

Designers flocking to fix Newton

CONTEST: Surrey town centres due for architectural remake

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Design challenges offered by the Newton town centre in Surrey are being embraced by designers around the world.

Vancouver architect Trevor Boddy, co-organizer of Surrey's competition to rework its town centres, said Tuesday that Newton offers several problems.

"Newton, which we're calling New-town, has no heart, no downtown. It has a library in Nowheresville and a strip mall. The bus exchange is moving several blocks away.

"We're looking for a plaza, parks and 1,000 units of housing. It's a whack of work. Entrants are not shrinking from the challenge. The number of Newton entries has been a big surprise," Boddy said.

Some vacant space exists in the town core at 72nd Avenue and King George Highway, but Boddy said pedestrians don't feel comfortable walking around in it.

"In many ways Newton has been troubled with crime and the drug trade. Pedestrians don't feel safe," he said.

The design contest was launched one month ago as a way of obtaining a

vision for future growth in five town centres in Surrey: Newton, Cloverdale, Fleetwood, Guildford and Semiahmoo.

Entries, which number 133 from 16 countries, have now been received from Croatia to Colombia. There have been 65 from Canada, 29 from Japan and 14 from the U.S.

Contestants must pay \$50 to enter and be willing to work for free, but they could win prizes worth \$75,000 when winners are announced in January.

Boddy said the level of interest has been a pleasant surprise. "We're really delighted. There is a range of depth to the entries. Lots of questions are being asked. It tells us people are thinking about this. Surrey is showing its entrepreneurial spirit at its finest. It will some day be B.C.'s largest city. It needs to deliver urban spaces in a more efficient lifestyle."

Mayor Dianne Watts said the ideas will be important as Surrey moves from a suburban environment into an urban one. "The competition is even more successful than we imagined," she said.

Full contest details are available online at www.townshift.com.

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