



City of Richmond

Report to Committee

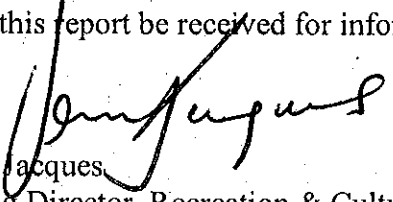
To: Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services
Committee
From: Vern Jacques
Acting Director,
Recreation & Cultural Services
Re: Youth Engagement Strategies

Date: February 6, 2009

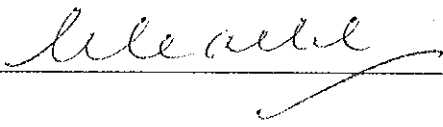
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Staff Recommendation

That this report be received for information.


Vern Jacques
Acting Director, Recreation & Cultural Services
604-247-4930

Att. 2

| FOR ORIGINATING DEPARTMENT USE ONLY | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|--------------------------|--|---|
| ROUTED TO: | | CONCURRENCE | | CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER | |
| Policy Planning | | Y <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> | |  | |
| Customer Service | | Y <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> | | | |
| Community Safety | | Y <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> | | | |
| REVIEWED BY TAG | | YES | NO | REVIEWED BY CAO | |
| | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>JK</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>acting</i> | YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> |

Staff Report

Origin

At the Council meeting of September 8, 2008, the following referral motion was passed:
"That staff explore a broader youth engagement policy."

This report provides an overview of the current level of youth engagement within the City of Richmond and youth engagement models and applications.

Background

The move towards policy driven youth involvement in municipal settings began to emerge in the mid 1980's in the Metro Vancouver area with the Cities of Burnaby, Vancouver and Richmond being among the first to adopt various types of Youth Strategies. These Strategies were primarily focused on ways of working with youth, including at-risk youth, because of the benefits of having youth directly involved at the front end of planning processes. These processes offer meaningful participation for youth, that is, opportunities for youth to take responsibility and demonstrate leadership while working with caring adults who value, respect and share power with them.

As engagement began to generate innovative and successful new ways to deliver programs and to address community issues, the practice began to gain credibility in not only the recreation field, but across different sectors in government. Involving youth in developing solutions around issues such as gang violence, racism, sexual exploitation, substance abuse, marginalized populations and homelessness has helped to build capacity, and improve policy and program outputs in some jurisdictions.

Analysis

On a civic level, youth engagement has emerged in areas such as community development, urban planning, public safety and community policing, park planning and design, library youth councils and community centre leadership groups. This form of public participation strives to motivate youth to be active participants and agents of change in their communities. Civic youth engagement responsibilities can align with Social Planning or Planning as the implementation involves nearly all city departments.

In 2002 the City of Vancouver formed the Youth Outreach Team (YOT). Since that time, they have piloted, implemented and refined their approaches of working with young people. The YOT has focused on building capacities internally across City departments, involving youth in civic elections, making connections between the youth community and the City, and activating community sectors that have a role in supporting youth. A Social Planning department manager oversees the work of a part-time Planner 1, an Outreach Team Coordinator, as well as casual staff with an operating budget of approximately \$90,000. Currently, a review document, initiated in 2008, for this corporate function titled, *Youth and the City* articulates some new

directions and a re-engineering of the service. The work functions are guided by a framework of value-based principles and 5 main goals.

The District of West Vancouver's Civic Youth Strategy (2003-2005 and 2006-2010) operates on a premise of five strategic approaches in its commitment to "developing, supporting and promoting initiatives that positively contribute to the lives of West Vancouver Youth". The strategy is about changing the culture of municipal government, bringing about awareness of the positive contributions youth can make to their community, bringing a youth perspective to civic policy development and planning, and making municipal resources available to youth. The implementation of the plan has been supported by a full time Youth Advocate as well as year to year funding for the specific initiatives.

The City of Richmond adopted its' first Youth Strategy in 1995. At that time, Social Planning was a part of the Parks, Recreation and Culture Department. As a result, this initial strategy had a very broad approach to youth engagement involving most departments within the City. As an example, a Staff Implementation Team was formed, including Community Services, Urban Development, Public Works, Finance, Personnel, Library and RCMP. Youth services were also a core component of services delivered by the Community Centres throughout the City.

Current Youth Engagement

Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services

In 2008, Council endorsed, the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services (PRCS), Youth Service Plan – *Where Youth Thrive*. This plan, developed in partnership with other youth agencies and youth throughout Richmond, seeks to continue promoting the goal of helping youth thrive and give our youth – every one of them – meaning purpose, and pride. A key component of the plan is the continued focus on the influencing of youths' 'developmental assets', which help young people make wise decisions, choose positive paths, and grow up competent, caring and responsible.

The 2008 Plan is focused on the delivery of parks, recreation and cultural services. Youth involvement is a core value embedded in the delivery of all services throughout Parks, Recreation & Culture.

Policy Planning

The City's Policy Planning Division engages youth both for its own initiatives and in conjunction with City advisory committees. The Division realizes that young people are valuable members of the community with important perspectives to share. It also realizes that young people are our future – an investment in youth today is an investment in a healthy and vibrant community for tomorrow. The Division lacks specific resources to actively engage youth on all matters facing the community. It is committed, however, to involving youths in a strategic, balanced manner on issues of priority concern both to the youth and the City.

Key examples include:

- consulting with students in Richmond schools, seeking their views during preparation of the Official Community Plan, City Centre Area Plan, and other community plans
- meeting with Richmond students during preparation of the Intercultural Strategic Plan and Work Program
- helping the Richmond Intercultural Advisory Committee in attracting young members (two youth appointees currently serve on the Committee)
- assisting the Intercultural Advisory Committee with the organization of youth round tables aimed at promoting welcoming and inclusive communities in Richmond
- assisting the Intergenerational Subcommittee of the Richmond Seniors Advisory Committee in reaching out to local youth
- supporting the Youth Subcommittee of the Richmond Community Services Advisory Committee (current focus is establishment of a youth service hub for Richmond)
- periodically meeting with youth through the Council/School Board Liaison Committee to discuss City initiatives of interest to young people in Richmond
- recommending approval of City grants to agencies that engage and provide services to Richmond youth.

Richmond City Hall and Council

Youth are also encouraged to associate with Richmond City Hall and Council. Tours and visits are conducted year round and accessed by many groups including school groups, Scouts, and SUCCESS leadership groups. Students in Grade's 6-7 study local government at school, many teachers utilize the tours during this module as a way of engaging the students in learning. Grade 9 students are encouraged to participate in "bring your child to work day," and many staff and students participate in this event annually. High school students, college students and youth community group members are often present during Council meetings to observe City government in process. Special events which include youth as participants and/or volunteers are often located at City Hall as well. These tours, events and visits to City Hall all contribute to building a connection between youth and the City structure.

Volunteer Richmond Information Services (VRIS)

The City of Richmond supports Volunteer Richmond Information Services (VRIS) in a variety of ways that engage youth. Community volunteer opportunities provide a great community connection for hundreds of youth each year. This year, up to and including the 2010 Winter Olympic Games, there will be more opportunities than ever for youth volunteer experiences. The City sponsors the "Leadership Richmond, Youth Now" program on an annual basis. This program provides training and experience to youth leaders as they participate with a Board of Directors from one of several community agencies, learning the skills, rewards, and challenges of community involvement.

Community Safety

In Community Safety, a cornerstone of educating and engaging the community is to enhance the ability of the City's youth in making wise choices, leading them towards making responsible,

caring decisions, giving them a greater awareness and appreciation of the City's safety services and providing them knowledge that empowers them to act in the case of an emergency. Fire Rescue and the RCMP Richmond Fire-Rescue interact daily with local youths through outreach and educational programs:

Examples of engaging youth include:

- The Youth Section officers giving lectures and holding open forums with youth on various topics related to policing and issues that Richmond youth face today.
- Activities in local elementary schools including
 - Fire-Rescue's "Getting to Know Fire" program
 - the detachment's Adopt-a-School program, which ensures that Elementary schools are visited on a regular basis, encouraging a positive perception of the police with children.
- Assisting a diverse group of youths in considering the fire services or policing as a positive career path through attendance at local high school career fairs.
- Opening local fire halls for tours and events - connecting with the community, providing safety messages, and creating excitement about the fire services.
- Presentations to high school law classes on the Criminal Code.
- Engagement activities being considered in 2009 are:
- As part of the next strategic planning process the detachment will be engaging Richmond Youth to talk about their issues and concerns in the community.

Sustaining Youth Engagement

Along with the benefits of youth involvement in civic processes, some challenges should be considered. The Centre for Global Studies at the University of Victoria, identifies six critical elements to sustain the civic engagement of young people.

1. Upholding young people's engagement as a value
2. Identifying a champion inside City Hall and the youth sector
3. Moving towards institutionalization
4. Allocating ongoing financial and human resources
5. Linking City processes and the youth community
6. Involving a diverse community of youth

These indicators outline the commitment required to the sharing of power in decision-making, the broad political support required, the allocation of adequate funding and the importance of supportive department leaders if youth are to be involved in a meaningful way.

Broad youth engagement requires a clear mandate and dedicated resources both in terms of staff time and funding for initiatives. As outlined earlier, both West Vancouver and Vancouver have invested considerable dollars to facilitate the implementation of their broad youth engagement strategies.

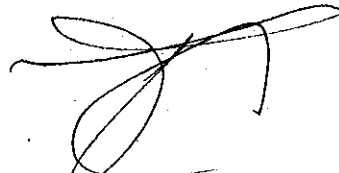
Conclusion

In 2005, Council endorsed the vision for "Richmond to be the best place in North America to raise children and youth."

A broad youth engagement strategy with supporting policy(s), involving all aspects of the City's operations can assist the City in achieving this vision. This report demonstrates the current high level of youth involvement within the City and options available for broader youth engagement.



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