

Richmond City Council

January 15, 2018

CONSENT AGENDA ITEM 16: DRAFT AFFORDABLE HOUSING STRATEGY 2017-2027

(File Ref. No. 08-4057-01) (REDMS No. 5657869 v. 13)

My name is Vincent Chiu and I live at 4471 Westminster Highway, Richmond. I am here this evening on behalf of the Richmond Poverty Response Committee (PRC). As chair of our housing Task Force, I can say the PRC has some concerns over omissions in the Affordable Housing Strategy update report. Therefore I would like to speak to item 16, The Draft Affordable Housing Strategy.

A number of our member organizations as well as individuals have talked to us about the increasing number of Richmond demo-victions. We describe these as rent eviction notices where rental homes are being sold for redevelopment. It mostly happens in older, well-established neighbourhoods with single-family homes. Each house usually houses either one owner and one renter or two to three renters, many of them with families. In addition, in the City's drive to densify neighbourhoods, one Land Assembly will eat up three, four or five of these homes in one fell swoop. That could mean 10 or more rental accommodations lost all at once.

We in the PRC do not see that these types of affordable rentals are being accounted for in the numbers used for updating the Affordable Housing Strategy. This rental housing is affordable for ordinary working people. Housing losses in this area affect the average Richmond income earner who makes \$50,000 per year and rents. If 'affordable' truly means 30% that income, then affordable housing should not cost more than \$15,000 per year or \$1250 per month and this is definitely below-market. Where do you find this kind of below-market rental housing except in the older neighbourhoods?

If the City is serious about preserving as well as building rental accommodation, this type of affordable housing should be considered in the Affordable Housing Strategy.

The PRC proposes that the City account for the losses in affordable rental accommodations as a result of rezoning and densifying policies. Things to consider would be:

1. Comparing the record of all legal secondary suite addresses with all rezoning and rebuilding applications,
2. Recording the losses of affordable rental accommodation and inserting the losses into a revised affordable housing strategy
3. Asking each rezoning application:
 - Was this house rented out in the past year?
 - If so, how many families or individuals did it house?
 - How many unrelated people did it house?
 - Will a rental unit be built on this site?
 - If so, will the rent be below-market?

Thank you,

Vincent Chiu