



Corporate Report

NO: R211

COUNCIL DATE: October 6,

2003

REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: Mayor & Council DATE: September 26,
2003

FROM: General Manager,
Engineering FILE: 5400-01

SUBJECT: City Centre Standards - Extension of Moratorium

RECOMMENDATION

That Council extend the current 5-year moratorium on the undergrounding of existing overhead wiring and installation of special City Centre street lights to run concurrently with the reduction on Development Cost Charges in City Centre for the next two years.

INTENT

To request authority to continue with the interim standard for development requirements in City Centre, as adopted in 1998.

BACKGROUND

In 1995, as part of its strategy for the development of City Centre, Council adopted streetscape beautification standards which included undergrounding of overhead wiring, wide sidewalks, paver sidewalks on some streets, special decorative street lights complete with banner arms and irrigation systems for hanging baskets, and street trees with electrical outlets for decorative lights. Subsequently, it was felt that the cost of these standards was adversely impacting the redevelopment of properties in the City Centre, especially the costs related to undergrounding of wiring which are particularly onerous on specific properties as often just one side of the street has overhead wiring to contend with. Development statistics at the time indicated that full City Centre standards were not economically feasible as a development requirement, and property owners indicated a reluctance to contribute via Local Improvement charges. As a result, in 1998, Council approved a five (5) year moratorium on the requirement for undergrounding of existing overhead wiring and for installation of special City Centre street lights (refer to Corporate Report R1596, July 28, 1998, attached).

Although adoption of these "interim" standards was seen as positive by stakeholders, the economics of redevelopment in the City Centre remained unsupportive of Council's objective of the City Centre becoming a thriving competitive business district. As a further incentive for redevelopment Council, in July 2003, instituted a reduction on Development Cost Charges (DCC's) for higher density residential units in City Centre for a two year "pilot project" period. Initial indications are that this has resulted in an increased number of development applications.

DISCUSSION

A 5-year moratorium on the undergrounding of overhead wires and special street light standards, or the creation of an interim standard for City Centre beautification and road works, established in 1998, was the first of a series of strategies to encourage redevelopment in City Centre. The recent Whalley Enhancement Strategy is directing funding and staff resources intended to improve the image of the area, build a greater sense of community pride in those who live, work at, and visit the area and thereby stimulate private sector development and redevelopment. An application is pending under Transport Canada's Urban Transportation Showcase program which, if successful (and it appears

there is a high probability of success), will provide significant funds towards enhancement of the City Centre as a “transit village” with beautification and pedestrian and cyclist facilities linked to SkyTrain. Most recently a two-year pilot project, consisting of reductions in DCC's, has been instituted for higher density residential development.

CONCLUSION

The moratorium on the full standards for streets in City Centre is one of a number of strategies to spur redevelopment of the area which, in combination, are starting to realize their objective. Extension of the moratorium, to run concurrent with the reduction of DCC's for high density residential development (until September 2005) is recommended.

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PH/KZ/brb
Attachment

c.c. - General Manager, Planning & Development
- Manager, Land Development – Engineering Dept.

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