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MAYOR'S
TASK FORCE ON
CRIME
REDUCTION

Abbotsford's Crime Reduction & Community Safety Strategy
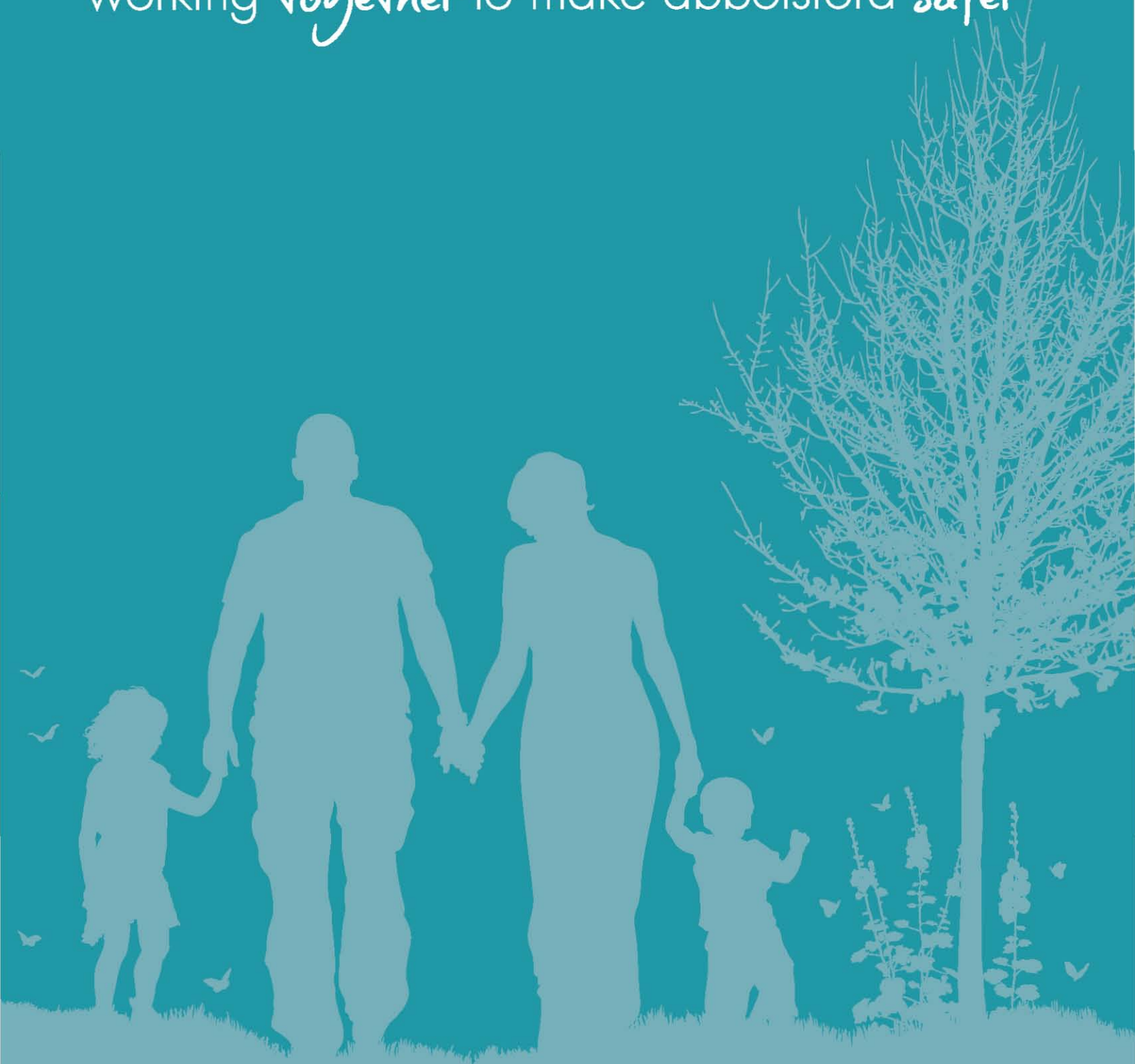
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Abbotsford's Crime Reduction & Community Safety Strategy:
We All Have a Role to Play

Abbotsford's Crime Reduction & Community Safety Strategy

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Message from the Mayor

I am extremely proud to introduce Abbotsford's first Strategy on Crime Reduction & Community Safety.

This report represents a year of dedicated effort by the members of the Mayor's Task Force on Crime Reduction and is Abbotsford's first attempt at tackling crime from a different perspective. It is important to recognize that the recommendations within this Crime Reduction & Community Safety Strategy seek to address the causes of crime rather than the symptoms, and are intended to complement the work of the Abbotsford Police Department.

The cornerstones contained within this Strategy will require community participation and a high level of coordination with government and non-government community resources. Crime Reduction & Community Safety initiatives belong to all of us and we all have a role to play in ensuring that our city is safe for our children and our citizens.

As we begin to develop and implement community initiatives to support this Strategy, I invite you to give some thought on how you can help to build a safer, healthier and more vibrant Abbotsford.

George W. Peary
Mayor, City of Abbotsford

Introduction & Background

The Mayor's Task Force on Crime Reduction was announced by Mayor George W. Peary in March, 2009. The Task Force is chaired by the Mayor and is a community venture that includes representation from:

- City Council;
- Board of Education;
- Abbotsford Police Board;
- Abbotsford Police Department;
- School District #34;
- Abbotsford Chamber of Commerce;
- Fraser Health Authority; and
- the community at large.

See Appendix E for list of Task Force participants.

The Task Force was mandated to develop a series of long and short-term initiatives that would address crime prevention and community safety issues in Abbotsford. In approaching the development of the Strategy, the Task Force made four integral considerations that guided their work:

1. The Strategy will not duplicate work, but will coordinate, where possible, with existing program providers and service groups in Abbotsford.

2. The Strategy will complement, not compete, with the strategic initiatives and operations work of the Abbotsford Police Department.

3. Inter-governmental cooperation, community-level partnerships and public engagement are key building blocks for making the Strategy sustainable and successful; and

4. Criminal justice reform policy and research will not be a focus within the scope of the Strategy.

Community Based Crime Reduction Strategies

As described by the Coalition on Community Safety, Health and Well-being, the causes of criminal activity and victimization are complex, and tend to involve a number of social, economic and cultural risk factors. Some of these risk factors, may include, but are not limited to:

- inadequate living conditions;
- family factors;
- familial criminality;
- individual personality, behavioural or medical factors;
- peer associations;
- school-related factors; and
- lack of employment opportunities and training.

Community-based crime reduction strategies are developed locally, and are a discerning way to identify specific community needs and address risk factors relevant to a particular community. Many community crime reduction strategies emphasize an approach that incorporates Crime Prevention through Social Development (CPSD) and community involvement.

CPSD is a long-term crime prevention approach that recognizes and tries to address the complex risk factors that contribute to crime, rather than the symptoms of crime *(Alberta Community Crime Prevention Association Web Source)*. CPSD seeks to strengthen the "bridge" between criminal justice policies and programs and the safe, secure, and pro-social development of individuals, families, and communities *(Coalition on Community Safety, Health and Well-being, 2006)*.

Other widely recognized approaches to crime prevention are Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) and Situational Crime Prevention (SCP). CPTED dissuades criminal activity and increases perceived safety through the proper design, use and maintenance of the built physical environment. SCP identifies situational problems associated with a specific combination of people, a specific location or an event, or any combination thereof, and resolves or prevents the immediate problem *(Government of British Columbia, Criminal justice Reform Secretariat Web Source)*.

All three crime prevention approaches are necessary for an effective community safety strategy. If they are implemented alongside traditional law enforcement and policing models, courts and corrections, they can bring balance to, and improve community crime reduction as a whole *(Canadian Criminal Justice Association, 1989)*.

In some cases, despite efforts of the police and community crime strategies, a community's perception of crime and safety may not always mirror the realities of crime and safety. Therefore, it is important to understand the community perspective in this regard, and work toward making improvements. This issue is addressed in more detail in Appendix B.

Abbotsford's Crime Reduction & Community Safety Strategy

Identifying the specific crime issues facing Abbotsford is the first step towards developing an effective and appropriate community response. To accomplish this task, the following information was gathered and analyzed:

- insight from the Task Force members, City staff, guest speakers and other professionals;

- information and advice obtained through a series of targeted community meetings; and

- a literature review of government, academic and non-academic materials including an informal review of approaches used in communities in North America and Western Europe.

The following five cornerstones that form the basis of Abbotsford's Crime Reduction & Community Safety Strategy:

1. Children, Youth and Family Engagement

2. Neighbourhood Capacity Building

3. Housing and Social Policy Development

4. Bylaw Enforcement & Civic Pride

5. CPTED & Target Hardening

Each cornerstone represents an identified area of need in Abbotsford where improvements can be made to address specific risk factors associated with crime, or where a greater coordination of existing resources and programs can be realized. Within each cornerstone, a number of initiatives are recommended to deal with specific crime issues and community challenges.

Strategy Format

The Strategy initiatives are structured under the five cornerstones and in two phases.

Phase One outlines initiatives that are targeted for substantial completion by the end of 2011.

Phase Two includes initiatives outlined in Appendix A, that have a timeline for substantial completion over a longer timeframe, and as resources permit.

In each phase, initiatives are divided into two categories:

1. *Initiatives implemented through existing departmental work plans.* Initiatives listed in this category will be primarily implemented by City staff, by integrating the initiatives into existing departmental work plans.

2. *Initiatives implemented through new staff resources and community partnerships.* Initiatives listed in this category may be implemented primarily by new staff resources (see Implementation Plan on Page 12) and in collaboration with community partnerships.

Phase One Initiatives

Children, Youth and Family Engagement

"Healthy children, youth and families are the building blocks to strong communities. Early intervention and education are key factors in promoting good decision making." (Solutions for America Website)

Phase One Implemented Through Departmental Work Plans

• Create a messaging campaign to draw the connection between using/selling/buying drugs and organized crime.

Phase One Implemented Through New Staff Resources & Community Partnerships

• Inventory existing mentorship programs, identify gaps and explore new opportunities to increase positive adult mentorship programs.

• Develop after school programming for children under 12 years of age.

• Identify at-risk children and youth in and out of schools and wrap them with the necessary supports required to overcome their barriers.

• Host a series of speakers to support, educate and encourage parents on challenging issues - focus on good parenting.

Neighbourhood Capacity Building

"Prosperous neighbourhoods provide opportunities for greater personal safety, reduced property crime and building strong relationships with other neighbours and local governments." (Solutions for America Web Source)

Phase One Implemented Through Departmental Work Plans

• Explore the possibility of creating a City-sponsored "Neighbourhood Initiatives" grant program and develop grant categories, submission guidelines and evaluation criteria for bestowing funds.

Phase One Implemented Through New Staff Resources & Community Partnerships

• Explore opportunities for sharing school spaces with neighbourhood groups, providing space for formal or informal neighbourhood meetings and functions.

• Identify at-risk neighbourhoods and support them through the Block Watch program and neighbourhood crime audits.

• Launch a "Get To Know Your Neighbours" Campaign, involving challenges, rewards and recognition of a winner.

• Work with the APD to obtain "real time" crime statistics and post on Community Safety Website / APD Website.

Housing and Social Policy Development

"Access to clean, safe and affordable housing, along with necessary social services facilitates the strengthening of a community's social fabric, and contributes to a stronger and ultimately safer community."

Phase One Implemented Through Departmental Work Plans

• Review Boarding Use provisions of the Abbotsford Zoning Bylaw, 1996, and investigate business licensing opportunities.

• Expand and improve the Crime-Free Multi-Housing Program and investigate a two tiered business licensing approach.

• Develop a set of social housing location criteria to help guide the decision making process with respect to new social housing proposals.

Phase One Implemented Through New Staff Resources & Community Partnerships

• Investigate the possibility of creating contract jobs for homeless – street and laneway clean-up crew contract positions.

Bylaw Enforcement & Civic Pride

"Civic pride has the ability to discourage litter, graffiti and criminal activity, which inevitably contributes to community improvement and an atmosphere for volunteerism and personal responsibility." (Solutions for America Website)

Phase One Implemented Through Departmental Work Plans

- Identify problem areas and coordinate with Adopt-A-Block/Park programs.

- Proactively target neglected/unsightly neighbourhoods & deliver clean-up, demolition and fix-up orders.

- Increase enforcement of Good Neighbour Bylaw with respect to nuisance behavior and unsightly premises.

- Promote the Adopt-a-Block / Adopt-a-Park programs.

- Complete the City's Public Art Program Policy.

Phase One Implemented Through New Staff Resources & Community Partnerships

- Work with media to regularly highlight the good work of police, community groups, mentors, charities and outstanding students. Use Crime Reduction & Community Safety website and other means of advertising.

- Develop a centralized Graffiti Hotline.

CPTED & Target Hardening

"Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) and target hardening can provide tangible solutions to many immediate crime and safety concerns. They can also provide a starting place for neighbourhood interaction through the use of neighbourhood crime audits or CPTED assessments."

Phase One Implemented Through Departmental Work Plans

- Develop CPTED guidelines & incorporate them into the Official Community Plan and development permit guidelines.

- Form a CPTED Review Group with the following functions:
  - review new development applications; and
  - assist neighbourhood groups with CPTED reviews and provide feedback.

- Investigate the feasibility of requiring businesses to conduct basic CPTED reviews prior to receiving a business license – examine the possibility of a two tiered business licensing approach.

- Work with the Integrated Services Enforcement Team (ISET) to identify and stop businesses from profiting by illegal activities.

Phase One Implemented Through New Staff Resources & Community Partnerships

- Investigate the feasibility of installing Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) at key crime hotspots such as the bus exchanges (safe zones).

- Work with neighbourhood groups, government agencies and commercial enterprises to promote CPTED design principles in public and private sectors.

In addition to the initiatives recommended under each of the five cornerstones, a number of crime prevention initiatives are already underway. Visit Abbotsford's Crime Reduction & Community Safety Website at www.abbotsfordcrimereduction.ca for more information.

Implementation Plan

Once the Strategy is approved in principle by Council, it will be reviewed by the City's Senior Management Team, and the Strategy initiatives outlined in Phase One and Phase Two that are earmarked for implementation through departmental work plans, will be assigned to the various departments to complete. As each department has an established annual work plan with initiatives, responsibilities, required resources, timeline considerations and desired deliverables, Senior Management must deliberate on how many Strategy initiatives can be integrated into current work plans, and how many will be forwarded to future work plans. Departments will report to Council at regular intervals, as progress is made.

Not all Strategy initiatives can be completed through departmental work plans. The Task Force recommends that the City hire a Community Developer and a half-time Crime Reduction Planner to implement the initiatives that require community partnerships and a greater level of coordination. Key roles of these two positions are outlined in Appendix F. Detailed job descriptions for the new positions, including specific areas of responsibility, will be developed by City staff in conjunction with the Human Resources & People Development Division.

Sufficient funds exist in the 2010 Crime Reduction budget to fill the above-noted positions, and to continue to support the work currently being carried out by Abbotsford Connected Neighbourhoods. The 2011 budget will require additional funding if all of the initiatives outlined in Phase One and Phase Two are to be completed.

Summary

Creating a safe, healthy, and vibrant community is the responsibility of all citizens. Community engagement and participation in implementing the Strategy initiatives, a well resourced police force, consistent enforcement of City bylaws, and the continued work of courts and corrections all contribute to increased community safety and improved perceptions of safety, reduced crime, increased community involvement in crime reduction and increased coordination between community groups already involved in pro-social development and crime reduction initiatives. Together we can make a difference in Abbotsford – we all have a role to play!

We all have a role to play in creating a safe, healthy and vibrant Abbotsford.

Appendix A

Phase Two Initiatives

Children, Youth and Family Engagement

Phase Two Implemented Through New Staff Resources & Community Partnerships

- Explore ways of 'cracking the secrecy code" between youth and adults with respect to reporting crime.
- Advocate for increased presence of Youth Squad Officers in secondary and middle schools.
- Expand the Abbotsford Community Services Buddy Program.
- Develop a pilot program where volunteer seniors walk kids to and from school & supervise during school breaks.
- Open a 24/7 youth refuge/drop-in centre.
- Provide low and no cost after school programs for children and Youth.
- Develop a confidential Help Line for parents.

Neighbourhood Capacity Building

Phase Two Implemented Through New Staff Resources & Community Partnerships

- Build and rent out a "Neighbourhood Night Out Tool Kit"
- Explore grant opportunities to support neighbourhood based programs.

Housing and Social Policy Development

Phase Two Implemented Through Departmental Work Plans

- Increase Abbotsford's housing and social services inventory for those most in need:
  - partner with government, non-profits and community service providers to improve the City's social conditions; and
  - investigate funding opportunities for housing and social programs.

Bylaw Enforcement & Civic Pride

Phase Two Implemented through Departmental Work Plans

- Develop a City Beautification and Civic Pride strategy.

CPTED & Target Hardening

Phase Two Implemented through Departmental Work Plans

- Convey to the Abbotsford Police Department the public's request for increased service and expansion of the following programs:
  - increase the number of "bikes and beats" patrols in "hot-spot" areas;
  - expand the Citizen's Patrol program;
  - Continue to expand and improve the Block/Business & Farm Watch programs.
- Perform CPTED reviews of "problem areas" and public spaces (CPTED Review Group function).

Appendix B

Perceptions vs. Realities of Crime and Safety

A community's perceptions of crime and safety do not necessarily correspond with the realities of crime and safety in that community. As noted in the City of Surrey's Realities and Perceptions of Crime Strand of their Crime Reduction Strategy, an individual's perceptions about crime and their relative safety in relation to becoming a victim of crime are formed by three basic factors:

1. a prior experience of being victimized by criminal activity or knowledge of others who have been victimized by criminal activity;

2. through various sources of information received regarding criminal activity, successful and unsuccessful efforts; and

3. the visibility of actions being taken to address criminal activities and improve their relative safety.

It is critical that a community understand the gap between perceptions and realities of crime and safety across the various demographic groups in the community. Fear of crime has been identified as a widespread social problem that can influence individuals' health and well-being, and at a broader level, can influence the quality of life in local communities by limiting interaction and trust among residents *(Conklin, 1975; Ross 1993; Skogan 1990) qtd. in Fitzgerald, 2008)*.

Conducting a crime and safety perceptions survey on an annual basis, combined with the latest statistics on crime rates and the geographic distribution of crime, is a valuable assessment tool for measuring community perception of crime and safety. If a specific area of concern is identified through the survey (i.e. a particular crime/safety concern in a specific demographic group), a specific action can be taken to address the issue.

A higher level approach, including the following actions, can help reduce the gap between perceptions and realities of crime and safety:

- Share real time crime statistics for priority crime areas and by geographic regions of the city;

- Report regularly on success stories of apprehending criminals and key criminal judgments and sentencings;

- Regularly report on the progress and successes of the Crime Reduction & Community Safety Strategy; and

- Showcase the good work of community agencies and non-profit organizations who contribute to crime reduction, community safety and pro-social development.

The above noted recommendations are reinforced by a number of recommended initiatives outlined in the Strategy. Conducting a survey on an annual basis will be a separate initiative housed in and administered through the Crime Reduction & Community Safety Website.

Appendix C

Evaluation

In order to appropriately measure whether the initiatives of the Crime Reduction & Community Safety Strategy are effective in reducing and preventing crime and contributing to feelings of safety, a set of performance measures must be developed for the initiatives.

Appendix D

Communication Plan

Launch of the overall Strategy

- News Conference with the Mayor and the Police Chief to announce the Crime Reduction & Community Safety Strategy and launch of the Mayor's Task Force website (follow up media coverage and interviews with Mayor and Police Chief) – Key messages and PowerPoint presentation will be produced for the news conference

- News release and Backgrounder documents sent to provincial media outlets

- Notification in Abbotsford News City Page

- Link and information included on City and APD websites

Launch of Specific Initiatives related to five key areas of crime and safety concerns

- Public information sessions

- News releases

- Media interviews with Mayor/Police Chief/staff

- Notification in the City Page

- Strategic messaging where needed – letters, door knockers, information pamphlets, PowerPoint presentations, videos, ads in newspapers, designated web pages

- Social media campaigns where appropriate (use of Facebook, Twitter, Blogs)

Appendix E

Members of the Mayor's Task Force of Crime Reduction

Mayor George W. Peary, Chair

Councillor Les Barkman

Councillor Bill MacGregor

Superintendent Julie MacRae, School District 34

Trustee, Korky Neufeld, School District 34

Trustee, Uultsje DeJong, School District 34

Gerry Charles, Abbotsford Police Board

Sergeant Doug Sage, Community Policing, Abbotsford Police Department

David Hull, Executive Director, Abbotsford Chamber of Commerce

Frank Fung, Fraser Health Authority

Scott Heal, Community Member

John Davidson, Community Member

Les Stagg, Community Member

Manpreet Grewal, Community Member

Cheryl Sarkosy, Community Member

Paul Wadhawan, Community Member

Peter Qumsieh, Community Member

Appendix F

Key Roles of the Community Developer and Crime Reduction Planner

Community Developer

A full-time position housed within the Parks, Recreation and Culture (PRC) department.

Key responsibilities may in part include:

- Coordinating with PRC, Economic Development & Planning Services, the School District, community service providers and neighbourhood groups;
- Fostering community engagement through the process of neighbourhood development and other neighbourhood and community initiatives;
- Developing and delivering neighbourhood based recreation, programming for children, youth and families, and civic beautification projects that improve neighbourhoods;
- Pursuing grant opportunities to support neighbourhood-based programs; and
- Reporting regularly to Mayor and Council on the progress of the initiatives.

Crime Reduction Planner

A half-time position, possibly housed in the Economic Development & Planning Services Department.

Key responsibilities may in part include:

- Maintaining and updating the Crime Reduction & Community Safety Website;
- Tracking the work of City Departments and assisting where necessary to ensure that the Strategy initiatives are being implemented;
- Liaising with the Community Developer, Abbotsford Police Services, community service providers, social service groups and government agencies to help develop and implement the strategy initiatives;
- Pursuing grant opportunities to support the implementation of initiatives; and
- Reporting regularly to Mayor and Council on the progress of the initiatives.

Appendix G

Community Consultation

The following community groups participated in a consultation session that helped provide insight and information about community crime and safety concerns to the members of the Task Force on Crime Reduction:

Cyrus Centre – youth drop in group

Abbotsford Youth Commission – Youth Council

Abbotsford Youth Commission – youth drop in group at the Abbotsford Recreation Centre

Abbotsford Community Services – South Asian Community Resource Group

Central Abbotsford Community School – student group

Abbotsford Recreation Centre – seniors drop in group

Abbotsford Community Services – "Lunch with a Bunch" seniors group

Sikh Temple, South Fraser Way (east) - men's Indo-Canadian senior's drop in group

Clearbrook Senior's Golden Age Society

Mennonite Central Committee Community Living Program – adult's with disabilities day program

Mennonite Central Committee – brain injury drop-in group

Abbotsford Community Services – Employing People in Community (EPIC) Program group

Abby House drop in group – adults with mental health challenges

Abbotsford Downtown Business Association (ADBA)

Abbotsford Chamber of Commerce

Indo-Canadian Business Association of the Fraser Valley

Women's Resource Society – The Warm Zone

Appendix H

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