

Meeting Notes



Citizen's Advisory Committee Meeting 5

Date/Time: Monday, October 25th, 5:30-8:00
Place: Sunnyside Hall (1845 - 154 St, Surrey, BC)
Next Meeting: 5:30 PM, December 16th, 2010
Attendees: Anthony Hepworth
Avtar Johl, CAC Member
Brad Lambert, CAC Member
Chuck Brook, CAC Member
Cindy Lighthouse, CAC Member
Eric Chen, CAC Member
Mike Proskow, CAC Member
Paul Fenske, CAC Member
Bharghav Parghi, City of Surrey
Fay Wong, City of Surrey
Ileana Kosa, City of Surrey
Stephen Godwin, City of Surrey
John Steil, Stantec
Siobhan Murphy, Stantec

Absentees: Nadine Adams, CAC Member
Don Luymes, City of Surrey
Arnold Fenrick, CAC Member
Delmar Robertson, CAC Member
Norm Porter, CAC Member
Prit Pal Sandhu, CAC Member
Vena Sandhu, CAC Member

Distribution: All in attendance + absentees

Welcome: John Steil welcomed CAC members to the fifth CAC meeting.

Agenda: The agenda for the meeting was reviewed.

Meeting Notes: CAC #4 meeting notes were circulated. John drew the CAC's attention to the revisions requested by the School Board for both the CAC and IAC minutes. No concerns were raised with the minutes.

Binder: no new additions.

Alternatives: Tony Hepworth asked for an update on what is happening with the servicing for NCP 4.

John Steil responded, saying that members of the Stantec Consultant team were recalibrating the stormwater Model. In the interim, the consultants are also working on the alternatives/scenarios. John explained that the intention is to make the design options different, with different elements. Servicing will be discussed later on the agenda.

John explained Option A, which he said featured a lot of open space, but it is much higher in terms of units and has commercial that is split across 24 Ave. In Option B, the commercial is split again, but there is also satellite commercial. Option B also has a different relationship between the school, commercial and open space. Option C has the lowest density use near the ALR. Plans for the Open House are to give participants a workbook with a list of the criteria and get them to respond to the elements in the options—then a preferred option can be developed through a mix and match process. John went on to ask CAC members about how he wanted to continue the discussion, asking members what they thought were missing from the options, what they liked or did not like about the options.

Brad Lambert asked if one could move the density around between options. John Steil replied that was what he was trying to do, by providing two different ranges of density, one about 4500 units, and one about 6000 units. John said he wanted the densities to be different so people have some choice.

Tony Hepworth said he thought the riparian areas were not accurately represented. He drew attention to Option A where the riparian area is quite large, when actually there is not any riparian area on a particular property. Eric Chen said he did not see a lot of difference between Options A and C. John pointed out the options are very different.

Eric Chen said it was important to figure out each landowner's contribution, that 30% was too much. John Steil acknowledged Eric's point, saying that the purpose of this planning process is to come up with a solution. He also directed Eric to Option B, which has no east-west corridor.

Brad asked about the number of units. In Option B, there are 1500 less units. He wanted to know if it is possible to add more units to some, and why the three scenarios could not offer similar density. John responded saying that it is important to offer a range of choices. Brad said developers may want more density. Option A has higher density with more greenspace and reiterated that the question about density has not been resolved yet about how that is going to be done. Brad said he was interested in moving the density around. John said that three options will be taken to the public, and that there is not one preferred option yet.

Tony said that it is not higher density that is most important, that it also depends on the designation, and it is important to have variety. Tony said he is happy with having some single family, and some higher density, that it just depends. He mentioned a partner in South Surrey with some higher density projects who he said is having a tough time financing and making it work because the banks are nervous about big projects.

Avtar agreed with Tony, saying that it is not just development cost charges, but how to pay for the infrastructure that has to be considered. Brad was concerned about land costs. Avtar said that land costs are not linked to density necessarily. Tony said the rate of absorption is taking a long time right now. Brad said that location is very important, and that could be one reason why some things are not being absorbed. Avtar said it is important not to have too much of

one thing in the same area.

John said that the notion of the market changes over time. It is advantageous to have a variety of land. Avtar agreed, but pointed out that he used to do townhomes at 12 u.p.a. (units per acre). Now he develops them at 20 u.p.a. to provide a more affordable product. Tony said small lots used to be 5 u.p.a., but now they are much higher, like 8. If you do less, it is not profitable. In Maple Ridge he has larger units, but says they are not selling well. Smaller ones are going much faster. The trend is towards higher u.p.a. for townhouses (from RM-15 to RM-20) because lower density townhouses are not as popular as RF-9 (small lot) single family homes, which are a better value for the purchaser. Tony said there was an article in a recent Sunday edition of the New York Times on changing house sizes – lower price point and smaller units. Tony said that when a certain mix is designated, the price will correct itself. However, it is important to be very careful. People have to sell.

Mike asked for clarification about what 15 u.p.a. and 30 u.p.a. look like on the ground. Avtar responded to Mike's question saying that RM-30 was meant for garden apartments with underground parking, but has actually been used for 20 u.p.a., involving three-storey units on deep and narrow lots with tandem parking. Lower density is typically two-storey, 30 u.p.a. is three-storey. RM-15 includes two-storey, double-wide garage, up to 2000 sq ft units. In Vancouver, they have underground parking and a two storey building, but it is too expensive to build in Surrey with underground parking.

Mike asked who the buyers were for this kind of product. Avtar said it was typically first timers, or people who are down-sizing. Mike agreed with the idea of having variety, but was a little skeptical about square footage coming down and that it was important to get it right on the size.

Tony said he had talked to a builder recently and that the size of their units was really coming down. They used to be over 2000 sq ft. Now they are smaller. Mike wanted to know about who is buying the product. Tony said he thought current sales were about the finishings and good design and quality materials. He also likes a mix, not necessarily the maximum density that is achievable because it does not guarantee the most profit. At the next CAC, John will bring examples of different types of land uses.

Mike mentioned a building scheme that he saw in Alberta that had a detached residential neighborhood with a ring road around with cul-de-sacs. Parking was located strategically, so the yards were bigger. He wondered if this was something that could be done here. He cited the example of how people used to say outdoor shopping would not work, and now it is being done really well, such as in West Vancouver. Tony said that 30 u.p.a. are being built in Burnaby and Vancouver but the parking is hidden. Mike said it was a bit different there with the higher land values.

Paul cited the Terra Nova development in Richmond. He said they have four-storey tandem units and that designs like that put more emphasis on the public realm because people will not be spending as much time in their homes than if they live on a large property.

Tony said he saw a big bit of park on his property, but also some really high densities in some of the Land Use Options. He thought it might be good to have a bit of flexibility to bring down

the density to respond to the market.

Brad pointed out that single family sales are coming back really well in Grandview Heights NCP #1, but Avtar said he thought that things are slowing up again. He said single family residential sales were moving a lot until the last three to four months.

Paul said that Terra Nova is a great current example and that it has these kinds of densities that the CAC is talking about here. He suggested that the group have a look to really get some perspective. Tony said that all the land has a high value. Apartments might be close to the single family prices. Again, he said it might be good to relax on the density if necessary.

Chuck said that the CAC was talking at two levels, the high level of the various layout of the land use designations and then drilling down to the densities, which is really what the current conversation is about. He said he was not sure where design guidelines come into the conversation and was concerned about how to convey these things to the public.

John said that there are some hints about the importance of urban design in the planning principles. He said the problem was that people want to get ahead of the concept a bit, and get to the preferred option where we drill down to the design guidelines. We have the 'Determining the Development Concept' phase and it is important to get the concept and the design principles. The urban design and the design guidelines will get worked out in Phase II.

Bhargav said that when the Land Use Options are taken to the public, it would be useful to bring some images and cross-sections to the Open House so that people can get a sense of what things might look like.

Chuck asked what the ten topics were for discussion to bring to the public. John reiterated what was on the design criteria matrix that was worked through at the previous CAC: commercial, the grid, school, parks, etc. and that he was looking forward to getting to the preferred option that the CAC can really get to work on it.

Mike asked John which option addressed the Planning Principles the best. John said he thought it was really about mixing and matching certain components from the various components. Mike said he was concerned about losing the greenspace and the critical mass for biodiversity.

John said he thought Option A most closely represents what is in the General Land Use Plan (GLUP) in terms of the greenspace. Bhargav added that the GLUP was done previous to the completion of the Madrone Report. John also said that since the GLUP, there has been more pressure to conserve greenspace. Stephen Godwin, the Environmental Coordinator at Surrey explained that ten or more acres are a hub – the overall size is important.

Tony said deer are migrating from Campbell Heights to Grandview Heights NCP #4 and that later they will go to Redwood Park. Stephen agreed with a point made by Tony, saying that NCP #4 is going to be important for wildlife and that it will really influence how they travel.

Bhargav said that the hub is protecting various elements: carbon footprint, infiltration, etc. Mike said he thought the amount of greenspace was going to be a big issue at the public

meeting and it was important to get it right. It is important to incorporate the hub, and what has been shown so far in the options is tokenism.

Tony picked up on Mike's point and said that there is a limit to what Council can do and that there is a limit to the amount of compensation that Council can give. If land is designated for public use, then landowners need to be compensated. An alternative could be to leave land agricultural.

Eric asked if the CAC group could debate each of the options. John started with Option A, showing the CAC that there is more of a corridor plan than a hub in this option. John said corridors can use a lot of land. He also showed the park space in each sector.

Cindy asked John how wide their corridors were. John said that the corridors are about 45-50 metres as an example, but can be easily modified. He added that the Madrone Report did not recommend desirable widths.

Stephen added that the wider corridors were the better, but that it is always a struggle. The wider the corridor, the better separation between uses. He said it was also important to be cognizant of what needs to be managed. For example, identify the wildlife that inhabits the area and apply a combination of design guidelines and a scale of widths (poor, good, excellent) to create an adequate buffer. Semiahmoo trail is a good example. 40 m wide is a good width.

Brad said that properties along the trail could sell very well. There would be lots of privacy for residents. Eric pointed to Option A and the large number of trees on his property. John said that it was identified in the Diamond Head report that there was high tree retention potential in this area and that the point of the options was that they are different.

Several members asked about the format for the upcoming public meeting. John said the format would be primarily an open house. There will be a presentation and introductory material about the process will be provided and then the plans will be displayed. Attendees will also be given information about the options and ask participants how each of the options respond to the vision and principles. An explanation will be given about the pros and the cons and feedback will be solicited.

Mike reiterated his concern about the public needing good direction. He thought the process needed to be described, and then it could be brought into focus to get meaningful feedback.

Eric brought up a number of points: he wanted to discuss the commercial designated in Option B. He said he did not like the spreading out of the commercial and did not think it was viable. He also said that he did not like the school site on 24 Ave in Option C. He thought it would have a negative impact on traffic flow. John noted that while the school was located on 24 Ave, there would not be access on 24 Ave. It would be accessed from local roads, but near the corridor.

Brad said he was rethinking the commercial land use, and was envisioning something like a farmer's market at the intersection of 24 Ave and 184 St, which could also catch commuters from Campbell Heights. He thought the corridors were good for people walking and cycling in the community.

Cindy said she saw a lot of straight lines in the options and wanted to see more meandering. The Options seem to have lost the sense of “unique place” that was discussed at the first CAC meeting. She said the greenspace was too squashed and being lost. John repeated his earlier point about urban design, which will be addressed in more detail at a later point in the planning process. Cindy said that the public is going to see this, so how is that going to be communicated? Chuck agreed with Cindy’s point, saying it was important for the public to know that that will be addressed at another level (such as in Stage II).

Mike asked Paul which scenario he thought captured the commercial best. Paul said he could not really see the pattern that works for him. He wants to see the driving idea in each option, not how each one is kind of different. John said the point of the options was to get all the elements on the table because members of the committee wanted them there. Paul said he wanted to see a rationale because people will ask at the open house, but that the rationale should be separate and provide the structure and the designated land use.

Mike asked John what had been the hardest part of the land use to deal with. John said it is an iterative process and all elements had to be integrated. The structure is based on the corridors, the street patterns, the ecological values, the location of the Science of the Soul, etc.

Chuck added that the CAC had talked about the diagram that accompanied each option to identify everything and break it down. John agreed that each issue (the ten major issues: commercial location, etc.) panel would be explained with diagrams. Tony said that the big green belt running along the ALR was significant and needed to be explained in more detail because he thought it was being lost. Paul said that with respect to greenspace and the strategic placement of parks, in plan C where there are higher density townhomes, there were no real parks, just small linear parks nearby. Greenspace and civic centres are important. Chuck and Paul commented that they would like to see descriptors with the maps’ colours to help people better understand the differences between the land use designations.

Servicing

Marc Bonner from Stantec made a short presentation on some of the servicing work that had been completed so far in NCP #4: drainage, sanitary sewer, and water. Marc used several diagrams that overlaid the proposed land use concepts on topographic maps.

For water distribution, three pressure zones are planned for the Grandview Heights area. Based on the current options being considered, the water distribution infrastructure required within the neighborhood is essentially the same for each option.

For drainage, the Grandview Heights area generally drains to the north. Drainage catchment areas that will drain to the ponds shown in the Erickson Creek ISMP will, in general, be governed by topography and the location of roads within the neighborhood.

Sanitary sewer servicing is also governed by topography and the location of roads with the neighborhood. Marc presented a diagram showing two potential pump stations, one on the southeast of the Science of the Soul site with the other on the north side and noted that the catchment area for the first is larger than the catchment for the second pupation. The

catchment area for the second pump station is located between 176 St and the internal road located east of 176 St. The diagram showed a gravity main in the green space located parallel to the north boundary of the Neighborhood leading to the first pump station, with the main crossing several creeks in the northeast area of the site. Marc noted that it may be possible to reduce the number of creek crossings by adjusting the location of a road creek crossing to coincide with a sewer creek crossing. Marc also indicated that the number of creek crossings could potentially be reduced by adding pump stations. He concluded this part of the discussion by indicating that each option for NCP #4 would have basically the same internal servicing requirements.

Marc said that Option B and C would require somewhat more servicing infrastructure because there are a greater number of streets. Mike asked Marc if Grandview Heights NCP #5 was developed before NCP #4, what the difference would be. Mark said that Stantec's scope has been focused on the servicing required for NCP #4 land use plan options.

Brad asked Marc if a pump station were required in the southwest portion of NCP #4. Marc said that to minimize the number of pump stations a gravity main will be used to service the area. The gravity main would then connect to the trunk sewer along the north boundary of the neighbourhood.

Cindy said her neighborhood suffered from poor drainage and asked if the City was running the sanitary through the rural area. She also added that anything north of 24 Ave would go to 32 Ave, and south of 24 Ave would go south of 16 Ave. Note: According to the consultant engineer, the ground south of 24 Ave slopes to the north. The scope of Stage I drainage is to identify areas impacted by the NCP development that may affect the development of Grandview Heights NCP #3.

In a previous City meeting, the public was shown the future sanitary concept (a pump station would be at 176 St and 32 Ave). Note: the pump station at 176 St and 32 Ave is known as the Grandview East Pump Station. The diagram shown by Marc Bonner showed the pump station on the north side of the Science of the Soul.

Marc said that from a straight engineering point of view, contours are followed to take advantage of gravity.

Marc said it was up to the City as to how far servicing would be extended. In response to the matter of poor drainage, Marc indicated that one of the objectives of the ISMP is to put water back in the ground. Cindy said there needed to be more consideration for the rural residential area. Marc responded to her point, saying that this could be addressed in more detail in Stage II. Cindy said the two areas look separate, but that they really go together, especially with the drainage and the sewage. Avtar supported Cindy's comment, and said the concept should take that into account. The Memo of Understanding has to take into account all the development in Grandview Heights NCP Area 5 and this would be part of this area as well.

Bhargav said that the options will go to Council this fall. He asked for any comments before November 1st.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:00 PM.

The foregoing is considered to be a true and accurate record of all items discussed. If any discrepancies or inconsistencies are noted, please contact the writer immediately.

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