

Schedule 108 to the Minutes of the
Public Hearing meeting of
Richmond City Council held on
Tuesday, September 8, 2015.

Mayor and Councillors

To Public Hearing	
Date:	SEPT. 8 2015
Item #	6
Re:	BYLAWS 9280+
	9281

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: September-08-15 3:30 PM
To: Mayor and Councillors
Subject: Public hearing: Bylaw 9280

Categories: 12-8060-20-9280

Dear Mayor and Council,

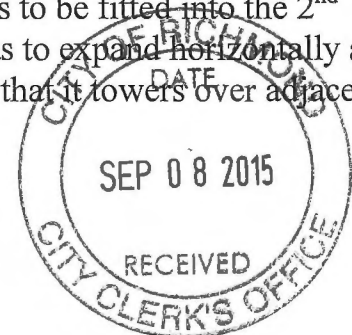
You have put many hours of consultation and deliberation with your planning staff, residents and developers, but this amendment that has been tabled does not seem to me to lay down any new measures for controlling the size/impact of massive homes.

What have you changed that will offer the residents relief from massive homes in the future?

If we are to think of a house as a cube, there are three ways one can possibly shrink a cube. You have returned the height of a two storey house to 29.5 feet. However, since most massive homes are at least 2.5 storey high. How will the height of this 2.5 storey structure be tamed by this amendment?

In fact by retaining the height at 16.4 feet before double counting built area you seem to have chosen to ignore the single most effective tool that could have been put in place to control massing. Reducing this dimension to 12.1 feet is very effective because then the developers need to think carefully about the double height spaces in the new houses in-order to fit in all the amenities they want.

Right now what is happening is that new homes have a lot more double height spaces which fill the house with vertical air space without allowing bathrooms and bedrooms to be fitted into the 2nd storey. And in order to fit in bedrooms and bathrooms this structure has to expand horizontally as well. So the building becomes too tall and too wide. So wide and tall, that it towers over adjacent homes and blocks their light and intrudes on backyards.



So reducing the vertical height to 12.1 feet before double counting would have a reductive effect on the width as well.

As far as depth of the cube is concerned: there exists a 20 foot setback that allows for backyard space. However, to allow for an accessory building to cover 40% of this backyard setback dilutes its intent and raises questions about whether the city really intends to provide any backyard privacy.

Even the future directions that the city has set to further investigate this issue seem to be getting diluted by unwarranted amendments. The city had intended to examine side yard setbacks from the property line in houses with frontage of 40 feet (12.5 m). However, this lot width was amended to 50 foot frontage (15 m) in the July 21st planning meeting without any consultation or deliberation with the general public only at the behest of the developers. You can refer to Amendment bylaw 9281 for details on this.

I want to bring to council's notice that massive homes are really problematic on small to medium lots and would make fine homes if they were built on larger lots that allow surrounding properties room to breathe. However by tweaking with the dimensions of what counts as a small or medium lot, the council seems to be partisan to only the concerns of the building industry that caters to the mega- home segment.

Not only is mega-home building having a negative impact on neighborhood connectedness and character, it has significant negative impact on the environment.

Mega home builders are far more concerned with fitting in a three car garage rather than accommodating any private green space/trees on the lot. In the recent transit vote about 70% of Richmond voted "no" to transit. There may have been multiple reasons for not supporting the transit vote but I am sure that having 3 or 4 cars per household would definitely pre-empt the need/desire for transit.

Allowing new massive homes to pave most of the front and backyard decreases the capacity of rainwater to be absorbed in the soil and creates more problems with massive run-off that city's storm drains cannot accommodate. These effects are cumulative and by the time they become commonplace it will be too late to turn the clock back. Mega homes are also rapidly shrinking the diversity and affordability of the single family detached home stock in Richmond.

Is this what the mayor and council really want for the future of this city?

The city's official community plan for 2041 mandates "incentives for reducing solar radiation, run off and green house gases" and the city's current practices of increased recycling and composting seem to indicate that the city is indeed serious about environmental stewardship.

Maybe the council and mayor believe that residents opposed to massive homes are a small minority in one or two neighborhoods of Richmond. However, the letters and photographs that have been submitted to local newspapers and to council show that we are not a small number and these issues are not just confined to our backyards. These issues are connected to the long term direction in city planning and most importantly to laying a foundation for promoting a diversity in lifestyles and encouraging mindful consumption.

I do not think that the city should put a stop to building massive homes. My opposition comes from these massive homes being squeezed in small to medium sized residential lots without providing adjacent properties sufficient sunlight and room to breathe.

I urge the mayor and council to reconsider the provisions in this amendment and to introduce more concrete provisions (such as reducing the height of a single storey to 12.1 feet before double counting) to scale down the massiveness of new construction and to consider zoning based on lot size rather than neighborhoods alone.

I want to re-assure the Mayor and Council that despite these regulatory mechanisms to control the size of massive homes, the city of Richmond will stay "open for business". Richmond's good public schools, its vibrant public parks and beautiful dykes and proximity to Vancouver will continue to attract new residents to its neighborhoods.

You are not just a council for developers in the city or even just a council for those who would like to live in massive homes. You are the mayor and council for all of us and we expect that you will

listen to all of us and be a good steward and lay down building regulations that allow for co-existence and even engagement of diverse people and homes.

Sincerely.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]