

CITY OF VANCOUVER

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT



Report Date: March 2, 2006
Author: M. White/T. Sebastian
Phone No.: 7094/7458
RTS No.: 05781
VanRIMS No.: 05-1000-20
Meeting Date: March 23, 2006

TO: Standing Committee on City Services and Budgets
FROM: Director of City Plans
SUBJECT: Area Planning Public Process Funding

RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT Council receive for INFORMATION this report which recommends that \$64,000 of project costs be added to the 2006 Budget for the public process costs associated with the first new area planning initiative, subject to Council decisions on priorities and sequencing of various area planning programs and approval of detailed work program. Approval and funding to be deferred to the 2006 Interim Operating Budget.
- B. THAT, Council receive for INFORMATION this report that recommends, beginning in 2007, the project-by-project budgets which have funded area planning public consultation over the last decade be replaced by an annual Operating Budget allocation of \$556,000 that will cover all program costs of area planning initiatives undertaken by the five permanent area planning staff teams in the City Plans Division. Approval and funding to be deferred to the 2006 Interim Operating Budget.
- C. THAT staff report back in Spring of 2006 on a recommended assignment of permanent area planning staff in the City Plans Division to New Local Area Plans, Neighbourhood Centre Planning, Canada Line Station Area Planning, and other area planning initiatives as described in this report.

GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS

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

COUNCIL POLICY

In 1995, Council adopted CityPlan as Vancouver's plan for the future. CityPlan directions seek to improve the involvement of the public in decisions that shape their city and neighbourhoods, including ensuring that a broad constituency participates in city-wide and neighbourhood planning.

The City has a long history of public involvement in community planning. Some major Council-approved programs that create new ways of reaching out to people and encourage participation for all who are interested or affected include: CityPlan, Community Visions, Neighbourhood Centres, and the Public Involvement Review.

PURPOSE and SUMMARY

The City Plans Division of the Planning Department has five permanent area planning staff teams (10 staff) that run a variety of area planning programs, including Community Visions and Neighbourhood Centres. All include significant public involvement. The current approach to allocating public process funding for these programs involves recurring requests to the City's Contingency Reserve to initiate programs in their first year, and annual requests thereafter to carry funding forward to the end of the program. This approach creates inefficiencies for program initiation and delivery, delays in initial funding, and creates uncertainty regarding carry forward requests. To remedy this, it is proposed that funding for the public process costs for the five area planning teams be built in to the department's annual base budget. All five teams have been funded in the past (for example, \$2.5m was allocated for Community Visions in 1999, to fund the program's two teams over the next 7 budget years) and will continue to require funding to do their work in the future. The tax impact will be the same whether they are funded as part of the base Operating Budget or through project funding. However, using the base Operating budget will eliminate the inefficiencies associated with the project funding approach.

All existing area programs currently have previously approved one-time funding which will cover public process costs for 2006, except one team will require \$64,000 to initiate a new planning program, subject to the 2006 Interim Operating Budget and a report back to Council this Spring that will seek direction on priorities, sequencing, and work programs for a range of future area planning programs.

The resource requirements to expand Vision Implementation to include Riley Park/South Cambie and Arbutus Ridge/Kerrisdale/Shaugnessy is the subject of a separate report to Council.

BACKGROUND

The five permanent staff teams in the City Plans Division are assigned to preparing area plans with significant public involvement. Each team is composed of a Planner and Planning Assistant. Most recently, the teams have been:

- developing Community Visions in the largely single-family areas of the city. Eight Visions have been adopted by Council and the last Vision, West Point Grey, will be completed in 2007;

- implementing Vision directions for “Neighbourhood Centres” that combine improvements to local shopping streets with increased housing variety in surrounding neighbourhoods. The Knight and Kingsway plan is complete with new zoning schedules adopted in 2005; Norquay Village (Nanaimo & Kingsway) is underway;
- planning for the Canada Line within Vancouver with a focus on station locations, entrances, and links to transit stops, cycling routes, and pedestrian connections; and
- undertaking a variety of zoning reviews and area studies necessitated by external initiatives, such as the East Portlands Planning Program.

Each area planning program includes a public process component scaled to the particular initiative. This typically includes various methods of notification and outreach; engagement activities such as open houses, workshops and surveys; and frequently includes on-going liaison with working groups. Program funding is used to, amongst other things, advertise meetings, rent facilities, print and distribute materials, translate print and spoken information, distribute and tabulate surveys, facilitate meetings, provide peer review of options and impacts, and engage consultants to provide specialized analysis or event related program support.

The present approach is to seek public involvement funding from Contingency Reserve at the start of a program. Since these programs are multi-year initiatives, staff must annually seek approval to carry forward previously approved one-time funding into the following year. This leads to time lapses and uncertainties in program delivery.

DISCUSSION

Current area planning programs are scheduled to conclude at the end of 2006 or in 2007, freeing up staff teams to undertake new area planning work. The ability to initiate this will depend on the availability of public process funding. Staff will be reporting to Council this Spring on current commitments, future staff availability, and requests for area planning services, to seek Council direction on priorities for future area planning team assignments. Sequencing of programs and detailed work programs to implement Council identified priorities will follow. The known area planning needs in the coming years are:

- **New Local Area Plans** in the nine non-Vision communities which have multiple issues and plans that are up to twenty-five years old. These outdated plans did not include the broad range of directions addressed in CityPlan and the recently approved Community Visions. Areas include the West End, Grandview-Woodlands, Mount Pleasant, Fairview, Kitsilano, and Marpole.
- **Neighbourhood Centre Planning** to implement Community Vision directions for shopping area improvements and increased housing choice in neighbourhoods. Further planning is required for the Council adopted Visions that identify 15 Centres with the potential to add 16,500 units of housing capacity in surrounding neighbourhoods.
- **Station Area Plans** will be required for the areas around Canada Line stations at Marine, 49th, 41st, and King Edward. These plans will implement adopted Vision directions for neighbourhood centres at 41st and King Edward, while exploring opportunities for redevelopment at Marine and 49th. (Planning for the Downtown Canada Line stations will generally be site specific with a focus on entrance integration. In addition, staff will be proposing a comprehensive transportation and planning study for the Central Waterfront and rail lands. This will be reported

separately to Council in 2006. Planning for the South False Creek station site will include a potential new zoning and transit-oriented development on this city-owned site. At the Broadway and Cambie Station, station area planning can be undertaken in the next few years in conjunction with planning for the civic precinct redevelopment and future extension of the Millennium Line.).

- **A Shopping Area Initiative** in non-Vision communities to provide planning for shopping districts that face significant issues but are in communities which will not require New Local Area Plans in the immediate future.
- **Unique Area Planning Initiatives** consistently arise in the course of considering major rezoning requests and addressing specific area concerns. Past examples include the Broadway and Arbutus Policy Review and the Grandview Boundary Industrial Area Plan. Currently, staff are working with the community and Port on the East Port Lands Plan, to develop agreements on port uses and relationships with adjacent neighbourhoods. Anticipated future initiatives include the Burrard Slopes, former rail lands near the Burrard Bridge and noise overlay zoning for arterial housing.

Public process funding is the equivalent of 'picks and shovels' for permanent community planning staff. The current approach to allocating public process funding for area planning programs is problematic because it:

- places regular demands on the Contingency Reserve, which is intended for contingencies and unexpected needs;
- forces new programs (and the associated staff) to wait until public process funding comes available to begin a new area program when the completion of an initiative does not coincide with the end of the budget cycle;
- results in uncertainty for process participants and in carrying forward the funding to the next year, since each area program generally extends beyond one budget year.

Given that public demand for area planning programs will continue, staff recommend a more efficient and predictable approach to public process funding for City Plans' five area planning teams. Based on the past decade of experience, staff estimate the annual budget to run five future area programs will be \$556,000. It is recommended that this amount become part of City Plans' base budget for area planning. At the end of a year, any unspent balance would not be carried forward, and the annual allocation would be available at the start of the new year. It is important to note that this level of funding would be required for the public process whether it is provided as part of the base Operating Budget or as project funding. Either approach would have the same tax impact but providing the funding in the base operating budget will avoid the inefficiencies listed above.

The \$556,000 would be dedicated to funding the public process for permanent area planning teams in the City Plans Division. Occasional city-wide or major planning projects, such as the Metro Jobs and Economy Study, Financing Growth, etc., would continue to be identified as new initiatives requiring separate program funding. Also, if Council chooses to increase the number of area planning teams, a commensurate increase in staff and program funding would be required.

Staff will report back this Spring on recommended future assignments for area planning teams and then, based on Council direction, prepare detailed sequencing strategies and work programs for each new initiative for Council consideration. These programs would be funded under this new approach, starting in 2007, with the elimination of all carry forward requests

for the five area planning teams. All existing area planning programs have sufficient funding for 2006, except for one team -- staff are requesting \$64,000 so the team can begin a new area program this year, subject to Council approval of priorities, work program, and 2006 Interim Operating Budget.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

For 2006, new project funding of \$64,000 is being requested to be added to the City Plans Operating Budget for public process funding for one area planning team that is available for a new assignment this year. For the 2007 and subsequent Operating Budgets, staff recommend that \$556,000 be added to the base Operating Budget of City Plans to fund the public process costs of the area planning programs.

Approval and funding to be deferred to the 2006 Interim Operating Budget.

PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

This report does not request new staff.

CONCLUSION

Public process is an essential element of local area planning in Vancouver, now and into the future. The replacement of irregular funding requests for area planning public processes with an annual budget will provide for a more efficient and predictable approach to area planning.
