

Current And Proposed Amenity Space Guidelines – Small Development Alternative Nov. 03

As stated in the report to Planning Committee, the new proposed indoor and outdoor amenity space guidelines are easier to understand and calculate, and permit more flexibility in terms of providing “formal” amenity space, and are more realistic and achievable overall.

However, as stated in the report, the downside from the development community’s point of view is for the smaller developments (under 20 units) which would be required to contribute cash in lieu of providing indoor amenity space, because 70 m² of amenities is uneconomic in a small site.

Smaller developments, often “infills”, are becoming an important component of the City’s new housing stock, and this trend will likely increase as the finite amount of raw land within the City is consumed. It is therefore desirable to solve this problem faced by small developments.

I would suggest reducing the amenity space alternative for small developments to ~38 m².

My rationale is as follows:

- 1) At 2 m²/unit (or more) it is in keeping with the ratio of amenity space required of larger developments.
- 2) It provides developers of small complexes a way to add value to their project, in a manner beneficial to its current marketing, in a manner comparable to larger projects – rather than the only viable option being to pay a levy to the City because a 70 m² amenity space won’t fit.
- 3) It can provide purchasers a building feature on site which can benefit them directly, offset their dependency on City facilities and reduce their time and effort spent traveling to City facilities, and thereby reduce the additional amount of City facilities and staffing required.

For this reduced amenity space proposal to be viable in small developments there must be useful options for such a space. (The current minimum of 70 m² is roughly comparable to providing 3.5 more parking spaces, whereas 38 m² would be comparable to 2 parking spaces, about 400 ft²).

Remembering that in many cases this type of project will comprise many small suites, but not necessarily so, amenity options could include:

- 1) A common room perhaps twice the size of a typical unit’s living room. This common room would be large enough for the all unit owners to attend an annual strata meeting.
- 2) A room large enough to hold individual parties, or strata social functions (If the room also had a microwave, sink & counter, and perhaps a single ensuite washroom.).
- 3) A guest suite (If the room furnishings included a sofa bed and ensuite washroom.).
- 4) Suitably finished, the facility could be a multipurpose area: a recreation area in typical complexes, or a basic fitness area, or perhaps be used as an on site daycare in projects targeted at young families, or a program area in a geared to seniors facility.
- 5) Were similarly sized adjacent properties to be redeveloped over time, a small developer could make different options available in each and increase overall utility by creating sharing agreements. Many smaller projects could band together for skills and economies they couldn’t get individually.

It should be remembered that while 38 m² is a relatively small space, it’s as large as a downtown bachelor apartment, and larger than many hotel rooms so it would have many viable options.

While the cost of a ~38 m² amenity space would still be higher than the in lieu payment, it would be much easier to fit in the development footprint, and the marketing advantages may override the cost penalty, especially in the mature part of the market cycle when features help differentiate a product from the competition. This would give small developers equitable opportunity.

Sincerely, Peter Mitchell

