

CITY OF BURNABY  
FINANCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

HIS WORSHIP, THE MAYOR  
AND COUNCILLORS

Re: 2001 Burnaby Tourism Program Status Report and Proposal for 2002

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. THAT this report be received for information purposes.

**REPORT**

At its meeting on 2001 November 26 the Finance and Economic Development Committee adopted the *attached* report providing a review of the 2001 Burnaby Tourism Program which includes the operation of the seasonal tourist information centre in the Metrotown retail complex, distribution of the Burnaby Visitors' Guide, the Tourist Services component of the Burnaby web site and the tourist information service in City Hall. The report notes that, in anticipation of reduced revenues and in an effort towards budget restraint, the Planning Department has reduced its expenditures in a number of non-core areas including the temporary elimination of the Tourism Program budget next year. The following initiatives will be continued, although at a lower level of service: limited distribution of the Burnaby Visitors' Guide, limited tourist display at Metrotown, tourist information at City Hall and the web site. It is thought that the proposed cutback will be a temporary measure for 2002 and past efforts in promoting and facilitating the local tourist industry can resume to its full extent in the near future.

Respectfully submitted,

Councillor D.R. Corrigan  
Chair

Councillor D.N. Johnston  
Member

Councillor N.M. Volkow  
Member

COPY - CITY MANAGER - DIRECTOR FINANCE - DIRECTOR PLNG. & BLDG.
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**TO:** CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE FINANCE  
AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

**FROM:** DIRECTOR PLANNING AND BUILDING

**SUBJECT:** 2001 BURNABY TOURISM PROGRAM  
STATUS REPORT AND PROPOSAL FOR 2002

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2001 NOVEMBER 22

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. **THAT** the Finance and Economic Development Committee receive this report for information purposes.

**R E P O R T**

**1.0 SUMMARY:**

This report provides a review of the 2001 Burnaby Tourism Program which includes the operation of the seasonal Tourist Infocentre in the Metrotown Retail Complex, the distribution of the Burnaby Visitors' Guide, the "Tourist Services" component of the Burnaby Web site and the tourist information service in City Hall. The report includes a statistical summary of the Metrotown Tourist Infocentre visitors and the "Tourist Services" Web Site users. A proposal for the 2002 Program is also included in this report taking into account current budget constraints.

**2.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

In 1995, Council approved the first City operated Tourism Program for the 1995 calendar year which was based on its review of the Burnaby Tourism Strategy Implementation Report. The City's Tourism Program has been administered by the Planning and Building Department since 1995 and has been modestly expanded over the years to widen the distribution of the Burnaby Visitors' Guide which now includes portions of Washington State, to extend the operation of the Metrotown Tourist Infocentre from three to five months along with Thursday and Friday nights and to add a "Tourist Services" component to the City's Web Site. The budget for the Tourism Program is incorporated within the Planning and Building Department Annual Operating Budget and for 2001 is \$72,625.

**3.0 SUMMARY OF THE 2001 TOURISM PROGRAM:**

**3.1 METROTOWN TOURIST INFOCENTRE**

The Burnaby Community Information Booth, located on the pedestrian walkway linking Metropolis at Metrotown and Metrotown Centre, operated exclusively as the "Burnaby Tourist Infocentre" from May 01 through September 30 seven days per week generally between 10:00 am and 6:00 pm and until 8:30 p.m. Thursday and Friday evenings (excluding Thursday evenings during September 2001). The Infocentre was staffed with three Auxiliary City employees (students from the Marketing and Tourism Management Program at BCIT) who provided the general public with information, advice, suggestions, directions etc. on a variety of tourist related topics covering Burnaby events, attractions and facilities around the Lower Mainland and the Province.

The Infocentre was clearly identified as the "Burnaby Tourist Infocentre" with large banners and a wide selection of prominent Burnaby and Province-wide tourist brochures, information items, attractions materials, maps, ferry and bus schedules, etc. that were racked and dispensed to the general public free of charge. Burnaby-related attractions, brochures and the Burnaby Visitors' Guide were allocated to the most visible sections of the display racks. Additional brochures promoting community and regional events were also prominently displayed.

Many of the general tourist brochures displayed at the Infocentre are distributed by Certified Folder Display Inc. which is a private company that charges a fee for distributing tourist related brochures throughout British Columbia and the western United States. They will most often provide their own display racks (free of charge) that are situated in hotel lobbies and other tourist related locations or will use other display systems provided by other agencies such as the one provided at the Infocentre. The cost to the City for this broadly based distribution of our brochures is approximately \$11,000.

The five month operation of the Infocentre provided a key role in the 2001 Program. It has a highly visible location in the Metrotown Retail and Entertainment Complex which has a significant regional profile as a shopping and visitor destination and provides a useful service to tourists and local residents. Promotion of the Metrotown Tourist Infocentre was included in the 2001 May issue of "Information Burnaby" produced by the City and distributed to every business and household in Burnaby.

This year, staff redesigned the identification/promotion banners at the Infocentre which dominate the rear wall behind the counter and display racks. These banners provide its primary identification and include a number of photos depicting Burnaby's various attractions against a panorama of Burnaby Lake with the Metrotown skyline in the background. These images, along with the more bold identification signage, have updated its visual appearance and give a clearer statement of the service provided.

### 3.2 CITY HALL TOURIST INFORMATION:

This is a limited tourist information service introduced in 1995 September at the Information Desk on the main floor of City Hall and through the display of tourist related information and brochures from a display rack located in the lobby area which are provided free of charge by Certified Folder Display Inc. City staff at the Information Desk respond to a variety of general City related enquiries by phone and in person on a year round basis and also answer basic tourist-related questions.

The extent of this tourist service is considerably less than provided at the Metrotown Infocentre and is focussed primarily on Burnaby events and attractions. Enquiries on events and attractions outside of Burnaby are referred to other agencies such as Tourism Vancouver and Tourism B.C. who are better equipped to respond.

### 3.3 BURNABY VISITORS' GUIDE:

The display and distribution of the all new Burnaby Visitors' Guide (copy of brochure *attached*), is a key component of the 2001 Program. During 2001, approximately 100,000 copies of the Burnaby Visitors' Guide were distributed and displayed throughout Greater Vancouver and B.C. by Certified Folder Display Inc. which includes 270 established tourist outlets throughout the Lower Mainland, the Vancouver International Airport, the Cruise Ship Terminal at Canada Place, the three most travelled B.C. Ferry routes; Nanaimo-Tsawwassen, Swartz Bay-Tsawwassen, and Horseshoe Bay-Nanaimo, selected Tourist Infocentres around British Columbia, the complete Washington State Ferry System including all ferry runs and terminals with display facilities and the I-5 Corridor in Northwest Washington State extending through Bellingham and Seattle and including approximately 200 display locations at hotels, visitor centres and car rental agencies throughout northwest Washington (excluding the I-5 Rest Stops).

This brochure was also distributed to the Metrotown Tourist Infocentre, all Burnaby Libraries, Recreation Centres, Burnaby Village Museum and Carousel and other community facilities, selected Burnaby hotel lobbies and rooms, numerous organizations and associations who requested copies for upcoming events, individuals (residents and non-residents) for friends and relatives and for non-residents planning personal travel.

In view of the large number of these brochures that are distributed, the Burnaby Visitors' Guide continues to be a useful, multipurpose brochure. .

### 3.4 TOURIST SERVICES WEB SITE

The "Tourist Services" component was added to the City's Web Site in 1999 and includes much of the information contained in the Burnaby Visitors' Guide. It has become well utilized with an average of approximately 1,918 "user sessions" per month from 2000 October through 2001 September for a total of 23,013 for the last 12 months period. This compares with an average of 1,000 "user sessions" per month and a total of 12,005 during the previous 12 month period (1999 October through 2000 September).

The current year figures represent a 92% increase over the previous year and approximately 10% of the total Burnaby Web Page user sessions. The vast majority (86%) of the "Tourist Services" user sessions are from the United States with a lesser number (13%) from Canada.

### 3.5 VISITOR STATISTICS - METROTOWN TOURIST INFOCENTRE:

The Metrotown Tourist Infocentre operated for a five month period from May 01 through September 30. In terms of visitor volume, June, July and August are traditionally considered the "peak" visitor period while May and September constitute the "shoulder" period when visitor volume tends to decrease.

Infocentre staff maintained a daily tabulation of customers who were provided with service at the Infocentre. Many customers received personalized service where staff provided advice, detailed information, brochures, maps, etc. while others simply picked up brochures and pamphlets from the display racks without interacting with staff.

#### A. 2000/2001 COMPARISON

The following table summarizes and compares the visitor statistics obtained from the Metrotown Tourist Infocentre for 2001 and 2000.

Metrotown Tourist Infocentre Statistics - 2000/2001 Comparison						
Visitor Statistics	Peak Period June - August		Shoulder Period May and September		Total Period May - September	
	2000	2001	2000	2001	2000	2001
Daily Average Personally Served	143	185	99	119	125	159
Total Personally Served	13,118	17,031	6,033	7,261	19,151	24,292
Daily Average Visits (Served and Non-served)	694	516	432	344	590	447
Total Visits (Served and Non-served)	63,861	47,446	26,349	20,988	90,210	68,434
Percentage from BC	52%	63%	57%	68%	53%	65%
Percentage from Outside BC	48%	37%	43%	32%	47%	35%

**B. GENERAL COMMENTS**

The number of people provided with personal service from staff at the Infocentre during the 2001 five month period was 24,292 with an average of 159 per day. This is the highest volume since the Infocentre opened in 1995 and is about a 27% increase over year 2000. The new identification signs at the Infocentre which now make a clearer statement of purpose may have helped to increase this number which grew by 73% since 1996.

The total number of people served at the Infocentre (with or without service from staff) during the 2001 five month period was 68,434 with an average of 447 per day. This is a 25.5% drop from year 2000 figures and is likely due to the recently declining economy which has caused cutbacks on personal spending and fewer visits to the shopping complex.

The total number of visitors from outside of British Columbia declined to 35% in 2001 from 47% in 2000 for the five month period. This decline is also likely the result of the weakening economy and less money spent on travel which kept people closer to home. The largest origin of visitors from outside of B.C. was from the "rest of North America" followed by "Asia/Oceania" followed by "surrounding regions (Western Provinces, Pacific Northwest States and Alaska)". This pattern is very similar to year 2000.

The extended Infocentre operating hours on Thursday and Fridays (until 8:30 p.m.) continued to provide a worthwhile service where a reasonable number of customers were served during this period. Of the total customers served during the entire day on Thursdays and Fridays for the five month period, an average of 22% were served during the extended hours of operation (6:00 to 8:30 p.m.) which represents approximately 24% of the total daily operating hours. This represents a slight increase over the year 2000 figures.

**4.0 PROPOSAL FOR 2002 BURNABY TOURISM PROGRAM:**

4.1 Due to the current economic slowdown, the Planning and Building Department anticipates that revenues from development and construction for 2002 will be lower than current levels. In an effort towards budget restraint and meeting the targets set for the 2002 Provisional Operating Budget, the Department has reduced its expenditures in a number of non-core areas including the elimination of the Tourism Program budget which is proposed to be deferred for the next year.

4.2 The proposed deferment of the noted components with respect to the 2002 Program will however allow for several of the tourism initiatives to be continued at no cost, albeit at a lower level of service. The following initiatives can be maintained:

A. Limited Distribution of the Burnaby Visitors' Guide

This would involve the distribution of the brochure to Burnaby facilities and locations including City Hall, Libraries, Community Centres, The Deer Lake Arts Centre, Burnaby Village Museum and Carousel, and the Community Information Booth in Metrotown and Burnaby Hotels. The brochure would also be made available for display at local events, to the numerous associations that hold events in Burnaby and to other Tourist Infocentres that request our brochures. The City will provide its own distribution of the brochures. The current supply of brochures will meet these needs through 2002 and possibly 2003. Staff will monitor the supply of the brochures through 2002 and, if necessary and possible, obtain funds that may be available from Prior Year Surplus or Stabilization to print additional brochures in 2003.

B. Metrotown Community Information Booth

Limited tourist information would be displayed at the Metrotown facility. Staffing of the "Tourist Infocentre" would not be provided. However, the booth will continue to be made available to other community groups who wish to promote their programs or provide general information about their organization. A notice indicating expanded availability of the booth would be distributed to non-profit and other community groups in Burnaby.

C. City Hall Tourist Information

This would include the continuation of the current limited service available in the lobby of City Hall through the staff at the Information Desk and the continued display of tourist brochures in the display rack provided by Certified Folder Display Inc.

D. Tourist Services Web Site

This will include the continued operation of this component of the City Web site which will be updated and monitored on a continual basis.

**5.0 CONCLUSIONS:**

In view of the foregoing, the City will be able to maintain a limited program at little or no cost for next year or until such time as other interim measures are pursued which could include funding from other City based sources or transferring the responsibility to another agency. In this regard, one option that is current being explored involves the Burnaby Board of Trade and its proposal for introducing a 2% Hotel Tax in Burnaby that, if approved, would provide funding for a renewed Burnaby Tourism Program which could replace the City's current program. This matter is expected to be considered further in an upcoming meeting of the Finance and Economic Development Committee with the Burnaby Board of Trade.

At this time, the proposed cutback is considered a temporary measure for 2002. It is anticipated that the past efforts in promoting and facilitating the local tourist industry can resume to its full extent in the near future.

Unless otherwise directed, staff will pursue the proposed limited Tourism Program for 2002 as outlined in Section 4.2 above.



J.S. Belhouse  
Director Planning and Building

PS/dbh  
Attach.

- cc: City Manager
- Director Finance
- Director Recreation and Cultural Services
- Deputy City Manager - Corporate Services