the fastest growing urban municipalities in Canada with a current population of approximately 400,000. Surrey City Centre is well located to advance its role as a destination and focal point for both Surrey and the Fraser Valley. However, a number of influences including competition from suburban office parks and large format retail businesses have impeded its development. Surrey is a quickly maturing suburban city where land prices are somewhat lower than many of the Vancouver region's other municipalities. One consequence of lower local land prices is that residents prefer to

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www/gvrd/bc/ca/livablecentres/surrey/rtc\\_surr\\_profile.pdf](http://www/gvrd/bc/ca/livablecentres/surrey/rtc_surr_profile.pdf)

reside in lower density single family dwellings instead of townhouses and apartments, typically found in regional town centres. This research project tracks the history of planning decisions, primarily at the local government and regional authority levels, that have shaped Surrey City Centre and examines factors influencing its future growth.

**Table 1.1: Regional Town Centres Dwelling Unit and Population Growth 1991 - 2001**

	Burnaby Metrotown				Richmond City Centre				Surrey City Centre			
	1991	%	2001	%	1991	%	2001	%	1991	%	2001	%
<b>Housing</b>												
Total Private	10,155		12,385		9,655		13,870		6,050		8,095	
Occupied Dwellings												
Single Family Detached	175	2%	170	1%	1,080	11%	965	7%	1,585	26%	1,900	23%
Rowhouse / Semi Detached	180	2%	235	2%	1,820	19%	2,245	16%	1,055	17%	1,270	16%
Apartment (< 5 Storeys)	5,380	53%	5945	48%	6,065	63%	7,990	58%	2,545	42%	3,175	39%
Apartment (> 5 Storeys)	4,415	43%	6040	49%	670	7%	2,625	19%	785	13%	1,710	21%
Other		0%	0	0%	15	0%	45	0%	80	1%	55	1%
<b>Tenure</b>												
Owner Occupied Households	2,595	26%	4,630	37%	4,380	45%	8,200	59%	1,905	31%	3,265	40%
Renter Households	7,560	74%	7,755	63%	5,270	55%	5,665	41%	4,145	69%	4,830	60%
<b>Residents</b>												
Total Number Of Residents	16,530		24,300		20,260		31,680		13,975		17,945	
Pop. Growth 1991 - 2001			7,770	47%			11,420	56%			3,970	28%
0 To 9	470	3%	2,035	8%	1,710	9%	3,170	10%	2,020	14%	2,240	12%
10 To 19	745	5%	1,850	8%	1,620	8%	2,905	9%	1,455	10%	1,805	10%
20 To 34	6,155	37%	6,840	28%	6,740	34%	7,120	22%	4,270	31%	4,460	25%
35 To 49	2,940	18%	6,150	25%	4,200	21%	8,625	27%	2,415	17%	4,440	25%
50 To 64	2,440	15%	3,250	13%	2,545	13%	4,925	16%	1,880	13%	2,770	15%
65 +	3,780	23%	4,170	17%	3,250	16%	4,945	16%	1,930	14%	2,235	12%
Population Density (Per Acre)	21.8		32.1		9.4		14.9		9.7		13	

Source: GVRD Key Facts December 2004.

## **2.0 OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT**

The objectives of this research project are to learn from an historical context, explore regional and international examples of town centre development, and investigate how sustainable development strategies can shape Surrey City Centre in an environmentally sound manner. Through this research, recommendations are made for creating a sustainable regional downtown.

This research project is a comparative case study that examines and compares significant planning policies and other strategies that have shaped three regional town centres in the Greater Vancouver region; Surrey City Centre, Burnaby's Metrotown and Richmond City Centre. This study examines the geographical context of each regional centre, their major land uses (current state of development), statistical information explaining the development growth and population changes of each centre, and policies from other jurisdictions including Provincial and Federal agencies, that have either played a role in guiding the development of these centres or ones that provide further information that could assist in shaping Surrey City Centre.

A guiding theme for this research is sustainable development. The terms sustainable development, sustainability and smart growth have been defined in many ways and are often used interchangeably. 'Sustainable development' has its roots in the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development', whose final report was entitled, *Our Common Future* (Oxford University Press, 1987). From this source, it means: "The ability of humanity to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."<sup>2</sup> From updated Canadian sources, Tony Dorsey states: "To be a practitioner of "sustainability planning" is to always consider the interdependency of ecological, economic, social and

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<sup>2</sup> Susan Murcott, *Sustainable Development: A Meta-Review of Definitions, Principles, Criteria Indicators, conceptual Frameworks and Information Systems*, Appendix A: "Definitions of Sustainable Development", *Massachusetts Institute of Technology, AAAS Annual Conference, IIASA "Sustainability Indicators Symposium, Seattle Washington*. (February 16, 1997), <http://www.sustainableliving.org/appen-a.htm>.

governance systems, from the local to the global, in the short and long term and the absolute and contingent values associated with them.”<sup>3</sup> As Dorcey notes, the foundations of “sustainability” have been entrenched as the need to balance economic, social and environmental needs. However, over the long-term, society may assign different values in protecting and enhancing each of these components in relation to each other, depending upon varying circumstances. A further explanation is offered by Mark Roseland in his description of sustainable communities that highlights how North American communities are becoming motivated to engage in developing differently, to create more environmentally sound and socially cohesive places: “This synergistic approach will enable our communities to be cleaner, healthier, and less expensive; to have greater accessibility and cohesion; and to be more self-reliant in energy, food, and economic security than we now are. Sustainable communities are not merely about “sustaining” the quality of our lives – they are about *improving it*.”<sup>4</sup>

## 2.1 Research Question

Recognizing that the City of Surrey has proposed the development of a major regional centre in successive Official Community Plans, why has Surrey City Centre not developed substantially as a compact, sustainable regional downtown?

This question is asked because successive Surrey City Councils and Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD) Boards have supported and promoted a regional town centre in Surrey. Given that development of Surrey’s City Centre has not progressed as planned over the long term, more appropriate local government policies could enhance the development of this regional centre as a model of sustainable development.

Comparisons are drawn between the regional town centres for Surrey, Burnaby, and Richmond to illustrate successes and challenges experienced in the development of these localities. Policies are compared and considered for possible use in developing

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<sup>3</sup> Tony Dorcey, “Challenges of Sustainability Planning: Living Dangerously in the Worlds of Theory and Practice”, *SCARP Perspectives on Sustainability Planning*, (February 14, 2002), <http://www.interchg.ubc.ca/dorcey/tony/tonydsustst.html>

<sup>4</sup> Mark Roseland, *Toward Sustainable Communities – Resources for Citizens and their Governments*, (Gabriola Island: New Society Publishers, 1998), 2.



City Centre as a sustainable place. Developers' perspectives are also considered in evaluating the future shape of Surrey's regional downtown. Taking into account what the City of Surrey has attempted to achieve, there may be nothing that can be done by this municipal government to promote development in the City Centre when considering competing market pressures from large format retail projects, suburban office parks and other regional town centres. Through the scope of this research, findings indicate that suburban office parks have developed more rapidly over the past decade providing direct office space competition for the region's town centres that includes Surrey City Centre. These factors must be taken into account when evaluating how Surrey's downtown can develop as an economically successful, socially vibrant, and environmentally sustainable regional town centre.

## **2.2 Surrey City Centre Overview**

A significant hallmark of regional planning for Greater Vancouver has been the establishment of regional town centres. These centres contain concentrations of high density, multiple use development that provide suburban municipalities such as Surrey with alternate locations for office and retail employment to Vancouver's downtown. In managing the region's rapid growth, the Greater Vancouver Regional District emphasized the role of regional town centres: "Fundamental to the vision of the Livable Region Strategy is compact and diverse centres of employment, services, and housing, accessible to their communities by transit and connected together by a regional transit system."<sup>5</sup> This multiple centre model for Greater Vancouver has been a foundation of its regional planning for over forty years since the creation of the Lower Mainland Regional Plan. Since that time, high density regional town centres have developed and are playing a role in contributing to a relatively compact development pattern.

Surrey's town centre is one of four originally identified in the 1975 Official Regional Plan. Although detailed planning for this centre started in 1977, this regional centre has not developed to the extent anticipated over the past twenty-eight years.

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<sup>5</sup> David Baxter and Strategic Planning Department of the Greater Vancouver Regional District, *Managing Greater Vancouver's Growth* (Burnaby: The Livable Region Strategic Plan Creating Our Future...Steps to a More Livable Region. of the Greater Vancouver Regional District, August, 1993), 47.

Over the past four decades, The City of Surrey and regional planning authorities have recognized that Surrey will accommodate a considerable component of the region's growth. In 1954, when the Lower Mainland Regional Planning Board published its first report: "Surrey was not included among those areas for which an active future was forecast."<sup>6</sup> However, this thinking changed over the following decade as Surrey grew into a more significant player in the region's development. According to Surrey's 1964 planning study, which led to its first Official Community Plan (OCP) in 1965: "the growth of its population, which doubled between 1941 and 1951, and again between 1951 and 1961, has become a reasonably familiar story?"<sup>7</sup> At that stage of Surrey's history, the development pattern was not organized and efficient. Based on the recommendations of the 1964 study, Surrey Council decided to organize its development into a system of towns and villages where: "shopping areas could be clustered into pleasant precincts, providing variety, quality and healthy price competition within the community."<sup>8</sup> The alternative scenario for "Towns and Villages" shown in Figure 2.1 identified a major town centre in north Surrey located near King George Highway and Fraser Highway in the Whalley community. In 1965, Surrey Council adopted its first Official Community Plan containing policy objectives that promoted the development of a significant commercial node in Whalley.

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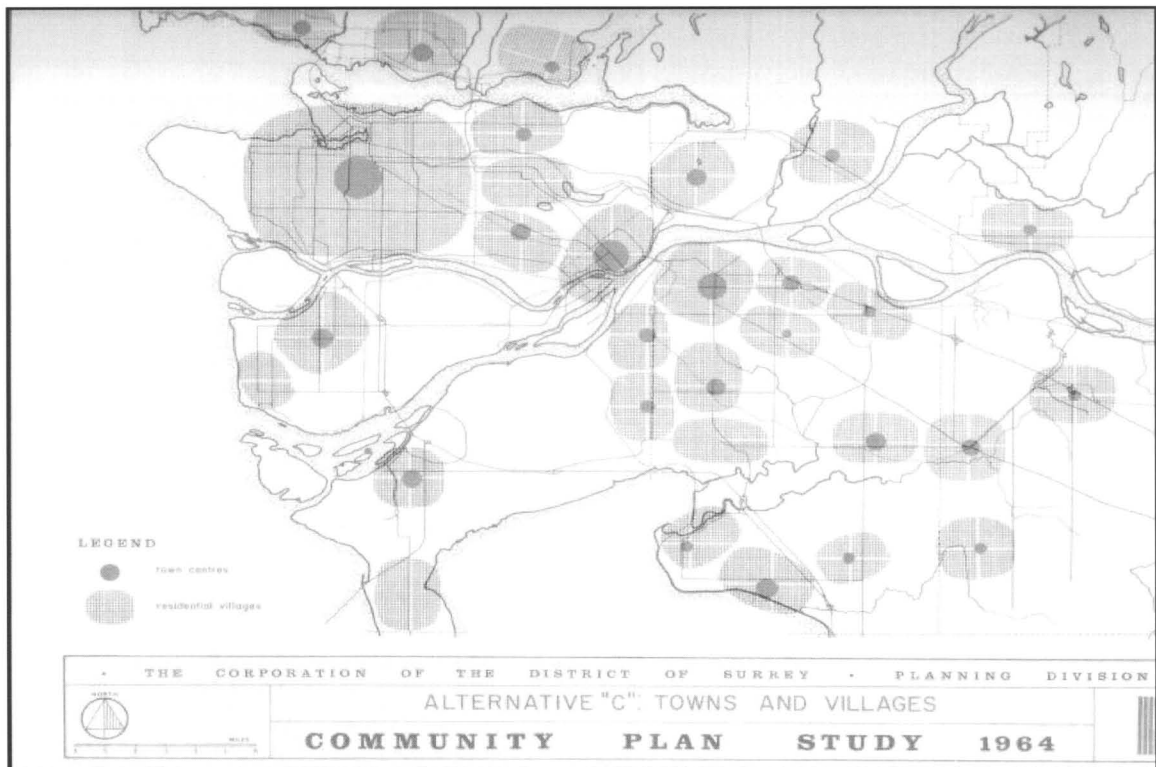
<sup>6</sup> Corporation of the District of Surrey BC, *Preface to a Community Plan*, (Surrey BC: Planning Division, November, 1964), 2.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, Pg 2.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, Pg 26

**Figure 2.1: Plan 5, Community Plan Study 1964, "Alternative 'C'": Towns and Villages**

Source: Corporation of the District of Surrey BC, *Preface to a Community Plan*, (Surrey BC: Planning Division, November, 1964), pg. 24.



The community of Whalley originated in 1925, when: “Arthur Whalley opened a gas station right on the triangle where Grosvenor and Ferguson Roads met at King George Highway. The opening of the Pattullo Bridge in November 1937 and the major water main laid across the (Fraser) river with the bridge provided the impetus for more rapid settlement in North Surrey.”<sup>9</sup> Following World War II, Whalley grew rapidly accommodating young families. Strip retail development occurred along King George Highway which included the Dell shopping centre. The North Surrey Recreation Centre, a library and seniors centre were constructed north of the Surrey Place Mall. Rivalry inevitably occurred between Whalley and Guildford when the Port Mann Bridge and Highway 1 opened in the 1960’s initiating the development of Guildford Town Centre.

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<sup>9</sup> Jack Brown, “Surrey’s History by Jack Brown,” based on thesis, *The Historical Geography of South Surrey British Columbia*, <http://members.shaw.ca/j.a.brown/Whalley.html>

The 1966 Official Regional Plan for the Lower Mainland Regional Planning Area established objectives for the orderly, staged, and diversified development of the Region, the efficient movement of goods and people and a sound Regional economy. Within its General Policies, the objective "Towards orderly development" stated that: "Urban growth is to take the form of a series of compact Regional Towns, each with its own business and civic centre and each related to industrial areas, complementing a Regional business, social and financial Core in downtown Vancouver."<sup>10</sup> This plan also identified Whalley as a location for a significant commercial node.

The GVRD's 1975 Official Regional Plan proposed a five part strategy for managing regional growth that included a policy for creating regional town centres in suburban locations. According to the plan: "Decentralization to these centres of some of the office growth that otherwise will locate in downtown Vancouver will greatly reduce transportation problems. The aim therefore is to create lively and diverse urban places which are attractive alternatives to downtown."<sup>11</sup> This plan identified the need for a regional town centre in Whalley. The plan also envisaged phasing the development of regional town centres in Burnaby and New Westminster first in the early 1980's followed by Surrey and other municipalities.

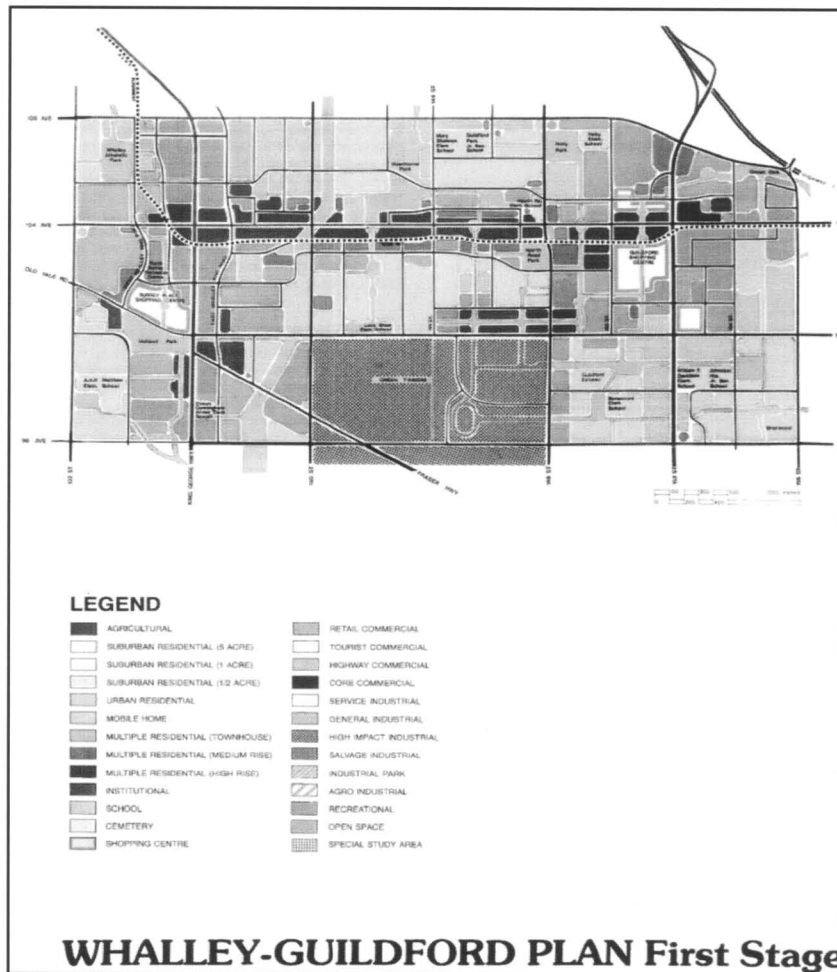
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<sup>10</sup> Lower Mainland Regional Planning Board, *Official Regional Plan*, (Vancouver: 1966,), 5.

<sup>11</sup> Greater Vancouver Regional District, *The Livable Region 1976/1986 Proposals to Manage the Growth of Greater Vancouver*, (Vancouver, 1976), 10.

**Figure 2.2: 1977 Whalley - Guildford Plan**

Source: Surrey Official Community Plan, 1985, Appendix Section



A plan created by Surrey in 1977 (Figure 2.2) prescribed the creation of a major regional town centre that included two nodes located in Whalley and Guildford linked by a high density corridor along 104 Avenue. This plan was adopted by Surrey Council in its 1985 Official Community Plan. However, throughout the early 1980's a combination of economic factors stymied development. Accelerating lending and mortgage rates in the early 1980's added fuel to speculative land development proposals. A number of development applications including Multiple Urban Residential Building (MURB) projects enabled by the Federal Government were initiated, but few were constructed. During the mid 1980's following an economic recession, renewed interest for high density residential and office construction occurred in Vancouver and Burnaby, triggered in part by the success of the 1986 Vancouver International Exposition (Expo 86). Recognizing the economic realities of the preceding decade, the City of Surrey re-examined its

downtown vision. In 1991, the City retained consultants including Ray Spaxman, who commented that:

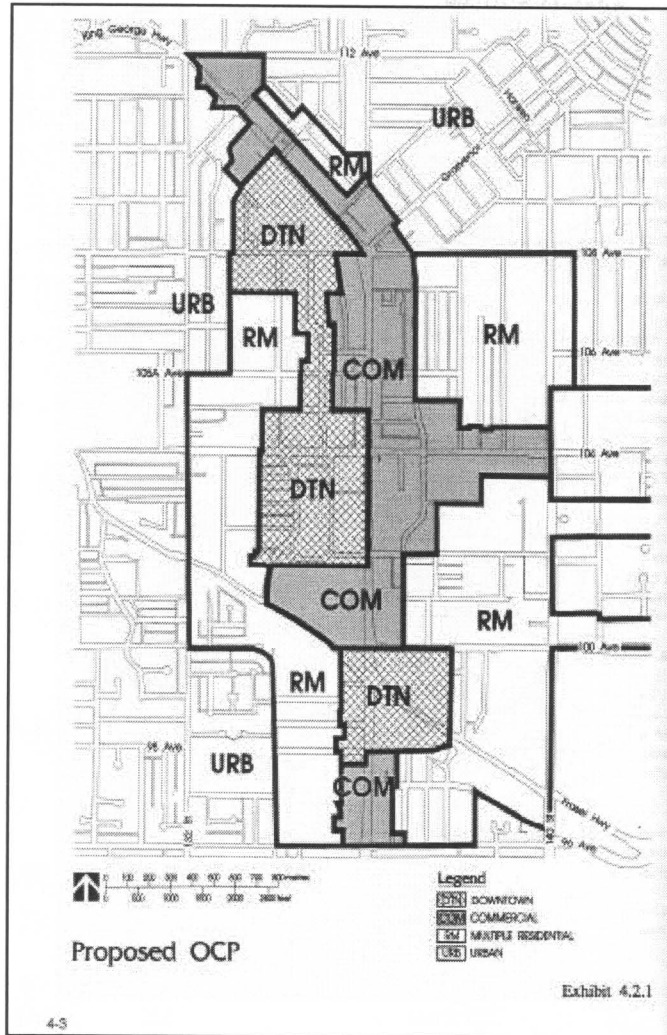
“The Whalley-Guildford Town Centre Plan was conceived in 1977 in support of the Greater Vancouver Livable Region Plan. While it was later adopted into the Official Community Plan, it now appears that it represented an overly ambitious concept of growth potential along the three mile length of the combined centres. Comparisons with Downtown Vancouver and other regional town centres illustrate the excessive amount of redevelopment which would be needed to create the Centre that is proposed in the current Official Community Plan.”<sup>12</sup>

The 1975 GVRD Livable Region Plan placed a strong emphasis on creating regional town centres that are linked with downtown Vancouver by rapid transit. Reinforcing this objective, the 1977 Whalley-Guildford town centre plan included corridors for future rapid transit service along King George Highway and in an alignment paralleling 104 Avenue between the high density nodes proposed for Whalley and Guildford. Following the successful initiation of SkyTrain service in the mid-1980s, BC Transit (the Provincial Government agency overseeing public transportation) extended the SkyTrain “Expo Line” across the Fraser River via the “Sky Bridge” to the Scott Road Station. Subsequently, through coordination between the City of Surrey and the Provincial Government, SkyTrain rapid transit service was extended to City Centre in the early 1990’s. Three stations were created in City Centre with the terminus at King George Station. Between 1990 and 2000, only one office building (the Gateway tower) and a few high-rise apartments were constructed. Since 2000, only one new office building has been built, the 20 storey 92,000 square metre (one million sq. ft.) Central City Tower (Figure 2.4). The tower complex has a Floor Area Ratio of 7.5 equalling office project densities in Metrotown and Vancouver downtown. Completed in 2002, it has only just recently been fully occupied. In 2006, it will contain lecture halls, a library, and administrative space for Simon Fraser University’s Surrey Campus.

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<sup>12</sup> City of Surrey Planning Department, *Whalley Town Centre*, (Surrey BC, October, 1991), ix.

**Figure 2.3: 1991 Whalley Town Centre Proposed Official Community Plan**  
 Source: Whalley Town Centre 1991, District of Surrey, pg. xvi.



The 1995 Greater Vancouver Regional District's Livable Region Strategic Plan (LRSP) designated Surrey City Centre as the region's second downtown after Vancouver. Also, in 1995, a major review of Surrey's Official Community Plan was undertaken. The 1995 OCP review reflected many of the recommendations made in the 1991 studies for City Centre by reducing the area of Surrey's regional town centre and allowing for the highest densities and mix of uses in a more concentrated "Downtown" designated area. In 2001, a five-year review of the OCP focused on the need to accelerate business development and employment opportunities throughout the City of Surrey. Performance standards were included in the OCP as guidelines for the creation of new commercial and industrial areas including business and office parks.

**Figure 2.4: Central City Tower**

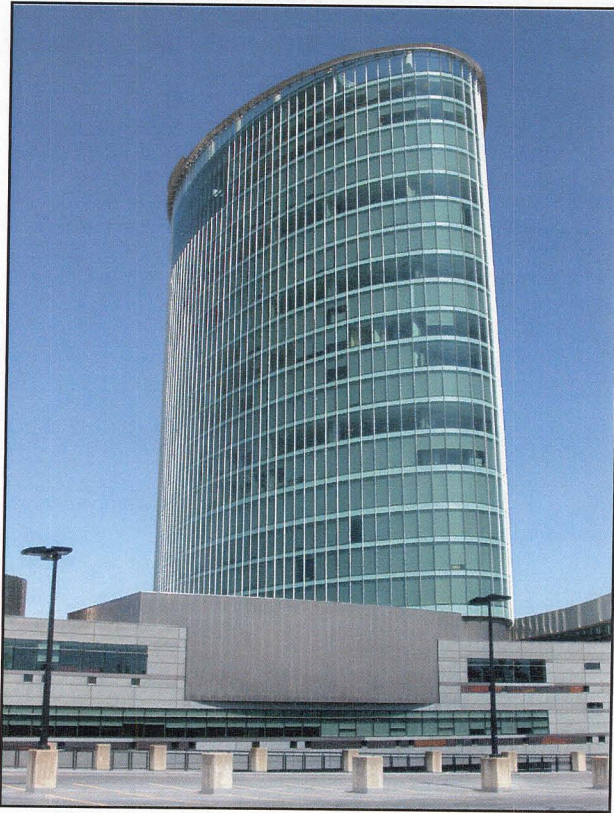


Photo by M. Dickinson

Throughout the course of Surrey City Centre's development, significant roles have been played by all levels of government in shaping its growth. While this research focuses on the strategic actions of Surrey and the GVRD, the Provincial Government provided leadership by constructing SkyTrain to Surrey City Centre (first by building the SkyBridge across the Fraser River, then by facilitating public private partnerships that achieved high density development around two of the three SkyTrain stations located in this regional town centre). Other Provincial policies are influencing this centre's growth including transportation infrastructure programs such as the current "Gateway" project and the Agricultural Land Reserve that has played a role in constraining urban sprawl in the Greater Vancouver Region. The Federal Government has provided support for Surrey City Centre development both directly and indirectly, through the funding of SkyTrain construction, by locating its Taxation Centre and future RCMP "E" Division headquarters in Surrey's downtown. In 2003, through Transport Canada's Urban Transportation Showcase Program, Surrey City Centre was selected as a location for a Showcase project. Beginning in 2004, the City of Surrey partnered with the GVRD,



Vancouver Transit Authority (TransLink) and the Federal Ministry of Transportation in an Urban Transportation Showcase Program to assess the development of Surrey City Centre from a Transit Oriented Development (TOD) perspective. Through the Showcase program, a plan will be developed that focuses high density, mixed use development similar to the Central City Tower complex (shown in Figure 2.4) around the Surrey Central SkyTrain station in the core of Surrey City Centre, bounded by King George Highway (at the east), the West Whalley Ring Road (west), 102 Avenue (south) and 104 Avenue (north limit of the study area). Collectively, all levels of government have played significant roles in influencing the development of Surrey City Centre.

### **3.0 METHODOLOGY**

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To provide an understanding of Surrey City Centre's development, this research paper compares it with two other GVRD Regional Town Centres (Metrotown and Richmond). Metrotown and Richmond Town Centre have developed more quickly and successfully than Surrey City Centre. Five independent variables provide insights into the challenges that have confronted successful development of Surrey City Centre.

This research paper uses literature review, executive interviews, and analysis of information from research sources, synthesis of interview and research findings to explain why Surrey City Centre has not developed according to Surrey and GVRD plan projections and how it contrasts with levels of development achieved in Metrotown and Richmond City Centre. The paper then provides recommendations for strategic policies and initiatives that could allow Surrey City Centre to develop as a successful and sustainable regional downtown.

Information on each of the regional town centres was collected through interviews with planners and officials who were responsible for preparing and implementing plans for these centres and overseeing development projects within them. These interviews have clarified the policies and strategic actions used by the three municipalities and the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD) with reference to the three regional town centres.

In addition to the interviews with municipal and regional planners and officials, a separate set of executive interviews were conducted with three developers who have built projects in either of the town centres and Surrey City Centre or who have participated in the creation of sustainable developments that are, in general terms, designed to mix compatible uses on the same development site, to minimize dependency upon municipal services, to decrease environmental impacts by processing solid waste, to use more efficient alternate energy and heating systems, to provide safe pedestrian and bicycle circulation and also to include a higher percentage of affordable housing units.

In order to protect the identity of the interviewees, the interviews with municipal officials were numbered as Interviews C1 through C7. A focus group style of interview was conducted with Surrey Planning & Development Department staff members and is labelled as Interviews C4 – C7 throughout the text. GVRD interviews were labelled Interviews G1 and G2 and the interviews with developers were identified as Interviews D1 through D3.

The questionnaires provided a foundation for the qualitative research conducted for this Research Project. Within each of the three questionnaires, one prepared for each group of participants being City officials, GVRD officials and Developers (Appendices A to C), were questions designed directly from the original set of seven independent variables. This set of variables was subsequently modified into the five used in this paper and explained in detail in the following pages. The questions were designed to extract responses that would provide details and personal, professional insights into such issues as the types of policies prepared for the three regional town centres being compared, the effects of the policies, competition from other sources that impeded or otherwise affected town centre development, accessibility to these centres, achieving community livability and approaches taken to lessen the impacts from these centres upon the environment.

The results from these interviews were analyzed for similarities in policies, development themes, criteria for achieving mixed uses, financial incentives for sustainable projects, and innovations that produce sustainable communities. Each chapter of this paper has, following the interview comments, further insights concerning planning policies for town centre development.

### **3.1 Dependent Variable**

#### *Successful development of Surrey's City Centre as a Sustainable Regional Downtown*

While considering how sustainable development is defined in an historic context, as noted in the quote from the Brundtland Report (World Commission on Environment and Development) on page 3, this research project examines how the principles of sustainability can be applied to a high density, mixed use regional node such as Surrey

City Centre. Timothy Beatley, in "Green Urbanism" (2000), provides insights into a possible vision for Surrey City Centre should go beyond "new urbanism" (that, according to Beatley: "aspire to many of the features of high-quality compact communities, are somewhat higher in density, more compact and more walkable"<sup>13</sup>) to reflect "green urbanism" or sustainability where the town centre is "more ecological in design and functioning and has ecological limits at its core"<sup>14</sup>. Beatley's term "green urbanism" can describe the direction that Surrey City Centre can take as a more "ecological" place if it is created with features such as high density mixed-use development that is conveniently served by transit, storm water retention systems that minimize damage to local watercourses from storm water run-off, community heating systems that minimize dependency upon fossil fuels and affordable housing accommodation that allows residents to live closer to employment thus reducing the need to commute via private vehicle and in turn, lower the impacts of atmospheric pollution.

To date, both municipal and regional plans have embraced the concept of regional town centres as high-density concentrations of office, retail, and residential space served by mass transit. This study compares Surrey City Centre with two other regional town centres, Richmond City Centre and Metrotown, which are both developed to a greater extent than Surrey's regional downtown. This initial comparison provides a quantitative snapshot of the present levels of development in each centre as well as their respective growth in recent years. Each centre exhibits some of the traits attributable to sustainable communities such as high development densities, integration of different land uses, public transit access, economic self-sufficiency, provision of social and cultural services, affordable housing, and building systems that minimize environmental impacts by using engineering services more effectively and operating with greater levels of energy efficiency. The approach taken in this research is to examine such features in order to evaluate how Surrey City Centre can effectively develop as a sustainable regional town centre.

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<sup>13</sup> Timothy Beatley, *Green Urbanism, Learning from European Cities*, (Washington: Island Press, 2000), 65.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid Pg. 5.

## **3.2 Independent Variables**

The study assesses each of the three regional centres through five independent variables that provide a conceptual framework for evaluating Surrey City Centre and for providing insights into its possible future development as a sustainable regional downtown.

### **1. Plans and policies shaping Surrey City Centre**

By comparing relevant policies oriented to developing the three town centres, it is expected that successes or failures can be determined. This chapter provides a means of comparing the levels of development in the three town centres and discussing policies that have supported development or require review. Measures of development success illustrate the comparative retail and office floor space and residential units built during specified time periods. Sustainability indicators and a scoring system are considered for monitoring Surrey City Centre's development levels, population density and other characteristics in order to track its progress in becoming a sustainable regional downtown.

### **2. Competition for Business and Development**

Recognizing the development trend to build large format retail centres and office parks, this variable will illustrate how these projects have impacted the progress of regional town centre development, in particular, Surrey City Centre. The high rate of office park development is compared with less significant office growth in the regional town centres over the decade between 1990 and 2000. Prescriptive measures are examined to suggest how this trend can be reversed providing Surrey City Centre with greater office employment opportunities. This variable is used to assess policies and approaches taken in other municipalities to assist town centre businesses and to attract new enterprises. By identifying successful initiatives, Surrey could emulate such strategies in order to enhance its downtown business climate. Partnerships including the City of Surrey, the Whalley Business Investment Area (BIA), learning institutions, private businesses, and others can work together to enhance the economic position of Surrey City Centre. Examining Municipal fiscal initiatives such as lowering

administrative and development costs for developers will show how such measures can lead to the creation of a centre that is economically sustainable.

### **3. Accessibility for Work and Shopping**

Surrey City Centre is served by SkyTrain and regional bus services. However, it functions more as a transfer location from one mode to the other in which transit users by-pass City Centre for work or shopping in favour of other regional destinations such as downtown Vancouver or Metrotown. The roles of automobile commuting and free parking are compared with transit and pedestrian/bicycle route systems in terms of re-shaping Surrey City Centre as an accessible and pedestrian friendly place. This chapter examines how service by mass transit can support sustainable development in this regional town centre.

### **4. Community Livability**

By examining the demographic profile, housing types, community service, employment, and shopping information, a picture emerges about the social health of the Surrey City Centre community. The elements of a liveable and complete community include such factors as local work opportunities, affordable housing, recreation opportunities, and cultural enjoyment, all combined in a safe and familiar environment. Housing affordability will continue to be a challenge for many people living in the Greater Vancouver region, the most expensive place to live in Canada. One benefit to Surrey City Centre residents that can assist them with housing affordability is their close proximity to transit. In this case, there is a higher probability that residents, who need to work elsewhere, can readily use transit thus minimizing the need for multiple vehicle ownership. Multiple benefits of town centre living can be realized within the scope of housing affordability, access to employment, cultural, recreation and medical services as well as transit. This variable should cast light on whether Surrey City Centre is a liveable and complete community or if significant changes are needed to guide it in these directions.

## **5. Compatibility with the Environment**

Regional town centres are intended to be both self-reliant and environmentally sound places. A combination of integrated factors contribute to this goal including: high density development, a mix of land uses preferably integrated within complexes, a well-defined and compact core area, environmental design that minimizes energy consumption, service by mass transit and a place that is walkable. These elements are examined to determine if Surrey City Centre is a sustainable regional downtown in terms of its impacts upon the environment. By using this variable, an assessment of the City Centre's environmental well-being is developed that can offer insights into alternate approaches for achieving greater compatibility with the environment.

## 4.0 PLANS AND POLICIES SHAPING SURREY CITY CENTRE

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We begin by examining policies and practices that have achieved varying levels of high density, mixed use office and residential development in the three regional town centres compared in this study. Data from executive interviews and other information from the Cities of Burnaby, Richmond, Surrey, the GVRD and real estate research corporations, track the extent of development achieved in these three centres. This chapter provides insights into the policies and practices that have influenced development of the three regional centres. Through this investigation, alternate approaches are presented that could stimulate the development of a sustainable downtown.

**Table 4.1: Total Development in Whalley Town Centre - 1990 Projections**

Total Development in Whalley Town Centre			
	<u>Existing (1990)</u>	<u>2001</u>	<u>2011</u>
Office Space	500,000 sq. ft.	1,500,000 sq. ft. to 1,900,000 sq. ft. (5 - 7 highrise towers)	3,000,000 sq. ft. to 4,000,000 sq. ft. (about 15 highrise towers)
Retail Space	1,000,000 sq. ft.	1,350,000 sq. ft.	1,750,000 sq. ft.
Housing	1,300 units	2,300 to 3,300 units (15 - 20 highrise towers)	7,300 units (about 30 highrise towers)

Source: Whalley Town Centre report, October, 1991, Exhibit 2.5.2, pg 2-11  
Colliers Macaulay Nicolls' report to Surrey on Whalley Town Centre, 1990

In preparation for the 1991 review of its town centre, marketing consultants for The City of Surrey provided projections for office, retail space, and housing units noted in Table 4.1. With the benefit of hindsight, reviewing these projections and comparing them with Tables 1.1 and 4.2, the level of development in 2001 did not meet the expectations in all cases. According to GVRD data, just over 1,700 high rise apartment units existed in Surrey City Centre in 2001 compared with the 2,300 to 3,300 units originally anticipated. There was a similar shortfall in the office space category. The actual level of office space accounted for in 1991 was 1,150,336 sq. ft. in comparison with the projected



amount of 3 – 4 million sq. ft. One exception to the 1990 projections was an actual increase in the amount of retail space developed by 2001 in Surrey City Centre. Instead of achieving 1.3 million sq. ft. (approximately), 1,608,511 sq. ft. of retail space was shown in the 2001 inventory (excluding shopping centre space). One explanation may be the large format retail addition at the Save-On plaza, now occupied by Canadian Tire and the addition of other stand-alone retail space on the East Whalley Ring Road.

This data provides a general foundation for examining why Surrey City Centre has not developed to the extent anticipated in the early 1990's. By examining plans and policy initiatives used by Burnaby for Metrotown and Richmond for its City Centre, a comparative understanding will emerge as to the growth of these centres in relation to Surrey City Centre, and the possible application of similar approaches that could be appropriate for advancing successful development of a sustainable downtown in Surrey.

Resulting from the executive interviews, the participants' responses to the following questions are covered in the sub-sections below. (1) What are the most significant City policies that have enabled your town centre to develop? (2) Explain how your town centre has developed in relation to your OCP and other planning policy guidelines.

## **4.1 Burnaby**

### *Interview C1.*

Metrotown is Burnaby's most developed town centre (as illustrated in the following photo in Figure 4.1). It functions as Burnaby's downtown and is designated as a regional town centre. By design, it is not intended to get any bigger. Future growth will move to Burnaby's other town centres such as Lougheed.

Infrastructure policies are part of Burnaby's OCP. Major roads and transit systems are planned in conjunction with development in Metrotown.

When comparing Metrotown's development with the guiding policies adopted by Burnaby, Metrotown has generally developed in accordance with the guidance provided.

**Figure 4.1: Metrotown from the Bob Prittie Library**



Photo by M. Dickinson

## **4.2 Richmond**

### *Interview C2.*

During the late 1970's to early 1980's, Richmond designated and rezoned its City Centre for maximum density growth allowing for a maximum Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of 3.5 with mixed uses." Following this, in the City Centre Plan, high density development was focused in this regional centre.

Development of Richmond's City Centre has been significantly influenced by Provincial and Federal legislation. The BC 1972 Agricultural Land Reserve Act designated a considerable portion of Richmond as protected agricultural land. Consequently, this action forced Richmond to focus its urban development inwardly. Proximity to Vancouver International Airport has resulted in the imposition of building height limitations (maximum building height is currently 140 feet). Recognizing the high water table in City Centre, parking for most projects is in above ground parkade structures rather than in below-surface garages. This forces specific urban design attention to building appearance (that includes Richmond City Hall, a LEED certified building with a green roof over its above-ground parking garage, shown in Figure 4.2), land uses, and streetscapes. Richmond City Centre benefits from infrastructure pre-servicing that allows for higher density development in parts of the downtown, such as the McLelland neighbourhood.

*Interview C3.*

Two projects (the Canada Line Skytrain connection and the Olympic Skating Oval) are expected to provide major benefits to Richmond and play a direct role in enhancing the development of its City Centre.

**Figure 4.2: Richmond City Hall**



Photo by M. Dickinson

*Interview C2.*

When considering Richmond's policies for its City Centre, in the opinion of its planning officials, it has developed well.

## **4.3 Surrey**

*Interviews C4 - C7.*

Surrey's OCP policies are flexible and generous allowing for a wide range of uses. The maximum development density in the downtown allows for a Floor Area Ratio of 7.0 (or a building area of seven times the development site area). In July 2003, Surrey Council reduced the Development Cost Charges for high rise and other apartment developments for a two year trial period. During this time, approximately 18 new apartment applications were made. Most are in the approval process while a few are under construction. For the highest density projects, Development Cost Charge reductions of 60% were recommended (for the RM-B135 and RM-150 zoned the rate was

reduced from \$6.87 sq. ft. to \$2.86/sq. ft.) This initiative has been extended for another two years as of July 22, 2005.

It was generally recognized by Surrey City staff that long-term support for policies has not always translated into development activity. In considering this, it was felt that a cohesive plan with well-coordinated strategies could be the key to successful, sustainable development of Surrey City Centre.

#### **4.4 GVRD**

GVRD participants responded to the questions: (1) What are the most significant GVRD policies that have enabled regional town centres to develop? (2) Explain how regional town centres have developed in relation to GVRD's policy guidelines.

##### *Interview G2.*

Initially, in the 1970's the GVRD through the Official Regional Plan (Livable Region Strategy) identified four regional town centres to balance the office growth experienced in downtown Vancouver and to structure that growth in the suburbs. The four centres were Burnaby Metrotown, New Westminster, Coquitlam, and Whalley-Guildford in Surrey. The goal was to produce high quality, high density places connected together and with downtown Vancouver by rapid transit. Inherent to this goal was to stimulate employment and higher density in suburban areas and to provide an alternative to downtown Vancouver for office development. In 1983, the GVRD also included Richmond and North Vancouver City (Lower Lonsdale area) and subsequently, Langley City and Haney in Maple Ridge, as areas that could support regional town centres.

##### *Interview G1.*

With the addition of other regional downtowns, initially the original policies became less focused than originally intended. During the early 1990s's the Livable Regional Strategic Plan (LRSP) was developed. It identifies regional town centres in a very minimalist way. The policy structure for supporting regional centres exists, but discussion on centres is not explicitly stated. The four elements of the LRSP (Complete Communities, Compact Region, Transportation Choice, and Green Zone) have a strong level of interconnectedness that supports the objectives of growth management and regional centres. Part of the culture of regional town centres dates long before the LRSP, and as a consequence, the region still benefits from that legacy of promoting town centres over a long period of time.

While Surrey City Centre has benefited from a long-term commitment from the GVRD to its development as a regional downtown, GVRD policies have become more diffused with less of a focus on town centre growth in recent years. In the Livable Region Strategic Plan, the policy

statements concerning regional centres could be strengthened to indicate continuing commitments to mixed uses and densification of development that can be provided by these centres.

## 4.5 Developers

The developers interviewed responded to the questions: (1) Describe the innovations your company has used in developing sustainable projects in the Greater Vancouver Region, especially in its regional town centres. (2) What are the most significant factors that your company considers before developing in a regional town centre?

In interviews with developers, they provided comments about their experiences with major projects in the Vancouver and Victoria regions and shared ideas from these projects that could provide direct benefits to Surrey City Centre in its development as a sustainable regional downtown. In some cases the comments are expressed as suggestions or recommendations that are based upon innovations from projects that are either in the advanced planning stages, under construction or already developed.

### *Interview D1.*

Development in the City Centre should employ the ideas of universal design and ageing in place.

Seniors housing and affordable housing should be included.

Provide for localized shopping and good pedestrian access (walk-ability).

To enhance mobility, decrease the number of parking stalls while, at the same time, increase residents' access to public transit.

Provide car co-ops as part of the overall development and transportation plan.

Demonstrate how "good density" can be achieved through well planned and integrated projects, and illustrate this with positive examples from other localities as proof of what can be achieved.

### *Interview D2.*

Mixed opportunities for residential, retail and rental housing would provide more incentive for development in Surrey City Centre. There needs to be a broader range of residential dwelling types in this centre. Security is an important issue for Surrey's downtown, not only for the protection of residents, workers and visitors, but for the image and attractiveness of this area. Developers can provide community facilities and services such

as policing stations and open space through multiple use projects. However, in some cases, a developer would provide a higher level of park maintenance than the City, instead of paying significant fees to the City for this service. Market rental housing can be provided through the production of smaller and thus more affordable dwelling units. Other factors should be considered that would enable a developer to create market rental housing while providing a guarantee to the City that such structures will provide rental units for extended periods such as 20 to 40 years before an owner can sell them. When contemplating development in a town centre, factors to consider include whether or not the City provides tax abatements as inducements for developing in these areas. In one case where the developer had been involved in a Surrey City Centre project where high fees were being paid to the City of Surrey to maintain public open spaces and parkland following construction of this high density, mixed use project. It was felt that there was no value in this service (by the City) for the developer and the community. Rather, the developer believed that his company could have provided this service in a more efficient manner.

### *Interview D3.*

Based on experiences in other cities, Surrey could utilize a "triple bottom line"<sup>15</sup> approach for development in City Centre, particularly on City owned properties. Requests for Proposals (RFP's) should be written to require sustainable community planning standards including LEED guidelines for building design and construction. This type of RFP should be considered for Surrey in cases where the City intends to sell its downtown properties outright or partner in their development.

While not all of the developers interviewed have developed in Surrey City Centre, or other regional town centres, all have participated in the creation of multiple-use, innovative projects. Responses to the second interview question were somewhat limited regarding factors that they consider in preparing for town centre projects. Among the considerations discussed were the developers' concerns that municipal governments would not be willing to accommodate high quality design with town centre projects. The significance of this is that well designed developments can enhance town centre living and working environments while also acting as positive models for future projects to emulate. Other factors included a desire that cities provide financial incentives such as tax

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<sup>15</sup> City of Victoria BC, *Dockside Lands Request For Proposals*, (Victoria: City of Victoria, September 10, 2004, 8). *Note: "Triple Bottom Line Accounting" means an accounting of value of the project from the economic, social and environmental perspective.*

abatements for developing in regional town centres. This would assist in lowering the developer's exposure to risk while providing support for high density and mixed use projects to develop in strategic locations. Further insights by developers are provided in the next chapter wherein they comment on impediments to developing in Surrey City Centre, including the need to improve its image, enhance marketing, lower municipal fees and project processing times, as well as concerns about the City's vision and leadership in developing this area.

#### 4.6 Further Insights – Plans and Policies

Metrotown and Richmond's City Centre, in comparison with Surrey City Centre, benefit from being located closer to the region's economic focus in downtown Vancouver. By the year 2001, Surrey's City Centre lagged behind both Metrotown and Richmond City Centre in its share of occupied office space as illustrated in Table 4.2 below.

**Table 4.2: Comparison of Regional Town Centres for Burnaby, Richmond, and Surrey - Land Area and Development 1991 - 2001**

	Burnaby		Richmond		Surrey	
Town Centre Attribute	Metrotown		City Centre		City Centre	
Urban Land Area	3.07 sq. km.		8.63 sq. km.		5.81 sq. km.	
Building Floor Space (sq. ft.)	1991	2001	1991	2001	1991	2001
Retail/Commercial	640,000	1,067,000	1,670,000	2,156,071	380,000	1,608,511
Shopping Centre	1,800,000	2,468,000	1,360,000	1,837,867	620,000	644,944
Office (excluding community facilities)	1,617,248	1,787,248	1,500,000	1,858,775	30,000	1,150,336
Source: GVRD key Facts December 2004						

Metrotown has been designed to have a much smaller, well defined core area that has enabled easier concentration of high density development. "The Metrotown concept is broadly based on a centrally-located mixed-use primary core area with an overlapping strong, linear Kingsway commercial corridor extending from Wilson Avenue east to Burlington Avenue."<sup>16</sup> In all, Metrotown occupies 298 hectares (735 Acres). "As of 2001, it included 1,067,000 sq. ft. of retail/commercial space, a 2,468,000 sq. ft.

<sup>16</sup> Kenji Ito, *Metrotown: A Time and a Place*, (Burnaby BC: Planning and Building Department, City of Burnaby, January 2002) 5.

shopping centre and 1,787,248 sq. ft. of office space.”<sup>17</sup> This regional town centre is home to 24,300 people and provides 18,620 jobs. According to Kenji Ito’s report “Metrotown: A time and a Place”, Metrotown has succeeded. “Its development is a result of consistent policies applied over many years, extensive city infrastructure expenditures, and the commitment of the City Council to its fulfilment. Metrotown as an accessible and enjoyable place attracts a broad spectrum and growing numbers of people for working, shopping, and entertainment not only from within Burnaby but also from the rest of the Lower Mainland. Tourists are also attracted in growing numbers.”<sup>18</sup>

Applying sustainable development theory in advancing the development of Surrey’s City Centre relies upon appropriate models of urban design. Metrotown is one such example with a compact core, served by a pedestrian network that functions particularly well around the Civic Square and Bob Prittie Library (Figure 4.1). Taking this concept one step further, the ‘Pedestrian Pocket’ outlined in “The Next American Metropolis” by Peter Calthorpe (1993), provides a vision for concentrated pedestrian oriented neighbourhoods that: “reinforce transit, preserve open space, and make a more compact metropolitan form.”<sup>19</sup>

Similar to Burnaby, Surrey has adopted plans and policies for its regional town centre. The primary objective of Surrey’s downtown plans has been to create a viable commercial heart for the City. However, the vision and direction of Surrey’s downtown plans have varied over the years, changing in scale from a multi-nodal centre (Whalley-Guildford Plan) to one that concentrates development in Whalley alone. “In contrast to Burnaby’s consistent, relatively successful long-range vision for the urban form of its city, Surrey has vacillated between different community development and regulatory strategies, often in response to apparent economic trends.”<sup>20</sup> A notable difference between Surrey’s current downtown plan and Metrotown is that Surrey City Centre

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<sup>17</sup> Greater Vancouver Regional District, *Metrotown (Burnaby) Key Facts*, (Burnaby BC: GVRD, Revised December 2004).

<sup>18</sup> Kenji Ito, *Metrotown: A Time and a Place*, (Burnaby BC: Planning and Building Department, City of Burnaby, January 2002) 12.

<sup>19</sup> Peter Calthorpe, *The Next American Metropolis – Ecology, Community and the American Dream*, (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 1993), 45.

<sup>20</sup> Mark Shorett, *Hedge Cities: Gambling on Regional Futures*, (Boston: Department of Urban Studies and Planning, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, May 2004), 94.



occupies a larger land area. This presents a problem in terms of focussing high density growth. The Urban Transportation Showcase Program that commenced its work in 2004, seeks to remedy this by focusing attention on a more limited study area around the Central City SkyTrain station generally bounded by 102 and 104 Avenues, West Whalley Ring Road and King George Highway. The intent is to create a compact and viable downtown core that will function as the heart of the community.

The land occupied by Richmond, including its urban development area, is considerably smaller than Surrey's. In particular, the Agricultural Land Reserve occupies a considerable portion of Richmond's total land area, thus creating a more compact urban development pattern. Due to Richmond's smaller urban land area, there is only one major town centre in comparison with Surrey's five smaller-scale community town centres in addition to its City Centre.

Richmond's Official Community Plan contains specific objectives and policies focused directly on the development of its City Centre. The OCP objectives are:

1. "Reinforce the City Centre as Richmond's "Downtown" Professional and Service Centre.
2. Strengthen tourism through the synergistic location of visitor accommodation and supporting services.
3. Maintain a hierarchy of retail and personal service locations to meet community-wide and neighbourhood needs."<sup>21</sup>

By comparison, Surrey's Official Community Plan provides statements about its downtown, but they are embedded in other policies and did not form a separate and readily identifiable group of coordinated policies.

Augmenting the City's OCP, Richmond adopted the City Centre Transportation Plan dated November 2000 to provide solutions for eight key transportation related problems confronting its downtown. Among the concerns addressed in this plan are: "through traffic on No. 3 Road that conflicts with local retail traffic, large downtown blocks that are

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<sup>21</sup> City of Richmond, *Official Community Plan*, (Richmond BC: 1999), 27 – 29.

inconvenient to vehicles and pedestrians, parking lot adequacy and management, transit not meeting the needs of commuters and local users, and unfriendly streets that discourage use by pedestrians and cyclists.”<sup>22</sup> This plan provides both short and long-term solutions for managing vehicular and pedestrian traffic. It also included measures for financing transportation improvements that provide incentives for developers who provide improvements identified in the transportation program. In exchange for providing these features, credits are offered for developers to offset the payment of Development Cost Charges for individual projects. A public parking commission was recommended in this plan to: “be responsible for future public parking facilities, and suggests that where such facilities are developed by the City for the direct benefit of a specific downtown area, that they are financed through local initiatives, such as:

- a. A “parking-in-lieu” program enabling developers to contribute money to public parking when they cannot provide adequate parking on their own lands; and
- b. Metered on-street parking and off-street parking fees, of which some revenues may be directed to local parking improvements.”<sup>23</sup>

Surrey has taken some steps to address the role of parking in its City Centre. According to the Whalley Town Centre report: “Paid parking should be introduced in the Town Centre.”<sup>24</sup> Following from this, the City instituted metered on-street parking in many locations. Pay parking lots are located at the King George and Surrey Central SkyTrain stations. However, an abundance of free parking exists throughout the downtown. Programs similar to Richmond’s have not yet been formalized, but may be realized within the plan created from the Transit Showcase study.

While The City of Surrey has endeavoured to create a viable downtown in Whalley, other City policies were created to allow for employment centres elsewhere in this large suburban city. Surrey’s October 2, 2003, Corporate Report explains ways that the City achieves the objectives of the GVRD’s Liveable Regional Strategic Plan (LRSP) in terms

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<sup>22</sup> City of Richmond, *City Centre Transportation Plan*, (Richmond BC: City of Richmond Transportation Section, November, 2000), 3.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, Pg. 12

<sup>24</sup> City of Surrey, *Whalley Town Centre study*, (Surrey BC: City of Surrey Planning & Development Department, October 1991), 3-40.0.

of coordination and compatibility with the LRSP policy objectives. However, it also outlines differences where Surrey must meet its own economic objectives of achieving greater self-sufficiency. The City of Surrey through its 2001 Official Community Plan Review stated: "Achieving the accelerated economic development goals would generate approximately 170,000 jobs over the next 20 years for a total of 260,000 jobs by the year 2021. With an expected labour force of 275,000, Surrey's job to labour force ratio in 2021 would be about 0.95 or 95 jobs for every 100 residents in the labour force."<sup>25</sup> In keeping with the 2001 OCP Review goals, the City anticipates that it will require 3.75 million square metres (40,000,000 sq. ft.) of commercial floor area in total with approximately only 33% of this to be accommodated in Surrey City Centre. The point of disagreement with Surrey is that the GVRD would prefer to see a higher percentage of the City's commercial growth occurring in its regional town centre (Surrey City Centre) located within the GVRD's Growth Concentration Area.

The regional town centres for Surrey, Richmond, and Burnaby have all been impacted by suburban office park development in the decade between 1990 and 2000. In relative terms, Surrey City Centre has accommodated more office development over the past five years than the other two town centres. However, the fact remains that there is considerable competition for office space from office parks. This issue is reinforced in Surrey with the policy adopted in the 2003 OCP Review that promotes business development in dispersed locations. While accommodating the objective of providing employment opportunities throughout Surrey, it allows for direct competition with office growth in Surrey City Centre.

Creating a sustainable downtown will depend on the creation and consistent implementation of policies by the City of Surrey that coherently define a more limited area for the highest level of development, in essence, a downtown core. Burnaby has succeeded in creating Metrotown as a relatively compact centre with a core area of approximately 100 acres. Richmond, while having a larger town centre, has pre-zoned land in accordance with its plans to achieve higher density residential development in

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<sup>25</sup> City of Surrey Planning and Development Department, *2001 Official Community Plan Review Draft Policy Proposals*, (Surrey BC: City of Surrey Planning & Development Department, October, 2001), 7.

strategic locations. Developers have indicated interest in creating projects within City Centre if there are financial incentives, partnerships, and assurances that Surrey's actions will lower crime rates and enhance both the safety and image of its downtown. Creating a sustainable downtown, employing a triple bottom line evaluative approach similar to Victoria's could also assist Surrey in developing a framework for its strategies so that economic, social, and environmental needs are met in balance with each other.

## 5.0 COMPETITION FOR BUSINESS AND DEVELOPMENT

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Surrey City Centre possesses the potential to support a robust economy and vibrant lifestyles in a location well positioned to serve the Greater Vancouver and Fraser Valley regions. However, its growth has not met expectations due to competition from different sources, uncertainty in the marketplace and the need for a positive image.

In September 1992, a report titled “Whalley Town Centre Marketing and Public Relations Plan” was prepared by consultants Hill and Knowlton for the City of Surrey. This report presented an evaluation of the market situation for land development and prescribed a marketing action plan that included re-naming Whalley town centre as “Surrey City Centre”. The summary for this report indicated that there was a need for the City to take a lead role in attracting investment, coordinating the participation, and securing commitments of major property owners. However, the report also stated:

“There is legitimate uncertainty in the marketplace with regard to the municipality’s plans for its own considerable property, and this uncertainty is a disincentive in the development industry.

A significant barrier to the success of Surrey City Centre, beyond the visual unattractiveness of the current area is one of image and pride. As long as Whalley residents and business owners lack positive self-image or self-esteem, it is difficult to project a positive external image.”<sup>26</sup>

Within Surrey’s downtown core area, there are a number of buildings and properties that are under-utilized and have not been maintained or renovated over the years, thus contributing to unattractive streetscapes. In examining a small sample of buildings located in the core along City Parkway between 102 and 104 Avenues, some have reached the end of their economic life-cycle and are at a stage where re-development becomes an economically viable proposition. Assessed values for buildings in this core area block vary from a low of \$10,000 for the former Stardust Roller skating Rink to a

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<sup>26</sup> Hill and Knowlton, for the City of Surrey. Whalley Town Centre Marketing and Public Relations Plan, September 1992. 9.

high of \$1.1 million for a newer two storey retail/office building. In the case of the Stardust building, the property it occupies is assessed (2006 estimated Assessment rate) at \$1.1 million. This situation is similar in other cases on this block indicating that the 'sunk' value of some buildings has reached a point where replacement could more readily occur. However, other buildings have a higher market value (also in relation to the value of the land they occupy) and may be considered to be too expensive to acquire for re-development at this time. Many of these buildings that are potential candidates for re-development are on small properties (many less than one-half acre in area) creating barriers for land assembly for larger-scale, comprehensive designed projects. However, other properties both within this block and immediately adjacent are larger in area containing surface level parking lots (most currently uncharged parking areas). The vacant parking areas are also located immediately adjacent to streets and could be more readily re-developed as part of a phased renewal strategy for the downtown core. With these factors in mind, strategies are needed to encourage property and business owners to maintain a higher level of visual attractiveness for those buildings that are ageing and otherwise ready for renewal or re-development, and consideration should be given to a phasing strategy to re-develop properties in Surrey's downtown core.

Over the past two decades, new trends in retail and office development including large format retail projects, specialized and "cultural" retail warehousing and suburban office parks have created direct competition for retail and office businesses in Surrey City Centre.

In the decade between 1991 and 2000 as shown in Table 5.1, Metrotown experienced only a small increase in office space (1,617,248 sq. ft to 1,787,248 sq. ft.). Richmond Town Centre experienced a slight gain from 1.5 million sq. ft. to 1,858,775 sq. ft. while Surrey City Centre experienced some gain from 30,000 sq. ft. to 310,000 sq. ft. with construction of Gateway office tower. The health of City Centre office enterprises depends upon the presence of major institutional operations that provide economic spin-off benefits to the whole downtown and beyond. However, around 2000, BC Transit (Now Translink) re-established its headquarters to the Metrotown tower from the Gateway towers.

Since 2000, with the completion of the Central City tower, almost one million square feet of office space has been added to Surrey City Centre. However, even with this recent addition, office park space competes directly with City Centre from locations in Surrey's industrial areas including the developing Campbell Heights as well as from Burnaby's Glenlyon Business Park and Richmond's Crestwood Corporate Centre. In the 2003 Annual Report, Liveable Region Strategic Plan, the GVRD comments that its policy objective for providing regional centres has met with significant competition. "As documented in earlier annual reports, the centres so far have not been successful in attracting new office development. One of the LRSP indicators is the proportion of office floor space located in centres. From 1990 to 2000, approximately 14 million square feet was added to the Vancouver region office market. The Metropolitan Core's inventory grew by over 6 million square feet, the eight Regional Town Centres grew by under 1 million square feet and as noted in Table 5.1, the office parks grew to just under 7 million square feet."<sup>27</sup>

**Table 5.1: GVRD Regional Town Centres - Office Space in Town Centres and Office Parks 1991 - 2000**

GVRD Regional Town Centre	Office Inventory (sq. ft.)		Growth (sq. ft.)
	1991	2000	1991 - 2000
Metrotown	1,617,248.00	1,787,248.00	170,000.00
Richmond City Centre	845,167.00	875,167.00	30,000.00
Surrey City Centre	30,000.00	310,000.00	280,000.00
Regional Town Centres	3,536,328.00	4,473,328.00	937,000.00
Business Parks in GVRD	1,547,206.00	6,790,448.00	5,243,242.00
Source: GVRD. Regional Town Centres and Office Development: Promoting Employment in Accessible Locations. Dec. 2003. (Royal LePage Advisors, 2002). Data from pages. 11, 12, and 13.			

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<sup>27</sup> Greater Vancouver Regional District, *2003 Annual Report Liveable Region Strategic Plan*, (Burnaby BC: GVRD, Regional Development Policy & Planning Department, May 2004), 11.

During the period 1991 to 2000, business/office park development outperformed the creation of office space in regional town centres because of the more favourable development costs (cheaper land, lower construction costs, lower rents for tenants and until recently, similar development cost charges). Other reasons cited by the GVRD Regional Town Centres report for the lower costs of business parks is in the form of construction: “slab-on-grade, 2 to 3 storey, steel or wood frame construction at \$70 - \$85/sq. ft. to build vs. \$135 - \$160/sq. ft. construction costs for concrete high-rise office towers with below grade parking in regional town centres.”<sup>28</sup> Business parks that sometimes include big-box retail businesses are a second competing element that has negatively affected City Centre’s growth over the past decade. The National Association of Industrial and Office Properties 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Municipal Report Card shows that: “Surrey’s Development Cost Charges for industrial development (that could include office parks) declined marginally (-5%) between 2003 and 2005.”<sup>29</sup> Also, approval time for rezoning industrial business parks was among the lowest in the region at 120 days. But given the economic advantage of developing suburban office parks where land prices are lower than in regional centres, challenges still exist for Surrey City Centre to compete as an attractive retail and office space location.

This section examines current market trends and discusses alternative approaches for addressing office park and large format retail space competition that impacts Surrey City Centre. Interview participants responded to the following questions. (1) What events or actions have impeded town centre growth and what has the City done to overcome development obstacles? (2) Describe how other Regional Town Centres influence your town centre? (3) How have “large format” retail outlets and office parks had an impact upon the development of your town centre? If they have, what policies and other actions have your city taken to minimize this influence? (4) What combination of economic policies and other fiscal/taxation incentives does your City use to enhance business and development in your town centre? (5) Have they been effective? Why?

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<sup>28</sup> Greater Vancouver Regional District, *GVRD Livable Centres Program, Regional Town Centres and Office Development: Promoting Employment in Accessible Locations*, (Burnaby BC: GVRD, December 2003), 13.

<sup>29</sup> National Association of Industrial and Office Properties, *6th Annual Municipal Report Card. Regional Commercial & Industrial Development Cost Survey*, (Vancouver BC: National Association of Industrial and Office Properties, Fall 2005), 4-5.



## **5.1 Burnaby**

### *Interview C1.*

Metrotown has the biggest shopping centre in the region. It has developed in line with the guide plans and policies. Nothing has impeded Metrotown's growth.

In addition to the usual Development Cost Charges that apply to residential and commercial development, Burnaby also includes a small charge to projects within Metrotown for the construction of pedestrian overpasses and open space located in commercial developments within Metrotown. In comparison with other Greater Vancouver municipalities, Burnaby's Development Cost Charges are lower, thus providing an incentive for building in the Metrotown area. The City of Burnaby has a close relationship with businesses and finds that development is achieved without providing subsidies. Some cost sharing occurs with the provision of infrastructure. Generally, businesses want to be located where other businesses are operating. Burnaby requires high quality of building and streetscape design resulting in a positive image that helps attract business activity

## **5.2 Richmond**

### *Interview C2.*

Richmond City Centre has not experienced competition from other regional town centres due to its proximity to Vancouver and the airport. Richmond City Centre has benefited because it has become a major location for jobs. Richmond has more jobs than residents and has the second largest concentration of jobs in the GVRD except for Vancouver's downtown. The City Centre has attracted a number of Asian malls and functions as a major centre for the local Asian consumer market.

Infrastructure investments have been made in Richmond's City Centre to support new downtown development. In turn, residential and commercial projects pay higher Development Cost Charges than in other municipalities. While the costs of development in Richmond City Centre may be higher than in other regional centres, developers aren't as concerned about the costs if they have the assurance that their payments are being utilized to create a positive development environment.

At this stage of its history, Richmond is struggling to attract more offices to its downtown. Currently there is a 30% vacancy in downtown offices and business park locations. The City has identified a need for a Commercial strategy, identifying existing types of businesses, vacancy rates, and capacity for different types of commercial activities. Due to the constraints on residential development by the Airport policy, there is an

over-supply of commercial land in the City Centre. A challenge related to this is the potential for large format retail to situate in downtown locations.

*Interview C3.*

Richmond has an Economic Development Strategy and a Business Council affiliated with the Economic Development Department that is oriented to attract new businesses. The City also works closely with its Chamber of Commerce and the local hotels that find the City Centre to be an attractive location given its close proximity to the airport. Additionally, the City's Parking Committee, By-law, and Transportation Committee play a role in downtown development.

### **5.3 Surrey**

*Interviews C4 - C7.*

It is generally believed that there is competition from other regional town centres. Metrotown has the benefit of being in the middle of the Expo SkyTrain line instead of at the end where Surrey City Centre is located. Taking site servicing into account, other regional town centres do not have as high Development Cost Charges as Surrey.

At this time, Surrey City Centre has a few big box retail stores such as Canadian Tire and Best Buy. It has the capacity to attract more of this form of retail. One challenge recognized by Surrey planners is the need to evaluate and balance the costs and benefits of having additional large format retail businesses in City Centre against not having this form of retail development in the downtown area.

Surrey has initiated a number of programs to stimulate economic development in its City Centre. Urban design and beautification programs included the creation of a more pedestrian friendly streetscape along City Parkway under the SkyTrain guideway. To enhance the image and safety of this area, By-law staff has worked with Building inspectors, the RCMP and others to initiate the Whalley Enhancement Strategy.

In 2003, Development Cost Charges (DCC's) were reduced for multiple family developments within Surrey City Centre. This has contributed to an increased interest in the production of new apartments, notably the Jung development adjacent to the King George SkyTrain station. Recognizing successful results of this initiative, the City considered applying comparatively lower Development Cost Charges for office space with the objective of enticing more commercial development within its downtown core area.

In comparative terms, while Surrey's DCCs were reduced for medium density residential development in 2003 from \$10.64/ sq. ft. to \$4.11/sq. ft. per dwelling unit, Burnaby's

DCC's for similar development was \$3.84/sq. ft. The same comparison holds with high density DCCs where Surrey's reduced charges are marginally higher than Burnaby's. More recently, Surrey Council is allowing for increases in Development Cost Charge rates for all new developments commencing in July, 2006. While the proposed DCC rates for Surrey City Centre high rise residential and office construction will still be comparatively lower than for other locations in the City, these rates will once again be noticeably higher than rates charged for Burnaby's Metrotown. If Surrey wishes to ensure that its downtown remains competitive with other regional town centres, office parks and large format retail development as an attractive place for development, then consideration should be given for lowering the DCC rates applicable to high density downtown development or to provide developers with bonus incentives for the provision of environmentally sound construction, servicing, amenity features and affordable housing.

## **5.4 GVRD**

### *Interview G1.*

The GVRD has located its headquarter offices in Metrotown in support of regional town centres. Demonstrating leadership, the GVRD aims to encourage municipal governments to locate city halls or major administration facilities in regional centres.

The GVRD is not concerned about inter-municipal competition between town centres but is more concerned about the negative influences upon town centres by business parks and large scale retail developments. Business parks tend to spread office development too thinly instead of concentrating such development in regional centres served by high capacity transit.

## **5.5 Developers**

Developers responded to the following questions. (1) What factors would make development in other town centres more attractive than in Surrey City Centre? (2) How could this be changed to ensure successful development in City Centre? (3) What municipal economic, fiscal and taxation initiatives have enabled your company to build

sustainable projects? (4) What would be your company's interests in entering into a public-private (P-3) partnership with a public agency to develop in Surrey City Centre?

A sample of their responses follows.

Surrey City Centre is big enough to do everything.

If Surrey Planning had a strong vision and gets political support, City Centre could "go".

All the elements are there.

King George Highway is a positive element (although viewed by some as negative).

Make Surrey City Centre a prime destination.

Regarding big box retail and other regional town centre competition, why not package Surrey City Centre differently?

Allow big box retail in the centre but in a different form that addresses the street, allows parking in the back, following examples of urban-oriented developments in the United States.

There is a need for a strong vision on the part of planning and politicians and enough resolve to say "no" to marginal projects.

People now look at SkyTrain as an endpoint to get on a bus and carry on further. They are passing through and not stopping. If people stop, they will be staying, living, and participating in the community producing huge benefits to the centre.

It would be a wonderful thing for a city hall, performance theatre, community centre or another big civic use to be located there and would show a commitment on the part of the City to Surrey City Centre.

Building permit fees, development cost charges (DCCs) and other development related fees are a major impediment for developing in Surrey's City Centre.

Considering that the overall cost of land in Whalley is somewhat lower than in Burnaby or Vancouver downtown, other cost factors add up to economics that don't work due to high development fees.

Currently, the selling price levels for the Whalley market can't cover the costs of development.

What is the City of Surrey willing to do in terms of providing for infrastructure such as engineering and community services as well as addressing concerns regarding public safety?

*Interview D3.*

Victoria will not charge Development Cost Charges for sanitary sewers to a certain project as solid waste will be treated on-site rather than by a municipal sewer and treatment system.

*Interview D1.*

Surrey should have a municipal "Green Light" team to coordinate and facilitate fast track approvals for green, sustainable development in Surrey City Centre. Surrey should create performance related Development Cost Charges and other municipal fees so that they are set at lower rates to attract "first comers" (developers who are taking higher risks to develop in Surrey City Centre).

*Interview D2.*

Tax abatement programs would work to benefit all parties and would provide incentive for developers to produce rental and affordable housing.

There was a mixed response regarding public-private partnerships (P-3's). The City could consider this and collaborate on design/build projects by setting targets collectively with developers. The City is well situated to develop land in Surrey City Centre as it owns a large resource of land in the core area around the recreation centre and library.

## **5.6 Alternate Approaches for Surrey City Centre Business and Development Growth**

A new marketing strategy is needed to assess both the current development climate and business health of Surrey's downtown, and then to set forth processes that will enhance business and development potential to allow Surrey City Centre to compete successfully as a dynamic place for business.

The office park trend is inconsistent with the region's planning objectives of concentrating office space in town centres. Office parks are appealing to developers because they can be developed more cost effectively, provide employment destinations closer to the growing Fraser Valley labour market, and can assist Surrey in realizing greater economic self-sufficiency. However, dispersed office parks, while cheaper for

developers to build, do not possess direct transit service and amenities within walking distance that can benefit employees and business visitors. "There is some indication that the market is realizing that business parks are not good for business. In Vancouver the trendy downtown district known as Yaletown is thriving as high-tech firms are redeveloping and locating there."<sup>30</sup> The GVRD also comments that: "Town centres still possess many competitive advantages with which they can compete for new office development projects. In sum, regional town centres offer three major advantages over other suburban office locations:

1. Superior regional transit connections (particularly those centres served by SkyTrain, West Coast Express or B-Line bus service);
2. Excellent community and employee amenities for office employees (including convenient shops and services, recreation facilities and cultural facilities); and
3. Residential housing opportunities in a wide variety of housing types and tenure that allows individuals to live more closely to where they work."<sup>31</sup>

While regional projections point to continued growth in office park development, largely at the expense of town centre locations, the above three factors must be reinforced in order to attract business owners and residents to Surrey City Centre. Both the GVRD's combined office and retail space projections for Surrey City Centre are in parallel for the year 2021 as noted in Table 5.2 below. However, given past performance in town centre office development, the projections may be ambitious and should be re-examined at regular intervals during the annual and 5-year OCP reviews.

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<sup>30</sup> Sarah McMillan, *Toward a Livable Region? An Evaluation of Business Parks in Greater Vancouver*. (Vancouver BC: School of Community and Regional Planning, University of British Columbia. November, 2004), 45.

<sup>31</sup> Greater Vancouver Regional District, *Regional Town Centres and Office Development: Promoting Employment in Accessible Locations*. (Burnaby BC: GVRD, Livable Centres Program, Regional Development Policy and Planning, December 2003), 18.

**Table 5.2: Regional Town Centres, Development, Population, and Job Projections 2001 - 2021**

Development Type & Jobs	Burnaby (Metrotown)			Richmond (City Centre)			Surrey (City Centre)		
	2001	2021	% Change	2001	2021	% Change	2001	2021	% Change
Commercial and Retail Floor Space (sq.ft.)	1,067,000	3,557,420	333%	3,994,588	8,500,000	213%	1,482,000	3,373,455	228%
Office Floor Space (sq.ft.)	1,787,248	4,887,355	273%	1,858,775	4,100,000	221%	1,029,000	7,065,336	687%
Dwelling units	12,385	15,154	122%	13,870	36,000	260%	8,095	31,199	385%
Population	24,300	27,200	112%	26,635	65,690	247%	17,165	56,185	327%
Jobs	20,000	31,280	156%	32,000	56,000	175%	15,700	46,145	294%

Source: GVRD Key Facts Dec. 2004

Simon Fraser University's Surrey Campus is a new player in the Surrey City Centre development scene. Strategically located in the Central City tower, this campus will eventually support approximately 5,000 students which will enhance the social and business dynamics of this centre. "The human capital theory says that economic growth will occur in places that have highly educated people. This begs the question: Why do creative people cluster in certain places?"<sup>32</sup> The answer to this could be that through an effective collaborative process involving the university, its student body, businesses, and the City of Surrey, new directions could be initiated to sponsor office and research facility development in Surrey City Centre. A strategic marketing plan could also set the framework for intensified business development in the downtown core, creating a synergistic relationship between businesses, the university, and the overall community, and ultimately providing a focus for creative people.

Within the Urban Transportation Showcase Program, stakeholders were invited to provide insights into the opportunities and constraints for development in Surrey's downtown core area. Participants in a series of workshops which included developers, staff from TransLink, the GVRD, RCMP, Surrey, local businesses, and Simon Fraser

<sup>32</sup> Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class*, (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 223.

University were asked to: “discuss the types of land uses contemplated, to identify the transportation and land requirements necessary to accommodate those aspirations, to explore opportunities for partnerships and to understand the possible timeframes for development.”<sup>33</sup> Observations from an initial market analysis noted:

“For the Multi-family residential market, it will only be attractive to redevelop properties in the core study area if relatively high-density projects (4.0 to 5.0 FAR) are permitted because properties in the core study area are improved and have relatively high existing property values.

For retail and service development opportunities, the key to encouraging retail development in the core study area is to create a large nearby residential population.

For Office market considerations, to ensure private office development in the core study area over the long term (other than as part of mixed use projects), sites intended for office use will need to be designated with “office uses” as a required use. Consideration could be given to designating/zoning City-owned lands for office use, and the City should identify and evaluate opportunities to locate new civic facilities in the core study area.”<sup>34</sup>

A variety of market mechanisms are currently being used in American cities to guide sustainable development. Robert Cervero cites strategies from Californian cities that could be considered for Surrey City Centre: City Planners in San Diego use a point system to assess proposed land-use changes. “Criteria reward infill projects and brownfield redevelopment, especially near light-rail stations.” “New projects in the city’s urban core (Lancaster California) are assessed a basic charge for providing additional infrastructure and services based on a standard unit cost. Projects outside the core are assessed the basic charge plus a distance-related surcharge that increases with distance from the core.”<sup>35</sup>

The success of many North American downtowns is a result of the creation of Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) or, as in British Columbia, Business Improvement Areas (BIAs). “The concern with downtown development is multifaceted, including a response

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<sup>33</sup> City of Surrey, *Corporate Report No. C018, “Urban Transportation Showcase Program – Status Report on the Development of a Transit Village Plan for the Surrey Central Station Area*, (Surrey BC: City of Surrey Planning & Development Dept., October 12, 2005), 6.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, Pg. 7–8.

<sup>35</sup> Robert Cervero, “Growing Smart by Linking Transportation and Land Use: Perspectives from California”, *Built Environment* Vol. 29, No. 1, (2003), 74 -75.



to urban sprawl, an emerging disenchantment with suburban life, a cultural attachment to Main Street, and the need to have effective local economic development policies.”<sup>36</sup> Revitalization of many downtowns has been accomplished by public/private partnerships in the form of BIDs or BIAs. In the case of Whalley, a BIA was formed in April, 2003 with assistance from the City of Surrey through its Economic Development Division. A primary goal was to create “a self-help organization that can effect change to improve the area’s commercial climate.”<sup>37</sup> From this base, the Whalley BIA works to address crime and image concerns while also developing as a voice for local businesses and a lobby group for Surrey Council.

Another example to emulate is the Indianapolis Downtown Inc. (IDI) which is: “a not-for-profit organization formed to develop, manage, and market Downtown Indianapolis. The organization makes Downtown a clean, safe, convenient, and exciting place to live, work and be entertained. It also helps ensure the maximum return on the \$4.7 billion invested in Downtown since 1990 and prepares Downtown for the \$2.7 billion of new investments scheduled for completion by 2010.”<sup>38</sup> A fundamental element for achieving an economically sustainable Surrey City Centre is the active participation by local business owners.

Another framework contributed by Christopher Leinberger involves twelve steps for successfully rebuilding downtowns. “The first six steps focus on how to build the necessary infrastructure, both “hard” and “soft” for turning around a downtown, and define the public and non-profit sector roles and organizations required to kick off the revitalization process. The next six steps are the means by which a viable private real estate sector can be re-introduced to a downtown that may not have had a private sector building permit in many years.”<sup>39</sup> Leinberger emphasizes that a successful downtown needs a defining boundary that allows it to be “walkable.”

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<sup>36</sup> Jerry Mitchell, “Business Improvement Districts and the “New” Revitalization of Downtown”, *Economic Development Quarterly*, Vol. 15, No. 2. (May 2001), 115.

<sup>37</sup> Ted Colley, The NOW, “Business tackles own backyard”, April 21, 2004, [www.thenewspaper.com/issues04/043204/features.html](http://www.thenewspaper.com/issues04/043204/features.html).

<sup>38</sup> City of Indianapolis, “Indianapolis Downtown Inc.”, <http://www.indydt.com/idi.html>

<sup>39</sup> Christopher B. Leinberger, “Turning Around Downtown: Twelve Steps to Revitalization”, Metropolitan Policy Program. *The Brookings Institution, Research Brief*, Washington, (March 2005): 3.

Drawing from strategies employed by other municipalities and sources as cited, the following strategic initiatives are therefore suggested.

Create a strategic Community Economic Development (CED) plan to identify economic gaps, strengths, potentials and to coordinate program delivery for Surrey City Centre businesses and development.

Establish a "Smart Scorecard" using accountable indicators such as floor area developed, sustainable features, new employment created, and new businesses supporting sustainability, in order to measure development progress.

Support and enhance the role of the Whalley Business Improvement Area (BIA) organization to engage local businesses in planning processes.

Create a Downtown Development Corporation (DDC) to assist the City in developing its holdings and marketing this regional town centre.

Establish programs for sponsoring cultural and historical events.

Create a City "Green Development Team" with staff located in Surrey City Centre to streamline development application approvals in the downtown core.

Pre-zone Surrey City Centre's core to allow for the highest development densities and integration of uses employing form-based zoning.

Promote sustainable development by establishing a bonusing system for projects that achieve higher densities and a mix of compatible uses.

Consider reductions in development application fees, property taxes, and Development Cost Charges (DCC's) for projects that use green technology and achieve sustainable social and environmental objectives.

Use tax shifting or tax abatement mechanisms to reduce automobile subsidies for parking and for rewarding sustainable projects.

Encourage Surrey, GVRD, TransLink, the Federal, and Provincial Governments to locate administrative offices in the core area.

Establish public-private partnerships in order to: "create supportive networks with incubators, resources, and information for green business innovators."<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Chris Lindberg (ed). *Making Sustainability Happen, Market Mechanisms for Sustainable Community Development, Interim Report*, (Vancouver BC: Simon Fraser University Centre for Sustainable Community Development, July 2005), 15.

Recognizing that municipalities are risk averse: “External funding should be sought for pilot or demonstration projects to offset risk costs. For example, the East Clayton project received \$600,000 from the infrastructure program for design, some construction, and monitoring.”<sup>41</sup>

In summary it is noted that in recognizing the varied challenges from large format retail operations, office parks and other regional town centres, a comprehensive approach is required for developing Surrey City Centre in an economically sustainable manner.

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<sup>41</sup> Paul Ham, “Financing Smart Growth: A Strategic Forum”. (Burnaby BC, Smart Growth BC. June 17, 2005), 7.

## **6.0 ACCESSIBILITY TO WORK AND SHOPPING**

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Before automobiles dominated and formed the shape of North American cities, some metropolitan areas were served efficiently by extensive streetcar systems. Until 1958, Surrey was essentially a rural municipality and was served by an efficient “Inter-urban” electric rail transit system that provided direct a direct connection between Vancouver and the farming community in the Fraser Valley. However, private vehicle use replaced this transportation mode and has reached a level where car ownership is now expanding at a faster rate than human growth. In response to this, many Canadian and American cities are re-discovering urban rail systems and the many benefits that can flow from their development.

Extensive research into the role of transit has been undertaken by Robert Cervero (1998). He describes a transit metropolis as: “a region where a workable fit exists between transit services and urban form.”<sup>42</sup> Cities such as Singapore and Copenhagen are adapting their physical settings to accommodate rapid transit and are thus encouraging more sustainable forms of metropolitan development.

Surrey City Centre’s location in the region allows for convenient public transit access and is Surrey’s terminus for SkyTrain (mass transit) and bus service. A transit exchange (that includes a bus loop) situated at the Surrey Central SkyTrain station, allows patrons to disembark from buses for local shopping and employment or to transfer to SkyTrain for destinations in Vancouver and elsewhere. Private vehicle access is via King George Highway, Fraser Highway and grid arterial roads including 100 Avenue, 104 Avenue, and 108 Avenue. Ample parking is provided in free and pay parking lots located around the town centre. Surrey’s cycle route system provides on-street lanes leading to and within this centre. Overall, Surrey City Centre appears to be an accessible place by all modes of transportation, yet further measures are needed to enhance peoples’ ability to move around comfortably in this regional downtown to enhance its role as a destination.

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<sup>42</sup> Robert Cervero, *The Transit Metropolis, A Global Inquiry*, (Washington: Island Press, 1998), 1.

The SkyTrain service to Surrey, as illustrated in Figure 6.1, is being systematically enhanced. It is linked by local and regional bus routes providing commuter access to Surrey City Centre. However, for many commuters, SCC functions only as a transfer point from local bus service to SkyTrain in order to continue their journeys to work and recreation destinations in Downtown Vancouver, Metrotown, and elsewhere. According to TransLink's South of Fraser Area Transit Plan (for the year 2000), Surrey City Centre is identified as an area of employment concentration for South of Fraser residents. This report notes that: "Surrey Central/Whaley residents who work in downtown Vancouver use transit extensively for work trips (70.2% modal split in favour of transit)."<sup>43</sup> However, this report also states that: "Excluding downtown Vancouver, the transit mode share for workers from the South of Fraser area to all other areas served by TransLink is just over 8%. Transit mode share for work trips that remain in the South of Fraser area is less than 4%, illustrating the dominance of the car mode in this area."<sup>44</sup>

**Figure 6.1: SkyTrain serves Surrey City Centre**



Photo by M. Dickinson

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<sup>43</sup> TransLink (Delcan), *South of Fraser – Area Transit Plan Final Report, Exhibit 2.8 – Home/Work Linkages to Downtown Vancouver*, (Burnaby BC: TransLink, June 2000), 18.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, Pg. 19

An overarching planning principle for regional town centres is that they should be served by mass transit. In this comparative evaluation, two of the regional centres (Metrotown and Surrey City Centre) are directly serviced by SkyTrain. At the time of this research study, Richmond City Centre is served by an efficient, B-line articulated bus service. The “Canada Line” (formerly known as the RAV “Richmond, Airport, Vancouver” transit line) is under construction and will serve Richmond in 2009.

The interview participants responded to the following questions. (1) Describe the roles that public transit plays in the development of your city’s town Centre. (2) What types of specialized transit service could enhance your town centres’ attractiveness? (3) What measures have been taken to guide the provision of parking in your town centre? (4) What policies and other mechanisms does your City use to ensure that the town centre is “pedestrian and cyclist friendly?”

## **6.1 Burnaby**

### *Interview C1.*

Metrotown is directly serviced by SkyTrain and bus and benefits from this. People find Metrotown easy to get to as a result of the direct connection from SkyTrain to the main station at Metrotown. This is the highest volume station on the Expo line. Additionally, transit service is provided at the bus loop that connects with trolley and conventional bus routes at the main SkyTrain station.

Metrotown is also quite compact in comparison with Surrey and Richmond town centres. Its core area is less than 100 Acres in extent making pedestrian mobility easy with walking trips taking only five minutes between the outer limits of the core area.

## **6.2 Richmond**

### *Interview C3.*

Richmond has a Transportation Plan that is part of its OCP. It integrates with the Downtown Plan addressing the network of main streets, public accessibility, bikeways, rapid bus, and SkyTrain (Canada Line). Through Richmond’s operating committees (public works and transportation, parking) the City enjoys a strong liaison that helps to ensure that the transportation system is integrated.

As a result of a recent policy initiative, Richmond now charges a Transit Oriented Development (TOD) levy for developers to fund a \$4/square foot fee for infrastructure-related items for projects in the rapid transit corridor. This money will be used to provide development along the guideway, for road reconstruction, utilities, and a grass strip but not for walkways, sidewalks and other pedestrian infrastructure needed for people to get to stations.

Richmond is addressing the concerns presented by parking in its town centre. Consideration is being given for civic parking structures paid for by developments. A key objective with a downtown parking strategy is to find ways to minimize parking requirements and encourage people to walk to the City Centre. Combined with this are approaches intended to make No. 3 Road more pedestrian and cycle friendly.

*Interview C2.*

With the "Canada Line" SkyTrain service expected by 2009, station precinct studies are being undertaken that will include solutions for providing public art at each station, and direct pedestrian and bicycle access to the stations.

### **6.3 Surrey**

*Interviews C4 - C7.*

Surrey City Centre is served directly by SkyTrain via the Expo Line with three stations and a bus loop that provides connections with communities south of the Fraser River. At the same time, Surrey has a "car culture". Private vehicle ownership is increasing faster than population and a majority of residents don't use public transit. Bus service is viewed as inconvenient by many.

While City Centre is served by SkyTrain, there are factors that don't allow direct transit service to serve this regional town centre as well as expected. This centre is located at the end of the SkyTrain line and is used more by transit users as a transfer point between regional bus routes and SkyTrain for passengers to access Vancouver and other employment centres in the region. Metrotown, by comparison, is located around the midpoint of the Expo SkyTrain route. Surrey City Centre is situated at the end of the Expo Line which does not allow for easy SkyTrain access from two directions. Also, the Central City station is located approximately 100 metres north of the main shopping centre (Central City Mall) and is not integrated within this shopping complex as is the case with Metrotown station.

Strategically locating a SkyTrain station to serve both commuters and major destinations in a town centre is a critical factor in ensuring the functional and financial success of regional centres. Given the current location of Central City station, the mall is not drawing any of the transit

users directly. Most commuters do not spend any time in the mall during transfers between bus and SkyTrain trips. While City Centre has an integrated bus loop and SkyTrain station, their location does not maximize the opportunities for ease of pedestrian access to major destinations in the core area.

## 6.4 GVRD

The Livable Region Strategic Plan “Transportation Choice Policies” emphasizes the need to increase transportation choice throughout the region, and in particular with regional centres. Policies directly supporting town centre development include:

Pursue Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategies as a fundamental transportation requirement for achieving the goals and objectives of this Strategic Plan.

“seek through partnerships on increasing transportation choice:

To plan and implement a transit-oriented and automobile-restrained transportation system for the region based on intermediate capacity transit facilities (including light rail transit, SkyTrain, and high-capacity busways) with the identified corridors.

To provide a variety of local transit services and networks with the flexibility to serve different demands in support of the complete communities and the compact metropolitan region;”<sup>45</sup>

GVRD participants responded to the following questions. (a) Describe the roles that public transit plays in the development of regional town centres. (b) What measures have been taken by the GVRD to guide the provision of parking in town centres? (c) What policies and other mechanisms does the GVRD use to ensure that regional town centres are “pedestrian and cyclist friendly”?

### *Interview G1.*

The GVRD provides advocacy and educational support to its member municipalities and coordinates actions that support the LRSP Transportation policy objectives through its Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). Also, by partnering with member municipalities such as Burnaby, Vancouver, and Surrey, solutions are explored to address parking concerns. Through the Transportation Showcase study for Surrey City Centre, GVRD is assisting in reviewing parking requirements, while also

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<sup>45</sup> Greater Vancouver Regional District, *Livable Region Strategic Plan*, (Burnaby BC: GVRD, 1996), 23.



examining approaches to improving pedestrian and bicycle mobility within this regional downtown. GVRD assists municipalities in planning to reduce Greenhouse Gases (GHGs) through coordinated land use and transportation strategies.

*Interview G2.*

Although the bus loop is integrated with the Central City SkyTrain station, it interrupts direct pedestrian access across the core area of this centre. In New Westminster, the SkyTrain station was designed to accommodate the future development of apartments, parking and shops over the station. Now that is happening with a joint development on City land that includes a parking lot and a couple of apartment towers.

## **6.5 Developers**

Developers responded to the following questions. (a) Explain the significance that transit accessibility has in your company's development decisions. (b) What steps would you take to ensure that pedestrians and cyclists are accommodated in your town centre developments?

The developers interviewed expressed unanimous support for the notion that public transit and a variety of transit modes are very important considerations for developing a viable regional town centre.

*Interview D2.*

In a transit oriented development in Vancouver located on the SkyTrain route, car ownership is far lower than the assumptions made by Vancouver Planning. Other mobility benefits derived from a SkyTrain station location included direct pedestrian and bicycle access to a multi-use pathway located under the SkyTrain guideway. This provides commuting cyclists with direct access to downtown Vancouver and regional town centres.

*Interview D1.*

Streets (in this developer's project) are designated and designed for cycle routes. Additionally, the developer is working with TransLink, planning for long-term revival of an Inter-urban line that provided service through the development site until the 1950's.

## 6.6 Enhancing Accessibility for Surrey City Centre

One explanation for City Centre's inhibited growth is the location and design of the transit systems that serve it. The current location of the bus exchange at the Central City SkyTrain station (shown in Figure 6.2 on page 55) does not serve the town centre core area as well as it could. It is located approximately 100 metres north of the Surrey Central shopping mall and does not provide direct and sheltered pedestrian linkages to either the mall, office tower or the North Surrey Recreation Centre. A strategic location in Surrey's downtown core is bisected with bus activity. Relocating this transportation facility to another location would open opportunities to develop a civic square that could function as a meeting place and a physical heart for the downtown core. Significantly, a central plaza could be part of a pedestrian system that allows unimpeded walking access throughout the core area.

In evaluating alternate locations for the transit loop, one option discussed was relocation to the King George SkyTrain station which is the terminus for the Expo transit line. While this station currently serves as the SkyTrain system terminus, it may have not operate in that capacity in the future if either SkyTrain or Light Rail Transit (LRT) service is extended beyond this point to other parts of Surrey and Langley. Through the overall transportation analysis for Surrey's downtown, decisions were made to retain the transit exchange in immediate proximity to the Central City SkyTrain station for a variety of reasons including:

- TransLink's plans to introduce Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) to service along 104 Avenue in the near future. This service will be able to link conveniently with the Central City SkyTrain station via City Parkway a short distance south of 104 Avenue;
- With the introduction of BRT on 104 Avenue, service connections with other local bus routes currently serving Surrey City Centre will be further enhanced at this central location;
- In the longer-term future, Light Rail Transit may replace BRT on 104 Avenue. Transit plans for Surrey City Centre take this into account in designing for this anticipated service; and

- By providing enhanced integrated public transit service to the core area of Surrey City Centre, transit can provide a valuable contribution to shaping the land uses intended for this central location helping the City of Surrey to achieve a more compact and densely developed downtown core that will function as a successful shopping and work destination. The ultimate relocation of the transit exchange, while either on City Parkway or in another location, will enhance the potential for high density, mixed use development around the Central City SkyTrain station, at the same time allowing for redevelopment of the bus loop and parking lot located south of the Recreation Centre for an integrated pedestrian plaza that will further enhance the area for pedestrian mobility and business activity.

**Figure 6.2: Bus Turning Into Transit Exchange at Central City Station**



Photo by M. Dickinson

Automobile dependence has been driving the growth of North American cities for over fifty years. The profound linkages between a growing automobile dependency and urban sprawl prompted Peter Newman and Jeffrey Kenworthy (1999) to explore this relationship with a view to reversing this trend. Their investigations covered transportation demand management and the creation of green urban villages. Copenhagen has adopted strategies for addressing automobile dependence through a long term commitment to developing its region in a finger-like form oriented around a system of transit lines. This transportation system: “includes places such as Ballerup, at

the end of one “S-tog” line (Copenhagen’s local electric train service), where a shopping centre, office complex, community facilities and apartments have been built over and around the station. The station environment includes pedestrianized boulevards, a large bus feeder station and extensive provision for bikes.”<sup>46</sup> A similar approach could be employed for a relocated bus exchange in Surrey City Centre.

North American metropolitan regions have embraced transit accessible places which are more popularly termed ‘Transit-oriented development’ (TOD). This typology has been adopted by planners as an approach to creating more cohesive, liveable, accessible, and environmentally sound communities. Hank Ditmar & Gloria Ohland (2004) explore the concept of transit oriented development. Significant elements of a transit town or TOD include walk-able streets, building at higher densities and integration of development with transit lines and stations. “The term transit-oriented development (TOD) should be reserved to refer to projects that achieve five main goals:

- Location efficiency
- Rich mix of choices
- Value capture
- Place making
- Resolution of the tension between node and place.”<sup>47</sup>

More specifically, according to Ditmar and Ohland, the three dimensions of successful TOD’s are:

“Active, walkable streets:

Places where people take transit are places where people walk. Every transit trip starts and ends with a walking trip, and places where walking is comfortable and appealing have a larger catchment area for transit patrons;

Building intensity and scale:

The regulation of building intensity through standards for floor area ratio, minimum lot area per unit and height/and or massing is a well-established

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<sup>46</sup> Peter Newman and, Jeffrey Kenworthy. *Sustainability and Cities – Overcoming Automobile Dependence*. (Washington: Island Press, 1999), 204.

<sup>47</sup> Hank Ditmar and Gloria Ohland, eds., *The New Transit Town, Best Practices in Transit-Oriented Development*, (Washington: Island Press 2004), 22.

function of zoning regulations. A concentration of activity that correlates with both the scale of individual buildings and the extent of the transit oriented district is a key factor supporting both transit and active users such as restaurants and shops that contribute to a vibrant street life; and

Careful transit integration:

Where train tracks, stations, or routes are part of the site, zoning must address how they will be successfully integrated into the project.”<sup>48</sup>

European solutions that integrate mixed uses with transportation stations could be adopted for Surrey City Centre. “The Dutch government has adopted a national locational policy intended to strongly support public transit and reduce auto use. Called the A-B-C policy, it seeks to steer large institutional and commercial activities to sites where public transit can be utilized.”<sup>49</sup> By adopting a similar approach, Surrey could achieve greater collaboration with the Federal and Provincial governments to guide the future location of their agencies within the core of Surrey City Centre rather than at the southern periphery where the Federal Taxation Centre is situated.

Land use factors that must be considered in planning for a transit-oriented downtown include: “density, mix, regional accessibility, centeredness, connectivity, roadway design and management, parking supply and management, walking and cycling conditions, transit quality and accessibility, site design and mobility management.”<sup>50</sup> The issue of connectivity is crucial for Surrey City Centre. It is developed according to the modernist traditions, on a mega-block principle in which large, unbroken street blocks are occupied by complexes such as the Central City mall/office tower and the recreation centre. Given this physical organization of street blocks, both vehicular and pedestrian mobility is inhibited by the limited number of roads and intersections. If a finer-grained road and pedestrian system is developed, access would improve throughout City Centre.

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<sup>48</sup> Hank Ditmar and Gloria Ohland, eds., *The New Transit Town, Best Practices in Transit-Oriented Development*, (Washington: Island Press 2004), 58- 59.

<sup>49</sup> Timothy Beatley, *Green Urbanism – Learning from European Cities*, (Washington: Island Press, 2000) 112 - 113.

<sup>50</sup> Todd Litman/Victoria Transportation Policy Institute, “3/ Land Use Impacts on Transport – How Land Use Factors Affect Travel Behavior”, (November 16, 2005), <http://www.vtpi.org/landtravel.pdf>.

Coordinated features are needed to provide pedestrians, cyclists, transit riders and motorists with a well connected downtown, one that provides not only safe and convenient access, but also a high level of ambiance and satisfaction. A recent TransLink initiative assists cyclists to use SkyTrain. Cycling infrastructure has also been developed with bicycle friendly travel lanes, road markings, parking stalls and parking lockers at the King George station. Free surface and structure parking is a significant feature of Central City mall and many other locations in Surrey City Centre. “Surface and structured parking lots present sterile, unattractive environments that deaden city and suburban streets alike, further isolate uses and preclude lively pedestrian-friendly streets.

Moreover, the adverse environmental impacts of parking lots, particularly on water quality are increasingly recognized. Too many quality smart growth projects remain on the drawing board because they simply cannot solve the parking dilemma. We need parking, but we need to re-think parking design, parking financing, and parking supply and demand to better meet the needs of communities, developers and users.”<sup>51</sup> As noted while interviewing developers for this research project, concerns were expressed about the high costs of development in City Centre including requirements for on-site parking.

Surrey has instituted a lower parking requirement for apartment and office space in Surrey City Centre through its Zoning By-law in comparison with requirements for other locations within the City. However, given that Surrey City Centre is a transit hub, the City should re-examine parking requirements for residential and commercial users. Evidence of this need is that Central City’s parking lots and structure are largely vacant during peak hours. One explanation is that property owners have set restrictions on stall rentals for office tenants in an attempt to provide sufficient free public parking for shoppers.

Pay parking exists on some downtown streets and also at park and ride lots adjacent to the King George and Central City SkyTrain stations. This user-pay practice charges

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<sup>51</sup> Robin Zimble/Governor’s Office of Smart Growth, “1/ Driving Urban Environments: Smart Growth Parking Best Practices,” [www.smartgrowth.state.md.us](http://www.smartgrowth.state.md.us)

motorists for the amount of time they park. “Cost-based parking pricing typically reduces vehicle trips 10 – 30% compared with unpriced parking, depending on circumstances.”<sup>52</sup> Another strategy that could have far-reaching effects is TransLink’s tax on parking stalls. The current rate is \$30/parking stall and many suburban businesses are criticizing this initiative saying: “that it’s unfair for the parking rate to be as high in the suburbs as in the urban core which has much better public transit.”<sup>53</sup> The TransLink Board is reviewing the tax with a view to lowering the proposed rate. However, like other transportation demand management approaches, a parking tax could promote behavioural changes in suburban commuters and encourage them to use public transit modes.

Taking a note from Seattle’s free downtown bus service, TransLink could consider a similar operation in Surrey City Centre. More personalized service could be provided by mini-buses on established routes. Augmenting this could be private jitney service and a free bike system similar to those found in European cities. Another transportation option could be accomplished through partnership with the Fraser Valley Heritage Rail society to provide trolley service similar to that operating in Vancouver between Granville Island and the Science Centre.

Measuring Surrey City Centre’s progress towards sustainability can be accomplished through using a blend of sustainable transportation indicators such as ones suggested by the Victoria Transport Policy Institute: “(economic) – user rating, commute time, employment accessibility, land use mix, mode split, congestion delay, travel costs, facility costs, (social) – safety, community livability, fitness/walking & cycling, service for non-drivers, affordability, service for disabled people, accommodating children, and (environmental) – climate change emissions, other air pollution, noise pollution, land use impacts, habitat protection, resource efficiency.”<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Todd Litman/Victoria Transport Policy Institute, “6/Win-Win Emission Reductions – Smart Transportation Emission Reduction Strategies Can Achieve Kyoto Targets And Provide Other Economic, Social and Environmental Benefits,” (December 2, 2005), <http://www.vtpi.org/wwclimate.pdf>.

<sup>53</sup> Don Cayo, *Vancouver Sun*, ‘Fairness’ not a word in TransLink’s tax vocabulary. October 19, 2005, D3.

<sup>54</sup> Todd Litman/Victoria Transport Policy Institute, “122-14/ Well Measured – Developing Indicators for Comprehensive and Sustainable Transport Planning,” (March 30, 2005), <http://www.vtpi.org/wellmeas.pdf>.

Surrey City Centre can benefit from policy successes experienced elsewhere. Integrating a transportation plan within the OCP can provide a strategic platform for coordinating land use and transportation objectives coherently. By focusing development into a smaller core area, similar to Metrotown, Surrey City Centre can become a successful pedestrian-oriented place. Re-orienting the bus loop will enhance the integration of transit activities without detracting from pedestrian mobility. Through coordination with TransLink, proposed 'B-line' articulated bus service can be activated on the King George Highway corridor to Newton and South Surrey, with prospects for light rail transit in the long-term.

Similar potential exists for linking Surrey's downtown with Guildford and Fleetwood via light rail along 104 Avenue and Fraser Highway. As an optional consideration for the Province's 'Gateway' project, high-speed rail service could be initiated to provide fast service between Surrey City Centre and Fraser Valley communities via 104 Avenue and the Trans-Canada Highway corridor, strengthening the regional role of this centre. By providing an easily accessible place that facilitates unimpeded pedestrian mobility through a compact core area, Surrey City Centre could emerge as a model of sustainable town centre development.



## 7.0 COMMUNITY LIVABILITY

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The long-term goal for Surrey City Centre is to create a positive, stimulating environment in which creative people want to live, work, shop and be entertained. According to Richard Florida: “regional economic growth is driven by the location choices of creative people – the holders of creative capital – who prefer places that are diverse, tolerant and open to new ideas.”<sup>55</sup> As City Centre evolves it has a choice of become an inspiring, healthy urban village or a high density ghetto. Fortunately, Surrey has the opportunities to make Surrey City Centre a successful environment for social interaction, cultural celebration, and business creativity.

During the 1990’s, Surrey and the GVRD established policies that include the creation of “complete communities” in which residents can live, work, shop, recreate, and enjoy cultural pursuits. The 1995 GVRD Livable Region Strategic Plan (LRSP) contains four interrelating policy strategies, including one that deals with complete communities. According to the LRSP: “these communities would offer greater diversity, choice and convenience where people could live, work and play without having to travel great distances to do so. The foundation for more complete communities is the Livable Region Strategic Plan’s network of regional and municipal town centres. Greater Vancouver’s eight regional town centres will accommodate a large share of the region’s future higher density commercial and residential growth with a high level of transit access and interconnection. Each municipality will determine the precise character and scale of its respective centre.”<sup>56</sup> Surrey City Centre embodies most of these attributes and is maturing as an identifiable downtown community.

The 1991 Whalley Town Centre report states that: “A healthy community is one which welcomes a diversity of lifestyles, ages and income groups; which provides a range of support services to help with the challenges of urban living: and which is characterized

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<sup>55</sup> Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 223.

<sup>56</sup> Greater Vancouver Regional District, *Livable Region Strategic Plan*, (Burnaby BC: GVRD, December 1999), 11.

by safety, neighbourliness and comfort.”<sup>57</sup> That report further commented (on page 3-44) that “the City address the increasing demands for community services and amenity spaces such as; child and adult day care, meeting facilities, drop-in facilities, information and referral services, multicultural services, public assembly space, family space/women’s centre, artists studios, cultural spaces for art displays, and a host of other facilities that contribute to a positive living experience for residents, workers and visitors.”

Surrey’s 1995 OCP echoed the policy intent of the 1991 Whalley Town Centre Study. In defining “Complete Communities”, the 1995 OCP stated: “Complete communities have a wide range of housing choice, opportunities for employment, business, and investment opportunities, recreation, relaxation, and a full range of services and leisure activities.”<sup>58</sup>

One of the most significant goals of creating a sustainable Surrey City Centre is the need for it to be an equitable, inclusive place. Surrey’s downtown must offer opportunities for inclusiveness, meaning that all ages, cultures, and economic levels are well served. According to Mark Roseland: “Social equity means more than equal opportunity. It implies opportunities for adequate housing, healthcare, education, employment, and mobility.”<sup>59</sup> “The development of Whalley Town Centre requires that social impacts be addressed in the early planning stages if it seeks to become a desirable location for residents, workers, and visitors. Failure to address the social planning principles may result in elite ghettos, crime, isolation, fear, and apathy.”<sup>60</sup> Hence, planning for the health, safety, and social requirements of this community is crucial for its success.

The interview participants provided insights to the following questions into how Surrey City Centre can become a livable place. (1) What policies and processes have your city

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<sup>57</sup> City of Surrey; *Whalley Town Centre*, (Surrey BC: City of Surrey Planning & Development Department, October, 1991), 3-44.

<sup>58</sup> City of Surrey. *Official Community Plan, 1995, By-law 12950*, (Surrey BC: City of Surrey Planning & Development Department, 1995), 5.

<sup>59</sup> Mark Roseland, *Toward Sustainable Communities – Resources for Citizens and their Governments*. (Gabriola Island: New Society Publishers. 1998), 146.

<sup>60</sup> City of Surrey; *Whalley Town Centre*, (Surrey BC: City of Surrey Planning & Development Department, October, 1991), 3-44.

used to encourage a mix of housing and commercial development in your town centre? (2) How has your city initiated social, cultural artistic and recreational facilities and programs within its town centre? (3) Could educational institutions contribute to the liveability and economic viability of your town centre? How?

## **7.1 Burnaby**

### *Interview C1.*

In establishing Metrotown, large scale public facilities have been provided including the Bonsor Recreation Centre (100,000 sq. ft.), the Bob Prittie Library (61,000) sq. ft. a large public parking garage under the library, open spaces with playing fields, a civic square and other lands set aside for future civic buildings. One project has hotel space above offices and retail (the Hilton) while another has similar uses including residential space and a medium format retail operation on the ground floor (Staples). In addition, many larger scale developments in Metrotown include a mix of uses, primarily residential and commercial. These uses, guided by the plans, enable Metrotown to provide a cohesive living and working environment for its residents, workers and visitors, in essence, making it a complete community.

## **7.2 Richmond**

### *Interview C2.*

Richmond residents supported its 1998 OCP policy objectives that focus on preservation of agricultural areas, single family areas and the City Centre. Downtown development closely follows OCP guidelines that require high quality streetscapes, schools, community centres, and pedestrian systems. By breaking down mega blocks into smaller units, pedestrian traffic is enabled making the City Centre a walkable environment. The City of Richmond is promoting live/work studios in new core area developments. OCP design guidelines support mixed use developments by promoting street-orientation, pedestrian-scale street edges that provide for public interaction and social opportunities.

Richmond has inspired the creation of a public arts policy and program that promotes the visual and literary arts as well as the provision of public art as an amenity requirement in all projects. Advisory committees work with the City to oversee a variety of social, recreation, and public art programs. A social plan was integrated into the 1996 City Centre Plan.

### *Interview C3.*

OCP policies require developers to provide funds for affordable housing, child care, and public art in all projects. The Olympic Oval will become a

major facility for public health and recreation programs. It will operate as a centre for wellness, physiotherapy, surgery recovery, and high performance sport programs.

*Interview C2.*

Educational institutions have stimulated and shaped the growth of many major cities. Kwantlen University College has a campus near Lansdowne Mall serving a wide student market. Additionally, many private schools located in City Centre serve the educational needs of Asian students. In combination, these policy initiatives programs and facilities share in creating a liveable environment for Richmond City Centre.

### **7.3 Surrey**

*Interviews C4 - C7.*

The City is receptive to allowing mixed uses and a variety of housing types in Surrey City Centre. While there is no explicit policy directed towards these objectives, the OCP generally provides for them. At this time, there are two large-scale mixed-use projects in Surrey City Centre. Gateway was developed by Intrawest in the 1990's at 108 Avenue near King George Highway. It incorporates an office tower with ground level retail connected directly with a SkyTrain station. By 2002, the Central City office tower was completed. Its plaza is linked with the Central City SkyTrain station by a pedestrian pathway. Currently under construction is the Jung Enterprises project, a series of five high-rise apartment towers that will be located on a podium containing retail space and recreation facilities as well as underground parking.

### **7.4 GVRD**

GVRD interviewees responded to the question: What policies and processes have the GVRD used to encourage mixed-use (e.g. housing and commercial) development in regional town centres?

*Interview G1.*

From a regional perspective, medium and high density housing is an important part of the formula for creating successful town centres. The regional centres that experience the greatest success are the ones that have a substantial housing stock (e.g. Metrotown, Richmond, and Coquitlam).

## 7.5 Achieving a Livable City Centre

For Surrey City Centre to flourish as a livable community, many elements should work together harmoniously. Indicators suitable for use with City Centre to define and measure community livability include: mixed-use and compact development, slow, interconnected traffic-calmed streets, pedestrian scale design, transit-oriented development, and mix of housing types.

**Table 7.1: Regional Town Centres - Community Facilities 2001**

<b>Community Facilities</b>	<b>Burnaby (Metrotown)</b>	<b>Richmond (City Centre)</b>	<b>Surrey (City Centre)</b>
Parks and open space	96 ha.	120 ha.	34 ha.
Recreational facilities	2 facilities	12 (incl. Minoru Pk.)	North Surrey Rec. Centre
Cultural facilities	Movie theatres	Movie & live theatres	n/a
Educational facilities	2 schools + 1 library	5 schools + Library	SFU Surrey campus, Library
Medical facilities	Numerous	Richmond Hospital	Surrey Memorial Hosp. nearby
Local government facilities	GVRD, TransLink, Police	City Hall	Community policing office
Source: GVRD Key Facts Dec. 2004			

In comparison with Metrotown and Richmond City Centre, Surrey City Centre is not as adequately served by park space as noted in Table 7.1 above. Also missing are cultural facilities such as a performing arts centre, museum and movie theatres, and a civic administration centre. These facilities are located elsewhere in Surrey. However, Surrey City Centre does possess a recreation centre and two community parks, Whalley Athletic Park and Holland Park. BC Parkway is a multi-use pathway located under the SkyTrain guideway linking King George Station with Brownsville Bar on the Fraser River. The North Surrey Recreation Centre located in the core area includes an indoor pool, two skating rinks, a physiotherapy facility, a fitness centre, and shops. A senior's centre, connected with the Whalley library provides local residents with settings for social interaction and educational opportunities.

According to the 1991 Whalley Town Centre report, the main objective was to: "take the existing parks and open spaces as its base and incorporate a system of walkways that would tie these open spaces and other points of interest, such as school, churches,

recreational and public service areas to the population densities which will be developed in the Centre.”<sup>61</sup> A 1992 staff study explored future open space and recreation facilities that should be considered for Surrey City Centre. Alternate park and open space standards were considered in recognition of higher land acquisition costs. Also, the proposed intense downtown development would require more “urban” types of open spaces such as pocket parks, pedestrian connections, linear open spaces, public squares, and plazas that would occupy compact areas.

Simon Fraser University’s Surrey Campus, located in the Central City complex is expected to accommodate 5,000 students including computing science, interactive arts, and business administration programs. Communities benefit from direct spin-offs associated with post-secondary institutions. Businesses frequently cluster near university campuses, seeking graduate students for employment and research assistance in product development. Some post-secondary learning institutions, in collaboration with governments and businesses, develop research parks adjacent to campuses, such as SFU at its Burnaby Mountain campus. Historical interaction between universities and their host communities have resulted in various forms of development including student residences, research establishments and full-scale communities such as “UniverCity” located adjacent to Simon Fraser University’s Burnaby campus. These potentials exist in Surrey City Centre with the emergence of university and other post-secondary establishments.

Surrey’s downtown provides a variety of housing types, affordability levels, and accommodation for seniors and long term care residents. The Ted Kuhn tower on Old Yale Road provides for seniors accommodation on an affordable scale. The Lions Club complex specializes in long-term care. Both facilities are located immediately adjacent to Central City mall within easy walking distance for residents to shop and socialize. The Mayflower housing cooperative is a high-rise apartment located on 104 Avenue near City Parkway that provides affordable living and security of tenure for its residents. Numerous rental apartment buildings exist throughout Surrey City Centre. Additionally, new apartment complexes and ones under construction provide strata title ownership

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<sup>61</sup> City of Surrey; *Whalley Town Centre*, (Surrey BC: City of Surrey Planning & Development Department, October, 1991), 3-50.

accommodation. However, many rental units in single family dwellings have been demolished in recent years without replacement accommodation being made available for the low income sector.

The Central City mall and tower complex, with its inspiring architecture, mixes retail, office uses and Simon Fraser University's Surrey Campus, setting a positive tone for core area development. A lesson can be taken from Andres Duany's description of Mizner Park in Boca Raton Florida. "Mizner Park offers a superior physical environment that attracts people whether or not they need to shop. Its desirability stems from the carefully shaped public space it provides, as well as its traditional mix of uses: shops downstairs, offices and apartments above. When well designed and well managed, this sort of mixed-use main-street retail is more profitable to own than the strip centre or the shopping mall."<sup>62</sup> Taking a cue from successful centres elsewhere, Surrey City Centre can become a complete community and a dynamic destination.

To achieve a stronger sense of community, Surrey City Centre requires a coordinated social plan that links its policies and programs with a downtown land use plan. Adaptation of policy approaches taken by Richmond could include establishing a network of committees that would advocate for public art, social and safety needs. Housing for all socio-economic and age-related needs is a priority for the core area. In combination with this should be enhanced office and retail employment opportunities, cultural attractions such as a performing arts centre and theatres, government administrative services and active involvement by health and learning institutions such as SFU. Blending compatible uses including ground-oriented dwellings in the core area could provide greater vitality and a distinct sense of place for the heart of Surrey's downtown.

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<sup>62</sup> Andres Duany, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk and Jeff Speck, *Suburban Nation, The Rise of Sprawl and the Decline of the American Dream* (New York: North Point Press, 2001), 28.

## **8.0 COMPATIBILITY WITH THE ENVIRONMENT**

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In order to evolve as a place that achieves greater compatibility with the environment, Surrey City Centre needs to be guided by a vision, policies, implementation, and financial strategies that will lead it in this direction. While there has been scepticism around the notion of sustainable city development, we are now more certain about human activities in urban settings that influence climatic change. "Reducing the energy consumption of buildings and associated greenhouse gas emissions has become a priority for all concerned with the design, production, and maintenance of buildings, in an attempt to curtail global warming. Sustainability is as much about the local as the universal; with the growing awareness of global issues, there is a growing concern for national heritage, and the protection of local identity and the ecological capacity of local and national habitats."<sup>63</sup> Surrey's downtown, if designed to minimize its environmental footprint, can contribute to a more compact and integrated form of community development and become a model for sustainability.

While this study compares Surrey City Centre with other regional centres, other recent advances in sustainable community development have their roots in European cities. In "Green Urbanism, Learning from European Cities", Beatley (2000) reveals many approaches explored in Europe that are now finding their way into North American urban communities, changing perceptions on how cities can develop in a sustainable manner. The transfer of ideas from a European heritage of environmental planning includes such examples as community farming, co-housing, traffic-calming techniques, car sharing, community heating, green roofs, urban containment, and pedestrian streets.

Within a series of executive interviews, participants provided responses on how their city and region frame policies to encourage sustainable development. The City and GVRD interview participants responded to these questions. (1) How has your City (the GVRD) framed its town centre policies to encourage sustainable (i.e. high density, mixed use)

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<sup>63</sup> Christine Phillips, *Sustainable Place, A Place of Sustainable Development*, (London: Wiley-Academy, 2003), 1.



development? (2) What approaches has your City taken to address energy efficiency, community heating and renewable energy processes for the town centre? (3) What initiatives have been taken to encourage a “greening” to town centre environments (e.g. through park development, tree planting, etc.). (4) What directions does your city (GVRD) plan to take to achieve sustainable development in its town centre? (5) What other ideas do you wish to share with regard to Surrey City Centre developing as a sustainable regional downtown?

## **8.1 Burnaby**

### *Interview C1.*

While Burnaby has not framed specific policies for sustainability, it does encourage mixed uses and high density development in Metrotown and its other town centres. Although there are no current requirements for community heating and other alternate energy sources for Metrotown, other initiatives assist in the reduction of energy use and Green House Gases in this regional centre. Greening initiatives include roof area, boulevard enhancements, street trees, and BC Parkway. A commitment of between \$400,000 and \$500,000 per year has been directed towards the bikeway system with end of trip facilities such as bike racks.

In considering new directions for achieving sustainable development in Metrotown, Burnaby would focus on improving the pedestrian system and boulevards. Metrotown has finite limits to its development. When it is built out, other centres in Burnaby will accommodate new high density office and residential growth.

## **8.2 Richmond**

### *Interview C2.*

During the 1970's, Richmond pre-zoned large parts of its City Centre for the highest density uses. Over the years the proposed density has been realized and the policy has been fine tuned to allow for continued high density core area development, a hallmark of smart growth and town centre sustainability.

In encouraging mixed uses, some high rise apartments are built on shopping centre sites such as the Richmond Centre Mall. A synergistic relationship is occurring with the coming transit line and station that has given impetus to high density and mixed use development in City Centre.

*Interview C3.*

Richmond encourages pedestrian-scale developments with building edges close to the street and canopies for pedestrian protection. The OCP requires increased tree canopies for improved oxygen exchange achieving reductions in greenhouse gas production. Green roofs such as the one developed at the City Hall could set an example for other developments. Success in green roof development depends on establishing a standard that can be duplicated for other projects.

*Interview C2.*

Richmond has provided leadership in developing its City Hall according to Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards. For other buildings, the City will require construction at a LEED silver or gold level. All new fire halls will use geothermal heating.

A Citywide trail network combined with wide pedestrian sidewalks provides for alternate mobility choices, contributing to a healthier downtown environment.

### **8.3 Surrey**

*Interviews C4 - C7.*

Surrey's OCP policies encourage sustainability through high density development and construction of green buildings. The OCP policies also require boulevard development with trees and stream course protection, all of which could apply directly to its City Centre. It is believed that a critical development concentration and residential population mass is necessary to be able to request more of the features needed in Surrey City Centre such as parks, social housing, and other amenities similar to those secured in other parts of the City. A plan for Surrey City Centre should require developers to provide similar amenities (as required in Neighbourhood Concept Plans) without discouraging them with additional costs.

### **8.4 GVRD**

*Interview G1.*

The GVRD has framed its regional town centre policies to encourage sustainable high density and mixed use development in a number of ways. The policies promote work place location in proximity to transit or walking. As an example, approximately 12% of Metrotown's employees walk to work. Given Metrotown's mix of jobs and housing, there is a high mode split by walking and transit. The current policies support both green locations and green buildings (not just green buildings). In one report document, a spreadsheet compares a 100,000 sq. ft. office showing its

configuration in a town centre location in a high density built format against an office park location as a one or two storey built form. This comparison illustrates the energy savings, greater energy efficiencies, and achievements in reducing greenhouse gases from office buildings if they are constructed in a town centre office location. The GVRD supports local initiatives such as North Vancouver City's requirement for instituting district heating and provision of green roofs.

One approach that could be explored would be regional intervention requiring GVRD approval of large scale development proposals (for instance large format retail over 300,000 sq. ft., or office parks) located outside regional town centres. There is significance in evaluating such proposals in terms of their influence on both local and regional development interests as well as possible impacts upon the Agricultural Land Reserve.

#### *Interview G2.*

There is a need to balance Surrey's corporate initiatives for new business locations by re-evaluating the role of its regional town centre in light of growing competition from business parks, large format projects and the changing nature of work environments. In light of technological innovations such as personal wireless communication devices, people can work in their vehicles allowing them to meet with customers at their workplaces rather than in town centre office locations.

## **8.5 Developers**

Developers interviewed responded to the following questions. (1) How would your company overcome financial, institutional, and other obstacles in developing "green" or sustainable projects? (2) What approaches has your company taken to address energy efficiency and other Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) objectives in your projects? (3) How can "green infrastructure" become more affordable for developers? (4) How would your company develop town centre housing that is affordable and provides for the needs of the elderly and people with physical challenges?

There is a fundamental recognition that the development community is faced with financial challenges and perception concerns regarding building in Surrey City Centre. Developing in a sustainable manner with green projects could possibly add to the complexities faced by developers in considering proposals for this regional downtown.

*Interview D2.*

Although there was agreement on the need to build “green”, alternatives to LEED may be required to encourage environmentally sound construction.

*Interview D3.*

Surrey could follow Victoria’s example in developing municipally owned land by preparing a Request for Proposal (RFP) model based on a triple bottom line approach (balancing economic, social, and environmental objectives of new projects).

*Interview D2.*

In one specific case, over the development period, greater experience was gained in refining practices and designing buildings that achieved enhanced energy efficiency through monitoring results. This practice yielded reductions in the unit price for energy efficiency features to \$2/sq. ft. There is a need to invest in marketing and education for purchasers who are willing to purchase green dwellings showing the costs and benefits of environmentally sophisticated buildings with enhanced energy efficiency.

*Interview D3.*

Other approaches now underway in a local sustainable project aim to achieve greater energy efficiency with an integrated closed loop system using a combination of passive solar cells augmented with wind power. A separate system is to use wood waste to power a heating system. Ultimately, the project is planned to generate its own heat and become a net exporter of heat to other buildings through a community heating system.

Higher density development can be achieved without requiring additional civic infrastructure. Methods for achieving this include recycling storm water, by using grey water and black water for flushing toilets, watering gardens, and washing vehicles. Eliminating piped storm drainage systems can be achieved by using ponds, creeks and developing “natural” drainage systems on a development site to minimize the flow of storm water away from the property both above and below ground. Additionally, rainwater can be managed “on-site” by collecting it in cisterns, diverting it from cisterns to green walls and green roofs allowing for the creation of rooftop gardens, some which may support food production. Green roofs are proven to provide greater building insulation and energy savings.

At this time, alternate energy systems, and on-site storm and sewage systems are achieved at higher development costs than conventional construction approaches. However, it is expected that “green” energy

and infrastructure systems will yield longer term returns with some capital cost savings.

*Interview D3.*

Above all, there is a need to create a framework for sustainability and an integrated approach for solving problems around City Centre. Consider using a Smart Growth style of Checklist to evaluate issues and set goals for this centre. Adopt “green building and community planning” policies based on the LEED system. Aim for accountability in building and community design. Develop and employ a lifecycle costing policy and budget for it. Use quality management programs to ensure high quality in construction. Along with these considerations, make sustainable development targets achievable.

In providing other ideas about the sustainable development of Surrey City Centre, developers mentioned independently that they believe that Surrey City Centre covers too large an area as currently configured and needs to be more concentrated. Office and high density residential development should be focused in Surrey City Centre instead of permitting these uses to be dispersed in different locations across Surrey. In addition, improving infrastructure and working with BC Hydro to place power lines underground will improve the image and streetscape aesthetics.

## **8.6 Creating an Environmentally Sound Downtown**

Regional town centres such as Surrey’s are a step in the evolution towards sustainable communities. They exhibit some of the features of sustainability with a mix of land uses clustered at high densities. Many regional centres are served by public transit, provide direct pedestrian access, contain natural features and landscaped amenities, are economically self-sufficient, use energy efficiently, and are livable, social environments. As regional centres, they are achieving a balance of social, economic, and environmental needs. According to Vancouver’s vision, sustainability is: “a direction rather than a destination. A sustainable city is one that protects and enhances the immediate and long-term well being of a city and its citizens, while providing the highest

quality of life possible.”<sup>64</sup> The concept of sustainability is an evolving one and Canadian cities are in the early stages of exploring and applying this concept to their development. There is a wealth of ideas that could have direct application for shaping Surrey City Centre’s future development. In this chapter, the elements of environmental sustainability are discussed.

In responding to the developers’ concerns, the City of Surrey should provide leadership by establishing a Downtown Development Corporation (DDC) that oversees public-private partnerships for building LEED type projects on City-owned downtown core properties. Within such a framework, the City could establish performance criteria for “green” construction, providing density bonuses for developers who employ building and infrastructure services that minimize environmental impacts. Use of a “triple bottom line” approach for downtown development projects similar to Victoria’s Dockside Green project could provide an appropriate evaluative mechanism for determining the environmental merits of new proposals. Most significantly, planning for Surrey City Centre should use a framework for guiding sustainable development in an integrated approach that uses indicators allowing for an on-going assessment of each new development to test its level of environmental compatibility.

Some attributes of a sustainable downtown for Surrey noted below are derived from the interview responses and other sources.

### **8.6.1 A Compact, Integrated Place**

To function as an environmentally sustainable place, Surrey’s downtown needs to cover a smaller area, have a well defined core area that incorporates a wide mix of land uses developed at a high density. By having a smaller, densely developed core area, Surrey City Centre’s environmental footprint is minimized. One prototype to follow would be the Dockside Green project in Victoria that integrates a wide range of uses on its site including residential, retail/commercial, live/work, offices, and industrial uses centred on a green open space/circulation system. On-site servicing such as storm water

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<sup>64</sup> A Sustainable City. City of Vancouver. <http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/sustainability/>

management could minimize requirements for extending city services. By using a sustainability checklist such as the one recently adopted by Port Coquitlam, Surrey could evaluate the mix of uses and densities proposed in developments to determine a project's level of performance compliance relative to environmental impact criteria.

### **8.6.2 An Energy Efficient Place**

It is widely recognized that more intense forms of development use energy resources more efficiently. A densely developed downtown core would be ideally suited for service by renewable power sources such as passive solar systems and district heating. "District heating can be most successfully applied where there are several large buildings or complexes, a mix of land uses, high residential densities, relatively small spacing between buildings and a grid street layout and a relatively cheap energy source such as waste heat from a boiler, heat pump, or geo-thermal facility."<sup>65</sup> The use of green roofs would not only provide a more aesthetic appearance to Surrey City Centre, but would contribute to greater building insulation and would minimize heat loss during summer months. Employing LEED evaluation criteria or an equivalent process would be a valuable tool for planners to use in determining the energy efficiency of new projects.

Surrey's OCP contains policy C-6-1 "Promote Energy Conscious Planning and Design" that states: "Promote energy efficiency as a factor for consideration in community planning and building designs, and support those land use and development options, transportation alternatives, built forms, energy alternatives and methods that increase energy efficiency and conservation."<sup>66</sup> The city's OCP policies could be advanced with a detailed energy plan for its downtown, that includes design guidelines for building siting, the use of solar, community heating systems and other technologies, as well as education on the costs and benefits of energy planning and a marketing strategy to encourage both developers and consumers to create and purchase energy efficient buildings.

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<sup>65</sup> Lee Failing and Michael Margolick, *A Tool Kit for Energy Planning in B.C. Energy Ideas for Community and Regional Planning, Part 2*, (Vancouver: BC Energy Aware Committee, April, 1997), 10.

<sup>66</sup> City of Surrey. *Official Community Plan, 1995, by-law 12950*, (Surrey BC: Planning and Development Department, 1995), 64.

### 8.6.3 A Green Place

Developments should be designed to conform with their site's natural setting to a maximum degree. Tree protection, streamcourse preservation, on-site storm water detention and modified street boulevards for greater storm water management (as noted in Figure 8.1 showing a boulevard from UniverCity at Simon Fraser University in Burnaby BC) are significant requirements that will allow the downtown to co-exist with the environment. In many cases, brownfield sites should be redeveloped with substantial landscaping including green roofs. Streetscape and other 'greening' strategies that include boulevard trees and other landscaping features would help to humanize the City Centre and modify its microclimate by minimizing the "heat sink" effect. The core area currently contains parking lots, streets and concrete plazas with very little foliage. Planning for a heavily landscaped pedestrian plaza would bring both visual and environmental relief to the downtown core.

**Figure 8.1: Design Boulevards to Improve Storm Water Management**



Photo by M. Dickinson

### 8.6.4 An Accessible, Transit-Oriented Place

Enhancing access to and within Surrey City Centre by various public transportation modes will enhance its level of environmental compatibility. Partnering with TransLink, Surrey could encourage more commuters to use transit to reach work destinations in City Centre rather than using private vehicles. Greenhouse gas emissions could be lowered through such programs. Individual development projects in Surrey City Centre could be assessed with a checklist using indicators similar to those in Port Coquitlam's Sustainability Checklist.



“Accessible by multiple modes of transport, emphasizing public transit including future planned.

Parking does not visually dominate the street view and allows easy, safe pedestrian building access.

Provides traffic speed and demand management.

Builds or improves pedestrian amenities such as sidewalks, transit shelters, bike racks, and connections.”<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> City of Port Coquitlam. Sustainability Checklist. 2005 [www.portcoquitlam.ca](http://www.portcoquitlam.ca)

## **9.0 CONCLUSIONS**

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This research project has explored significant impediments to Surrey City Centre's development as a sustainable downtown. Competition from large format retail complexes such as the Strawberry Hill Mall in Newton (Surrey), Langley By-pass area and in Coquitlam (Ikea on Lougheed Highway and Furniture outlets on United Boulevard) as well as suburban office parks (for instance the York Centre in Newton and Glenlyon in Burnaby) have influenced its development. Changing strategic plans, fluctuations in the economic climate, varying consumer preferences, crime, and image have all affected the growth of Surrey City Centre. Service by SkyTrain has brought mixed results. While mass transit serves this regional downtown, it also takes workers to other regional business destinations.

Surrey's regional downtown has felt the influence of social and economic problems. However, its history is changing. While the concerns of the past have not evaporated, lessons have been learned and new approaches are being taken to provide viable solutions.

Planning Surrey City Centre as a model for sustainability can succeed through an understanding its past, appreciating what has been done well, learning from the best practices of other places, using well defined indicators and criteria for guiding growth, and seeking support from the community, developers, businesses owners, educators, and politicians. Its future development can be shaped to provide an alternative solution for suburban sprawl through intense densification, mixing compatible uses and providing accessibility and livability.

### **9.1 Plans and Policies Shaping Surrey City Centre**

Over the past forty years, and in particular, since 1977, Surrey has employed a series of plans with varying visions for the development of its regional town centre. The 1977 Whalley-Guildford Plan was ambitious in its vision for a large-scale, bi-nodal town centre. Shortly after its launch in the early 1980's, the economic impacts of rising

lending rates followed by a recession contributed to stalling the Plan's initiatives. In revisiting this plan, the 1991 Whalley Town Centre plan provided a comprehensive set of policy guidelines for the development of Surrey City Centre that covered the scope of land use, transportation, social implications, community services, parks, and utility provisions. It contained insightful policies that have yielded some significant results. During the 1990's, the City of Surrey, together with the Provincial transit authority, collaborated on providing SkyTrain service to Whalley. Through public-private partnerships, significant projects were constructed around the Gateway and King George SkyTrain stations. However, when examining the market projections of this plan, the anticipated level of development has not materialized. By 2001, it was expected that there would be 3,560,000 square feet of office space and 3,409,000 square feet of retail space. According to 2001 GVRD findings, approximately one half of the anticipated commercial space existed. The development shortfall between 1991 and 2001 is attributable to a number of factors, among them the large area of Surrey City Centre (although much smaller than the 1977 Whalley-Guildford Plan) and competing influences from office parks located elsewhere in Surrey and the Greater Vancouver region.

Surrey's 1995 OCP included policies for downtown development. However, while included in the plan, they were not organized cohesively, but rather were blended with policies for Surrey's community town centres. The 2001 OCP review provided new opportunities for business development throughout Surrey with the belief that new office and retail operations should be located closer to a dispersed population. Commencing in the 1990's Surrey initiated Neighbourhood Concept Plans (NCPs) that provide a high level of detail for planning new communities in suburban, greenfield locations. After permitting urban expansion into new areas through NCPs, concentrating urban growth at higher densities in Surrey City Centre became more challenging.

Although the 1991 planning policies for Surrey City Centre were well constructed, they were not supported consistently with a capital plan developed on the same level as recent Neighbourhood Concept Plans. Substantial competition for new retail and office space also emerged with the impetus for large format retail locations and suburban office parks accommodated by other City planning policies.

Through comparative analysis of plans for Burnaby's Metrotown and Richmond City Centre, other strategies derived from these municipalities could be transposed onto a template for Surrey's future planning directions. In the case of Metrotown, this regional town centre is relatively compact and has been developed over the years with consistent policies, implementation of extensive infrastructure, land purchases for future development and commitment from Burnaby Council. Although Richmond City Centre covers a larger land area than Surrey City Centre, its development has been constrained and shaped due to its proximity to Vancouver International Airport. Richmond City Centre, like Metrotown, also has benefited from infrastructure pre-servicing. The GVRD lent support to a high-density town centre in Whalley through its 1975 Livable Region Plan policies. However, the more recent 1995 Livable Region Strategic Plan policies are more diffused with less of a focus on town centre growth. Developers commented that there should be a broader range of residential dwelling types with a mix of retail development in Surrey City Centre. For future development, Surrey should employ a triple bottom line approach that balances economic, environmental, and social considerations in plans for a sustainable City Centre.

Some elements of the 1991 Whalley Town Centre report should be carried forward within today's planning context including the benefit of a strategic implementation mechanism combined with a long-term financial plan. Implementing a downtown plan requires partnerships between Surrey, the development sector, non-profit and non-governmental agencies as well as other levels of government. Plans prepared by Surrey and the GVRD on one hand have supported the sustainable development of Surrey City Centre, but have been challenged by recent trends in office park and large format retail development. By reviewing the challenges faced in Surrey City Centre through the Urban Transportation Showcase Program (UTSP), there should be opportunities for triggering mixed use, high density (Transit-oriented) development to create a "Surrey Central Transit Village" in the core area. This program contains components for: "the development of a plan, development of an implementation strategy, and the development of a prioritized strategy for capital spending to assist in implementation."<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> City of Surrey, *Corporate Report No. R104, "Transport Canada Urban Transportation Showcase Program – Update and Terms of Reference in Support of a Request for Proposals,"* (Surrey BC: City of Surrey Planning & Development Dept. April 26, 2005), Appendix A, 4.

Through the UTSP, there will be opportunities to influence changes in land uses, transportation functions and urban design in the core area having the potential to assist the City of Surrey in creating a sustainable regional downtown.

## **9.2 Competition for Business and Development**

Surrey's downtown development has been hindered in part due to competition from other regional centres, large format retail businesses, and office parks. In 2001, Surrey adjusted its OCP policies allowing business centres to develop in more locations across the City in order to support a long-term goal of achieving greater economic self-sufficiency. The GVRD noted in its 2003 report *Regional Town Centres and Office Development: Promoting Employment in Accessible Locations*, that outside of the Vancouver downtown, considerably more office floor space was developed in office parks than in the regional town centres.

Burnaby and Richmond officials indicated that these regional town centres have developed according to the approved plans and policies. Their growth has not been impeded by external competing businesses or other town centres. Developers commented that development fees, cost charges and other administrative expenses are impediments for developing in Surrey City Centre. However, while these costs play a role in building decisions, it was felt that Surrey City Centre is well located for future development. An analysis of recent development by Surrey shows a substantial increase in townhouse and apartment development over the past two years since Development Cost Charges were reduced for downtown multiple family developments. King George Highway's role should be re-examined allowing it to become a major shopping destination street rather than a route through Surrey's downtown to other locations.

In order for Surrey's downtown to attract more office space and professional/service sector employment, a new vision of downtown as an employment destination is required. Recognizing changes in the work environment advances in wireless communications and the mobile office; City Centre needs to become more than just an office work location. A combination of complementary activities is needed to make Surrey's downtown a vibrant working and social environment, a place where people want to be.

By studying approaches taken by many American cities to incorporate large format retail operations into downtown locations, a significant question might be: Should City Centre accommodate a limited amount of large format retail businesses by requiring their integration with high density residential, office and other uses? Recognizing Surrey City Centre's suburban location, a question posed by Mark Shorett may assist in framing the issues of development form and competition from large format retail and office park operations. "Is it better to attempt to transform a district dominated by mall superblocks into a finely grained sequence of public streets and smaller buildings, or to propose a hybrid that capitalizes on existing circulation patterns and accepts the dominance of large buildings and the reality of a limited number of public rights of way?"<sup>69</sup>

Given the current large block format of Surrey City Centre's road network that was designed to facilitate ease of private vehicle access to shopping and work destinations, plans for Surrey's downtown core should strengthen the role of pedestrian access through a finer-grained circulation system that includes pedestrian routes in addition to new cross-streets that accommodate motor vehicle, pedestrian and bicycle circulation. A hybrid circulation system that provides uninterrupted pedestrian access will enhance the role and identity of Surrey City Centre as a desirable shopping and work destination that could become noted for its high quality streetscapes and pedestrian routes that allow direct and safe access to a wide variety of retail, recreation and cultural venues. Larger blocks (broken down from the current mega-blocks) could be designed to accommodate large format retail businesses within multiple-use complexes that facilitate integration with office, residential, entertainment and cultural facilities utilizing underground or structure parking in a pedestrian-oriented setting.

City Centre's residential development has shown signs of recovery in response to reduced Development Cost Charges for multiple family projects. Frequently, commercial construction follows residential development. This fiscal approach could be coordinated with a business development plan similar to Richmond's involving partnership with the Whalley Business Improvement District, learning institutions, developers, the City of Surrey, and others. Public-private partnerships (P-3's) can assist in promoting new

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<sup>69</sup> Shorett, Mark. *Hedge Cities, Gambling on Regional Futures*. MIT. May, 2004. 161.

development while spreading the risks for all parties. A critical question is this: Should Surrey be a key player in guiding the development of its strategically located land holdings in the downtown core?

Although Surrey City Centre has been challenged by business competition, re-designing its plans and policies to capitalize on its transit access advantages could assist this centre in becoming a shopping and work destination helping it achieve a significantly higher level of economic self-reliance. Surrey City Centre could successfully compete with suburban office parks and large format retail locations by devising policies and design criteria that could integrate them within high density, mixed use projects located in a walkable setting and by developing a unique image with specialized regional business functions,

### **9.3 Accessibility to Work and Shopping**

Surrey City Centre is well serviced by public transit, arterial roads, and bicycle routes making it an accessible town centre. However, at the same time, it functions as a transfer location for thousands of commuters who continue their work journeys to other parts of the Greater Vancouver region.

In most aspects, Surrey City Centre benefits from its public transit service and connections between bus and SkyTrain travel modes. Contingent upon extension of the SkyTrain route to City Centre was the development of a high-density office and residential node at the Gateway Station, and a residential enclave at the King George Station. To a limited extent, transit has been a catalyst for high-density development. However, for a period of approximately ten years, the expected synergistic relationship between transit and Surrey City Centre development stalled in its tracks as anticipated office and retail growth fell short of municipal and regional goals. While Surrey's population grew to over 400,000, much of its growth occurred in new suburban areas within Neighbourhood Concept Plans instead of in established communities through intensive infill and re-development around Surrey City Centre. This has prompted a coordinated study sponsored by Transport Canada, the GVRD, TransLink, and Surrey. The 'Transit Showcase' study will explore development and transportation concerns to provide new directions for Surrey City Centre development.

Surrey City Centre's development has been premised on service by rapid transit. While there is not a strong correlation between the provision of mass transit and town centre development, there is sufficient evidence that transit plays a positive role in the growth of such centres. Public transit access to Surrey City Centre provides advantages in comparison with office park and large format retail locations where workers and business clients require access by private vehicle. By advancing the coordination of transit service including safe passage for pedestrians and cyclists, Surrey City Centre can develop successfully as a sustainable place that addresses transportation needs.

## **9.4 Community Livability**

While many features are in place to make Surrey City Centre a functioning regional town centre, other elements including a performing arts centre, cinemas, street bistros, street oriented buildings, a central plaza and other facilities are needed to cumulatively enhance the social and cultural health of this downtown. A greater variety of housing in the core area, such as non-profit co-ops, affordable rental accommodation, shelters for the needy and a blend of strata/ownership housing would contribute to an equitable living environment. This variety of housing forms and tenure, integrated with retail and office functions, would provide 'eyes on the street' and significantly contribute to downtown livability.

Supporting the notion of community 'ownership' is fundamental in creating an equitable place. A comprehensive social plan combined with effective program delivery is required to assist residents in establishing a stronger claim to their downtown neighbourhood. To assist Surrey City Centre a core area resident in achieving greater fulfillment, a new social plan is needed that would address such concerns as crime prevention, homelessness, housing affordability, linkages with work opportunities, health and safety concerns. A social plan developed with the involvement of local residents, business owners and social agencies can assist Surrey City Centre residents and workers in achieving a complete, equitable and safe community.



## **9.5 Compatibility with the Environment**

Surrey City Centre has the means of becoming a place that exerts minimal impact upon the environment. With vehicle ownership growth in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia exceeding its rapid population growth, this regional town centre will provide the opportunity for residents to live closer to work destinations thus lowering their need for multiple car ownership. Recognizing the high costs of augmenting existing storm and sanitary sewer engineering services to Surrey City Centre, new buildings and comprehensively developed projects should employ solid waste and storm water management processes on-site in a sustainable manner that could minimize downstream environmental impacts and substantially reduce the servicing costs that are usually associated with conventional piped storm and sanitary systems. With advancements in heating system technology, Surrey's downtown core can be planned to use community-heating systems based on a hybrid of geo-thermal and solar heating technology. Through effective environmental design, building orientation for solar gain, combined with effective heating and energy systems, Surrey City Centre could ultimately become a net exporter of heat and energy.

**Table 9.1: Surrey City Centre - Sustainable Development Checklist**

Surrey City Centre can develop as a sustainable regional downtown through the use of coordinated policies supported by evaluative mechanisms such as Table 9.1 that provide a framework for ranking new development proposals. The intent of this table is to provide an illustration of how new proposals can be ranked in terms of their sustainability. This is a general Checklist that uses a small sample of possible indicators. Its structure is based on the five independent variables employed in this report. The Checklist also includes a triple bottom line approach that can provide insights in assessing new proposals on the basis of achieving a balance between economic, social and environmental needs with the ultimate goal of helping Surrey City Centre evolve as a sustainable regional downtown.

<b>Sustainable Surrey City Centre Development Scoring Category</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Points</b>	<b>Max. Score</b>
<b>1. Plans &amp; Policies Shaping Surrey City Centre</b>			
Development density – Floor Area Ratio (FAR)	FAR <1	0	
	FAR 1 - 3	1	
	FAR 3 - 5	3	
	FAR 5 - 7	5	<b>5</b>
Land use mix (compatible uses on same site)	1 use	0	
	2 uses	1	
	3 uses	3	
	4+ uses	5	<b>5</b>
<b>2. Competition for Business and Development</b>			
Provides permanent employment	<10 employees	0	
	10 – 20 employees	1	
	20 – 50 employees	3	
	>50 employees	5	<b>5</b>
<b>3. Accessibility to Work and Shopping</b>			
Accessible by multiple modes	Car only	0	
	Bus/walking	1	
	Bus/bike/walking	3	
	Bus/bike/walking/LRT	5	<b>5</b>
<b>4. Community Livability</b>			
Affordable housing/tenure mix/special needs	<5% of units	0	
	5 – 10% of units	1	
	10 – 20% of units	3	
	20+% of units	5	<b>5</b>
<b>5. Compatibility with the Environment</b>			
Energy efficient design	Not LEED	0	
	Similar to LEED	1	
	LEED Silver	3	
	LEED Gold/Platinum	5	<b>5</b>
Minimizes infrastructure impacts	Full Servicing off-site	0	
	Some servicing on-site	1	
	Most servicing on-site	3	
	Totally serviced on-site	5	<b>5</b>
<b>Maximum Possible Sustainable Development Score</b>			<b>35</b>

## **9.6 A Sustainable Vision**

The future for Surrey City Centre is a positive one if new and well constructed policies are adopted to assist in implementing a sustainable vision for its development; however, as witnessed in the past, failure to support these policies and planning strategies will not yield a self-sustaining regional downtown. By examining Surrey's City Centre from the theoretical perspective of sustainability, it is possible to see the interrelatedness of major contributing elements such as; the environment, social needs and economic potential, within an urban context. This research is one small step in the exploration for sustainability in regional town centres. More questions require informed responses and initiation, for instance: How can a regional town centre such as Surrey's attractively provide an environmentally sound option for suburban sprawl? Recognizing the current marketplace attraction for large format retail establishments and office parks, how must Surrey City Centre compete effectively with low-density, car-oriented developments?

Surrey City Centre is poised to become a unique and successful regional downtown, which will succeed only if there is a concerted commitment to shaping its vision with effective policies and financial support so that it becomes a model for sustainable regional downtown development.

## **10.0 APPENDICES**

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## **10.1 Appendix A: Cities Questionnaire**

### **MURB Research Project**

#### **“Shaping Surrey City Centre as a Sustainable Regional Downtown”**

**Mike Dickinson**

**September 14, 2005**

**(Cities Interview)**

This Research Project is a comparative case study that examines why Surrey's City Centre has not developed substantially as a compact, self-sustained regional town centre. It reviews similar planning policies and development approaches for regional town centres in Burnaby and Richmond, two other Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD) municipalities. By comparing policies and other strategic initiatives employed by these municipalities, insights will be developed for recommended use in making Surrey's City Centre a model of sustainable regional downtown development. This information will be augmented by data analysis of economic and development trends affecting the three town centres and the Vancouver Region. A third source of information will be from developer interviews. This is expected to yield insights into the possible costs and challenges of developing a sustainable town centre. The questions in this interview are intended for municipal officials working for the cities of Burnaby, Richmond, and Surrey.

1. Plans and Policies shaping town centres
  - a. What are the most significant City policies that have enabled your town centre to develop?
  - b. Explain how your town centre has developed in relation to your OCP and other planning policy guidelines?

2. Competition from other Regional Town Centres, Big Box retail outlets and office parks
  - a. What events or actions have impeded town centre growth and what has the City done to overcome development obstacles?
  - b. Describe how other Regional Town Centres influence your town centre?
  - c. How have “large format” retail outlets and office parks had an impact upon the development of your town centre? If they have, what policies and other actions has your city taken to minimize this influence?
  
3. Accessibility for business, shopping and transit
  - a. Describe the roles that public transit plays in the development of your City’s town centre?
  - b. What types of specialized transit service could enhance your town centre’s attractiveness?
  - c. What measures have been taken to guide the provision of parking in your town centre?
  - d. What policies and other mechanisms does your City use to ensure that the town centre is “pedestrian and cyclist friendly”?
  
4. Economic and business challenges
  - a. What combination of economic policies and other fiscal/taxation initiatives does your City use to enhance business and land development in your town centre? Have they been effective? Why?
  - b. What benefits could your town centre realize with a strategic business plan and a development company based on a public-private enterprise model?
  - c. What challenges did the City face in encouraging new businesses to locate in your town centre?
  
5. A livable town centre that is a complete community
  - a. What policies and processes have your City used to encourage a mix of housing and commercial development in your town centre? (Is there a particular mix of land uses that successfully encourages social and business activity to create a vibrant place to live and work?)

- b. How has your City initiated social, cultural, artistic, and recreational facilities and programs within its town centre?
- c. Could educational institutions contribute to the livability and economic viability of your town centre? How?

6. Meeting the needs of all ages

- a. What City policies provide for housing affordability and variety (including family living) for town centre residents?
- b. What measures have been taken to ensure that town centre residents, workers, and visitors experience a safe, healthy environment? (e.g. CPTED guidelines, community policing, block watch programs and participants, etc.)?
- c. What services are provided for children, teens and the elderly in your town centre and are they effective in meeting the needs of these age groups?

7. A sustainable place that minimizes ecosystem impacts

- a. How has your City framed its town centre policies to encourage sustainable (i.e. high density, mixed use) development? What challenges and successes have been experienced?
- b. What approaches has your City taken to address energy efficiency, community heating and renewable energy processes for the town centre?
- c. What initiatives have been taken to encourage a “greening” of the town centre environment (e.g. through park development, tree planting programs, green roofs, stream course and environmental protection)?
- d. What new directions does your City plan to take to achieve sustainable development in its town centre?
- e. What other ideas do you wish to share with regard to Surrey City Centre developing as a sustainable regional downtown?

## **10.2 Appendix B: GVRD Questionnaire**

### **MURB Research Project**

#### **“Shaping Surrey City Centre as a Sustainable Regional Downtown”**

**Mike Dickinson**

**September 12, 2005**

**(GVRD Interview)**

This Research Project is a comparative case study that examines why Surrey's City Centre has not developed substantially as a compact, self-sustained regional town centre. It reviews similar planning policies and development approaches for regional town centres in Burnaby and Richmond, two other Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD) municipalities. By comparing policies and other strategic initiatives employed by these municipalities and the GVRD, insights will be developed for recommended use in making Surrey's City Centre a model of sustainable regional downtown development. This information will be augmented by data analysis of economic and development trends affecting the three town centres and the Greater Vancouver Region. A third source of information will be from developer interviews. This is expected to yield insights into the possible costs and challenges of developing a sustainable town centre. The questions in this interview are intended for officials working for the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD).

1. Plans and Policies shaping town centres
  - a. What are the most significant GVRD policies that have enabled regional town centres to develop?
  - b. Explain how regional town centre have developed in relation to GVRD's policy guidelines?



2. Competition between regional town centres and from big box retail outlets and office parks
  - a. What events or actions have impeded regional town centre growth and what has the GVRD done to overcome development obstacles?
  - b. Describe competition between regional town centres and how it influences the development of Surrey City Centre
  - c. How have “large format” retail outlets and office parks influenced regional town centre development? If they have, what policies and other actions has the GVRD taken to minimize this influence?
  
3. Accessibility for business, shopping and transit
  - a. Describe the roles that public transit plays in the development of regional town centres.
  - b. What measures have been taken by the GVRD to guide the provision of parking in town centres?
  - c. What policies and other mechanisms does the GVRD use to ensure that regional town centres are “pedestrian and cyclist friendly”?
  
4. Economic and business challenges
  - a. What guidance has the GVRD provided the region's municipalities in terms of economic initiatives to encourage business and land development in regional town centres? Has the guidance been effective? Why?
  
5. A livable town centre that is a complete community
  - a. What policies and processes have the GVRD used to encourage mixed-use (e.g. housing and commercial) development in regional town centres?
  - b. How has the GVRD encouraged social, cultural, artistic, and recreational facilities and programs within regional centres?
  
6. Meeting the needs of all ages
  - a. What GVRD policies provide housing affordability and variety (including family living) for town centre residents?

- b. What measures has the GVRD taken to ensure that regional town centre residents, workers and visitors experience a safe, healthy environment?
- 7. What assistance does the GVRD provide member municipalities in providing services for children, teens and the elderly in town centres?
- 8. A sustainable place that minimizes ecosystem impacts
  - a. How has the GVRD framed its regional town centre policies to encourage sustainable, high density, mixed use development? What challenges and successes have been experienced?
  - b. What approaches has the GVRD taken to address energy efficiency, community heating and renewable energy processes for regional centres?
  - c. What initiatives have been taken to encourage a "greening" of town centre environments (e.g. through park development, tree planting programs, green roofs, stream course and environmental protection)?
- 9. What new directions does the GVRD plan to take to achieve sustainable development in its regional town centres, particularly in Surrey City Centre?
- 10. What other ideas do you wish to share with regard to Surrey City Centre developing as a sustainable regional downtown?

## **10.3 Appendix C: Developers Questionnaire**

**MURB Research Project**  
**“Shaping Surrey City Centre as a Sustainable Regional Downtown”**

**Mike Dickinson**

**September 14, 2005**

**(Developer Interview)**

This Research Project is a comparative case study that examines why the City Centre in Surrey BC has not developed more fully as a sustainable, compact regional town centre. It reviews similar planning policies and development approaches for regional town centres in Burnaby and Richmond. This information will be augmented by data analysis of economic, demographic and development trends affecting the three town centres and the Greater Vancouver Region. An additional, significant source of information will be from developer interviews. This is expected to yield insights into development industry innovations, economic and institutional barriers, and other challenges in developing a sustainable (“green”) town centre. The questions in this interview are intended for developers who are building innovative, high density and mixed use projects in the Vancouver region.

1. Developing in regional town centres
  - a. Describe the innovations your company has used in developing sustainable projects in the Greater Vancouver region, especially in its regional town centres.
  - b. What are the most significant factors that your company considers before developing in a regional town centre?
  
2. Competition from other regional town centres, big box retail outlets and office parks
  - a. What factors would make development in other town centres more attractive than in Surrey City Centre? How could this be changed to ensure successful development in City Centre?



- f. What other ideas do you wish to share with regard to Surrey City Centre developing as a sustainable regional downtown?

## **11.0 REFERENCE LIST**

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### **11.1 Executive Interview Participants**

To protect the identity of participants, the interviewees are assigned numbers as follows.

Participants in the City interviews (Burnaby, Richmond, and Surrey) are identified as Interviews C1 through C7

Participants in GVRD interviews are identified as Interviews G1 and G2.

Participants in the Developer interviews are identified as Interviews D1, D2, and D3.

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