



CITY OF RICHMOND

REPORT TO COMMITTEE

TO: General Purposes Committee
FROM: Kate Sparrow
Director, Recreation & Cultural Services
RE: **Youth Outreach Project**

DATE: April 25, 2001
FILE: 3425-01

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That funding be allocated from the City's Casino Grants for 2 full-time youth outreach staff for one year at a cost of \$70,000.
2. That funding be allocated from the City's Casino Grants to expand late night programming to 3 additional community centres for one year at a cost of \$81,000.
3. That staff be directed to develop strategies for design and implementation of after school hour activities.
4. That staff be directed to report back to council with a project review at the end of the granting period.
5. That funding partners be sought to share in the cost of these initiatives.
6. That the School Board be requested to name a coordinator to assist City staff in the promotion and marketing strategies with all of the District high schools.

K. Sparrow

Kate Sparrow
Director, Recreation & Cultural Services

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Budget..... <i>A</i>	Y ☒ N ☐	<i>David G. [Signature]</i>

STAFF REPORT

ORIGIN

At the Joint Council/School Board Liaison meeting in September 2000, a resolution was brought forward to explore how young people can be provided with "safe" meeting places; including activities outside of regular hours of community centres and after park/school site closures. Subsequently, a needs assessment was commissioned to assist in developing initiatives to address the need to have safe meeting places for youth. This report will provide a summary of key findings and steps to align new and existing resources for program implementation.

FINDINGS OF FACT

The City Strategy for youth services, as endorsed by council in June 1995, set out to build opportunities for youth which has worked towards achieving:

- A place for youth in the community
- A strong youth voice and involvement in decision making
- A support base for youth
- Recognizing youth as resources in the community
- Programs and services that are youth friendly
- Good access for youth to education/information about health and other issues.

The framework to achieve these goals has become the basis for numerous other civic policy documents created by recreation and social planning departments across North America, providing them with a mechanism to strengthen service delivery. The outcomes of these strategies impact upon the lives of youth in communities in ways that increase the liveability and youth friendliness of communities.

The benefits of recreation, social and cultural opportunities add to and enhance adolescent growth through providing developmental experiences, which affect self-esteem, a sense of belonging, critical thinking, positive use of discretionary time and communication skills. Researchers categorize these attributes as "Developmental Assets" (Appendix 1 -Search Institute, Minneapolis, Mn.) Studies have proven that the greater number of these assets that youth have, the incidence of negative, anti-social and risky behaviors is reduced significantly. Conversely, youth who have minimal support and lack of opportunities in their lives present with a higher degree of risky behaviors such as criminal activity, drug use, truancy and poor social cognition.

The city's strategy aimed at creating opportunities, which impact upon adolescent growth, is consistent with Canada's National Strategy on Community Safety and Crime Prevention. Crime prevention through social development is a long term, proactive approach directed at addressing personal, social and economic factors which lead to risky behaviors resulting in criminal activity and a high financial burden.

"It is recognized that community safety and positive social development of children and youth are linked."

– National Crime Prevention Centre, Department of Justice-Ottawa.

ANALYSIS

The city's research study, *Fill the Void* (Appendix 2 – Executive Summary) investigated the determinants and motivations to youth participation in community-based recreation or other uses of their leisure time. Data was gathered through a 54 question survey, followed by focus group sessions with a random sampling of youth. Also, interviews were conducted with youth serving agencies in the city to compile a list of issues and recommendations from a front-line service provider perspective.

It is clear from the data that youth engaging in high risk behaviors are not participating in many recreation, social or cultural services offered in the city. Feedback from the focus group sessions offered more insights into the reasons why (Appendix 3). All respondents named their peers as playing a crucial role in determining what they do during their spare time. Youth consistently choose who to do things with before choosing what they might do. Subsequently, making choices with friends about what to do becomes the critical issue. Those youth exhibiting risk taking behaviors are more likely to choose higher risk activities such as partying in fields, house parties, bars, and parks absent of adult supervision. This theory was supported by survey, focus groups and RCMP. Though these activities fit the criteria of "cool", these actions can have dire consequences, they are often illegal and are generally frowned upon by the public. The choice for pro-social activity is a remote possibility for this group. Recreational outreach workers are best positioned to interface a youth involved process as it seems unlikely this group would willingly access recreation services in a traditional manner.

There are mixed feelings on Community Centres and whether they are 'cool' or not. Those who do not consider a community center as a viable option may, for their own reasons, perceive these places to conflict with their beliefs about what is cool. Authority figures, rules, inhibitors to self-expression, feelings of disrespect, and a lack of individuals to relate with are factors that would not motivate a young person to use community centres. Key determinants to pro-social behaviors could be summed up by understanding the relationship between being cool, being bored and being safe.

However, youth who have found a way to be connected to a community centre would have a much different perception. Also, those who have had the Night Shift experience went as far as regarding it as a safe and cool place to be. Night Shift aims to deconstruct myths and perceptions that youth have about going to community centres.

"It's the only place (Night Shift) outside of home that I feel safe"
–Focus group respondent.

When asked about what kind of activities they would like to see, the responses did not hold anything radically different from what the current service provides. It is reasonable to conclude then, that this contradiction lies in perceptual barriers youth have and/or insufficient promotion of current activities.

Youth service providers in Richmond concur that appropriate communication strategies must be instituted in homes, schools, and community organisations to increase awareness of youth needs and interests (Appendix 4). Several providers suggested one-to-one or outreach support for problematic high-risk activity as seen in the Steveston area. These core groups causing problems are bored. They recommend a strong networking system that would ensure a reliable form of collaboration amongst the core group of front-line staff working with these youth. Schools and other youth providers in the city need to have mechanisms to share information on what is happening for youth around the city.

The following strategies have been identified to address the needs identified:

1. That 2 full-time youth outreach workers be hired to develop a youth outreach component that would focus on interfacing non-joiners or at risk youth into new or existing youth initiatives across the city. The mobility of this position permits them to move freely throughout the city to develop rapport with youth or groups of youth in need of 1:1 dialogue. They may be positioned to respond to areas of need. They will work closely with other front line youth service providers, including the RCMP and community centres. Their work is within a recreation and cultural services context opting to make referrals for counselling rather than provide direct counselling.
2. That funding be approved to expand late night programming, similar to the *Night Shift* model, to 3 other community centres. Recommended locations for these programs are Steveston, Cambie and South Arm.
3. That staff be directed to work with existing Youth Coordinators to develop strategies to design and implement after-school hour activities.
4. That staff develop a plan to measure the success of these initiatives and report back to council on the results of this investment.
5. That Recreation and Cultural Services assume a lead role in furthering networks and working relationships with other front line youth service providers as a means to streamline service, share information and to respond to community issues.
6. That Council request the Joint Council/School Board Liaison Committee to direct staff from the respective administrations to develop mechanisms that better inform youth of recreational, cultural and social opportunities that exist in the city.
7. That, based on the success of these strategies, staff bring forward an additional level request through the 2002 budget process, to establish ongoing funding for this kind of programming.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Option 1

2 Full-Time Youth Outreach Positions	\$ 70,000
Expand programming similar to Night Shift to 3 locations @ \$27,000 per	\$ 81,000
(Steveston, Cambie, South Arm)	\$151,000

\$100,000 Casino funding was approved by Council at the April 23, 2001 Council Meeting.
\$51,000 additional Casino funding would be required.

Option 2. (phased implementation)

Phase 1

2 Full-Time Youth Outreach Positions	\$70,000
Expand programming similar to Night Shift to Steveston	\$27,000
	\$97,000

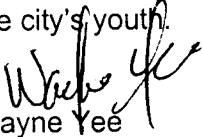
The \$100,000 one time funding recommended by the Casino Grant Committee would cover these expenditures for 1 year.

Phase 2

Expand Night Shift to Cambie and South Arm \$60,000
Additional funding sources need to be identified to implement.

CONCLUSION

While the study concludes that youth at risk and youth exhibiting risky behaviours are being under-served by Recreation and Cultural Services, there exists a strong foundation of youth services which has been successful in providing the opportunities, skills and values required for safe and active living. The existing model can be leveraged to serve a more diverse segment of the city's youth.



Wayne Yee
Coordinator, Youth Recreation Services

WY:wy

Appendix 1



Developmental Assets: An Overview

In an effort to identify the elements of a strength-based approach to healthy development, Search Institute developed the framework of developmental assets. This framework identifies 40 critical factors for young people's growth and development. When drawn together, the assets offer a set of benchmarks for positive child and adolescent development. The assets clearly show important roles that families, schools, youth organizations, municipal governments and others in communities play in shaping young people's lives.

External Assets

The first 20 developmental assets focus on positive experiences that young people receive from the people and institutions in their lives. Four categories of external assets are included in the framework:

- **Support**-Young people need to experience support, care, and love from their families, neighbors, and many others. They need organizations and institutions that provide positive, supportive environments.
 - **Empowerment**-Young people need to be valued by their community and have opportunities to contribute to others. For this to occur, they must be safe and feel secure.
 - **Boundaries and expectations**-Young people need to know what is expected of them and whether activities and behaviors are "in bounds" and "out of bounds."
 - **Constructive use of time**-Young people need constructive, enriching opportunities for growth through creative activities, youth programs, congregational involvement, and quality time at home.
-

Internal Assets

A community's responsibility for its young does not end with the provision of external assets. There needs to be a similar commitment to nurturing the internal qualities that guide choices and create a sense of centeredness, purpose, and focus. Indeed, shaping internal dispositions that encourage wise, responsible, and compassionate judgments is particularly important in a society that prizes individualism. Four categories of internal assets are included in the framework:

- **Commitment to learning**-Young people need to develop a lifelong commitment to education and learning.
- **Positive values**-Youth need to develop strong values that guide their choices.
- **Social competencies**-Young people need skills and competencies that equip them to make positive choices, to build relationships, and to succeed in life.
- **Positive identity**-Young people need a strong sense of their own power, purpose, worth, and promise.

The Power of Asset

On one level, the 40 developmental assets represent everyday wisdom about positive experiences and characteristics for young people. In addition, Search Institute research has found that these assets are powerful influences on adolescent behavior—both protecting young people from many different problem behaviors and promoting positive attitudes and behaviors. This power is evident across all cultural and socioeconomic groups of youth. There is also evidence from other research that assets have the same kind of power for younger children.

Yet, while the assets are powerful shapers of young people's lives and choices, too few young people experience enough of these assets. The average young person surveyed experiences only 18 of the 40 assets. Overall, 62 percent of young people surveyed experience fewer than 20 of the assets. In short, most young people in the United States do not have in their lives many of the basic building blocks of healthy development.

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Appendix 2

Fill the Voice Needs Assessment - March 2001

Executive Summary

Fill the Void investigated the determinants and motivations to youth participation in community based opportunities or other positive uses of their discretionary time. This study also identifies the current levels of services which support the developmental needs in youth. It identifies any real and perceived gaps in existing services, and studies the areas of needs for youth oriented recreation, social, and cultural opportunities.

A high percentage of youth involved in the survey said they engage in some form of risky behavior and low levels of pro-social behaviour such as community involvement. This may be characterized by their a weaker support systems in their lives than those who engage in socially acceptable activities. **Fill the Void** supports a relationship between needs of healthy adolescent development, risky versus positive behaviours and levels of active involvement. This study group showed those who engaged in more risky behaviors were non-participants in pro-social activities related to community programs and services.

Determinants that discouraged positive behaviour and activities have been identified through extensive interviews and open discussion with youth and their providers. Unmet developmental needs as well as what youth perceive as 'cool', 'safe', and 'boring', all contribute to level and type of involvement or non-involvement. The youth's definition of what a 'cool' and 'safe' place looks and feels like is often differs from a child or adult's definition. They listed a non-threatening environment with either no adult supervision or 'relatively young' adult supervision. These places elicit feelings of being accepted for who you are and partaking in activities that interest them. Recreation designed by youth for youth is a factor most participants listed as essential.

A focus group of mostly high-risk youth reported 'there is nothing cool to do in Richmond'. When asked to expand on what they felt was 'cool' they listed activities and services which already exist in the Recreation and Cultural Services Department. Many of these youth associate leisure boredom and engaging in socially unacceptable behaviour such as substance use and loitering. This speaks to a philosophical foundation of youth programs which need to be youth friendly and marketed within a context of "cool" as understood in popular youth culture.

Youth providers interviewed for **Fill the Void** shared similar concerns regarding high-risk youth in Richmond. Common observations are the incidence of one or more risk factors including poor family relations, peer isolation, drug use and lack of community involvement. Many of the providers believe that high-risk youth would benefit greatly from more one-to-one attention and support.

Future directions will challenge recreation departments to use these tools and expand the client groups to engage a more diverse client group. A shift to work with diverse youth populations also requires that the service delivery system be able to accommodate these differences through staffing, philosophies and outcomes.

Appendix 3 Summary of Focus Group Findings

A) If you were Mayor of Richmond for a day, what would you plan for the youth?

- Youth-only center with a 16+yrs dance club, sports complex, arts and drama
- More late-night programs for youth featuring: MC battles, dances, graffiti art, open-gym, and Improv.
- Night Shifts at other Community Centers
- More arts and drama- put on by youth for youth: talent shows, art exhibits, outdoor concerts featuring local youth bands
- Skate Park improvements:
 - A place to buy food- a booth run by youth
 - Weekly maintenance on park's grounds
 - Water fountain
- BMX track in Steveston
- Youth dances organized by youth, offering various styles of dance, theater, arts
- A youth-only newsletter
- Focus more on visual arts, such as theater
- More recreational activities for youth, such as Taebox classes and water rafting
- More school fieldtrips

B) What are the Issues Facing Youth?

- Not enough to do for youth in Richmond- leads to boredom
- Not enough 'cool' places for youth to hang out
- Not enough information provided on youth events and programs in Richmond
- Need to connect schools and Community Centers
- Some youth cannot afford to participate in programs and events that cost money i.e. open-gym basketball- discourages youth from participating
- Transportation in Richmond is too expensive- Limits places accessible to youth
- It's hard for young people to find jobs- transportation issues, lack of experience
- Youth are stereotyped as troublemakers
- Often targeted by police because they are teenagers

C) How can we increase proactive youth involvement in Richmond?

- Involve more youth in youth committees and programs
- Promote existing and future youth programs, events, and committees- it will increase awareness and generate more interest in the programs if the youth know about them.
- Use radio, website, word-of-mouth, and information in schools to promote awareness.
- Become involved in youth committees and planning committees- has a voice
- Volunteer time and ideas to youth issues of interest, such as building a designated area for Graffiti art at the Skate Park
- Have a Youth Bus that transports youth to various youth-centered areas in Richmond
- Youth teaching youth. For example: responsible driving, tutoring, dance classes

- Counter-act the stereotype that youth are all troublemakers, by creating a pamphlet that speaks to the positive and proactive youth activities in Richmond-
- Improve on existing youth-centered places such as the Skate Park
- Create a youth council in Richmond that could represent youth and their voice
- Have more youth events at Community Centers that cater to a more diverse population
 - More late-night programs
 - Make open-gyms easily accessible to youth- lower the cost, increase the hours it's open to youth

(Responses are listed from most to least mentioned)

Feeling Safe

a) Define 'feeling safe'

- ✧ A place where you feel accepted and can be yourself
- ✧ A place where you feel secure, relaxed, and comfortable
- ✧ A place where people who respect and like you
- ✧ A place away from authorities i.e. Parents, police, teachers

b) Safe environments

- ✧ Hanging out with friends
- ✧ At home
- ✧ Public places such as the mall, movie theaters, coffee shops
- ✧ Community Centers, specifically, Night Shift and open gym
- ✧ Public parks
- ✧ Driving in a car

c) Reasons they are safe

- ✧ Relieves boredom
- ✧ A chance to hang-out with friends
- ✧ You can be yourself
- ✧ They are all non-threatening people or places
- ✧ Absence of adults, or 'relatively young' adults supervising

Cool

a) Definition of 'cool'

- ✧ Being part of a group
- ✧ A place where you can do the things that interest you with little adult supervision
- ✧ The way you act
- ✧ Being accepted by your peer group
- ✧ Being yourself
- ✧ Following current trends

b) 'Cool' things to do in Richmond, and why they are cool

- ✧ Hanging out with friends- we can have fun together, talk, and laugh
- ✧ Hanging out at malls, movie theaters and restaurants. A place to hang-out with friends, relieves boredom, little adult supervision
- ✧ Night Shift at Thompson Community Centre- a cool place to hang out late at night with friends, participate in arts, drama, and sports.

- ❖ Public parks i.e. Minoru Park, Gilbert Beach, and Garry Point- we can hang out with friends, get drunk without getting into trouble with our parents or cops, it's a secluded area and away from authority figures
- ❖ Youth special events and Committees at Community Centers. Centers mentioned- South Arm, Cambie, and Thompson. They put on more youth events, such as dances etc,
- ❖ Richmond arcades and pool halls- You can hang-out with friends and play games
- ❖ Play basketball at community centers, parks or school- good exercise, hang-out with friends
- ❖ Partying and smoking at field and/or house parties. There's no one there to tell you what to do, and only a small chance of getting caught by parents and police
- ❖ Lasertag- some of the youth disagreed because it is too expensive
- ❖ Hanging out in Vancouver- there are more things for youth to do there
- ❖ Hanging out at bars in Richmond and Vancouver-you can drink, dance, and hang out with other people having fun

Boredom

a) Definition of Boredom

- ❖ Nothing to do- no parties or activities planned
- ❖ No money to spend on food and entertainment
- ❖ No transportation

b) Time of Boredom

- ❖ On the weekends- especially at night and on Sunday
- ❖ After school and after dinner on weeknights
- ❖ At school

c) Ways to relieve boredom

- ❖ Hang out with friends and be 'bored' together.
- ❖ Hang out at home- watch TV, play on the computer, listen to music, and read
- ❖ Hang out at parks and friends' houses- some choose to drink and smoke there
- ❖ Go to the mall and/or movie
- ❖ Play basketball and other sports at the Community Centers, Schools, or parks

Making Sense of the Data

It is apparent from data compiled through questionnaires that youth high on the risk-continuum are not participating in many recreational programs and services offered in Richmond. Findings from the questionnaire supports the relationship between developmental assets, behavior, and positive community involvement.

Three factors that affect this relationship, including the youth's perception of what is 'cool', safe, and boring. In order to increase positive behavior, active involvement in recreation, and the number of developmental assets owned by a youth, it is crucial to learn how these three factors affect participants high on the risk-continuum.

If a youth perceives existing programs and services as 'uncool' it is likely he will not participate. Leisure boredom is linked to affective states such as depression and loneliness, as well as risky behaviors including alcohol use, trouble in school, and over-eating in female adolescents. Youth hang-out at places where they feel safe- a place where

they feel secure and respected. A youth's definition of a safe place often differs from a child or adult's definition. A youth's answer to feeling safe, 'cool', and bored, will help identify determinants that encourage and discourage active and pro-social involvement in community-sanctioned recreation.

Ideas on what is 'safe; 'cool', and 'boring' are not wholly determined by a youth's level of risk or involvement in youth-based programs and services. 'Cool' and 'safe' places are interchangeable- it is possible that both illicit feelings of being accepted for who you are, and allow for relative freedom from responsibilities. Another factor that determines a 'cool' and safe place is the amount of adult supervision present- basically, the less supervision the better. Some participants expanded on this by saying 'relatively young' adults are still pretty 'cool'. The majority of participants are bored during certain times of the day and week. Most said they relieve boredom by playing sports, going to the mall with their peers, or keeping busy at home. More troubling are the youth that claim to drink and smoke with friends when they are bored.

All respondents named their peers as playing a crucial role in determining what they do during their spare time. When asked whether it is the place or people that make something 'cool', all youth answered 'the people'. The two focus groups of youth with a higher number of risk factors mentioned several socially unacceptable places and activities as 'cool' and safe. Places such as field and house parties, bars, and parks were perceived as places they can engage in risky behaviour in the absence of adult supervision. There are mixed feelings on Community Centres and whether they are 'cool' or not. Participants who have been involved in some youth-based program and/or service at a centre within the last 6 months, saw it as a safe and 'cool' place to hang out. Responses from youth regarding perceptions of what is safe, cool, and boring provide insight into what youth do in their spare time. They highlight the need for more youth-based initiatives where young people can hang out with friends in an environment that is safe and monitored at a distance (if at all), by adults to prevent risky behaviour.

Appendix 4

Summary of Recommendations From Youth Service Providers

Richmond Youth Service Agency (RYSA)

- More later-evening programs for youth
- Art/drama/theatre programs needed
- Late-night swimming at Steveston pool
- Web site for youth by youth- outlining youth events and programs in Richmond schools, community centers, links to youth agencies and cool sites
- Youth tutoring programs
- Increase communication lines with community centers- promotes recreation
- Dedicated youth center- with access to other youth services, such as drug and alcohol counselors
- Youth bus that provides cheap transportation to places in Richmond- can act as a mobile youth center
- Affordable programs and services

Royal Canadian Mounted Police School Liaison Officer

- 1 liaison officer per school
- More programs on prevention at all ages
- More money for staffing
- Less policy making – more action
- After school programs

City Centre Community Association Youth Coordinator

- Web site developed by youth
- Teach skills i.e. merchandising
- Help youth build something i.e. a youth event from scratch
- Involve kids in council (see Youth consultation in RYSA agency)

Richmond Alcohol & Drug Action Team (RADAT)

- A place for youth to hang out, feel safe, get information and referrals from professionals
- An outreach recreational worker to teach life skills, social aspects (working out of RADAT)
- Fee subsidies
- Increase awareness of current youth events, issues, programs – benefit youth and youth providers
- Web site?

Royal Canadian Mounted Police Community Liaison Officer

- BMX track in Steveston – ample space in park now – should be designed and run by youth
- Midnight swimming at Steveston pool for youth – they are already doing it – why not charge fee and supervise
- Outdoor basketball court
- Safe parks – i.e. Triangle road near Silver City – a park for kids to hang out, feel safe, could be supervised

Richmond Health Services Society (RHSS)

- Parent support groups: information sessions connect with parents – youth are recognized as individuals but also as part of the family.
- Connect with youth coordinators to increase awareness of recreational programs available
- Web site – for youth by youth
- Outreach worker to liaise between youth providers

Station Stretch, School District.

- A place for youth to hang out, feel safe, get information and referrals from professionals

Making Sense of the Data

Youth providers in Richmond concur that there is a population of high-risk youth in this community who are engaging in risky behaviour, such as substance abuse loitering, vandalism and youth who are at risk of leaving school or being recruited to work in the sex trade. These youth share a weakened support system that agencies and other youth providers endeavor to strengthen through counseling, alternative measures of enforcement (RCMP), and programs that tailor to their interest and needs. Funding and staff numbers were mentioned by all youth providers as being a factor in the level of attention and support these high-risk youth receive from their agency or service. All agreed that youth providers including school, community centres, and agencies, need to work 1:1 with youth who are high on the risk continuum. Many feel that youth who engage in socially unacceptable activities are doing so because they are bored. Existing youth-based programs and services do not appeal to some youth, and youth providers interviewed believe that youth who are engaging in socially unacceptable activities are doing so because they are bored. Improvements to existing programs, as well as the creation of new avenues tailored to their interest, will decrease boredom, and increase positive behavior.