

THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF NORTH VANCOUVER

**Meeting of the Advisory Planning Commission
Held at City Hall, 141 West 14th Street, North Vancouver, B.C.
in Conference Room A on Wednesday, July 13th, 2016**

MINUTES

Present: D. Farley
M. Higgins
B. Hundal
A. Jamieson
M. Robinson
T. Valente
R. Vesely
B. Watt
Councillor Back
Councillor Bell

Staff: S. Smith, Planner 2, Community Development
W. Tse, Planner 1, Community Development
S. Kimm-Jones, Committee Clerk

Guests: None

Absent: M. Clark
D. Marshall

A quorum being present, the meeting was called to order at 6:02 p.m.

1. **Minutes of the Meeting of the Advisory Planning Commission held June 8th, 2016**

It was regularly moved and seconded

THAT the minutes of the meeting of the Advisory Planning Commission held June 8th, 2016 be adopted.

Carried Unanimously

2. **Business Arising**

None.

3. **Staff Update**

S. Smith reviewed relevant planning development, project and policy items from the previous Council meetings.

4. Housing Action Plan

W. Tse reviewed the final version of the draft Housing Action Plan which establishes goals and strategies to address community housing needs. It aligns with the Official Community Plan goals and objectives and fulfills the Metro Vancouver Regional Growth Strategy requirement.

Discussion ensued.

Comments and Questions from the Commission included but were not limited to:

- How did you come up with the 10% requirement figure for provision of three bedroom units? **A:** It was borrowed from New Westminster who have implemented a policy and have determined 10% is the optimal number for that community.
- Will it be adequate? **A:** Based on their experience a project is feasible based on 10%. It is not based on demand.
- The requirement for three bedrooms will not address the need because new construction rental is very expensive. **A:** We recognize that families need larger units and have additional policies speaking to affordability. Some families can afford the higher rent.
- Townhouses are mostly three bedrooms. My building is 50% three bedrooms. **A:** Moodyville will allow a lot more townhouses.
- Re the percentage of three bedroom units, the City of Vancouver just approved a bylaw that 35% have to be two and three bedroom suites. **A:** In the City we have not seen an issue with two bedrooms so have focussed on three bedroom units. There will be design considerations to make them family friendly e.g. on the ground floor, mud room etc.
- Any thought to increasing allowable heights of houses so the basement suite would be above ground? **A:** It has been a concern. The height envelope in the duplex zone has been amended a little. It could be looked at to see if it is appropriate to extend the zone.
- Bringing houses out of the ground will enhance basements and help liveability. The City of Vancouver has a 34 foot height envelope. It makes a huge difference in the cost of building; probably \$50,000 by bringing the house up four feet. Every truckload of dirt goes to Mission, Squamish, or Surrey at \$600 per truck load. A basement suite supports approximately \$400,000 of mortgage.
- Cellars are not good for liveability.
- Are duplexes not having suites? **A:** Yes; there are about 30 new secondary suites in duplexes in the City. Some builders do not add it because of the extra cost of greater fire separation. We are trying to see if we can bring the price of adding a suite down. People need mortgage helpers.
- Many existing duplexes do have external doors and wiring set up for a suite. Are there suites we do not know about? **A:** We think many may have put in a suite. There is an issue with those from a life safety point of view as they are not built to code.
- Do we differentiate on row housing and what is the difference? Are there opportunities in the City? **A:** It is a term used in the census. A new category for row house was introduced in the Zoning Bylaw during the Moodyville process.

- Has the City thought about leasing land and having people buy the housing on it?
A: We have the idea for non-market housing but the City does not have a lot of land so we want to use it for the vulnerable populations. We would rather reduce lot sizes etc. trying to get the really low end housing.

T. Valente joined the meeting at 6:50 p.m.

- What about density for rental? **A:** We provide a 1.0 bonus but will also want 10% rented at 10% below average market rents.
- Re the tax exemption; has this been done anywhere? **A:** No, but the Local Government Act allows for an exemption up to 10 years. We would have to work with the Finance Department. It would be taking away from the larger tax base. The number has to work for the City's budget.
- Does reducing parking save money? **A:** Yes. The developer wants to make a percentage but will take what the market will bear.
- We are potentially creating more congestion on the streets by reducing parking requirements on site. **A:** We have heard from some groups that think it is not the right direction. We are also hearing from some that units and parking are being decoupled i.e. being rented separately, so the rent should be lower for a unit that does not have a stall.
- Did you think about having a maximum amount of parking? **A:** We did, but knew that reducing it would be controversial. We thought about having a cap but people may not agree at this point in time.
- Almost every development we review has more parking than it is required to have. They can charge more for parking.
- Instead of reducing parking, take a value for the parking and add it like a transit levy. Make them pay for adding it. If we could something like net zero energy, it would keep annual heating costs down etc. and could reduce strata fees.
- Is there any evidence as to what makes sense for parking? **A:** The 100% reduction would be for projects close to transit. Calgary has a rental building with no parking. In terms of non-market, we have seen a reduction of 75% in the past. There is not much research into the final 25%. **Note:** There is a Metro Vancouver parking study which recommended reductions and decoupling of parking to reduce cost.
- The City of Vancouver is starting to look for empty spots in buildings and rent them out.
- People are unwilling to give street parking up for separated bike lanes, larger walking areas.
- It would be great for us to try less parking. I would love for the City to try a pilot project and measure it in an area where Car2Go and Evo are available. VanCity have just put out a report that says when housing and transportation are combined, nothing in the whole region is affordable.
- Re no parking near the SeaBus, we are attempting to service people who work in Vancouver; young people who do not have cars. Who are we helping? **A:** We also have the Frequent Transit Network. We are focussing on the SeaBus because of the connections on the Skytrain; people who live here work throughout the region.
- Do we have statistics on where residents go to work? **A:** There is a significant proportion that stays on the North Shore. We have 50,000 jobs for 50,000 population which helps reduce the number commuting further to work.
- Rapid transit is not a solution for some people depending on where they work.

- How could parking near the SeaBus be used for people who want to use the SeaBus but need somewhere to park down there i.e. a park and ride? Is there a way to get developers to rent spaces out?
- Did you think about taking money out of the affordable housing fund for an upgrade tax? **A:** As a municipality we cannot aid a private business. Under the Local Government Act, we can give a permissive tax exemption, or provide a grant.
- What sort of upgrades would be permitted? **A:** Definitely life safety upgrades; they cannot just paint the building. It will have to extend the life of the building and be safe.
- What about energy efficiency? **A:** There were grant programs offered before; there are none at the moment.
- We tend to ask for amenity spaces rather than low cost rental spaces. **A:** Through the density bonus we have been able to achieve some; we do not get a lot through it.
- What things do you see changing with federal funding starting to happen? **A:** They have not announced exactly what the funding is going towards. We may be able to step back if they are going to subsidize rents. We still feel there is a role in providing housing that meets the needs of our residents. Non market units will be our focus.
- How do you assess the tax breaks for improvements? **A:** We would need reports from building professionals.
- We do not want to adversely impact other things. Financial ideas are exploratory.
- Fee simple rowhouses are a big change for construction industry; I cannot see them doing it unless there is a forced change. **A:** The uptake elsewhere has not been great.
- Strata management companies are making a lot of money off people who cannot afford it.
- Repurposing bungalows could mean renovating? **A:** It would mean moving it rather than demolishing it e.g. moving it to be a coach house. It can be expensive to move a home. We are trying to add to the rental stock as a coach house.
- That is going to be more and more difficult with the new BC Code changes. It will be expensive to save the old houses because they are not energy efficient and the walls are not thick enough.
- Has it been done? **A:** We have seen it with heritage houses not with others.
- Has homelessness gone up because people are coming from other areas? **A:** The climate attracts people west. Seniors on fixed incomes are likely local.
- Is the homeless shelter full at all times? **A:** It is at capacity most of the time. The transitional units are at capacity. We do not have many of them.
- Maybe creating a warehouse with beds and communal kitchen would help; it would be better than a tent with a clean bed and food. It would not be expensive. Or empty buildings such as the Lucas Centre.
- What about using the reserve fund for land banking? **A:** We do not have a lot of land to buy and the price is increasing so fast; we are competing in the open market.

It was regularly moved and seconded

THAT the Advisory Planning Commission has reviewed the draft Housing Action Plan and supports the overall direction with further consideration of the following:

- The ratio of the rental rate (10% of units to be 10% below market) to the density bonus (1.0 FSR);
- Increasing single family and duplex building height (e.g. to 34 feet as in Vancouver, Surrey) to bring the suite out of the ground (livability) and reduce cost and GHGs associated with digging deeper into the ground;
- A tax incentive for Net Zero energy efficiency for rental buildings to reduce longer term energy costs;
- The calculation of the minimum percentage of three bedroom units required to be based on community need rather than precedent;
- Eliminating the restriction on size of secondary suites;
- Further incentivizing / mandating fee simple row housing;
- Cash-in-lieu parking reductions with funds toward improved transit service;
- The use of vacant buildings for shelter/non market housing; and,
- The affordability implications of reduced lot sizes for duplex development where an accessory rental suite is not permitted under current standards.

The Commission commends staff for a thorough presentation.

Carried Unanimously

5. Information Items

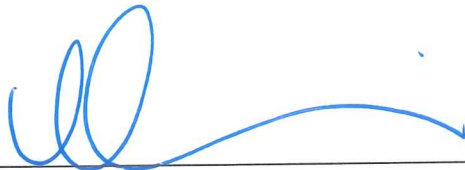
None.

6. Other Business

The August 10th meeting is cancelled.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

The next regular meeting of the Advisory Planning Commission will be held on Wednesday, September 14th, 2016.



Chair

