

# METRO VANCOUVER NEWS

## Metro live

Vancouver councillor **George Affleck** wants the Metro Vancouver board to broadcast its meetings.

Affleck is bringing a motion to city council Tuesday directing council's representatives to the board to ask Metro to allow the region's residents to watch the meetings by Internet "or other means."

"The residents of the city of Vancouver rely on Metro Vancouver for many services, including water supply and wastewater treatment," his motion says. "Decisions by the Board of Metro Vancouver have a significant impact on the taxes paid by the residents of Vancouver."

Metro Vancouver's meetings are not televised nor is there a live feed, although some council meetings in the region, including Vancouver and Surrey, are.

## New arts centre for Surrey

Surrey has set in motion a plan to build a new 1,600-seat performing arts centre in the City Centre area, where it is trying to develop "a dynamic downtown core."

**Bing Thom Architects** has been selected as architectural consultant for the centre, and Surrey said the firm has begun

programming, site selection and conceptual siting for the project.

"The City of Surrey has a half million residents and we need a major performing arts facility if we're going to create a dynamic downtown core and foster our creative economy," Mayor **Dianne Watts** said in a news release. "Arts and culture are the heart and soul of a city and play an essential role in education and learning."

Watts did not reveal how much the project is expected to cost, but said Surrey is hoping senior levels of government and the private sector will "partner" with the city.

The centre will include a flexible main stage with at least 1,600 seats, a studio theatre with about 250 seats, "and other arts amenities."

"We believe this facility will become another iconic landmark in City Centre and help create a more cohesive city," Watts said.

Surrey said programming work includes site selection, budget preparation and determining timelines.

"Bing Thom Architects will liaise with the community, city staff, the steering committee and key stakeholders to deliver the project program, which is expected to be completed by July 2012," the release said.

- **William Boei**

## VANCOUVER BRIEFS

### Office vacancies tighten

A shortage of office space downtown meant vacancy rates declined in 2011 in central Vancouver as well as in Burnaby and Richmond, **Avison Young's** year-end 2011 Metro Vancouver office market report has found. Vacancies remained the same on the North Shore.

"The overall downtown office market remains tight

with only 3.9 per cent vacant at year-end 2011, a steep decline from 5.2 per cent at year-end 2010," the report said.

It added that renewals represented most of the "notable deals" in the second half of 2011.

But the report also showed some optimism. Quoting Avison-Young's senior vice-president and

Vancouver office managing director **Michael Keenan**, the report predicts the market will change.

"With three significant projects starting construction downtown and at least four others in the planning stages — along with new projects going forward in the Broadway, Burnaby, New Westminster and North Shore submarkets — Metro Vancouver's office market is embarking on one of the most substantial expansions the region has witnessed in

decades," Keenan said.

The report mentions the **Bentall** tower at 745 Thurlow, **Westbank's** Telus Garden and **Oxford's** tower at 1021 West Hastings coming on stream as well as others proposed for the downtown core.

Keenan notes that "the Vancouver skyline is about to undergo a radical transformation and the downtown core prepares for the largest expansion of office space in decades." **NRU**