

## Mayor and Councillors

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**From:** niti sharma <niti.tana@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, 19 November 2018 18:53  
**To:** Mayor and Councillors  
**Subject:** City centre development by gbl architects: november19th, 2018.

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Flagged

Honorable Mayor and Council,

I am here to speak about item 3 on the agenda, the Richmond centre development by GBL architects.

As a resident concerned about the housing unaffordability in the city, this is a great opportunity for the council and mayor to ask the developer to try some bold initiatives that tie this density to building affordability in this city. This is a large development that will add 2100 new units of housing at city centre. I understand that the development proposes 150 affordable units and 100 market rental units. However, at this scale of development the city should be requiring a very different "cost of doing business" from the developer because Richmond residents do not just need housing, many need affordable housing.

I also want to remind the mayor and council that what makes the city centre location in Richmond desirable and worth all the work of building and selling homes is not just what is being built by this development but what already exists within the city as public amenities such as Canada line/public transit, a vibrant community and existing roads and schools

In my opinion, the city should explore options for:

- Using its rental only zoning powers to bring in much greater proportion of the much needed purpose built rental supply.
- To consider having a much greater proportion of affordable housing than the current 150 units of affordable housing.
- Requiring greater than the current proposed 50% multi bedroom units. Two and three bedroom homes are in short supply in the city and are a much needed size of home to live in.
- Asking this development and all the other city centre developments to contribute towards building a city centre school without which this new dense city centre community cannot support and welcome families and children.

I do know that this site was pre-zoned earlier but I find it perplexing that that does not tie the hands of the developer for selling the redeveloped condos at the current market price but it ties the hands of the city for asking for a community contribution and affordable housing contribution that is connected to today's market conditions and lack of affordability in this city. **This "community amenity freeze" for the developer at the 1980's rate seems very much like a "rent freeze" in favor of the developer.**

If there was any way that the new redeveloped condos would also sell for a 1980's price, I would have no problem with this bylaw amendment going ahead tonight.

Eventually all the taxpayers will service the cost of this density whether it is through having to widen roads or to police empty homes or in other more invisible ways by losing this great opportunity to re-direct a greater proportion of this redevelopment to bringing more affordable housing into Richmond.

Sincerely,

Niti Sharma.

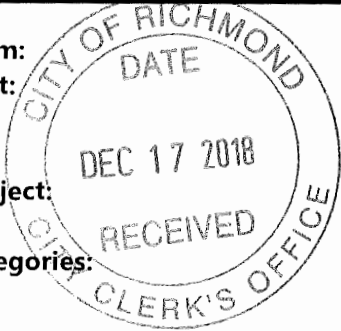
19<sup>th</sup> November, 2018

# ON TABLE ITEM

Date: DECEMBER 17, 2018  
Meeting: PUBLIC HEARING  
Item: 4

## Mayor and Councillors

**From:** niti sharma <niti.tana@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, 17 December 2018 13:53  
**To:** Mayor and Councillors; City Clerk; Steves, Harold; Day, Carol; Wolfe, Michael; Brodie, Malcolm; Au, Chak; McPhail, Linda; McNulty, Bill; Loo, Alexa  
**Subject:** Sears - richmond centre development: December 17-2018  
**Categories:** - TO: MAYOR & EACH COUNCILLOR / FROM: CITY CLERK'S OFFICE



Honorable Mayor and Council,

Affordability is a problem in Richmond but it is a problem your decisions around development can fix. I would like to point out that affordability is a problem not just for lower income Richmondites but most Richmondites that report any local income at all. The Airport, the school district and the city are probably among the three largest employers in the city. According to the city's income hot facts, about 59.4 % Richmond households have a total household income under \$ 80, 000 per annum and 70% have a total household income of under \$100,000 per year. Your local businesses are struggling to retain employees because of high cost of housing and emergency care providers and nursing staff cannot afford anything in Richmond and this is despite a boom in building in the city. The rental vacancy rate in Richmond has been consistently under 1%.

A question you should be asking is whether what will be built in the centre of this city through the sears redevelopment will help those entering the housing market with local incomes afford anything or will it just pave way for more speculation. Single bedroom homes have a limited use as homes for living and are better suited as speculation specials and homes for tourists and other part time residents who do not live in Richmond for most of the year or as second or third home for local speculators who would like to see their money grow fast through local real estate, much faster than it would grow in the bank or through earning a salary at a local job.

You should be using every tool in your tool belt to build affordability and what is currently proposed under this proposal falls far short of that goal. The rental only zoning is one such tool you have at your disposal and you should at least be asking the developer to build 25% of the inventory it builds as market rental homes and the size of at least a 65-70% of these homes should be 2-bedroom homes: A size that would work much better (than single bedroom homes) to provide rental homes for young families and downsizing seniors. The city should also consider putting a policy in place for rent to own mechanisms to come into effect once the vacancy rates in the city are consistently at a healthier level (between 3-4%)

In essence unless you view the sears re-development and its density as an opportunity for Richmond to accommodate local housing needs, this would be a huge opportunity lost for building more rental housing and a greater percentage of affordability in the city. Other than the Landsdowne re-development, there are not too many other developments of this scale that Richmond is going to be building in the near future, so this very much sets a precedent for all other developments.

Now that I have mentioned the issue of precedents, I'd like to bring up a related constraint that the city has offered for not asking more than 5% affordable housing contribution from this development. The city has said that since this area was pre-zoned for density in 1980's it cannot apply the new ask of 10% under its current updated policy. I'd like to remind the mayor and council that in the past it has changed zoning constraints that are in place at the request of the developer. We saw this happen earlier in the year for ONNI getting its request to change the mixed maritime use zoning constraint under which it had build its Steveston waterfront property. I think the city could consider a zoning/OCP change to allow for 10% affordable housing requirement as a change brought in for public interest to build greater affordability through the city center densification.

After all the discussion around affordability in the recently concluded municipal campaign you should be doing much more to make sure that you use every tool in your tool belt to build affordability in the city. However, it is not a problem that you will be able to fix by just adding supply. You will need to build the right kind of supply. You will also need to plug the hole of speculation in real estate by designing features that make it harder for people to buy homes for parking and growing wealth, penalizing empty homes and encouraging long term rentals over short term rentals.

The affordable housing that is being built under this proposal should not be confined into two separate buildings but should be spread through out the development. Separating housing into different areas based on income levels of the owners is not a good strategy for building a vibrant and diverse city and tends to stigmatize affordable housing developments.

I would like to bring up the issue of planning for a city centre school as the city centre gets re-developed. Please note that I am not suggesting that this development alone foot the bill for a city center school but that plans for a city centre school should very much be part of the discussion and proposals for each of the city centre developments. Without concrete plans for a city centre school we cannot build livable density unless the city is building this density for the express purpose of housing speculation.

My final mention is to address a comment raised in the Council chamber on November 19<sup>th</sup> , 2018 that all these asks for including a much greater percentage of rental housing and affordable housing is like "moving the goal post" in a game and this would be very disheartening and unfair for the developer.

I think as each of you tries to answer this question, a pertinent question to ask might be what game we are playing in the city and what is our goal post?

If the game we are playing is for a select few to get richer through housing speculation; the city can comfortably disregard all the changes in the current proposal that I and other members of the public have asked for. However, if the goal is to bring more affordability in the city though building density at city centre then council must consider incorporating these requests for changes to the current development proposal seriously. These changes will make it much more probable for people with local incomes to have a fighting chance to live in Richmond rather than be displaced. If the game the city is playing is building homes/communities to live in (rather than speculate) , then development and business interests will continue to prosper because the city will stay vibrant and thriving not just for tourists but for those who live and work here.

Sincerely,

Niti Sharma