

Schedule 10 to the minutes of the Regular Council Meeting for Public Hearings held on Monday, November 19, 2012

To: Public Hearing
Nov 19, 2012
Item 3



URBAN DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE – PACIFIC REGION
#200 – 602 West Hastings Street
Vancouver, British Columbia V6B 1P2 Canada
T. 604.669.9585 F. 604.689.8691
info@udi.org
www.udi.bc.ca

November 19, 2012

His Worship Mayor Malcolm Brodie and Council
City of Richmond 6911 No. 3 Road
Richmond, BC V6Y 2C1

Dear Mayor and Council:

Re: Draft 2041 Official Community Plan (OCP)

For the past three years, Council, staff, stakeholders and the public have been working to map and plan Richmond's future through the draft 2041 OCP—*Moving Towards Sustainability*. The new Official Community Plan is particularly important to the members of the Urban Development Institute (UDI), as they build the visions laid out in these types of plans.

We would like to thank staff for involving UDI and our members throughout the process. The OCP has been on the agenda of our UDI/City of Richmond Liaison Committee meetings since the process began, and there have been several special sessions with the industry at various stages of the development of the Plan. We had a positive meeting on October 30, 2012 with staff on the draft OCP, which forms the basis of our comments regarding the document.

In general UDI is very supportive of the OCP process and the Plan itself. There are some issues that we would like to bring to the attention of Council.

Chapter 2 (Climate Change Response):

We are pleased that the City recognizes that wood-frame construction, compact communities and Transit Oriented Development (TOD) are important prescriptions for reducing community greenhouse gas emissions. This is especially true in Richmond with its access to the Canada Line. UDI also looks forward to working with staff and stakeholders on important issues such as climate change adaption.

Chapter 3 (Connected Neighbourhoods):

UDI is very supportive of the proposals to enable more development through neighbourhood centre/shopping mall densification and arterial road policies. An additional opportunity for the City to consider is approaching communities, where schools are in danger of being closed, to discuss increasing densities so local schools do not have to be shut down. Our industry would be pleased to work with the City, the School Board and local communities on such plans.

UDI would be pleased to work with staff and the Richmond Centre on Disability to improve accessibility in projects throughout the City. We believe that the focus of this work can be on apartment buildings as these types of projects, by their nature, are accessible. In these projects, units are generally one level, and elevators provide easy access to units. We also believe that it is important to have a database of accessible units. Many of our members are finding that these units are not being purchased by those who need them, and then after a few years, the inventory of already built accessible units in Richmond is being forgotten.

We would also like to thank staff for including in the OCP definitions of accessible, adaptable, convertible, and barrier free housing as well as visitability and aging in place. UDI members have requested more clarity regarding these terms and how they apply to housing.

Chapter 4 (Vibrant Cities):

UDI supports the City's efforts to improve its cultural, artistic, recreational and heritage assets and programs. We particularly endorse the proposal to prepare Public Art Plans, as our members provide direct funding the Arts Program. We would be pleased to discuss the use of incentives to support the provision of cultural, art and heritage space with staff and other stakeholders.

Chapter 6 (Resilient Economy):

UDI would like to work with the City on specific policies to promote economic and job growth in Richmond.

Chapter 8 (Mobility and Access):

UDI would like to work with the City on identifying future funding sources for the infrastructure and amenities such as roads and trails outlined in the Mobility Chapter. We note that the top three funding sources outlined are primarily development industry related. As the OCP is implemented, it will be important to discuss how various types of amenities and infrastructure will be funded.

Our industry supports the efforts of municipal associations such as the Union of British Columbia Municipalities and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities to increase infrastructure funding from the Federal and Provincial governments. It is not appropriate that local governments only receive 8¢ of every tax dollar.

We also believe it is important to link increased densities and improved transit services. As communities densify there is an opportunity for the City and TransLink to work together to increase transit services to them. The public will be more accepting of growth if they see improved services resulting from that growth.

There are three additional issues in the Mobility Chapter that City staff and industry have agreed to further discuss as the OCP is implemented:

- Car-share spaces;
- Electric Vehicles; and
- Transportation Demand Management.

We look forward to those discussions. The industry needs additional clarity on some of the policies, and there are some opportunities to meet the objectives set out by Council through alternative approaches.

Chapter 9 (Island Natural Environment):

We are pleased that staff have confirmed that the designations and guidelines Development Permits for Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs) will not impede development, as the use and density will be not be altered by the ESAs. One issue that needs further discussion is how the ESA process is incorporated into the development review process for projects. UDI and Richmond staff will be discussing this at upcoming meetings of the Liaison Committee.

Chapter 11 (Social Inclusion and Accessibility):

In Chapter 11, there is a proposed policy to:

"Establish mechanisms to assist non-profit agencies and community groups to secure office or program space, or funding (e.g., through senior governments, NGOs, the lease of any surplus City space, negotiation with developers in the rezoning process)."

Staff have indicated that more discussion is needed on how developers could be incentivized to provide office space for non-profit agencies and community groups. UDI looks forward to these discussions.

Chapter 12 (Sustainable Infrastructure and Resources):

One of the policies proposed in this Chapter is conducting waste audits. UDI has been working with Metro Vancouver on this issue for two years. Metro recently released a *Sample Municipal Bylaw for the Management of Waste and Recyclable Materials from Demolition Work*. As UDI noted in an October 30th letter to Council, we would like to discuss this approach further with staff before it is implemented in Richmond. We are pleased that staff have agreed that further consultation is needed with stakeholders, including UDI.

Chapter 13 (Implementation Strategy):

UDI is pleased that staff confirmed front-end financing and latecomer charges would continue to be utilized in consultation with our industry.

Chapter 14 (Development Permit Guidelines):

A few of our members noted that some of the Guidelines appeared to be very specific and restrictive (e.g. itemizing desired building materials in multi-unit residential projects). The Guidelines could be made more flexible by replacing restrictive words such as "require" with words like "encourage".

We agree with staff that these matters can be addressed after the OCP is approved through a future review of the Development Permit Guidelines.

Chapter 15 (Regional Context Statement):

UDI recommends a less detailed and restrictive Regional Context Statement (RCS). In particular, there are some designated industrial and employment lands in the RCS that our members believe are of marginal utility for industrial and/or job-generating land uses. As we have noted in the past, redesignating these lands may prove difficult for future Councils because it requires approval from the Metro Board.

Overall, the Urban Development Institute is very supportive of the new OCP, and we congratulate staff on preparing a positive future vision for the City of Richmond. We would also like to thank them for their efforts throughout the consultation process – especially Terry Crowe who kept our members informed about developments in the OCP and reviewed and discussed industry comments with us over the past three years.

At the October 30th meeting, it was agreed that if Council adopts the OCP, UDI and City staff would continue to work together to explore more fully the items noted above. We look forward to those discussions as we implement Richmond's Official Community Plan.

Yours truly,



Anne McMullin
President and CEO