

GOOD DECISION

Since the announcement of a new library in downtown Surrey, there have been concerns expressed about funding a library in these challenging economic times.

A new, main branch of the Surrey library has been on the books for years. The City recognized this need and money was allocated for planning.

This foresight meant that the City was far enough along in the process that they could take advantage of the economic stimulus infrastructure programs offered through the Provincial and Federal governments.

And our residents and local businesses win.

While \$30 million is a great deal of money, it is money well-spent. Economically and socially, a new library will benefit Surrey.

Who is to say that building this structure a year or two from now would be cheaper? As the economy improves, chances are the costs for building will increase. Funding from the senior levels of government, means our new library will be built a few years sooner than originally anticipated at a lesser cost and that is a good thing.

Surrey continues to grow. We currently have over 460,000 people living in Surrey and thousands more who come to Surrey to learn or work.

We need a main branch library that will accommodate administration offices and serve the entire City.

Currently, the Whalley Library is housed in an old hardware store. It is small and lacks the ability to service the community of City Centre/Whalley – a community of over 100,000 people let alone the whole City.

It makes sense to build a world-class library in our City Centre. That is the vision of our Mayor and Council and has been supported by the Provincial and Federal Governments. Why would the citizens of Surrey not support a library that will benefit themselves, their children and grandchildren?

While some people might question the decision to build the main branch of the library in City Centre consider the reasons why it makes sense.

The new library will be part of a civic complex including City Hall, SFU science building and a Performing Arts Centre. This complex will add vitality and an added dimension to the downtown core.

Public transit from most areas of Surrey stops at the bus loop at the foot of the Skytrain Station right where the library will be located.

With the continued expansion of SFU, there would be a good synergy between the City library and SFU, not to mention the other post-secondary institutions located within the City Centre including Douglas College and Vancouver Career College.

Good leadership is not about making popular decisions. It is about making good forward-thinking decisions. Building a world-class library in Surrey City Centre is a good decision.

Downtown Surrey Business Improvement Association
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A NEW LIBRARY FOR DOWNTOWN SURREY

Written by Sylvia Taylor.

On September 25, there was an announcement by all levels of government that a new library would be built in downtown Surrey.

The investment in a library shows the commitment our leaders have in our community.

In the 21st Century, libraries are not just a place to find books. New libraries need more versatile space than those in the past. Space to hold public readings, lectures and group meetings. Space that accommodates the needs of a young tech-savvy community - from books to computer terminals and DVD collections. Today's libraries also provide services for people looking for a job, a place to read a book, listen to a CD or go

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generates tremendous foot traffic for local businesses and cultural destinations. An economic study reviewed what happened in Seattle when a new



Surrey City Development Corporation's vision of what the new library, along with a performing arts centre and hotel, might look like in Whalley. Actual renderings for the project have not yet been done.

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An economic study reviewed what happened in Seattle when a new

downtown library opened in Seattle in 2004. More than 2.3 million individuals visited during the first year of operation, including 700,000 out-of-town visitors. This library is credited with bringing \$16 million in new spending in Seattle in the first year of operation.

Nearby businesses, particularly restaurants and coffee shops reported increased spending because of Library visitors.

Reports show that increase in the use of library resources contribute to learning, literacy, business productivity, and personal and professional development – all of which boost the local economy.

A library as an economic driver is not the only benefit to a City. In Seattle, the library added to the livability of downtown. The visitors contributed to downtown vitality and vibrancy making it a more attractive residential and commercial location. Collaboration between the Seattle library and other partners, such as the Seattle Art Museum and nearby theatres, make it an important asset to repositioning their downtown as a cultural arts district.

The Seattle library is part of a network of Seattle attractions that makes Washington a more attractive destination. It also contributes greatly to Seattle's sense of pride and identity.

Anyway you look at it, a new library in downtown Surrey makes sense – community vibrancy, culturally and economically.

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