

## Maillardville Residents' Association

### President's Report for 2010

Once again, it is my pleasure to bid you a good evening and to bring to you a summary of our activity for 2010.

Unlike other types of community organisations, residents' groups do not have the benefit of a sharply defined mandate. Some associations come into existence because an issue arises and there is opposition to it...no we do not want high residential density in our neighbourhood, no we do not want a new pub located close to that school. Speaking out against issues that may have a negative impact on a neighbourhood is certainly a valid reason for bringing citizens together in an organised fashion, yet, when interest in the issue lessens, often the organisation decreases or even disappears.

It is a more difficult task by far to create a residents' association that is dynamic and relevant in the community in an on-going way. One that addresses concerns within the neighbourhood certainly, but is also able to engage in the process of community growth, to work with other community groups for mutual benefit and in the end, make a positive contribution to the quality of life in its own neighbourhood.

To keep our members engaged and interested is indeed a challenge, and once again, I am happy to report that our own organisation has succeeded in meeting that challenge once again.

As you have already heard, our membership has grown from 207 last year to 271. That represents a 31% increase in our number. Growth is one indicator of success and MRA has increased its numbers steadily since our inception in 2005. Someone asked me recently how many is enough? I answered that membership by every adult and every family within our MRA borders would be enough.

Pleased as we can be with the growth we have experienced this year, we must forge ahead and redouble our efforts to bring in new members. Why? Because a healthy and safe neighbourhood is one whose residents are connected to one another. We do this by our email updates and through our website as well as at our meetings and activities. We are making a difference to the quality of life in Maillardville, but we can do so much more and in this case, more is better.

More members also means health for the organisation as new ideas are brought forward and an increasing membership brings more people willing to commit to its growth and to its leadership.

Of course, another reason is that there really is strength in numbers. We are able to advocate with City Hall much more successfully for the needs of Maillardville if we continue to be a strong organisation that is a credible voice for all of our residents.

This year, we hope to continue on this path of growth and we will call upon each of our existing members to make it his or her goal to sign up at least one new member this year. Your Board will also take on the challenge of creating a succession plan so that we may be assured that the MRA will survive as those who are now committed to its management move on and others answer the call to serve the neighbourhood.

Communication is a cornerstone of any relationship. Our website continues to develop into a valuable community resource. The site receives several thousand visits per month and visitors can

find information about our neighbourhood, its activities and connections to other community resources and organisations. This year, we are very pleased to have added a valuable new resource; a made in Maillardville Business Directory and it has already become one of our top landing pages.

It is our desire to continue this evolution and update the site so that it may be used more and more as the “go to” place for all information concerning Maillardville.

Part of the MRA’s original mandate was to address concerns with crime and graffiti. Again, we see change in our neighbourhood. One of the advantages of being a member of the MRA is that we receive regular Blockwatch fanouts that we distribute through our email network. This is a real value for our members as it keeps us informed of the where and when of crime activity in our community. There are several goals for us this year. The first is to update the crime page of our website and make it more relevant and useful to our members and to all who use our site. Second, we will consider organising another crime forum so that we can hear first-hand about crime in our neighbourhood and for the opportunity to ask any questions we may have. Third, we will continue to encourage each and every one of our members to renew their commitment to making our neighbourhood safe by being the eyes and ears of our streets and reporting all suspicious activity. Community safety is a partnership between city, police and residents. We must take responsibility for the well-being of our own neighbourhood.

Another indicator of growth can be an increase in activities and the funds required to support them. In 2010, we continued to be very active in our neighbourhood. We carry on with the “Picking Up Maillardville” litter pickup with modest numbers, yet the group is dedicated and the overall tidiness of Mackin Park and Brunette is noticeably better. This activity sends a message: we care, we are watching and we are taking action. As with increasing membership, more is better. If any of you have thought of joining us on our clean up venture, now is a good time to step forward...come join us this Saturday at 9am in front of Mackin Park.

We hosted an all candidates meeting for the 2010 civic by election and will do so again this fall.

Our organisation continued to work with Mayor and Council, city staff and other stakeholders. In advocating for the needs and concerns of residents in Maillardville, we have members on the Mayor’s Task Force for Maillardville Revitalisation and the committee concerned with updating the Maillardville Neighbourhood plan. In addition, we participated in developing the plan to upgrade Mackin Park. We are happy to finally see a few residential projects being contemplated, and MRA has been asked by Morningstar Homes to offer our input as they develop the property at the corner of Cartier Avenue and Casey Street. This is a unique and important project as it will be the first to introduce the new housing types recently adopted by council.

We continued to enjoy social time together and both the Summer BBQ and the Christmas Party have become very enjoyable family events.

Financially, we now have in place two annual fundraisers that will provide more than enough money to meet our operating costs. It is our intention to continue with the Garage Sale and the Pub Night events. We hope that as we accumulate funds beyond our administrative needs, we can initiate other community projects, such as a neighbourhood garden.

We continue to partner with other organisations in our area, including Place Maillardville Community Centre, Club Bel Age and Société francophone de Maillardville. We intend to remain open to new opportunities to working with all of Maillardville's stakeholders as we share the common goal of making this the most liveable neighbourhood in Coquitlam.

We are proud of our efforts, proud to represent the needs of the residents of Maillardville and proud of our successes. Another indicator of success is, in fact, pride. It could be argued that one goal for an organisation such as our own is to help instil a healthy pride in our neighbourhood... It is my hope that, in the coming year our Board of Directors will consider establishing a committee to develop a program of annual awards honouring those who make significant contributions to our community. What form that may take remains to be seen but I am hopeful that our first annual awards ceremony could take place at next year's AGM.

As I have said each time I have delivered this report, in spite of our many successes, Maillardville still faces significant challenges. The landscape has changed considerably from a few years ago when the plan to develop the Brunette commercial corridor was adopted by council. The plan envisions high residential density and includes the building of six high rise towers. Today, the traffic concerns centred on the Highway 1 Brunette Interchange and the United Boulevard Extension remain unresolved. Development of the Fraser Mills lands to our south and now the Austin Heights area to our north will bring both increased commercial activity and higher residential density. Can our own commercial district that is physically so much smaller and more constrained hope to successfully compete on that same playing field? Or is it time to revisit our vision for the commercial district of Maillardville? With options now available that did not exist a few years ago, we may well ask ourselves if high rises is the way for us to go. The most notable recent change that allows us to consider a different option is the ability to construct 6-story wood frame buildings over commercial units. In developing our commercial centre, we may also want to examine the possibility of a more targeted effort to attract businesses that are different from those that will be available at Fraser Mills or Austin Heights. There are many decisions to be made for our commercial district, but the important thing is to recognise that those decisions will have an impact that will be very long lasting. We must not only remain engaged in the process, but we need to take a leadership role in order to safeguard and to enhance the quality of life in Maillardville. No small task, but I pledge that your Board of Directors through its membership on the committees responsible for looking at these questions will keep you informed and will ensure that you have an opportunity to have your voice heard in the process to develop your neighbourhood.

Finally, I would like to thank so many who have contributed to the successes we have enjoyed throughout 2010 and up to this evening. Many thanks to Mayor Richard Stewart, Councillors and city staff who have continued to engage us, support our efforts and listen to our concerns.

To our provincial MLA Diane Thorne, who has always shown her support by attending and participating in so many of our functions.

Likewise for our Federal MP Fin Donnelly who has made it his business to listen to our thoughts and concerns for Maillardville.

Many thanks to our partners. Place Maillardville Community Centre, its Board and staff, as always, provide us with a home, are supportive of our efforts and are active participants in many of our projects. We owe them not only our thanks but also our gratitude.

Thanks also to the Club Bel Age with whom we have worked more in 2010 than ever before. This is a relationship we hope to make stronger and mutually beneficial.

We also hope in the coming year to strengthen our bonds with Societe francophone de Maillardville. We were delighted to return to a very successful engagement at Festival du Bois. Last year marked a year of mutual benefit, as la Societe was able to support our efforts as we promoted their activities through our email and website.

The Maillardville Residents' Association and the community owe hearty thanks and gratitude to our Board of Directors. Without these eight dedicated men and women, the MRA could not function in the effective way that it has. I would also like to extend a warm welcome and thank you to our newest director, Mr Ron Taylor.

And in closing, on behalf of your Board of Directors, I extend our sincere thanks to all of you our members. Your interest and commitment to the neighbourhood is what makes Maillardville a better place to live. Together we will continue to make a difference.