

myPG and Developer Meeting of March 30, 2010

Minutes of the myPG Goals and Actions Review Meeting with Developers, held in the 2nd Floor Conference Room of City Hall, 1100 Patricia Boulevard, Prince George, B.C., on Tuesday, March 30, 2010 at 1:00 p.m.

COMMENCEMENT

The meeting commenced at 1:07 pm.

1. INTRODUCTIONS

Introductions were given by each person in attendance.

2. BRIEF OVERVIEW OF SUSTAINABILITY PLANNING

Mr. **Fercho** provided a brief powerpoint presentation on the goals of sustainability planning as well as how and why the Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (myPG) is unfolding for Prince George.

3. BRIEF OVERVIEW OF AN OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN

Mr. **Milburn** provided a brief powerpoint presentation on what the difference is between an Official Community Plan (OCP) and a sustainability plan. An explanation was also provided on the purpose of an OCP. The OCP for Prince George will become open for consultation by the public this summer.

4. OPEN DISCUSSION

The following is a list of paraphrased comments that were shared between the meeting attendees:

It is important that the City and land developers communicate as the OCP is revised because the developers have made significant investments in the community through development and infrastructure.

Terms and discussion around “zoning moratoriums”, “restrictions on zoning”, and “decreasing areas for development” are causing concern among some developers because they have made investment decisions and commitments based on existing neighbourhood plans.

Neighbourhood plans developed since 2001 should be upheld and respected because of investments such as oversized infrastructure that are built in line with the neighbourhood plans. Developers have rezoned to meet the existing OCP and make decisions based on long-term investments. Changing the OCP drastically may cause developers to leave Prince George because of a lack of trust.

The OCP lot lines currently do not follow topographical features, which has caused some service provision challenges, and this is an area that could be addressed through the revisions to the

OCP.

Some developers understand the desire for downtown revitalization and the desire to develop the downtown core, but there is also a market demand for developing property outside of the downtown core.

Developers will build in response to market demands, and market demands are based not only on the affordability for the consumer but also on a fulfilling various consumer demands ranging from condominiums and townhomes to small single level homes for “empty nesters” as well as spacious homes on larger lots to accommodate the needs of growing young families, including room for all their “toys” [recreational equipment]

There is caution against the City becoming too restrictive in dictating where homes should be built.

The City is advised to form partnerships with the development community based on trust and fulfilled commitments. If the City and developers were able to form a partnership around downtown development, cost of development would need to be addressed to create affordable housing.

Perhaps there can be incentives for developers to invest in downtown or specific areas of development.

The university is viewed as a magnet for development and an opportunity to develop various types of housing.

Development takes time and reflects changing demands, demographics, and ways of life. The population cannot be forced into a specific type of housing or an area of development. It was noted that demographics are changing and the demand for housing types is changing. Request that changes in development have time to evolve, rather than be forced.

The Prince George market is primarily based on single family lots and some developers focus on this type of development. Prince George residents tend to have more “toys” than lower mainland residents. Small lots are preferred in the lower mainland, in Prince George there is some market demand for room to park toys (trailers, campers, ATVs, snowmobiles, etc) that is not offered by the smaller lots.

Some developers recognize the gradual change and increasing demand for sustainable projects, such as LEED projects, e.g. LEED neighborhood.

If the downtown core is going to be revitalized, people need a reason to move to the downtown core rather than building housing and hoping people will move to the downtown core.

From a real estate perspective, the Hart Highway and College Heights have developed due to the attraction to those types of communities. UNBC has also contributed to the development of College Heights. There is still demand in areas such as the Hart Highway and College Heights because people still want to live in those areas.

It is possible for some housing developments to start in the downtown core to see if people will move downtown, but the market will ultimately drive housing starts.

There is continued support to develop along the lines of the existing neighbourhood plans.

Air quality is an issue that keeps people from moving to the downtown core.

Development has been slower than anticipated in Prince George.

There is a demand for a mix of housing in Prince George. There seems to be a trend and demand in Prince George for larger lots and larger housing as well as some demand for condos and smaller houses.

The development community is seeking certainty from the City, as the move forward on developments and investments as many developers are financed through banks who require a degree of certainty and stability.

Discussion commenced regarding the City's opinion on how much change is expected through the OCP review process and whether the existing neighbourhood plans will remain the same. The City's opinion will be determined by the public review process and a vote of Council. This dialogue is one of many, and is part of the myPG Goals and Actions review process, the beginning of the OCP process. Developers are important stakeholders in how the OCP process moves forward and will continue to be involved.

The City understands that the goal of developers are to contribute positively to a community and make money. The City is asking the developers for innovative and effective ways to meet the goals the community voiced through the myPG process.

Development profit is sometimes in phases 2 and 3 of a development, the first phase is often not profitable with the infrastructure required to prepared for future phases.

There are some sustainable neighbourhood plans already being planned, which will be more people oriented rather than automobile oriented. Interest was expressed in developing some pilot projects to see if there are new ideas that will work for the City and developers.

Mutual trust needs to be maintained between developers and the City (as the authorizing body) to form a strong partnership for community development.

The current OCP is based on a much higher growth rate that Prince George has experienced. There will likely be changes that reflect the changed expectations in growth rate. The opinion of the development community is being sought to identify opportunities and areas of growth.

Some developers identify the slow but steady growth of Prince George as an asset, and now developers and the City can focus on tightening up development. If the City wants to avoid sprawl, it could consider limiting development by carefully looking at the existing urban boundary and removing areas that are unserviceable due to topography or excessive infrastructure expansion. There are many areas that are currently designated urban that could be removed under these criteria.

There was a desire for another meeting to be held between the City and this group of developers as the OCP is taking shape through the public review process.

ADJOURNMENT:

Hearing no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 2:48 pm.