

THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF NORTH VANCOUVER

**Meeting of the Advisory Planning Commission
Held via Webex on Wednesday, September 8th, 2021**

MINUTES

Present: Y. Al-Nakeeb
M. Mathieson
A. Wilson
S. Huber
A. Rahbar
S. Tornes

Councillor Hu
Councillor McIlroy

Staff: R. de St. Croix, Manager
R. Fish, Committee Clerk
T. Huckell, Committee Clerk

Guests: B. van der Heijden, Planner
E. Macdonald, Planner

Absent: K. Balcom
C. Castro
M. McCorkindale
M. Tasi Baker

A quorum being present, the meeting was called to order at 6:04PM.

1. Acknowledgement of Unceded Territory

2. Approval of Agenda

The agenda of September 8th, 2021 was adopted as circulated.

3. Adoption of Minutes of Meeting of June 9th, 2021

It was regularly moved and seconded

THAT the minutes of the meeting of the Advisory Planning Commission held June 9th, 2021 be adopted.

Carried Unanimously

4. Business Arising

T. Huckell was introduced as the new Committee Clerk for this Commission. R. Fish was thanked for her dedication and efforts over the past several years.

5. Staff Update

R. de St. Croix reviewed relevant planning development, project and policy items from the previous Council meetings.

6. Council Update

- Nothing new to update since Council hasn't been in session since July. Expecting some heavy agendas over the next month or so.
- Next week will be the virtual UBCM Conference.
- First Regular Council meeting has been bumped to Tuesday, September 21 to accommodate the federal election.

7. Coach House Process/Bylaw Update

Staff presented on the Coach House Process and Bylaw Update. The main points included but were not limited to the following:

- Coach houses were initially permitted in 2010. Changes to the process and bylaw since then have largely reflected an increasing level of comfort with them in the City.
- Currently there is a need to make the application process more efficient; processing times of coach house applications are relatively long considering the scale of the projects and the review process takes up a significant amount of staff time.
- The goals of this proposed update include:
 - aligning the requirements with other low-density developments
 - ensuring a streamlined application process
 - providing one point of contact for the applicant
 - transferring as many guidelines as possible to the zoning bylaw
 - removing low-value and difficult to interpret guidelines
 - keeping a reduced set of guidelines to guarantee essential criteria that cannot be captured in the Zoning Bylaw

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

- Curious as to how development and building permits will be submitted? **A:** Those logistics have not been fully worked out yet. Initially the Planning team would take on the development permits. While in progress, we'd work towards an application process whether there would be a single contact point. Ultimately the Director of Planning would still have to approve.
- Will you be increasing team capacity if you'll be taking on an additional workload? **A:** We've flagged that as something that needs to be determined. The major intent behind this is deregulation; believe it will generally simplify the workload, with a reduction of staff hours dedicated to coach houses.

- How long does an application normally take from beginning to end? How much time is expected to be saved? **A:** The pre-consultation period is 4-8 weeks. That would be eliminated.
- Is this new proposal solely for coach houses, and not infill units? **A:** Yes; this is purely based on the coach house development application process. We are looking at other infill policies and processes, but not tonight. Streamlining other types of smaller low density projects (e.g. duplexes and triplexes) is also on our radar.
- Commend staff on this, really good to see. Costs have become prohibitive and timelines seem to have slowed significantly so good to see some action in this area.
- How will the new guidelines meet sustainability targets/objectives? **A:** The current sustainability requirements are part of the zoning bylaw and will remain the same. What we're developing will also provide information to potential applicants on how to make a coach house more sustainable.
- With respect to the sustainability aspect, could those suggestions be added to the guidelines upfront? **A:** This is intended to be a step-by-step guide. At the moment, not a lot of sustainability features are required, but are strongly recommended. Additionally, our experience is that designers become familiar fairly quickly with the City's elements and guidelines.
- Could this be a template for further streamlining of other processes? **A:** A lot of the lower density housing in the City is still being processed as individual CD zoning. These tend to be a more tailor-made, individual process; we are trying to deregulate to a point where these are more of a black and white process. We do have an ongoing process review program and anticipate more of these types of updates coming to the Commission over the next year.
- Will these new guidelines be in effect City-wide, irrespective of location? Will developments still be subject to certain prerequisite requirements such as lot size? **A:** The eligibility and evaluation criteria for a coach house will remain the same.
- Will there be any reconsideration for the way heights and building envelopes are calculated, to allow for more contemporary forms of expression? **A:** The previous height calculations were removed from the requirement in 2018, with the livability study update.

It was regularly moved and seconded

THAT the Advisory Planning Commission has reviewed and considered the overview of changes to the Coach House Guidelines and Zoning Bylaw Requirements as presented by staff and is supportive of the general direction of the Accessory Coach House Bylaw and Process Update.

Carried Unanimously

8. Small Lot Policy

Staff presented on the Small Lot Policy. The main points included but were not limited to the following:

- In 2018, the current RS-2 zone was added to the Zoning Bylaw to allow for small single family lots with a minimum front lot line of 7.4 metres. The goal of the RS-2 zone is to provide more housing options within the City's single family areas.
- Current rezoning applications for small-lot developments are being considered on a case-by-base basis, without clear or consistent criteria for evaluation. Council has indicated a desire for a more comprehensive policy.
- The scope of this policy is limited to consideration of small-lot development (though other more sustainable/affordable forms of housing may be explored prior to or during the next OCP update).
- This policy would not remove the need for staff review but would allow less focus on building design and more on site context.
- Key goals include:
 - providing clearer direction for Council, staff, applicants and the general public regarding small-lot development
 - amending the rezoning process and submission requirements to appropriately reflect the scale of the proposals
 - being careful not to initiate a high volume of applications

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

- One of the proposed requirements is that no heritage building should be located on the lot, or should have been present on the lot for the past five years. Can you elaborate? **A:** An applicant could choose to demolish such a building prior to application. This is intended to discourage that, as it would prevent immediate rezoning to RS-2 and development, asking the applicant to wait five years.
- If a heritage building was torn down, a new single family house (RS-1 zoning) could be built without delay. Doesn't this actually make it harder to increase density? **A:** Basically we're trying to make it an additional criterion, to ensure that a heritage home isn't torn down simply to rebuild two homes.
- How will this help to increase density? **A:** The high level intent is that we're enabling a choice. We're indicating that RS-1 lots in the City, if you meet the standard criteria (follow regular lot pattern, have lane access, are not heritage) then you have the potential to rezone to RS-2. We are not trying to encourage or discourage such development; rather saying that we will facilitate it. We do want to avoid a floodgate of applications; if we were removing regulatory requirements down to a minimum, that could potentially send a signal that we want to encourage small lot subdivision. This is not our intent.
- Concerned about "NIMBYism" with the proposal to poll all households within 40 metres of the property. How important is neighbourhood engagement; can it trigger an automatic veto? **A:** Staff intend to remove this consultation requirement, and instead require general notification in the direct vicinity of the lot. Any application like this would go through the usual notification process and public responses would be considered.
- Do staff see an acceleration in reaching sustainability goals in conflict with the attainability? **A:** We do feel that single family homes are not as sustainable; anticipate that what would be built in an RS-2 zone would have more efficient footprints. Will densify areas currently zoned as RS-1. The context is important;

we are simply talking about the single family neighbourhoods, giving them one way to densify.

- The past 10 years have seen a lot of rapid changes on certain streets and this will change the feel of a neighbourhood; can be an odd look when there is so much variety. **A:** Good feedback; managing urban change and urban growth is never easy. Comments tonight have been helpful and have highlighted some key areas for staff to focus on.
- One of the big crises of this time is affordability. If we want to see more density, is this proposal really going to encourage much change? Don't see this as the kind of change that is helpful in terms of how we design and manage our land. **A:** Agree that the affordability crisis is a significant challenge. Staff are looking at a host of options; for example, we have updated our tenant displacement policy, and we are looking at ways of encouraging more mid-market housing. It may look disjointed as we bring policies to this group in a piecemeal fashion, but we are working on overarching guides, to provide housing in all areas of the continuum. We are embarking on broader policy opportunities that will hopefully work towards alleviating the affordability crisis.

Staff agreed to review feedback from tonight's discussion and continue to work on the proposed policy with a goal to bring it back to the Commission at a future meeting.

9. **Adjournment**

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

The next regular meeting of the Advisory Planning Commission will be held on Wednesday, October 13th, 2021.

"Adrien Rahbar"
Chair

"November 10, 2021"
Date