

DRAFT MINUTES

Development Advisory Committee

File: 360-20 (DAC)
Date: June 27, 2019
Time: 2:30 p.m.
Location: 3W Meeting Room
A, Surrey City Hall

Members:

Jasgroop Gosal
Adrien Herberts
Nathan Hildebrand
James Howard
Anita Huberman
Louis Kwan
Louis Landolt
Phil Magistrale
Scott Pelletier
Mark Sakai
Kiegan Scharnberg
Charan Sethi
Alexander Wright
Ross Yamaguchi

City Staff:

Tommy Buchmann
Remi Dube
Preet Heer
Ron Hintsche
Patrick Klassen
Kristen Lassonde
Jean Lamontagne
Carla Stewart
Fay Wong

1. Previous Minutes

The notes of the May 23, 2019 meeting were accepted as distributed.

2. Newton Town Centre Plan Stage 2 Update – Fay Wong

June 11 Open House was part of the final phase of the engagement process. The original plan was approved in 1990. Refresh of this plan started in 2008. Stage 1 was approved in 2010. Land Use strategy is to focus growth in the core around future transit (20-25 storeys). 4-6 storeys on the edges of the plan to interface with neighbouring area. Some potential changes in the north east corner of the plan based on feedback to orient mixed use along arterial roads. Transportation network includes “Green Lanes” (lane with a sidewalk on one side), 96 B-Line enhancements along King George, and separated cycle tracks and pedestrian connections throughout. Next steps are finalizing the plan over the summer. Hoping to bring the plan to council in the Fall - October.

Comments:

DAC members comment on the transportation challenges in Newton. Need for certainty in what the mode of public transportation would be, especially for the concrete-higher density but even 4-6 storey low-rise will be risky to build without some public transit certainty. DAC members also noted the competition between Newton and Whalley – City Centre is a more desirable location for development at this time.

3. Proposed Changes to Indoor Amenity Requirements – Carla Stewart

In the 1980s Surrey established indoor amenity requirements in the Zoning By-law. This was required for all multi-family development and could be excluded from density. In 2001, introduced a cash-in-lieu option. Money collected this way goes to City capital reserves (one for each of the town centres) for recreation spaces, multipurpose rooms, public facilities. The problem is the amount collected is not aligning with the costs for the City to provide these facilities. Outdoor amenity space requirements also require review.

Regionally, not easy to compare, as most other municipalities acquire these amenities through density bonusing. Richmond and Mission were the only municipalities that use a comparable approach.

For now, the City will continue with 32 square foot requirement per unit, excluded from FAR.

The City is considering:

- requiring a minimum of 500 square foot for any project over 16 units;
- adjusting the By-Law so amenity space does not include corridors or circulation areas;
- implementing different rates for different types of construction (high-rise, low-rise, townhouse, etc.); and,
- gradually increasing the rates over a 3-year period.

Council's concern is that developers are opting to pay in-lieu as it is cheaper than constructing amenities. Ideally, Council would like to see the amenity space to be built, so providing cash-in-lieu should be the more expensive option.

Comments:

DAC member asks if the City would consider having a cap on indoor amenity space as it becomes a challenge for owners with the cost of strata fees rising for excessive space that may or may not be utilized? Jean Lamontagne mentions the challenges of what is appropriate is different for high-rises compared to low-rise or townhouse, also challenging to determine the affect of the marketing of the amenities. Council wants the amenities to built and obviously be functional.

DAC member offers that it is easy to create great, large, usable, and marketable amenities in a large project but notes the challenges with how to create an amenity that is functional in smaller projects.

Another DAC member agrees that 4-6 storey townhouse is the biggest challenge. Towers are easy to provide good, useful amenities. In townhouses, amenity space may be FAR exempt, but it takes away from the ground area which can amount to less units. Carla Stewart replied that for townhouses, the challenges are more with outdoor amenity space and the livability of the units. The City will also be looking at outdoor amenity space requirements.

DAC member questions where the 32 square foot requirement came from and comments that to Council it could appear that the industry is underserving with so many developers providing cash-in-lieu but in reality, we don't know if the 32 square foot requirement is an appropriate metre stick. Jean Lamontagne clarified in addition to Council's concern on this issue, City Speaks conducted a survey and residents also cited the need for more amenity space.

Adrian Herberts, James Howard, Alex Wright, and Charan Sethi volunteered to provide more input on this issue.

4. Changes to Trees and Landscape Procedures – Jean Lamontagne and Remi Dube

The City recently launched the option to send photos of tree barriers for inspection. Comments can be turned around very fast. Doing in-person inspections, the City would receive the requests, inspectors would go all the way there and there are no barriers up. We have a high failure rate (~40%) from the photos too but the City doesn't waste as much time. Tree replacements can be done by photos as well. These bulletins will be posted on the web.

The City has a Terms of Reference for Arborists. This was done with help of private sector arborists. They provided input and the City has formalized the requirements. The City is requesting the same look and feel for reports so that it is easier and faster for the City Arborists to review. Instead of providing a list of arborists to residents, the City has put together a list for owners/developers of what they should be looking for in finding a tree care professional.

The Trees and Landscaping team has caught up with their email and phone requests. The next phase is landscape submissions. The City is undergoing a similar process, working with Landscape Architects to provide a Terms of Reference for landscape plan submissions.

Comments:

DAC member asks what happens if there are minor deficiencies, for example if the Arborist Report doesn't meet the scope 100% will it go to the back of the line? Staff clarifies that the intent is that Trees and Landscaping only receives good quality reports as not all applicants review their consultants' work. If they are following the template, they will be fine.

5. Comments on the market (all members)

Regionally, multiple DAC members cite construction and land costs are high while the market is slow. The increasing regulation aimed at affordability and livability, resulting in lower yield and increase unit size and cost in a low market cycle.

In Surrey specifically, there has been a drastic shift to Multi-Residential. Lots of sales in Surrey Centre last quarter compared to the rest of the region. Fleetwood townhouse market has stalled completely. Developers are only starting to see the effect of the market with last cycles fee hikes. Different municipalities will be seeing a lot of applicants dropping their projects. Surrey isn't one of those municipalities but there are cities where the numbers just don't work anymore. Jean Lamontagne adds, the City hasn't seen much of a slow down in applications. Council is approving projects. There should be confidence for developers that we are moving forward.

DAC members suggesting involving the City Environmental Planner into applications earlier as entering late into the application, can derail the project. Jean Lamontagne explains several QEPs' peer reviewed reports were substandard. Those QEPs were met with and reminded of their professional obligations to bring their work into compliance. Hopefully moving forward, the QEPs will be making recommendations early on which will be in alignment with the Environmental Planner's review.

DAC member requests clarification on the status of CACs. Jean Lamontagne updates that density bonusing is to be discussed in the fall as Coriolis is still working on their recommendations.

6. Next Scheduled Meeting – July 25, 2019

The meeting adjourned at approximately 4:08 pm.