

RR-1(b)



CITY OF VANCOUVER

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Report Date: December 22, 2006
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TO: Vancouver City Council

FROM: Director of Planning in Consultation with the City Engineer and the Director of Social Planning

SUBJECT: Additional Staffing to Support Area Planning Initiatives Approved by Council in June, 2006

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council receive for INFORMATION this report on the creation of three new full time positions to support area planning initiatives approved by Council:

- i. a Civil Engineer II and an Engineering Assistant III to work with the area planning teams on the Hastings Sunrise Neighbourhood Centre Plan, the Mt. Pleasant Community Plan, and the Shopping Area Initiative and Marpole Industrial/Gateway Study. The estimated annual cost of these two positions, including fringe benefits is \$147,300 (\$85,900 prorated for fiscal 2007), plus a one time cost of \$12,000 for computers, software, and office equipment. Approval and funding to be deferred to the 2007 Interim Operating Budget.
- ii. a Social Planner I to work exclusively with the Mt. Pleasant area planning team, service providers, and community organizations on an action plan which addresses key social issues in the community. The estimated annual cost of this position, including fringe benefits is \$75,300 (\$62,700 prorated for fiscal 2007), plus a one time cost of \$6,000 for computers, software, and office equipment. Approval and funding to be deferred to the 2007 Interim Operating Budget.

GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The General Manager of Community Services RECOMMENDS approval of the foregoing.

COUNCIL POLICY

In June 2006, Council assigned City Plan's five two person area planning teams:

- two teams to complete Neighbourhood Centre Plans (one team assigned to Hastings-Sunrise, one team to be assigned based on forthcoming staff recommendations);
- one team to develop community plans in six areas with outdated plans, starting with Mt. Pleasant;
- one team to prepare Canada Line Station Area plans, beginning with the area around the Marine Drive station; and,
- one team to plan the Marpole Industrial/Gateway area.

In addition, Council approved the transfer of a Planner from Current Planning to a temporary Shopping Area Initiative in communities with outdated plans that would not be receiving a full community planning process for several years.

SUMMARY & PURPOSE

There are 18 identified Neighbourhood centres, 6 local areas, and 4 suburban station areas that require planning services over the next 10 years. Planning resources include permanent staff, with annual public process funds to cover this work included in the base operating budget. Canada Line Station Area Planning will be undertaken by a permanent Planning/Engineering team. This report seeks approval for additional staff in Engineering Services (CEII and EAIII) and in Social Planning (PI) to support Council-mandated planning for Neighbourhood Centres, Local Area Plans, the Shopping Area Initiative and, to a lesser extent, the Marpole Industrial/Gateway study. The report also discusses implications for program delivery if the staffing request is not funded.

BACKGROUND

Over the past decade, Community Visions have been completed or are nearing completion (West Point Grey) for the 13 largely single family areas of the city. Since these areas did not have previous plans, the Visions consist of general directions which will guide community and City decisions on a range of topics over the next 20 years.

More recently, the Neighbourhood Centre Planning program has been initiated. It starts with the community-supported Vision directions to improve existing shopping areas and accommodate additional housing. Products are a public realm plan for the shopping area and rezoning of single family areas to accommodate new housing types. The first process, at Knight and Kingsway, produced zoning changes which garnered strong community support. The 'Norquary Village' Centre process (Kingsway and Nanaimo) is currently underway and is moving to introduce new housing density in single family areas and in existing commercial areas.

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- one team to prepare Canada Line Station Area plans, beginning with the area around the Marine Drive station;
- one team to plan the Marpole Industrial/Gateway area; and,

In addition, Council approved the transfer of a Planner from Current Planning to a temporary Shopping Area Initiative in communities with outdated plans that would not be receiving a full community planning process for several years. Council also instructed staff to report back on resource requests from other departments and options to mitigate resource implications.

DISCUSSION

Overall, additional resources in other departments are needed to support Council's priority to move forward with new area planning programs, especially ones that will deliver more housing supply and choice in the city and to respond to Council's interest in social sustainability.

The need for additional Engineering staff arises because the June 2006 Council-approved area planning programs to be pursued over the next decade involve more design and implementation work than the policy-oriented Vision Program.

Past experience shows that about 1/3 of the time of an Engineer II and an Engineering Assistant III is required for the detailed traffic/parking, public realm design, and costing inputs required for each centre plan. The new initiatives of a second Neighbourhood Centre, the Mt. Pleasant Community Plan, and the Shopping Area process each generate equal demands for Engineering assistance. Engineering Services concludes they have no spare capacity, and an additional Engineer II and Engineering Assistant III are needed to support these programs. Most current area planning programs must be completed before starting the new initiatives and, although the Mt. Pleasant planning process will start in early 2007, it will not require additional Engineering resources until June, 2007. As a result, the additional Engineering staff will not be required until mid-2007.

Canada Line Station Area Planning will incorporate many features of Neighbourhood Centres planning. It will be lead by the existing permanent Planner and Engineer in the Rapid Transit Office once they complete their work on system fit and station precincts in Spring, 2007. The balance of this Engineer's time will be allocated to station impact mitigation, creating community linkages, and restoration of the public realm for the length of the line.

Mt. Pleasant faces social issues ranging from homelessness to youth/families/aboriginals at risk, drug dealing/use, and public safety. Advice from staff, service providers, and the public strongly indicates that these issues will need to be proactively addressed or they will dominate the planning process and substantially extend its duration. The social component in the Mt. Pleasant planning process will develop and implement short term action plans to deal with specific problems as well as engage the community in discussion of longer-term

strategies to address social issues. Similar social issues exist in the other five local areas with older plans. Our experience in high need communities is that unless this aspect is addressed and managed, the planning timelines cannot be met. A regular full time Social Planner I is requested to work directly with the planning team to undertake policy assessment, public consultation, and community development on the social aspects of the Mt. Pleasant Community Plan. This approach complements the Social Development Plan initiative which was approved by Council on September 20, 2005.

Staff have explored external funding sources for the Social Planner position. Although there is interest in considering grant applicants for background research, program evaluation, and assistance to community organizations to support their participation in the process, staff have been unable to find an external source which will fund City staff to lead a City process.

The options for Council are to add staff to support its initiatives or significantly extend the timeline for completion of the programs. The following section presents reasons why additional staff are recommended.

The timeline in the Appendix of the June 2006 Council report showed that Neighbourhood Centre and New Community Planning programs will each take 10 years to complete. The Shopping Area Initiative will last about 6 years. Without additional staff the program timelines will be extended by an estimated 50-70%. As a result, the following opportunities will be lost or substantially reduced:

1. Reduced Private/External Contributions to Public Realm Upgrades

A public realm plan will be produced for each Neighbourhood Centre and Shopping Area process. As well, in Mt. Pleasant and subsequent Community Plans, public realm plans for shopping areas will also be completed.

Once such a plan is approved by Council, the development approval process can require developers to construct the public realm bordering their projects. Delaying the programs and adopted public realm plans will reduce the City's ability to capture improvement costs from private developments. In addition, the Knight and Kingsway Centre process showed that with an approved public realm plan, staff were very successful in securing external cost sharing (e.g Translink) to construct the public realm improvements. Both private and cost sharing contributions reduce the City's capital requirements.

2. Significant Delays in Delivering Density Supported by Communities/Council

Additional housing in single family areas is a priority for communities and Council. The additional Engineering staff will enable the next 18 neighbourhood centres to be planned in 10 years because they will be done in pairs with parallel processes. Without additional staff, they would be planned sequentially. This would stretch completion of centre planning to 15-17 years. Extending the program will date community support for additional housing expressed in Vision processes and dampen momentum to change in single family areas.

3. Reduced Opportunity to Layer EcoDensity onto Centres Planning

EcoDensity is a major Council priority. Many EcoDensity initiatives will likely be implemented by layering them onto Neighbourhood Centre planning. Extending the Centres program will slow detailed consideration of EcoDensity opportunities in single family areas. Similarly, EcoDensity initiatives appropriate for communities with existing higher density zones can be brought to the local level through the Community Planning initiative in the six local areas with outdated plans.

4. Reduced Process Efficiencies

Experience in Mt. Pleasant shows that, even 20 years ago, it was not possible to complete a land use planning program in this community without an unplanned, two year diversion to consider social issues. Today, social issues remain major community concerns. Extending the process to save the costs of a single Planner I will require the two person team (Planner II and Planning Assistant III) to respond to community social issues. Opportunities for efficiencies gained from linking land use and social issues in a concurrent public process will be lost (for example, concurrent land use and social action streams could share initial outreach, committee recruitment, newsletters, open houses, and community validation processes; a sequential process would require each stream to conduct these activities separately and thus duplicate event planning, production, outreach). Overall, staff and public process costs for an extended process will be higher than for an additional Planner.

In addition to leading the social action plan, the Social Planner will seek outside funding to support community initiatives and projects which both address social issues and build community capacity/identity.

There will also be demands on Engineering from the new local area plans. In addition to the work on shopping areas (public realm plans, parking reviews), in Mt. Pleasant consideration of the future of the Quebec/Kingsway Connector will benefit from efficiencies created by the Community Plan's public process and review of land use adjacencies.

Similarly, the additional Engineering resources would allow two neighbourhood centre programs to run concurrently. Experience from Visions has shown that concurrent programs generate significant efficiencies in public process costs (mounting parallel events, dividing background work, translation, printing, etc.). The public process budget is based on these efficiencies.

5. Mitigating Community Concerns

Our experience has been that communities are more satisfied with an adopted plan which they are waiting to implement than when they believe planning service is only a possibility. In addition, some elements of any plan can be implemented by coordinated community action rather than by the City.

In the absence of adopted plans, there is a tendency for Council and City departments to be pressured into projects which may not have broad community support or high priority when viewed from a city-wide perspective. Delaying area planning programs to save on additional staffing costs will increase pressure on staff and Council to act where there is an articulate group rather than a defined and broadly supported community need.

Overall, the additional staff will reduce City costs for public realm improvements, increase program efficiencies, and allow Council initiatives to be implemented more quickly.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The annual cost of a Civil Engineer II including fringe benefits is \$91,000 and for an Engineering Assistant III the costs are \$56,300. However, in 2007, these additional staff will not be required until the start of June when area planning staff have completed their current assignments and transition into the new Council approved initiatives.

The Social Planner I will be required in early 2007 because the Mt. Pleasant process will start background research and detailed process planning in March 2007. The annual cost is \$75,300 including fringe benefits.

Each of the three positions will require one time costs of \$6,000 for computers, software, and furniture.

Approval and funding to be deferred to the 2007 Interim Operating Budget.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

These new planning programs initiated by Council will deliver more housing choice and retail, service, and employment opportunities in existing city communities. This will provide an opportunity for citizens to live, work and shop in their community, reducing reliance on the automobile and using urban land more efficiently.

SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Social Planning position is recommended to deal proactively with pressing social issues in Mt. Pleasant. This responds to Council's interest in social sustainability and strong community concerns about issues such as homelessness, youth/families/aboriginals at risk, open drug sales/use, and public safety. The focus will be on addressing these issues, building community capacity, and seeking external funding for relevant projects.

CONCLUSION

The area planning initiatives approved by Council in June 2006 represent an increased program level and require 3 additional staff positions to respond to community opportunities and issues in a timely manner. This report discusses the implications for program timing, process efficiencies and other opportunities that may be affected by extending the programs rather than adding staff.

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