



Mayor's Annual Address to the City

January 24, 2011

Good evening everyone. I am pleased and very proud to present my 2011 address to the citizens of our Royal City.

Before I begin, I want to sincerely thank each and every citizen of New Westminster for your contribution to the spirit of our great city. A community's success can be largely measured by the engagement of its people. By that measure – and by any other – New Westminster, the Royal City, is a tremendous success.

Throughout my life, and especially during my time as Mayor, I've reflected on advice my dad gave to me many years ago. The advice was simple, yet powerful: be determined in the pursuit of your goals, work hard and conduct yourself with integrity at all times and you will succeed. It truly is a formula for success and one that we've applied to great measure here in New Westminster. Throughout the organization - from city staff to city council – the formula shines like a beacon, guiding us forward with progress in mind, creating a livable community for all of us now and our children and grandchildren in the future.

Over the past decade, and in particular over the past six years, there can be no doubt that great progress has been made in our city. However, like always in municipal government, more remains to be done. Our citizens have told us that livability is of



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utmost importance to them. It's why people choose to live here, work here and play here. Over the past year the many initiatives we've launched or completed have been done with livability – for the very young to the not so young – in mind.

Looking back over 2010, it certainly was a busy year. Earlier in the fall, we gathered with our funding partners along with a team of hardworking fundraising volunteers to cut the ribbon opening the new Youth Centre at Moody Park. This shiny new structure is unique in that it co-locates a facility geared towards youth with one geared towards addressing the needs of our older residents – Century House. We've been told that this co-location makes this facility the first of its kind in Canada, which is appropriate, as Century House was also the first recreation facility of its kind when it was opened by HRH Princess Margaret back in 1958.

In Queensborough, construction activity has been evident for some time, with the all-wheel park nearly complete and planning for an expanded community centre underway. Also in this historic area of the city, a number of other parks initiatives are taking shape including a new neighbourhood park and pocket park as well as construction of a riverfront trail system to bring citizens closer to the beauty of the Fraser River.

With the assistance of generous contributions from senior levels of government, we're making much needed improvements to Mercer Track and its storage facilities. Mercer Track is used by many sports clubs and residents as they pursue their passion for activity and fitness. The Royal City Track and Field Club, New Westminster Spartans, and NWSS track and field club all look to our facility as they train future champions from



the Royal City. Work on the track is well underway and we look forward to completing the upgrade project later this year.

And of course, in our historic downtown, we're moving towards completion of the newest jewel in the Royal City's crown: Westminster Pier Park. It's no secret that everyone on this council is very excited about this project. It is a dream that many of us have shared for a long time and to me, it really does transform the face of our city's waterfront.

To paraphrase one local editorial writer, the new Westminster Pier Park essentially turns our city one hundred and eighty degrees to face the Fraser River. The significance of this shift cannot be understated. We owe our very existence to this river that flows by us on its way to the Pacific. For generations, the New Westminster waterfront was home to industry and trade. As the economy changed, it was left to decay, and literally became a brown spot on our crown. Thanks to the generosity of the provincial and federal governments and the residents of New Westminster, along with input, ideas and vision of our engaged citizens and city staff, we're well on our way to opening Westminster Pier Park later this fall, turning our city to face the river once and for all.

While we've certainly kept busy addressing the growing parks and recreation needs of the community in 2010, and will continue to do so in 2011, over the past year we've also renewed a commitment to arts and culture. The creation of the new position of Manager of Arts and Culture Development has been met with widespread approval and our new manager continues to work with local arts groups to advance initiatives that highlight the



depth of creative talent that we have right here in the Royal City. We look forward to further development in the area of arts and culture in the coming years, promoting a vibrant local arts scene to citizens and visitors alike.

Our continued efforts to increase livability by delivering needed amenities and promoting quality of life are investments in our community that are sending out this message loud and clear: New Westminster is the place to be! For years, it seemed as if we were being overlooked by the development industry, which concentrated their efforts and projects in other areas of the lower mainland. But look around our city today and that scenario has become a thing of the past. People are coming to our city like never before and our talented and hard-working development services department have risen to the challenge. As we grow, we're doing so with a plan in hand that ensures our livability into the future.

In 2010, we completed our Downtown Community Plan, a document that will guide the growth and development of this historic area of the city in years to come. We were very proud to have the plan recognized with an award of merit from the Washington, DC-based International Development Institute, proof positive that we're on the right track. And, just last month, we announced a new Development Cost Charges program, to better serve the infrastructure needs of our growing community.

So we are growing and we are growing with a plan. Our historic downtown has been a bustle of construction activity over the past few years and this will continue as we prepare to break ground on the new Multi Use Civic Facility this spring.



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We're excited to be partnering with Uptown Property Group to bring a business office tower complex to downtown that will add a new dimension and much needed office space to our city. The value of this great project cannot be understated as it will bring new jobs, new businesses, new customers, and new tax dollars to New Westminster. A win-win for everyone.

In 2011, construction will continue on the Plaza 88 development. This unique mix of retail and residential integrated with Skytrain – believed to be the first of its kind in North America – will take further shape during the year and introduce even more shops and services to meet the needs of our residents.

We eagerly await the completion and the new cineplex, banks, specialty shops and services that will enhance the entertainment and shopping available to our community.

Over in Sapperton, development of the Brewery District is well underway with the first building under construction. We were thrilled in 2010 to learn of Translink's decision to locate their office and Translink police headquarters to a new highrise located here in 2013. Thrifty Foods is already confirmed as a tenant and we look forward to hearing more as business and organizations from across the province discover that locating in New Westminster offers incredible opportunities.

The city places a priority on working with the development community to ensure that growth in New Westminster brings with it additional amenities for our citizens. The Council was excited to join with representatives from Onni Development and children



from a daycare located in Victoria Hill in June to cut the ribbon opening the new pedestrian overpass joining this new neighbourhood with Queen's Park.

In our Uptown district, new development at Belmont and Fifth Avenue taking shape in 2011 will replace an existing parking lot with a mix of residential and retail, offering both current and new residents of the Royal City new services and opportunities for living in this bustling hub of New Westminster.

Across the river in Queensborough, development at Port Royal continues, enabling new residents to discover this gem of a neighbourhood nestled alongside the Fraser. With the arrival of British Columbia's first Lowe's home improvement store and western Canada training centre, citizens of our city will have yet more services to choose from in their own backyard.

And in Glenbrooke, 2011 will see the transformation of the corner of 1st Street and 8th Avenue as the new 8 West residential development moves forward.

I've just listed some of the major development activity taking place throughout New Westminster in 2011 and, frankly, like a speech at an awards event, I fear I may have left some people out! If so, I sincerely apologize. But one of the key messages to take away from all of this is that as our city grows, it is doing so with a well-designed plan. And the other message is for our hard-working development services department – I'm sorry to say, but I don't see your jobs getting any less busy in the near future!



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Working with both local and potential new businesses, our Economic Development Office was kept busy in 2010. A new Economic Development Committee was struck to assist in guiding economic activity in the Royal City.

In the year ahead, we look forward to new initiatives on this front to ensure a vibrant local economy with more jobs and services to serve our citizens in the years ahead. And people are taking notice. It's no longer rare to see our city in the spotlight. Just a few weeks ago, the River Market at the Quay's Vancouver Circus School was profiled on CBC's Rick Mercer Report and last week, Shaw's Express program dedicated an entire episode to our wonderful Royal City. Do yourself a favour and search for the clips on YouTube – they will make you proud.

Also in 2010, we addressed some of the important infrastructure needs of our community. Street and sidewalk improvements were completed in Sapperton, putting a new shine on this wonderful part of New Westminster. We also completed major upgrades to 12th, literally changing the landscape of the street.

We also continued to do what we do so well here in New Westminster, embracing partnerships with senior levels of government and other organizations to bring improvements for our citizens. Throughout the city, engineering staff worked with ICBC to introduce speed reader boards and red-light cameras at high crash locations to keep our roads safe. In 2010, we were also excited to learn about Fraser Health's plans to expand Royal Columbia Hospital, making improvements to a facility that serves British



Columbians from Burnaby to Boston Bar, and ensures New Westminster's access to top quality health care here at home.

In the years ahead, New Westminster will continue to work with the Canadian Federation of Municipalities to bring attention to what is becoming a nation-wide crisis – an infrastructure deficit as cities struggle to keep up with necessary improvements and replacement of aging facilities. A key focus on this front will be on planning and partnerships to address the problem and New Westminster will be playing an active role.

Another challenge we face that will come as no surprise to our residents is a need to deal with the growing traffic situation in our borders. Council has committed to working with our residents and Translink to develop real solutions. At the top of the priority list is the North Fraser Perimeter Road issue, including the United Boulevard Extension project that Translink took to public consultation in late 2010. Let me be perfectly clear. The City of New Westminster will not accept any new major transportation project that increases the already undue burden on our citizens and quality of life that we work so hard to achieve. In 2011, we'll continue working with staff, residents, businesses and stakeholders to develop solutions that make sense for our livability now and into the future.

And, also in 2010, following months of joint efforts between the City, School District #40 and the Province of British Columbia, a framework agreement was struck that will see



the much-needed school capital project proceed. The working relationship between the school board and our council has never been better.

The results speak for themselves as we've overcome obstacles to get the school project back on track. And that is as it should be: our children are our future and we are committed to ensuring they can learn in clean, modern facilities that meet their needs. In 2011, Council and staff will continue to do our part to keep on track what has been described as the most complicated and costly school construction project in the history of British Columbia.

The construction cranes, paving machines and tradespeople were hard at work in the Royal City in 2010, and this will continue in 2011. But we also made a number of improvements in other areas.

On the social policy front, we maintained a leadership role in introducing a wide-range of initiatives:

- We established the civic child care grant program
- City Council gave official endorsement to a Children's Charter
- We began planning and development work on a child care facility as part of the expansion of Queensborough Community Centre and efforts on this front will continue throughout 2011
- The former Garfield Hotel was transformed when the Rhoda Kaellis Residence was opened in 2010, providing 24 units of transitional and permanent independent housing for people with a history of homelessness



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- In celebration of the wonderful multicultural make-up of the Royal City, we established the Multi-cultural awards program last year and made a historic first by issuing a formal apology to the Chinese Community for past injustices
- In 2011 we'll roll out a Newcomer's Guide to New Westminister, opening our arms and hearts to new residents from far away and assisting these new citizens in becoming involved in our great city.
- With New Westminister's establishment of a Living Wage Policy, the first city in Canada to do so, we struck another one for the history books while underscoring our commitment to livability for all of our citizens
- And, of course, on Remembrance Day, Council gathered with officials from Honour House along with armed forces personnel and first responders to cut the ribbon on this unique facility that honours the work these brave men and women do to keep us safe. We're very proud to have Honour House in our midst and look forward to sharing our great experience with other cities across Canada.

On the environmental front, 2010 was a busy year indeed. Our Engineering Operations department launched our new Auto Waste Collection Service, providing more opportunity for recycling and reducing waste.

Here at City Hall, a new electric bike program for city staff now provides an environmentally-friendly option for staff travelling within the city over the course of the day.



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And, now, a corporate greenhouse gas reduction plan, looking at ways to emit less greenhouse gases in our fleet vehicles, facilities and buildings is before Council. We look forward to even more progress on this front in 2011.

Ask anyone who has lived here for awhile what New Westminister does best and one response most certainly will be that we know how to have fun. Festivals and celebrations were in abundance in 2010, ranging from the old to the new to the once in a lifetime.

Once again, the annual Hyack Festival and parade brought a festive atmosphere to our city in the spring and in the summer, the Show n' Shine attracted tens of thousands of car buffs from near and far.

Over in the West End, Summerfest at Grimston Park brought residents from across the city together to enjoy this great area and its new amenities. We look forward to this becoming an annual event and congratulate the organizers on a job well-done. And of course, in Sapperton, the Sapperton Days festival celebrated this special neighbourhood by providing fun activities for young and old alike.

Last February, as the eyes of the world fell upon us and the Olympic Flame burned bright, New Westminister rose to the challenge. Our Torch Relay event was a momentous occasion in our history and we'll never forget the thrill of hearing the cheers erupt as the travelling cauldron was lit on stage in Queen's Park. In September, we conferred Freedom of the City status on HMCS Discovery in celebration of the 100th anniversary of the Canadian Navy. The pomp and pageantry that marked this event was



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a testament to our connection to our armed forces that goes back to the very start of our history. And, we can't forget that also in 2010, the eyes of sports fans from coast to coast were on New Westminster once again, as the TSN/Kraft Community Challenge broadcast our celebration in Tipperary Park to the nation. A big thank you to Vance McFadyen for nominating us for the TSN/Kraft Community Challenge Award and, to all of the organizers and volunteers of the events around the city, on behalf of the entire community, thank you so much! You truly do your community proud!

Informed citizens are engaged citizens and throughout 2010, the City of New Westminster continued to develop new ways to deliver information. Recently, our Parks, Culture and Recreation department launched its new website, improving access to online information and integration with the city website. This spring, Citypage online will be introduced, offering new ways for web users to access popular Citypage information running in the local paper.

We'll also be pursuing new ways to reach citizens through the increased use of social media and, later in 2011, we'll complete our WiFi pilot project in uptown and Queen's Park as we explore the introduction of wireless network technology city-wide for residents and visitors alike.

Before I close, I'd like to recognize my fellow council members. Throughout 2010, this council has worked very hard together to address the issues that are important to our citizens. We've remained united in our passion for delivering the very best to this community and will continue to do so in 2011. Councillor Cote, Councillor Harper,



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Councillor McEvoy, Councillor McIntosh, Councillor Osterman and Councillor Williams, thank you for your tremendous efforts and tireless work on behalf of this city. I am proud to have you as colleagues and sincerely appreciate everything you do for your fellow citizens.

I'd also like to recognize our city staff. As I've often said, we have the best and brightest people of any municipality working for us right here in New Westminster. The proof, as they say, is in the pudding, and I continue to be amazed at the number of people who approach me to share stories of positive interactions with city staff and tell me of the excellent quality of service they receive. Working with our committed and talented team at City Hall and facilities throughout New Westminster, it is clear they have a passion for the work they do for residents.

Our high level of citizen satisfaction and livability is a testimony to this hard work and I'd like to offer my sincere thanks to each and every staff member for a job very well done.

So, there you have it. Thank you for your attention to this short, concise overview of where we've been in 2010 and where we're going in 2011. If I sound excited that's because I am. Everywhere I go in New Westminster there is a sense of success, a feeling of having arrived, of realizing the tremendous potential that we all know flows through our Royal City. Each and every one of our citizens deserves credit for where we are today. I look forward to the coming year as we continue working together making ours the very best community in Canada. **Thank you.**