



# **Corporate** NO: C001

# **Report** COUNCIL DATE: January 17, 2000

## **COUNCIL-IN-COMMITTEE**

**TO: Mayor & Council**    **DATE: January 11, 2000**

**FROM: General Manager, Planning & Development**    **FILE: 2350-000**

**SUBJECT: Simplified Procedural Guidelines for Amendments to Approved Neighbourhood Concept Plans (NCPs)**

## **RECOMMENDATION**

The Planning & Development Department recommends that Council approve the modified procedural guidelines described in this report (and specifically in Appendix A) as a means of reviewing and approving proposed amendments to approved Neighbourhood Concept Plans (NCPs).

## **INTENT**

The intent of this report is to seek Council's endorsement of modified procedural guidelines to deal with proposed minor and major amendments to approved Neighbourhood Concept Plans (NCPs). The new guidelines provide for a simplified procedure to accommodate applications for small residential lots in Neighbourhood Concept Plan areas. These modified guidelines would replace the current guidelines which were approved by City Council in July, 1997.

## **BACKGROUND**

On July 14, 1997, City Council approved procedures for handling proposed major amendments (changes in land use and/or density) and minor amendments (all other changes) to approved Neighbourhood Concept Plans (NCPs).

Current housing market trends, Surrey's small lot initiatives and recent deliberations with Surrey's Development Advisory Committee reveal that the City can expect an increase in demand for small residential lots in approved Neighbourhood Concept Plan areas. Most approved NCPs designate either very little or no land for small lots (i.e. 3-4,000 square feet in size). The reasons for this are:

- (a) at the time of approval for most of the City's NCPs, small lots were not as well accepted by the market as

they are today; and

(b) the City's "Small Lot Zoning Study" and subsequent small lot policy deliberations by the Development Advisory Committee and the City had not been completed at the time of the NCP approvals.

The City has received a number of requests for amendments to NCPs to accommodate small lot residential developments. In many cases, the change in the density proposed is minor. However in some cases, the form of the housing is significantly different from what was originally envisioned. In addition, the current NCP amendment process for a change in density or housing form is considered by the development industry to be onerous particularly where the change is only minor in nature. This report proposes a simplified process for some types of NCP amendments.

## DISCUSSION

### **The Importance of Certainty**

Creating land use/density certainty in Surrey's emerging urban areas is one of the main principles behind Council's approval of NCPs. This certainty is the basis upon which the City plans for amenity, recreation and infrastructure investments. It also forms part of the basis upon which home buyers and residents place their expectations and purchase homes within the neighbourhood of their choice. Considerable care, consultation and socio-economic analyses goes into defining land uses within NCP areas to ensure housing variety, mix and an overall healthy community structure.

It is recognized that consumer demands and housing markets change over time. The City therefore needs to manage these changing expectations in a reasonable way without compromising the public's trust in the NCP planning process. The NCP amendment process for major changes affecting land uses and/or density was, therefore, intentionally designed at the outset to be thorough and time consuming so as to discourage spurious attempts to amend approved NCPs. The process does, however, allow amendments which pass the rigorous tests prescribed in the current NCP amendment policy. An overview of the current NCP amendment policy is outlined below.

### **Current NCP Amendment Policy**

The current procedures for the three types of NCP amendments are briefly described as follows (see Appendix A for details):

*Major Amendment (change to the land use, density or major road network)* - the proponent is required to undertake a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the proposed change, conduct a comprehensive public consultation program (including input from the former Steering Committee members), and seek Council's approval.

*Minor Amendment (change to the local road network)* - the proponent is required to undertake an evaluation of the impacts upon the approved road network, consult with affected property owners, and depending on the impacts, may or may not need to seek Council's approval.

*Minor Amendment (change to the underground services)* - the proposal is evaluated by the Engineering Department, property owner input may be sought, and Council approval is not required.

## The Need for a Revised Policy and Procedural Guidelines

In the context of the above policy, small residential lots in NCP areas may only be considered on lands specifically designated for small lots or compact housing, and there are very few parcels of land designated as such. At present, to develop small lots in other NCP land use designations, the developer must undertake a “major” NCP amendment process, which is considered by the development industry to be too onerous and time consuming. In addition, it is possible that in some cases (e.g., a change from townhouses to small lots) a proposed amendment may be welcomed by the neighbourhood, and have virtually no impact upon the existing or planned infrastructure.

In view of this, and in response to changing market and consumer demands, it is considered timely to revisit the existing NCP amendment policy and procedural guidelines. The proposed procedure outlined below (and more specifically described in Appendix A) represents a simplified approach to handling minor NCP amendments, particularly those involving changes to accommodate small lots or changes in building form.

## Proposed Modified NCP Amendment Process

The following points highlight the proposed NCP amendment process. These revised guidelines (as detailed in Appendix A), if approved by Council, are intended to replace the current guidelines.

### 1) *Major Amendment (major change to the land use, density or major road network)*

- examples include a change to a different category of land use such as residential to commercial, relocation of a major collector road or a significant increase in density along with a change in building form (e.g., from single family to apartments)
- the current procedural requirements should apply (details in Appendix A).

### 2) *Site Specific Amendment (change to the local road network, minor change in building form and/or density)*

- examples include:
  - (a) relocation of a local road or pathway;
  - (b) a change in density without a change in land use category (e.g., single family lots to small lots); and
  - (c) a change in land use category or building form without an increase in the approved density (e.g., from townhouses to small lots)
- the amendment procedure would be simplified to facilitate minor changes in density and building form. The amendment process would be integrated into the rezoning process. Details are provided in Appendix A.

### 3) *Minor Amendment (change to the lot layout, servicing requirements or a specific policy or guideline)*

- examples include a change in lot layout, the relocation of a sewer main or traffic signal, or a minor deviation from the design guidelines
- this type of amendment would be integrated into the development approval process and in most cases, Council approval would not be required. Details are provided in Appendix A.

## CONCLUSION

This report recommends a simplified process for undertaking amendments to approved Neighbourhood Concept Plans under certain circumstances. To accommodate changing consumer expectations and market trends, and to improve the application review process, adjustments to the current NCP amendment procedural guidelines are proposed. This simplified process will address proposed minor changes to residential density and building form, and be particularly applicable to small residential lot proposals.

The procedural guidelines for NCP amendments are presented in Appendix A, which will be readily accessible and clearly communicated to potential applicants through a public informational Bulletin.

Murray D. Dinwoodie

General Manager

Planning & Development Department

WW/kms

Appendix A: Procedural Guidelines for Amendments to Approved Neighbourhood Concept Plans

v:\wp-docs\planning\00data\jan-mar\01100939.ww

LN 01/12/00 09:00 AM