

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 the Atrium Meeting Room on Wednesday, April 8th, 2015**

MINUTES

Present: M. Clark
D. Farley
M. Higgins
A. Jamieson
D. Marshall
P. McCann
M. Rahbar
M. Robinson
Councillor Back
Councillor Bell

Staff: S. Smith, Planner 2, Community Development
W. Tse, Planner, Community Development
T. Forrest, Planning Analyst, Community Development
M. vander Laan, Planning Technician, Community Development
S. Kimm-Jones, Committee Clerk

Absent: T. Valente
B. Watt

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

1. Minutes of Meeting of the Advisory Planning Commission held March 11th, 2015

It was regularly moved and seconded

THAT the minutes of the meeting of the Advisory Planning Commission held March 11th, 2015 be adopted.

Carried Unanimously

2. Business Arising

Information on the Economic Commission and the Socio-Economic Impacts of Gaming were emailed to members. This was an action item from the last meeting.

Discussion ensued.

Action: Staff to circulate Harbourside paper to members.

3. Staff Update

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

4. Draft Tenant Relocation Policy

W. Tse, Planner 1, presented a draft of the proposed Tenant Relocation Policy and asked for feedback and a resolution from the Commission members.

The Policy focusses on market rental housing as there is increased redevelopment pressure of purpose-built rental buildings in the City and there is concern over displaced renters.

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

- We do not want to discourage developers from building new rental units; what is in it for the developer? **A:** We encourage the inclusion of more rental units through density bonussing. A bonus of up to 1 FSR over the base density may be provided to make rental development more attractive. The City is concerned about the displacement of long-standing tenants. There may be some pushback from developers, but they will be consulted over the draft policy.
- How well has the policy worked in Vancouver? **A:** The markets are quite different. It works well (finding replacement units) in Vancouver because they have larger rental stock. The market is favourable for rental. The City cannot ask for too much and discourage redevelopment due to the age of the rental stock. It is a fine balance.
- Three months of free rent seems unfair to developers; two months is fairer; tenants know when the building is going to be redeveloped and have time to look.
- Tenants need to have been there a year for the free rent? It would not be fair for someone to come in at the last minute and get the three months' rent. **A:** Rezoning applications take about six months to process.
- Perhaps make it one year from the announcement of the redevelopment.
- Could the compensation be pro-rated? Someone who has less than a year's residency has no rights. **A:** We will have to explore what happens to new renters.
- What is the burden on the developer with the employment of the Tenant Relocation Coordinator? **A:** Some developers are using their building managers. We have specified third party but it could be a building manager. It may be an added expense if it is a small rental building. Owners who have multiple properties will find it easier. We may take the third party aspect out of the policy, but tenants need to feel comfortable.
- With a 0.5% vacancy rate it may be very difficult to find three comparable rental units. **A:** It will be a challenge.
- Under the current zoning three or four storey walk-ups can be rebuilt as five to six storey buildings without rezoning? **A:** No, zoning restricts height; also developers typically want the density bonus so would have to go through the rezoning process in that case.

- Strata conversion only applies to existing buildings? **A:** Yes.
- Thought it was about keeping the stock, trying to soften the blow to the tenants. If it is underzoned – why would you rezone it?
- How do you encourage building owners to keep their buildings rather than rebuilding e.g. grants / tax breaks for energy efficiency improvements, sprinklers? If there was assistance for physical changes to upgrade the buildings then they would not be torn down. **A:** Work on the Housing Action Plan is starting; one consideration is how to retain rental and encourage upgrades. Density bonussing also allows for density transfer to another site.
- You should try renovation and upgrading; many of the buildings will not be going through redevelopment; some effort should go into upgrading the buildings. Many buildings have leakage problems; work with CMHC and other agencies.
- The Policy looks good. It is important for APC to have the information on the status of the building, current rents etc. when reviewing an application.
- Is the Tenant Relocation Coordinator position clearly defined? It is an extra cost. Tenants will say the advisor did not really try if they are the landlord's employee. Does it have to be a third party?
- I agree that it is easier to manage free rent rather than collecting moving receipts; that is a sensible solution.
- We do not want renovations to be “renovictions”. The reality for the City is that we have other goals other than land use e.g. the social structure of the community. We are trying to have a balance in the population with housing for single parents, low income residents for example: trying to protect a segment of housing.

Action: Staff to send the link to the Tenant Relocation Plan presentation to members.

It was regularly moved and seconded

THAT the Advisory Planning Commission has reviewed the proposed Tenant Relocation Policy and is supportive of the general direction of the policy. The Commission recommends further consideration of the following:

- The length of tenancy required in order to qualify for benefits under the policy;
- Further consideration of the role of the third party Tenant Relocation Coordinator.

In addition, the Commission suggests the consideration of policies to support the retention of existing rental buildings versus demolition.

The Commission commends staff on an excellent presentation.

**Carried
In favour 7
Opposed 1**

5. Draft Sustainability Checklist

T. Forrest, Planning Analyst, presented the draft Sustainability Checklist to the Commission and asked for feedback. The Checklist has been developed to challenge applicants to help advance the sustainability objectives of the City, and will function to implement the sustainable city framework in the 2014 OCP.

At the current time, applicants have the choice of completing the current Sustainability Checklist or writing a statement; most elect to write statements that are usually quite broad. – open ended and lacking in detail. Renewed interest in providing more concrete account of the sustainability features.

The new Sustainability Checklist is intended to be easy to use. It builds on existing guidelines using the 2014 OCP framework as a guide for organizing the content. The option to write a statement has been eliminated. Applicants will be required to provide more clear evidence of sustainable measures. It could also be useful when evaluating projects for evaluating Sustainable City Awards.

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

- Why does it say “located adjacent to amenities” under the urban agriculture section? **A:** To encourage the plots to be located in a gathering space for use for different users.
- It is a very comprehensive checklist and could be used within this Committee as a score card to evaluate whether projects are good or below average. Perhaps have a rating number? Or low, medium, high?
- The economic category could be expanded to promote some of the core businesses within the City.
- Subheadings tend to get lost; make it easier to read.
- Do we have micro units? **A:** No; there is a minimum unit size of 400 sq. ft. and we are asking applicants to provide smaller units for housing diversity.
- Try to make it as quantitative as possible; low flow nozzles might not be installed in the whole building for example. **A:** We could ask the comments to be quantified.
- LED lighting seems too specific under infrastructure. Is there anything for solar energy?
- Fantastic job on putting it together. I am ok with yes or no because there is space for comments. It is a great checklist.
- There might be some overlap with development permits.
- There could be a summary at the end of the list e.g. how many yes or no check boxes or a percentage.
- It would be easier if the Checklist is quantified.
- The Checklist should be fair for developers e.g. passive solar gain is important. Site planning is important with windows facing south. The right to light and to prevent access to light being blocked.

It was regularly moved and seconded

THAT the Advisory Planning Commission has reviewed the draft Sustainability Checklist and supports the general direction outlined. The Commission recommends further consideration of the following:

- Quantification of the individual list items and implementation of a scorecard;
- Less specificity on certain line items e.g. LED lighting is not the only option;
- Consideration of site planning and right to light/solar access; and
- Expansion of some of the ideas provided under Section 3 “Local Economy”.

The Commission commends staff on the quality of the checklist and an excellent presentation.

Carried unanimously

*There was a short break at 7:25 p.m.
The meeting reconvened at 7:30 p.m.*

6. Active Design Guidelines

M. vander Laan, Planning Technician 2, gave the Commission an overview of the proposed Active Design Guidelines. These guidelines encourage building design to facilitate daily physical activity and social interaction. New York City has published active design guidelines for low income housing.

The built environment exerts powerful influences on people’s health such as the composition of their diets and the frequency of physical activity. In addition, a recent study by the Vancouver Foundation has shown that the majority of residents in apartments feel lonely and do not often talk to their neighbours. The design of a building can influence the way in which people move and interact.

Existing City policy promotes healthy, walkable, livable urban environments. In particular, the 2014 Official Community Plan encourages the inclusion of active design principles in new development. Furthermore, recent changes to the Zoning Bylaw encourage active design through the provision of bike parking and shower facilities.

Before the guidelines are finalized, a Building Code consultant will be asked for feedback. An illustrated guide will be produced to accompany the checklist and related changes will be made to the Sustainability Checklist and Zoning Bylaw.

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

- Excellent presentation. There should be a bonus or exclusion for floor areas that create more active design so that the designer is not restricted.
- Will this be for all buildings including commercial? **A:** It will be mainly for multi-unit residential buildings as that is where the greatest need is.
- It may not be very practical in mixed use buildings; there will be issues with fire safety and security. If there is an outside staircase to the roof, will there be issues with setbacks? What about CPTED?

- Locked off floors restrict interaction. Would there be security issues if the floors were not locked off?
- I like the idea of open stairwells; I am too nervous to use enclosed stairwells.
- I like the idea of using the lobby areas and having a usable space e.g. the Local has a gym off the lobby. Most lobbies are dark and not very inviting.
- I like the check off list.
- Bright colours and more lighting for the lobby would be good.
- It is good to have interaction between the street and interior space with no frosted glass as a barrier.
- Is there a reason for a different format to the Sustainability Checklist? It would be easier if they had a similar format. **A:** We work closely together and will look at it.
- Make the guidelines more quantitative.
- It is probably a development permit opportunity.
- The illustrated guide will be very important. The guidelines need to be documented and footnoted with numbers to measure items, showing the rationale for them.
- Glass is good for CPTED.
- I like the emphasis on the exterior in terms of social and pedestrian gathering spots. If there could be a flow between interior and exterior it would be good.
- There should be exterior seating for people to sit and gather.
- It would be good to have an exterior way to get from the back to front for biking and walking.
- Some residential buildings have the amenity space on main floor that can be used for parties, movie nights. **A:** We have talked about minimum and maximum sizes and location.
- There should be outdoor space (i.e. patio) adjacent to indoor amenity space.
- I do not see anything promoting cycling? **A:** It is not in the document because the Zoning Bylaw has been changed to require minimum standards for secured bike parking, facilities for changing and showering.
- What about making the bike space accessible? In my building it is hard to get my bike out. **A:** It could be in this document.
- Communal spaces in apartments can be very uninviting with left over furniture. It would be good if the developers had to furnish the rooms e.g. with a bar area and kitchen so they can be used for entertaining. It would be good to have outdoor place that is inviting to go to perhaps with a fire pit.

It was regularly moved and seconded

THAT the Advisory Planning Commission had reviewed the proposed Active Design Guidelines and supports their general direction. The Commission recommends further consideration of the following:

- Convenient internal/external access to bicycle storage facilities;
- A balance of security issues with openness and accessibility to stairs;
- Ensure ample interior lighting in lobby, stairs and communal space areas;
- Some level of quantitative measurement;
- Consideration of a similar format to the Sustainability Checklist for consistency; and,
- Ensure transparency between indoor and outdoor spaces, such as specifically limiting the use of frosted glass at the street level.

The Commission commends staff on the quality of the checklist and on an excellent presentation.

Carried unanimously

7. APC Workplan for 2015

S. Smith reviewed the summary of the output from the March 11th brainstorming session and asked for members' comments.

Discussion ensued

It was agreed that staff will arrange a walking tour of Lower Lonsdale, and schedule the top priority topics as Council priorities and time permits including a workshop on laneways.

8. Information Items

The Socio-Economic Impacts of Gambling report was previously distributed by email for information. There will be a Council Policy Committee on gaming on April 20th.

9. Other Business

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

The next regular meeting of the Advisory Planning Commission will be held on Wednesday, May 13th, 2015.



Chair

