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A Surrey man in his late 20s is dead after he was gunned down at a gas station in the city's Clayton Heights neighbourhood.

The shooting happened around 6 p.m. Saturday night at a busy shopping centre near Fraser Highway and 188 Street.

Homicide investigators cordoned off a Mobil gas station and part of the Save on Foods parking lot across the street to collect forensic evidence. The victim’s body was recovered from a black Mercedes SUV riddled with bullet holes.

Neighbours say they’re angry with the disregard for innocent bystanders.

"It goes with the territory with Surrey. There's a lot of gang activity, a lot of thugs,” said Frank Penko, a Surrey resident.

The gunfire forced families shopping in the area to duck for cover.

"She heard five gunshots and really got scared,” said Bruce Claggett, Senior Managing Editor at News 1130, describing his wife's reaction to the shooting.

Claggett’s wife and nine-year-old son were just steps away from the suspected gunman.

"They saw a guy dressed in dark clothing and had a mask on and it was really frightening for them,” said Claggett.

The Integrated Homicide Investigation Team has taken over the case.

"When officers and first responders got there, they found one man who had suffered apparent gunshot wounds. Despite their best efforts, he succumbed to injuries and was pronounced dead at scene,” said Sgt. Frank Jang, of IHIT.

The victim was known to police. His killer is still at large.

"It's too early to tell exactly what the motive behind the shooting is, but it certainly wasn't random," Jang said. "This man was targeted for death."

It's the third public assassination in the Fraser Valley in recent weeks.

A Hells Angels member was gunned down outside a South Surrey Starbucks back in August, and a Red Scorpion member was murdered outside an Aldergrove McDonald’s earlier this month.

"They're high profile gangsters. They choose this life. They know the life they chose ends two ways: jail or with a bullet,” said Gurpreet Singh Sahota, a member of the Wake Up Surrey advocacy group.

Sahota says more school programs are needed to deter kids from gang life.

"If we can work more on the prevention side, then we can stop new recruitment," he said. "We can't bring people already gone back."