

THE CORPORATION OF THE DISTRICT OF BURNABY

HOUSING COMMITTEE

HIS WORSHIP, THE MAYOR
AND MEMBERS OF COUNCIL

Madam/Gentlemen:

REPORT OF THE HOUSING COMMITTEE

RE: RESIDENTIAL COMPACTION REVIEW - PROGRESS REPORT

RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT this report be received for information purposes.

REPORT

The Housing Committee, on 1982 July 14, requested responses from the Planning and Building Inspection Department on a number of points that were raised at the meeting as a part of a progress report on the Residential Compaction study. These included:

- a) The legality of establishing a Committee of Council to review "hardship cases" in connection with illegal suites as is done in Vancouver.
- b) That current densities governing townhouse developments be reviewed in order to assess their suitability and to examine the desirability of the densification of this housing type.
- c) That consideration be given to the feasibility of including facilities for the handicapped within compact forms of residential development.

These items are followed in the report by an update on the status of the Residential Compaction study.

A. REVIEW OF HARSHIP POLICIES IN VANCOUVER:

There are presently an estimated 16,000 illegal suites in Vancouver. A further 1,000 or so "accessory suites" have been developed as the result of "hardship". These include units for parents and grandparents, students, physically handicapped and low income persons.

On 1977, May 10, the Vancouver Council adopted a series of guidelines governing hardship cases in accessory suites. Prior to this, there were no established policies for such cases which, over the years, resulted in considerable numbers of people taking advantage of the situation for developing additional suites that were, in fact, illegal and not due to any form of hardship.

Under the 1977 guidelines, applications are made for a special permit for additional suites in hardship cases. These are referred to a committee which makes recommendations to Council. Each application is considered on its own merits and once approved must be renewed annually. In order to attain

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approval, the suite must comply with the necessary building, plumbing and electrical regulations. The qualifications for hardship include such items as an income qualification, unemployment, a physical handicap, a health problem, over 60 years of age, etc. The guidelines also make provision for appeals to be made to the Community Services Committee of Council which has the final authority to either approve or reject an application.

Once a hardship suite is no longer occupied by the original tenant, the dwelling should be returned to its normal single family status. However, because of the time-lag between approving an application and the follow-up inspection (usually 6 months), some of the units change hands, and are occupied by persons who do not meet the hardship provisions. Normally, their removal would be ordered, but due to the current housing situation, such units are generally permitted to continue to operate - "for the time being".

We have obtained the opinion of the Municipal Solicitor with respect to the legality of the Vancouver hardship policies and their possible applicability to Burnaby. In his response, the Solicitor indicated that there are no provisions in the Municipal Act that would allow for similar regulations to be developed in this municipality. Further, the Vancouver regulations are considered to be discriminatory, in that only suites occupied by persons who satisfy a hardship committee are permitted. All others remain illegal.

B. REVIEW OF TOWNHOUSE DEVELOPMENT DENSITIES:

Townhouses are included under the "higher density forms of family type housing" in the comparative tables that have been prepared for the Residential Compaction Review.

In other jurisdictions surveyed, allowable townhouse development densities range from a low of 8 units per acre in West Vancouver, through a fairly common moderate figure of 12 to 15 units per acre in New Westminster, Calgary and Bremerton, to higher levels of 17 units per acre in Edmonton (on a minimum development site area of 3.5 acres) and 25 units per acre in Vancouver at an F.A.R. of 0.75.

In Vancouver, townhousing is permitted as an outright use in apartment zones and as a "conditional use", subject to special Development Permit Board approval, in RS-2 (single-family) and two-family zoning districts. As shown in the comparative tables, there is a zoning category (RF6) in Edmonton which permits a maximum density of 32 units per acre. This is, however, a multiple family designation which also provides for standard type apartment developments at this density.

A number of townhousing projects have been developed in Burnaby over the last few years, including Greentree Village, Simon Fraser Hills, Villa Montecito, Burnaby 200, etc. The type of zoning is CD (Comprehensive Development) and the densities generally range between 10 and 12 units per acre, although in some projects higher densities have been attained. Among these are McInnis Place (16 units per acre) and Simon Fraser Village (17 units per acre).

The determination of maximum permissible densities for family oriented housing is subject to a number of considerations such as the extent and intensity of existing development, economic

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factors, the characteristics of the population to be housed, the availability of nearby amenities (parks, schools, shopping facilities), design standards, etc.

There is, however, a point beyond which overcrowding takes place and project maintenance becomes difficult. There is also a point where the identity of the individual family unit becomes completely lost. While the livability of this type of development can be maintained at a slightly higher intensity of use, through careful design, site densities should not exceed those possible under the RM1 (garden apartment) category (16 to 20 units per acre), which could be developed under CD zoning based upon RM1 guidelines. In general, however, densities in the 10 to 15 units per acre range are considered most appropriate for family oriented townhousing.

C. HANDICAPPED FACILITIES IN HOUSING UNITS:

One of the socio-economic issues to be pursued by the Planning & Building Inspection Department in the coming year is to assess the requirements of special needs households in the municipality. Certain background material has been gathered by a student during the summer of 1981. Further work is in progress.

The study will define special needs groups in the municipality, determine housing and service requirements for each group, inventory existing housing and propose directions for the generation of policies. A second part of the study will propose an implementation strategy for carrying out these policies. It is the intent that special needs housing be integrated into established neighbourhoods, wherever possible, in close relationship with the Residential Neighbourhood Environment Study.

It should also be mentioned, in this regard, that the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP) contains a provision which permits the modification of housing units anywhere in the municipality, subject to RRAP guidelines and the Burnaby Building Bylaw regulations, to meet the special housing needs of the handicapped and disabled.

D. STATUS UPDATE - RESIDENTIAL COMPACTION REVIEW

The assessment of residential compaction techniques and alternatives in the Residential Compaction Review is directly related to the Residential Neighbourhood Environment Study. This is a phased study for which parts I and II, neighbourhood Profiles and Resident Opinion Survey, are complete. Progress in the development of the next phase of the study, which involved the initial neighbourhood designations for increased housing opportunities and for preservation and enhancement, has been slowed by other work demands (i.e. data base for compaction review study, etc.), and is unlikely to be completed before November or December. This will be followed, in early 1983, by part III of the study which includes the preparation of:

- a) general development criteria which identify the qualities to be preserved in areas where increased housing opportunities are to be introduced.
- b) design guidelines and illustrative examples of various forms of infill housing suited to the typical neighbourhood situations in Burnaby which accommodate, where possible, a range of income groups reflective of the area into which they are to be introduced.

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- c) statements of the potential capacity of each neighbourhood designated to receive increased housing opportunity with regard to its ability to absorb additional housing units, of certain types, without detracting from the overall livability of the neighbourhood.

The information which has been compiled in the Residential Compaction Review will provide background material for the implementation of item b) above.

Certain densification measures are already available for infill purposes under the existing Zoning Bylaw regulations. These include:

- (1) The permitting of an additional dwelling unit in single family dwellings constructed prior to 1971 January 01 in the R4 and R5 Districts. The minimum required lot area standards for such conversions are 5400 square feet and 7200 square feet in R5 and R4 Districts respectively.
- (2) The R9 District which provides for the development of compact single family dwellings on smaller than standard lots (8.7 to 9.7 units per acre).
- (3) The R6 District designed for the accommodation of row house dwellings on individual lots at densities of approximately 13 units pr acre.
- (4) The R8 District for group housing projects at densities ranging from 3.5 to 9.5 units per acre. This varies in accordance with the densities which prevail in the area in which the development is located.
- (5) The Comprehensive Development (CD) District, which is the category commonly employed in the development of higher density family oriented housing projects (i.e. Zero lot line, cluster, town and group housing). Although densities generally range from 10 to 12 units per acre, this particular designation has sufficient flexibility to allow for higher densities a noted earlier in the report.

It is considered that some changes will be required in the regulations to broaden the range of housing types available to the various population groups in the municipality. Where necessary, such changes will involve revisions to certain of the existing standards, as well as the introduction of new regulations.

There are a number of possibilities for increasing housing opportunities which warrant further investigation, including:

- (1) Extending the present deadline for single family dwellings eligible to be converted to two-family occupancy in the R4 and R5 Districts (the present cut-off date is 1981 January 01).
- (2) Permitting legal "accessory suites" in single family dwellings in mature residential districts where the existing housing stock is clearly underutilized.
- (3) Reducing lot area and setback requirements in older residential neighbourhoods where existing lots are generally small.

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- (4) Allowing for a wider range of housing types to locate in residential districts, providing that prevailing densities are maintained (i.e. zero lot line, cluster, townhousing, etc.).
- (5) The broadening of the R6 (Row Housing) District regulations to increase their flexibility by permitting a grouping of units on a single site (at present each unit must occupy a separate lot).
- (6) A moderate increase in allowable densities in the R8 (Group Housing) District to encourage development under this zoning category (the present densities are the same as those which prevail in the district in which a group housing site is to be located).
- (7) Developing a fourplex zoning district designation for transitional locations between apartment areas and low density residential districts.
- (8) Allowing for the internal division of larger houses into units in transitional areas.

Potential problems which could result from the implementation of many of the foregoing possibilities include increased parking and traffic generation, disruption of aesthetic continuity and scale of development, as well as changes in traditional values in residential neighbourhoods. All these factors will have to be carefully weighed in assessing the suitability of various areas for densification.

The actual application of the various infill and densification measures will be identified on an area specific basis in the Residential Neighbourhood Environment Study. The establishment of certain special zoning designations may, therefore, be required in order to allow for their introduction into some areas and their exclusion from others (i.e. cases where the existing zoning is the same, but the suitability for compaction may differ). This could probably be achieved through the addition of appropriate sub-categories where additional uses and/or conditions would apply, such as the C6a and M7A classifications.

Respectfully submitted,

Alderman V.V. Stusiak
Chairman

Alderman D.P. Drummond
Member

Alderman A.H. Emmott
Member

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