

Let's add sparkle to centres: Mayor

SURREY: Public's invited to participate in contest to give 'flavour, appeal' to community

BY KENT SPENCER
STAFF REPORTER

After years of building strip malls and encouraging urban sprawl, Surrey is looking for a makeover.

Mayor Dianne Watts is inviting the public to a design competition that will present the city in a new light.

"We're a place where growth has been very rapid. We're playing catchup," Watts told a news conference Monday.

"There's been no opportunity to take a step back and think about how to create uniqueness in our town centres," she said.

In the upcoming contest, anyone can put forth ideas to spruce up the town centres of Newton, Guildford, Fleetwood, Cloverdale and Semiahmoo.

"We want to give places a flavour, taste and an appeal," said Vancouver architect Trevor Boddy. "We're not replanning Surrey."

The contest does not include Surrey Central City, which planners feel is making its mark with an SFU campus, highrises, public spaces and recently announced main library.

Prizes worth a total of \$75,000 will be available. Contest details are at www.townshift.ca.

Surrey is looking for ideas from anyone, not just professional architects and planners.

Boddy said the process can bear dividends: a rare design contest in Vancouver resulted in the architecturally stunning Library Square, which owes the Roman Coliseum's designers big time.

Surrey types didn't say specifically what they were looking for Monday, but they dropped a few hints: town squares, tall apartment buildings, wide walkways, leafy streets and plenty of accommodation for the ever-growing senior population.

Wood will be a preferred building material in some low-rise locations such as Cloverdale.

Watts called the design aims "connectiveness and place-making."

Boddy calls them "walkable, bikeable hubs."

"We're working towards a less auto-dependent future," he said. "This is the framework for a green

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Architect Trevor Boddy helps unveil Townshift, a design contest to help the city of Surrey plan future growth. JASON PAYNE — THE PROVINCE

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— Surrey Mayor **Dianne Watts**



city. We want to get the best from anyone with a good idea."

Since the town centres are generally filled-in with buildings, the city will have to re-engineer existing developments and/or incorporate parcels of vacant city-owned land.

Cloverdale town centre, site of the city's original city hall, still retains a sense of rural, homespun simplicity.

There are places to do laundry and pizza parlours on the main drag, but there is also the new \$7-million Surrey Museum and spiffy residential subdivisions.

If the city accomplishes its goals, several places will be created which will provide a sense of what to do and where to go when visitors are planning trips to the spread-out city of 400,000-plus.

Instead of a mish-mash of strip malls, there will be town centres in which residents will have a place to call home.

Rick Hart, president of the Fleetwood Community Association, said the exercise is well worth doing.

"The idea is to get the public to have some ownership. Urban sprawl was allowed to continue for

Calling all wannabe urban planners

Surrey wants the public to provide design ideas for five town centres in need of a little sprucing up and excitement.

Anyone can fill out a single sheet of paper with their ideas, but they will have to be quick: the deadline is Jan. 6.

Interactive models are available online so entrants can "fly through" the town centres with representations of the existing layout.

The top ideas will be put on display at the Simon Fraser Uni-

versity exhibition space in Surrey Central City during January, but the winners — who will share \$75,000 worth of prizes — won't be immediately announced.

More comments will be invited and people will be asked to guess which ideas have been judged best.

Surrey Mayor Dianne Watts will announce the winners during the Winter Olympic Games in February.

Further details are available at www.townshift.ca. — K.S.

many years. There's no kinship with the town centre and there's a social aspect that goes along with that," he said.

But he said the real challenge is to follow through.

"Unless you stick with it, you get what you get. To be successful, you have to find a way to implement it," he said.

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