

MayorandCouncillors

To Public Hearing
Date: Dec 15, 2003
Item # 5A
Re: Bylaw 7611
McLennan South
Sub-Area Plan

From: web1@city.richmond.bc.ca
 Sent: December 8, 2003 11:04 AM
 To: MayorandCouncillors
 Subject: same - bylaw OCP 7611

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 Address: 7680 Ash St
 SubjectProperty_Bylaw: same - bylaw OCP 7611

Comments:

Dec 08th 2003

Re: Public Hearing McLennan South Lot Size

We would like to write in support of the zoning as recommended by Staff for the McLennan South neighborhood. This recommendation would see R1/B type zoning for the remaining single-family area.

As property owners in this area, we support this zoning, as we feel that it provides the highest potential for actually seeing some development and improvement in the area.

It appears that there are four primary groups of property holders in the area

- Absentee property owners who are holding for investment purposes. This group would no doubt prefer to see the entire area zoned multi-family. This option is not currently on the table, however there are concerns these investors may choose to hang on and wait out the current owner occupied properties. Many of the investment properties are in an evident state of disrepair. As these properties continue to decline the livability of the neighborhood declines with them, making this a genuine concern. Since high density development would be in keeping with the overall Town Centre OCP and given the apparent popularity of developments along Heather Street and in McLennan North, it is understandable why some developers might feel it is only a matter of time.
- The City, who are holding properties in the future park area. While the City properties are somewhat better maintained than other rental properties, the month-to-month nature of the rentals does pose some problems.
- Owner occupiers who favour smaller R1/B lots
- Owner-occupiers who favour larger lots or no change at all.

This last group tends to be the ones who champion the area's unique country atmosphere and "traditional" nature. There is no question that the area retains some unique character, however marijuana grow ops have long since replaced blueberries as the crop of choice.

Some owners would like to retain their large front lot while selling off the "backlands". This desire misses two points - the backlands will never be developed unless it is economical to do so; and an R1/B zoning precludes no one from retaining their larger lot if they choose to do so.

We have recently been doing a "reality check" as we walk the neighborhood, comparing what might happen under the two zonings under consideration. While it is clear that R1/B will result in the creation of many 40-foot lots, it is also clear that it will not be feasible to pull down and redevelop newer or well-maintained older houses. While there are some which could go either way it is clear on a walk through as to which are slated for re-development and which will stay as larger frontage lots. There will be a good mix of lot sizes along Bridge and Ash, even without the possibility that there may very well be opportunities to redevelop larger frontage lots in order to allow larger square footage houses. The only lot currently under active building in the area is in fact a large frontage lot with a large house being built.

In summary we support staff's recommendation on lot size.

We would also like to comment on Staff's recommendation to create a "special zoning district". We strongly do not support this initiative. Please avoid this recommendation at all costs! A cynic might see this as staff payback for the neighborhood's clear rejection of the back lane concept so favoured by City planners. Cynicism aside, the proposed planning restrictions have the same effect as lanes, which is to limit and compromise the backyards available for our enjoyment. It is not clear what the covenant on driveways means, however reports show that "shared driveways" are one of the largest planning-introduced sources of neighbor-to-neighbor conflict. Forcing an unsaleable view of an idealized "streetscape" will do nothing to encourage the single-family redevelopment that this neighborhood needs. It will do everything to encourage the continued decline of many properties and worsen the living environment. It appears that these "heritage-concept" design principles are a response to the requests that the character of the neighborhood be somehow retained. If so then the desires of the residents are being misinterpreted. Put simply, the desire is to retain as large a backyard as possible, not to contribute to increased setbacks and unrealistic design guidelines. Garage doors apparently offend the aesthetic sensibilities of the planning staff, however this is not an aversion shared by the vast majority of homeowners in Richmond.

We would note that staff has now determined that incentives are not required to support development along LeChow and Turnill streets. This may be so; however, we would not be opposed to incentives for these side streets if actual experience shows this not to be the case.

Respectfully submitted

James and Linda Watson
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