

Member of Planning Committee:

My name is Lawrence Lim and I lived at 7580 Lombard Road. I am also the President of the newly formed Richmond-based company called Mayfair Commercial Real Estate Advisors, whose office is located in the Three West Centre.

I would like to thank the City Staff for their diligent effort in preparing the CCAP. The conceptual plan was adopted in 2007 and finally we have the revised CCAP that has just been presented. It is indeed a major undertaking and the City Staff has done a marvellous job in the formulation of CCAP. I am proud of my participation through the public hearing process and my involvement with UDI Liaison Committee in watching the evolution of the CCAP. Like the City Staff, I am especially impressed with their long-term vision of Richmond where we can work, live and play.

However, there are two major issues that I would like to bring to the attention of the Planning Committee today in the revised CCAP that is of special concern to many property owners in the Downtown Richmond Area.

The two major issues I am referring to involved properties that are outside of the 200 metre radius from the Skytrain Station or proposed Village Centre (properties along Minoru Blvd, Alderbridge Way, Elmbridge Way). The revised CCAP is recommending that:

- (a) Future Development be restricted to a maximum of 2.0 FAR and there will be no bonus density of any kind for non-residential development.
- (b) For those areas affected, there will also be a height restriction of 35 metre to 25 metre depending on the location of the site, instead of the 45 metre for other high-rise developments in the City.

Mayfair Commercial has spoken to a number of property owners who own properties in those areas. These property owners are faced with major property tax increases that they have to pay by July 2nd based on BC assessments which relied on a recent sale that was purchased on speculation based on a 3 times density.

I would like to highlight a number of key points as to why the above recommendation should be reconsidered and I will also make a recommendation to resolve this issue:

1. If you take a bird-eye view of Downtown Richmond west of No. 3 Road and note existing developments and approved development; Ocean Walk on Elmbridge and Alderbridge; The Flo Project and Lotus Project in the same neighbourhood and moving to the still unnamed major development on the former Lansdowne Pontiac car dealership, all these projects were approved for a 3.0 FAR density for residential development. It is therefore, not unreasonable to assume that all the undeveloped areas surrounded by these few projects will also obtain a high-density development of 3.0 FAR.

The conceptual CCAP also showed those areas as T-5 with density from 2.0 FAR to 3.0 FAR. Under the revised CCAP, T-5 is now restricted to a maximum of 2.0 FAR.

I can accept that due to the Noise Management Agreement with YVR that was signed in 2002 and the limited capacity as projected by City Staff will make it unreasonable for this area to support 3.0 FAR density for residential development, but I do not comprehend the reason behind the proposal to eliminate the non-residential 1.0 FAR.

There was already two major precedents on 2 FAR residential and 1.0 FAR non-Residential in Downtown Richmond. The Suntec City Project on No. 3 Road by Pinnacle International and the Richmond Wall Centre Project by Wall Financial, which was based on 2.0 FAR residential and 1.0 FAR for non-residential.

By eliminating the 1.0 FAR non-residential density, property values in the affected area has technically dropped by 1/3. We are not talking about land speculators who bought in the last few years. We are talking about long time property owners who have been dutifully paying their property taxes for decades and hoping to benefit from the years of contribution towards the municipal treasury.

The CCAP calls for the future of Richmond to be a place to live, work and play.

If there is a viable non-residential project is proposed on those property beyond the 200 metre, the revised CCAP will not be supporting such a development, unless it is taken from the residential 2.0 FAR. Residential density are precious commodity and developers will not want to give up their residential density to build non-residential which has a lower market value.

However, non-residential developments are job-creators. They can be retail, hotel, Office, service industries, etc. They represent jobs. I would like the Planning Committee to consider this – why should we discourage such development in our City Centre ? If you want Richmond to be a place to live, work and play, let us provide the work element in the CCAP. Staff may say that they will provide the non-residential development within 200 metres of skytrain station, but if are no development sites in those areas, are we going to wave goodbye to jobs in Downtown Richmond ?

If the City was to apply the arbitrary 200 metre radius, most of the popular hotels along Westminster Highway would not have been build ! Just think of the number of jobs that those hotels created.

My recommendation

The solution to this is very simple. For those affected area, the CCAP should place a limit of 2.0 FAR for residential development, but to provide the ability to award up to 1.0 FAR if the non-residential development is justified. Developers will not build any non-residential development if there is no demand for it. If there is a demand, there will be jobs in those developments. If there are no demand, the developer will stick to the 2.0 FAR residential and the City would have not made any compromise.

2. I am not sure about you, but short and fat do not usually end up in the winner's podium in any beauty contest, male or female. By restricting the building height of those areas, you are going to get short and fat buildings, with little view corridors.

In Richmond we have a height limit of 45 metres, if we are restricting the density, the height should not be tampered with. I do not accept that the imaginary wave approach as proposed by the revised CCAP will create a better looking city Skyline. In fact, it will be an ugly short and fat skyline. Let us take advantage of the 45 metre limit and forget about short and fat. Let the street walkers and cyclist see some of the views instead of the fat buildings in our Downtown.