



Transport  
Canada

Transports  
Canada



## SURREY CENTRAL TRANSIT VILLAGE PLANNING PROCESS BACKGROUND BRIEF

The purpose of this brief is to provide an outline of how the vision for Surrey's City Centre has evolved over the last several decades. The outline provides an understanding of the existing context from which to begin a planning process focusing on the smaller Surrey Central plan area. The Surrey Central plan will focus on an area approximately 500 metres around the Surrey Central SkyTrain Station and it is within this area that transit-oriented development is to be encouraged to create a transit village. It is expected, however, that the Plan will have influence in an area of up to 800 metres from the station.

While not exhaustive, this brief summarizes key initiatives that have been proposed and/or implemented in Surrey's City Centre and is organized under the following headings:

- Policy Framework;
- Whalley Enhancement Strategy;
- Development Activity; and
- Area Profile (Demographics and Transportation characteristics)

### **POLICY FRAMEWORK**

Plans and policies have been in place for Surrey's City Centre since the 1970's:

- **1976 - the GVRD's "Livable Region Plan"** identified Whalley as one of four regional town centres;
- **1985 – the "Whalley-Guildford Plan"** was adopted and proposed a major concentration of high-density commercial development along 104 Avenue between the Whalley and Guildford Areas.
- **1991 – the "Surrey City Centre Plan"** was adopted to encourage development along 104 Avenue and to explore opportunities in conjunction with the future extension of SkyTrain service to Whalley. This plan provides direction for concentrating residential and employment density around three SkyTrain stations. This plan contains policies that focus on creating safe and active pedestrian-, cyclist-, and transit user-friendly streets, developing attractive buildings, encouraging high density and mixed use developments, and incorporating good design that provides a unified identity for the centre.
- **1993 – "Surrey City Centre Urban Design Concept"** builds on the policies contained in the "Surrey City Centre Plan" and recognizes a High Street (City Parkway) that provides a north-south pedestrian link through the plan area. Additional east-west links are proposed to provide better access to the area's amenities for multiple transportation modes, particularly from King George Highway. Guidelines for the siting and massing of buildings are also proposed to accommodate density while creating a pleasant pedestrian environment.

- **1994 – Surrey Street Beautification Strategy** proposed a series of recommendations to improve the appearance along Surrey’s major streets to reinforce the appropriate image of Surrey as a City of Parks. King George Highway was identified as one of the six improvement areas. Improvements that have since been completed along King George Highway between 100 Avenue and 108 Avenue include the undergrounding of overhead utility wires, construction of 2 metre wide boulevards, installation of 1.5 metre wide paving stone sidewalks, landscaping to screen unsightly land uses, and the realignment and painting of streets lights.
- **1994 – the “Surrey City Centre Social Strategy”** complemented the Surrey City Centre Plan in identifying needed human care facilities and services. The City is currently working on an updated plan to address the social well being of all Surrey residents, which will provide future direction for this and other areas of the City.
- **1996 – “Livable Region Strategic Plan”** identifies Surrey City Centre as one of eight regional town centres.
- **1996 – “Surrey Official Community Plan” (OCP)** contains policies that pertain to the City Centre, including promoting “...Surrey City Centre as the downtown and major employment centre for Surrey, and as a Regional Town Centre for the region south of the Fraser River, by supporting a broad range of high density commercial and residential development, as well as entertainment, cultural and social amenities and community facilities to serve the City and region.” Examples of more specific policies include encouraging pedestrian-oriented development, discouraging surface parking adjacent to pedestrian-oriented streets, supporting visual and arts projects in the City Centre, and providing connected public open spaces.
- **2001 – the “Whalley Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plan”** was developed to update the previous plan generated in 1998. This plan outlines a vision for the area and outlines the key elements including the provision of recreation facilities at the heart of the community to meet City Centre growth, pedestrian-and people oriented public spaces (particularly along the High Street and the linked recreational corridor), and culture and heritage facilities.

## **WHALLEY REVITALIZATION STRATEGY**

The Whalley Revitalization Strategy is an initiative aimed at enhancing the Whalley area by improving its image, stimulating private sector development and building a greater sense of pride for those who live in, work in and visit the area. This strategy builds upon policies and ideas generated as part of the OCP, “Surrey City Centre Plan,” and “Surrey City Centre Urban Design Concept.” The main three components of the strategy include capital improvements, private sector incentives, and leisure centre programming.

### 1. Capital improvements that have been proposed and/or constructed include:

- North Surrey Recreation Centre renovations, which are currently underway. The improvements include the provision of more glazing to improve surveillance of area as well as other crime prevention, aesthetic, and functional improvements;
- Tom Binnie Park Community Centre, the City Centre Library, and Sunrise (Seniors) Pavilion renovations, which have been completed and include regular maintenance, and upgrades to improve the safety and appearance of these facilities;
- Holland Park upgrade into a special events site and Surrey’s first major urban park. Construction is expected to commence in the early part of 2005, with the park opening in the fall of 2005.
- Banner and flower basket installation along King George Highway between 104 and 108 Avenues to celebrate the City’s ten-year anniversary project.
- Indoor synthetic turf facility near Tom Binnie Park. Negotiations are underway to build an indoor facility to accommodate a range of field sports.
- Large civic plaza. This plaza is proposed in a central location along the City Parkway.
- East and West Whalley Ring Roads. Most of the City Centre Ring Road network has been completed, but there are a few missing segments that need to be constructed.
- City Parkway, which is the main north-south pedestrian shopping street and greenway in the City Centre. This street is to connect Holland Park in the south with 108 Avenue in the north. Only the section between 102 and 104 Avenues has been improved and plans are underway to construct improvements between 104 and 105 Avenues next spring, 2005.
- East-West road connections to the City Parkway. The proposed connections are to improve access and connectivity to the amenities in the City Centre for multiple transportation modes.
- Pedestrian overpass from the mezzanine level of the King George SkyTrain Station to Holland Park is identified conceptually.

### 2. Incentives for Private Sector Development

To encourage private development, Development Cost Charges (DCCs) have been reduced by approximately 30% for high density residential units in the City Centre as a pilot project for a two year period, which commenced mid 2003.

### 3. New and Enhanced Leisure Centre Programs

Programs have been developed to focus on wellness, youth, and family-oriented activities. Following are examples of these programs.

- **Community Art Series** initiatives include the Community Art Matching Program and a City Centre Walking Loop project. The Walking Loop project is in the planning stage and will encompass the street frontage along 135/135A Street between Holland Park and 108th Avenue. This Loop will incorporate a series of public/community art that will create visual linkages along the route.

- **Creating Neighbourhood Spirit** focuses on building neighbourhood pride through the delivery of programs that address the specific needs in the Surrey City Centre area. Successful programs include Block Parties, the Food and Cultural Event, and the Music and BBQ on the Plaza Event. The North Surrey Recreation Centre plaza also offers “Family Fun Nights” on Fridays, which include reduced admissions to the centre, where a variety of activities that appeal to the whole family are offered.
- **Targeted Recreation Programs** have been developed for specific age groups and high-risk populations. These include preschool programs (some of which include ESL and fine arts components), Young Mums Program, Kids In Motion Summer Camps, free drop in Saturday swim lessons, and After School Programs in all but one of the sixteen schools in area. A seniors outreach program is currently being planned.

### **DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY**

The development activity in the Surrey City Centre area that occurred between the adoption of the Surrey Centre Plan in 1991 and 2001 included:

- Fourteen low rise residential apartment buildings;
- Six high rise residential apartment buildings;
- Eighteen new commercial buildings;
- Six major renovations;
- Three new institutional buildings; and
- Two major institutional expansions.

A summary of more recent developments that are under construction or currently under review, in addition to the Central City Tower and mall renovation are as follows:

- 715 residential units plus two high-rises in future phases
- 158,000 square feet of office/commercial/industrial development
- Institutional projects include an environmental interpretive centre, a 400-seat church, a free standing child care centre, a 30-bed detox facility and health related offices, a two-storey expansion of an existing care facility (additional 30 beds), and a drug and alcohol treatment facility (28 beds and 34 affordable transitional housing units).

## **AREA PROFILE**

Following is a demographic profile of the larger Surrey City Centre area to provide a snapshot of the existing conditions as well as understand the changes that have occurred since the adoption of the Surrey City Centre Plan and the arrival of SkyTrain service. A transportation profile is also provided.

### **Demographic Profile**

The population of Surrey City Centre was projected to steadily increase and Table 1 compares the projections included in the 1991 “Surrey City Centre Plan” with the actual growth achieved both for the City of Surrey and the smaller City Centre area.

**TABLE 1**

|   | <b>1991</b>              | <b>2001</b>              | <b>2011</b>              |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>City of Surrey Population</b>                                  |                          |                          |                          |
| Estimate in<br>Surrey City Centre Plan                            | 233,400<br>to<br>253,700 | 341,370<br>to<br>374,600 | 458,775<br>to<br>503,400 |
| Actual 2001   | 245,200                  | 347,825                  | -                        |
| <b>City Centre Population</b>                                     |                          |                          |                          |
| *Estimate in<br>Surrey City Centre Plan                           | 13,975                   | 19,575<br>to<br>20,575   | 34,180<br>to<br>35,180   |
| Actual 2001   | 13,975                   | 17,945                   | -                        |
| <b>City Centre Office/Retail<br/>Floor Space (ft<sup>2</sup>)</b> |                          |                          |                          |
| Estimate in<br>City Centre Plan                                   | 1.50 mil                 | 3.25 mil                 | 9.00 mil                 |
| Actual 2001   | 1.03 mil                 | 3.40 mil                 | -                        |

Notes:

\* Numbers assume two persons per new apartment dwelling unit and did not factor in the loss of units as part of redevelopment

While population growth is somewhat below the projections for Surrey’s City Centre, office and retail projections exceed that anticipated for 2001.

Other descriptive characteristics that may help to create a profile for Surrey’s City Centre area are outlined in the table below.

**TABLE 2**

| <b>2001 DATA</b>       | <b>CITY CENTRE</b> | <b>CITY OF SURREY</b> |
|------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Age</b>             |                    |                       |
| under 30               | 37.54%             | 41.8%                 |
| 30 to 59               | 44.2%              | 43.5%                 |
| over 60                | 17.8%              | 14.7%                 |
| <b>First Language:</b> |                    |                       |
| • English              | 64.2%              | 63%                   |
| • Punjabi              | 8.0%               | 14.9%                 |
| • Hindi                | 2.3%               | 2.5%                  |
| <b>Jobs</b>            |                    |                       |
| Total                  | 15,700             | 177,145               |
| Sales                  | 27.8%              | 25.2%                 |
| Business               | 20.1%              | 19.0%                 |
| Trades                 | 21.3%              | 17.8%                 |
| Management             | 7.3%               | 10.2%                 |
| <b>Housing Stock:</b>  |                    |                       |
| • Single Family        | 20.0%              | 55.4%                 |
| • Apartments           | 57.1%              | 19.4%                 |
| <b>Tenure:</b>         |                    |                       |
| • Owned                | 40%                | 71.5                  |
| • Rented               | 60%                | 28.5                  |

### **Transportation Profile**

In Surrey’s City Centre, approximately 6% of workers get to work by foot or bicycle as compared to 9% in Metrotown and 12% in downtown Vancouver. Of the residents in Surrey’s City Centre, 5% walk or cycle to work as compared to 13% in Metrotown and 43% in downtown Vancouver.

SkyTrain service to this area includes three stations: the Surrey Central SkyTrain Station is the focal point of the Transit Village process with the Gateway and King George SkyTrain Stations located at the north and south perimeters of the larger Surrey City Centre area. The average weekday boardings for the Surrey Central SkyTrain station are 6,400 compared with other Regional Town Centres including 7,700 at the New Westminster SkyTrain Station and 17,200 at the Metrotown SkyTrain Station. Only about 10% of those working in the Surrey’s City Centre area use transit to get to work, while about 20% of those living in the area use transit to commute to work.

King George Highway is part of the Major Road Network, which runs through Surrey’s City Centre. The people moving capacity of this network is to be retained except under certain conditions as approved by the regional transportation authority.

TransLink has provided the following information pertaining to existing bus service and issues as well as future plans for rapid bus service.

A profile of the Surrey Central Transit Exchange as well as some of the issues are outlined below:

- The exchange is served by 21 routes
- There are eleven bays, one of which is on-street (135<sup>th</sup> St)
- Three of the routes use the 24-foot Community Shuttle vehicles and the rest use conventional 40-foot buses.
- Peak period route frequencies range from 10 to 30 minutes.
- Nearly all trips terminate at the exchange, creating the need for a layover time and more storage capacity. While increased through-routing may be considered for existing and future routes, this would likely require that route frequencies be increased, so that timed transfers and transfer waits are also reduced (significant resource cost).
- The exchange is not a true “loop” from the point of bus approach and exit movements – buses are officially only permitted to enter the south side of the loop from 135<sup>th</sup> St (and are not permitted to do a U-turn from the north side of the loop into the south side), and are only permitted to enter the north side of the loop from 134A St (and again, are not permitted to do a U-turn from the south side of the loop into the north side); this design (referred to as no internal circulation) can add to the bus approach/exit travel times and make bus connections more challenging.
- Pedestrians coming from the parking area to the North Surrey Recreation Centre must cross the exchange, and given that long queues sometimes occur from passengers waiting for buses, pedestrian flow through the exchange can be impacted. Given the large pedestrian volumes trying to cross the exchange, this is a significant issue.
- Up until the construction of the station in 1994, the exchange was on street. The large street block meant bays were far apart and passengers had to walk long distances to transfer between buses. Even more so than with the design of today’s exchange (wherein ‘looping’ from one side of the exchange to the other is not officially permitted but does occur), this design required buses to use specific bus approach/exit routing, which as previously noted can add to travel times and make bus connections more challenging.

Surrey RapidBus service that is connected to the Surrey Central bus exchange has been considered for several years now. The last study to specifically examine Surrey RapidBus service was the “Surrey RapidBus Transit System Study”, completed by Stantec (for BC Transit) in May 1999. RapidBus service would likely operate in addition to the #321 route, not replace it.

RapidBus is not yet planned for implementation, though the “Three Year Plan & Ten Year Outlook” does state that by 2007 preliminary planning and design work will have begun, and funding contributions from senior government will be sought. It also states that Surrey’s RapidBus is proposed to be operational by 2013, and notes that the projected capital cost was in the order of \$120 million, which the GVTA would likely cost share with senior levels of government.

The introduction of RapidBus service will likely be considered for implementation in the 2008-2011 Three Year Transportation Plan. While it was considered for the 2005-07 Plan, the City of Surrey staff indicated a preference for other service improvements to precede the RapidBus. The routing that has been proposed at this very preliminary stage is from Guildford to Surrey Central via 104<sup>th</sup>, then via King George and 152<sup>nd</sup> Street to White Rock Centre. It is a possibility that alternating trips may not go all the way to White Rock Centre, but short-turn at either

Newton Exchange or Hwy 10. In terms of any diversion off King George Hwy to access the Surrey Central transit exchange, it is the goal to keep any such diversions from the major corridor to a minimum.