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Job yield not good enough: Mayor

By Kevin Diakiw - Surrey North Delta Leader - March 09, 2008

Touted by politicians in 2003 as an initiative that would bring employment to Surrey citizens, the first phase of development at Campbell Heights delivered 15 jobs per acre.

The second phase is expected to bring 13 jobs per acre.

Mayor Dianne Watts said Wednesday she's not impressed with the number of jobs.

"To yield 15 jobs an acre is not acceptable," Watts said. "We have to look at doing things differently."

However, regional and national comparisons indicate about 15 jobs per acre is about what can be expected out of light industrial property such as Campbell Heights, the second phase of which will include manufacturing and warehouse space.

Vancouver and Edmonton, which have higher developed industry, yield between 18 and 20 jobs per acre.

Surrey could receive an increase in the number of jobs per acre if it considered different uses. Reports indicate retail development brings about 25 jobs per acre, while office space delivers about 50 an acre.

Office towers bring much more.

"I want more than 15 jobs an acre," Watts said. "I don't know what that number is, but I think it's incumbent on us to find it out."

A representative from Smart Growth B.C., a group dedicated to sustainable development, said there's no magic number of jobs expected per acre.

However, Smart Growth B.C. prefers to see a mix of uses, such as industrial, commercial and residential, providing people with ways to live, work and play in the same area.

Watts said Friday among the hurdles facing Campbell Heights is its distance from town centres and the lack of public transportation.

Watts said she'll be consulting experts on how the property could best be used to ensure it's the most efficient for future generations.

"That's what sustainability is all about," she said.

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