



Corporate *NO: c005*

Report *COUNCIL DATE: May 8, 2000*

COUNCIL-IN-COMMITTEE

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

FROM: General Manager, Planning & Development **FILE: 2151-012**

SUBJECT: Simplified Building Scheme

RECOMMENDATION

The Planning & Development Department recommends that Council approve the Simplified Building Scheme as contained in Appendix II as a precedent document for use in developing subdivision specific Building Schemes to regulate the design of single family residential dwellings in new subdivisions.

INTENT

On May 3, 1999, Council received a Report from the General Manager, Planning & Development Department and approved the recommendations respecting proposed modifications to the Development Review and Approval Process in the following areas:

1. Reduction in the areas of the City within which Development Permits are required;
2. Reduction and modification of the mandate and scope of the Advisory Design Panel;
3. Simplification of the Planning Reports to Council dealing with development applications; and
4. Reduction in the scope of the Single Family Subdivision Building Scheme.

Amendments to the Development Permit requirements, and simplification of the Planning Reports to Council have been completed and are in various stages of implementation. The intent of this Report is to address the proposed changes to the Building Scheme for single-family subdivisions as directed by Council.

BACKGROUND

The City has been using Statutory Building Schemes to control the design of single family houses and address concerns from the community regarding large houses, illegal secondary suites, and house designs which are incompatible with the design and character of existing dwellings in the area. Although the Building Scheme process has been positive for the community in terms of providing the necessary design control, there has been substantial concern expressed by the development industry on the costs and time delay resulting from this process, as well as associated administrative and enforcement problems.

PROPOSAL

To address these concerns, modifications to the standard Surrey Building Scheme are proposed, with a view to reducing the scope of the design guidelines and addressing the administrative and enforcement difficulties experienced in the past. The areas targeted for changes include design guidelines related to architectural details, and the introduction of a "sunset" clause to enable the building scheme to expire after a certain length of time, thereby eliminating the need to discharge or amend Building Schemes in order to facilitate future redevelopment. Minor text changes are also proposed to address housekeeping issues and improve the efficiency and enforcement of Building Schemes.

Architectural Details and Housekeeping Amendments

The prime focus of the Building Scheme is to ensure compatibility of the form and character of new dwellings with existing homes in the same neighbourhood. One of the concerns raised frequently by developers is that the standard Surrey Building Scheme is overly detailed, and includes restrictions related to extraneous architectural details which do not offer substantial value in terms of achieving building compatibility or improved quality of design. The inclusion of these details in the Building Scheme results in frequent proposals for changes, which are time consuming and costly to complete under the Building Scheme amendment process. In addition, these details are administratively cumbersome and are difficult to enforce, as changes are made by homeowners over time.

As a result, many provisions related to architectural details have been deleted, such as restrictions on fencing, accessory buildings, eaves, meters and vents. Further amendments are proposed to enable certain provisions to be optional rather than mandatory, including controls on accent materials and trim, roof overhangs, driveways, sidewalks, tree types, balconies, and building siting. Leaving these architectural elements as optional provisions will enable the Design Consultant to impose specific design controls which may be important in certain cases, such as in areas with heritage significance. Finally, minor text changes are proposed to ensure that new dwellings are constructed in compliance with underground drainage systems and the approved lot grading plan (Appendix I).

The proposed changes will eliminate the need for extraneous architectural details to be included in the Building Scheme, thereby reducing the scope of the Design Consultant's work. Although reduced in scope, the architectural guidelines will continue to ensure high quality design and appropriate massing, building types, and interfacing of new dwellings with existing homes, while avoiding excessive architectural controls which unduly restrict design expression, result in costly amendments, and do not add significantly to the quality or compatibility of new single-family dwellings.

"Sunset" Clause

Problems have been experienced in the past regarding the administration and enforcement of registered Building Schemes. One of the key issues involves the cumbersome and costly process required to amend and discharge Building Schemes, which is required in cases where lots are being redeveloped. Since Building Schemes run with the land and usually have no expiry date, Building Scheme guidelines are in force in

perpetuity, irrespective of changes to development patterns in the area or the evolution of building styles over time. Amendment or discharge of a Building Scheme requires approval from all properties which are party to the original Building Scheme. Therefore this process is often lengthy, incurs a substantial amount of legal, administrative, and consultant costs, and in many cases the necessary approvals cannot be obtained.

To address this issue, a "sunset" clause is proposed to terminate the application of the Building Scheme after a period of fifteen (15) years, after which it will be null and void. This will effectively protect the existing neighbourhood and ensure compatible development within the new subdivision while eliminating the need to amend or discharge the Building Scheme in the future to permit redevelopment.

The Simplified Building Scheme has been reviewed and found acceptable by Legal Services and representatives from the Land Title Office. The proposed amendments were also reviewed and supported by the Development Advisory Committee (DAC).

CONCLUSION

Amendments to the Surrey Standard Building Scheme are proposed to address Council's recommendations regarding the need for streamlining the development review process.

The Simplified Building Scheme incorporates changes to architectural and administrative provisions designed to improve processing time, reduce administrative costs, and minimize the need for future changes through the formal Building Scheme amendment process while still achieving the fundamental objectives which the Building Scheme process was established to address. A number of provisions related to architectural details have been deleted or made optional rather than mandatory to eliminate areas of the Building Scheme which were viewed as not adding sufficient value to justify the costs of including them. Minor text changes are also proposed to address specific issues related to ensuring the compatibility of new dwellings with the approved lot grading plan and underground drainage systems. A "sunset" clause has also been proposed to cause the Building Scheme to expire 15 years after registration, thereby eliminating the need to discharge or amend the Building Scheme in the future to facilitate redevelopment of the subdivision.

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General Manager

RCA/kms Planning & Development Department

Appendix I: Proposed Amendments to Standard Surrey Building Scheme

Appendix II: Simplified Building Scheme

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