

Mayor and Councillors

From: [REDACTED]
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City Clerk's Office

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LUC Correspondence

Honorable Mayor and Council,

Today I speak before you in support of the early termination process for Land use contract properties that Richmond has begun. I speak not just as a concerned resident of Richmond but also as a LUC owner who will be affected by this decision in more than one way. Not only do I live on a LUC property, I also live next door to one that has been sold and is slated for demolition and rebuild. I feel it affords me a unique perspective to see the various sides of this issue in its fullness.

There is even greater pressure today on LUC properties to be re-built as massive homes because the city has tightened its bylaws through amendment 9280 in September this year. This urgency to re-build LUC properties is fuelled by the fact that Land Use Contracts lie outside the purview of the city's bylaws and are not subject to the city's controls on maximum height and setbacks as they are applied to non-LUC properties. The land use contracts as they stand today, offer those who wish to build outside of city's permitted bylaws, a convenient loophole and an easy opportunity to do so.

There are many LUC properties that have already been built into mansions and monster homes that tower above neighboring properties and take away a neighbor's sunlight and privacy. This building trend on LUC lots also dilutes and mocks the steps taken by city staff, residents and council earlier this year to address the trend of massification of single family homes.

However, the process of early termination set out by the city is a step forward in closing this loophole presented by LUCs and offers to bring all Richmond residents under the same set of building bylaws by the end of 2016.

Keeping LUCs in place until 2024 is not fair to those residents who do not desire to live in or next to massive overpowering homes that shadow neighboring properties. It is also not fair to those residents that do not live on LUC properties and are subject to a stricter set of building controls under the city's bylaws. In order to be fair to all, building controls and bylaws need to be the same for all residential properties.

All LUC properties are supposed to become part of the city's bylaws by 2024. However nine years is a long time in the life of a city. By then, many residential LUC lots will likely be re-built outside the rational controls of the bylaws. Right now there are many residents and neighborhoods suffering from the onslaught of massification. By then many may have given up and there may not be much left to save with respect to neighborhoods and their sense of community.

Some residents who have written to the local newspaper and city council against the early termination process have implied that building under the city's stipulated FSR would make it harder for them to accommodate older parents or children who have returned to the nest. I wish to disagree and say that Richmond's allowable FSR offers ample room to build homes to accommodate extended family commitments. This past summer, I went to an open house in my neighborhood. This home built on a 5200 square feet lot was about 2800 square feet large. It had not only a bedroom on the main floor with an attached bathroom but also had 4 bedrooms on the 2nd storey, three and a half total bathrooms, a two car garage and a green front and backyard. The point I wish to make is that we do not need to build massive homes to accommodate ageing parents or returning children and the city's bylaws very much allow for these kinds of homes to be built.

The last thing I wish to speak about as an LUC homeowner is the fear that the process of early termination will significantly impact home values. I believe that it is the world economy and how it affects the Greater Vancouver region that is the single most important factor in rising house values in the lower mainland, not just in Richmond. Any change in the LUC designation can only bring a marginal change in a home's price. A well kept home, no matter LUC or not, will sell for top dollar as long as the engines of world economy stay robust.

I do not think our decision about LUCs in Richmond will affect the world economy in any significant way. However, this decision will significantly affect the livability of Richmond over the next nine years and will define what kind of city we hope to become in the future.

To end with my own story: I feel that even early termination will perhaps be too late to change the course of the re-build next door to me. I am hoping though, that the new owners of the lot next door will pay attention to their neighborhood and not build an overpowering structure and this will spare me some sunlight on the south side of my house. I also hope that the city will be able to persuade the owners next door not to build a third storey which has been a trend on LUC lots so far.

I hope that early termination of LUC contracts will go ahead so that we have only one set of building bylaws to abide by and do not have to approach each demolition on the block with a sense of dread.

Sincerely,

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[REDACTED]