

Purpose: To present details of the proposed Centre Plan Phase 1 model to regulating development in 11 Regional Centre corridors intended for densification and to test economic feasibility of the model.

The meeting sought to receive general feedback on the model from the architecture and development community, but NOT to discuss specific sites and development proposals.

Present:

HRM Staff: Austin French, Andy Fillmore, Susan Corser, Luc Ouellett, Richard Harvey, Andrew Faulkner, Brandon Silver

Development representatives: Cesar Saleh, Danny Chedrawe, Joe Metlege, Louie Lawen, Ross Cantwell, Peter Polley, Joseph Daniel - UDI rep, Tony Metledge, Joe Ramia

Architects: Dan Goodspeed, Eugene Pieczonka, Leah Gillis, Tom Emodi

Presentation

Andy Fillmore welcome all participants, described the purpose of the meeting and ground rules for discussion (i.e comments on the model are welcome but not those on specific development proposals)

Andy described the Centre Plan Phase 1 model, why it is needed, why it will be beneficial and what tools are proposed. Key comments from the discussion are listed below. Comments by staff are indicated in green.

Discussion

- Tower separation R3 = 50' proposed 23m (but has 40° height and 80° length)
- Change of grade, building face and setback on through lots reduces building height
- Height is no different between 8-10 storey (6-12?)
- Needs more height
- Not all commercial at grade, perhaps other treatments
- Gottingen – commercial at grade hard to rent poor return
- Commercial needs subsidizing, as does affordable housing, need high return use, commercial is cheap on Gottingen Street
- Can't tell mass above street wall, so why limit so much?

- Update/review view planes. Bottom of Gottingen
- Monolithic design if lots can't be developed
- Pro development, check balances good
- Cookie cutter
- Variable setback above street wall?
- Practical issues with height – Building Code impacts
- To meet time line need simple box
- 6-12-18 storey 3 types of city buildings
- Allow up to 20% penetration of required setbacks 45 degree
- Remove opportunity sites – every site is opportunity
- Allow 3 heights – street wall height as shown is good
- Angle is very expensive – suggest one 45 degree setback abutting residential
- Want total flexibility
- Heights seem to be driven by what neighbourhood can tolerate NOT good streets (Quinpool)
- Alternating height makes poor streets
- Use storeys instead of height
- Seem to be short corners and tall middle which is odd like Young & Robie/Almond & Robie
- Performance standards on height is more important than fixing height
- Set percent of day with sun
- Agrees that street wall design is more important than height
- General support for performance standards
- Need parking – cash-in-lieu
- Down loading parking fees to developers is not good
- Parking or transportation strategy is municipal responsibility

Staff

- Separation of towers mitigates mass development and loss of sunlight
- Will explore storeys only without maximum height requirement
- Residential vs. commercial – different storey height
- Flexibility in ground floor use to allow residential now – i.e. no 4.5 m ground storey height

Staff

- Maintain 4.5m ground but flexible other wise
- 20% relax in Required side/front/rear and setbacks.

- Discussion on April meeting
- Not economical to build a 7 storey 6/12/10+
- Storeys NOT height to encourage higher ceilings
- Parking: cash-in-lieu
- Rooftop green is too expensive
- Cash in lieu of landscaping to local parks? Optional
- Greening is valuable – adds to urban canopy on step backs – roof is not valuable
Therefore do not require greening of High and Tower buildings.
- CMHC definitions of Affordable Housing
- Small “a”- workforce housing; Big “A” is Provincial jurisdiction.
- Medium – incomes
- Small “a” vs. Big “A”
- Too easy to build outside core – bonusing complicates
- Min height then bonus to max is a problem because it is a further disincentive to build
- Add NGO to bonus i.e. , provision of community space as bonus incentive
- Don't forget commercial affordability/NGO affordability
- Fees reduction downtown i.e. construction, taxes and services
- Can Affordable Housing (AH) be a Centre Plan issue and not addressed directly in Phase I?
- Midrise controls (45 degree over rear wall) shrink buildings dramatically
- How about straight up at rear set back
- Tower sites don't need to crowd street
- Review average grade definition
- Street wall is off street – not over grade
- 20' rear is dead space – perhaps 100% coverage as per existing regulations
- Generic rules have problem in application
- Angle controls will stop many developers
- Not economically feasible

Staff

- Flexibility by lot size? Traditional
 - Only designing 6" skin when lot is so prescriptive
 - Consensus that storeys is a better height
 - Height should be tied to lot size
 - Spring Garden road at Robie street height is prohibitive
 - Density bonus can be used for flexibility
 - Parking reduction may be good (cash-in-lieu)
 - What about projects in the works? Do we have to wait for October?
 - Post bonus height – mix of must and may
 - Pre bonus height set and post bonus to storeys
 - Sustainability (bonusing) is worth something
 - Relax height requirements in certain conditions – we are way behind the rest of the world
 - Implementation/process is very important site plan/density bonus can complicate and lengthen process – too much time needed by staff to process.

Staff

- 1. Transitioning is very important
- 2. Affordable – perhaps it is a simple 5%? Not tied to bonusing
 - Affordable needs a realistic/economic definition
 - That would work better because province's definition is 60% or 80% of market rent.
 - Problem is average rent is across the board without consideration of building age etc.
 - Borrowing is cheaper than subsidy

Staff

- We can't enforce affordability levels even if he wanted to
 - Affordable housing is cost recovered from other units
 - Council needs to be advised that things have changed – need to open up
 - Remove 45 degree rear on small lots
 - Performance is more important than transition on these small lots – privacy/sun/scale
 - Land assembly pushes costs way up so design needs to encourage return