

# TOWN OF SIDNEY



## ADVISORY PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

October 5, 2021

Meeting held in Council Chambers

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### **PRESENT:**

Vice Chairperson: Clarence Bolt

Members: Douglas Watt, Richard Novek, Denny Gelinis, John Crowhurst, Lucina Baryluk, Bernadine van der Meer

Council Liaison: Councillor Chad Rintoul

Staff: Alison Verhagen, Senior Manager of Current Planning  
Corey Newcomb, Senior Manager of Long Term Planning  
Kelly Albuca, Development & Administrative Coordinator

Absent: Kelly Bull-Tomer, Andrew Tidman

### 1. **CALL TO ORDER:**

The Chair called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

### 2. **ADOPTION OF AGENDA:**

Moved by D. Watt, seconded by R. Novek that the Agenda be adopted as circulated.

**CARRIED**

### 3. **ADOPTION OF MINUTES:**

Add bullet point to "Policy Direction – Downtown Density and Building Scale: change wording in Policy Direction from "Second Street" to "First Street".

Moved by R. Novek, seconded by B. van der Meer that the Minutes of September 21, 2021 be adopted as amended.

**CARRIED**

### 3. OCP UPDATE PROJECT: PHASE 2 SUMMARY & KEY DIRECTIONS REPORT

The following notes include comments brought forward from the APC September 21, 2021 meeting as the discussion was to be continued:

#### A. Policy Direction – Downtown Density and Building Scale

*Policy Direction: Maintain the half blocks north and south of Beacon Avenue between Second Street and half a block past Fifth Street by:*

- *Limiting density and building heights to a maximum of three storeys, and*
- *Establishing design guidelines for fine-grained storefronts and use of natural materials (e.g. wood, brick)*

The Commission discussed the following aspects:

- Current step back requirements are for buildings of four to five storeys; step backs for buildings of over two stories on Beacon Avenue would make more sense. Staff indicated that these are currently in the Downtown Local Area Plan (part of the OCP) and are reviewed and revised going forward.
- Step backs are difficult to design and considered challenging for developers trying to balance construction costs and increasing land costs.
- Restricting building heights to one or two storeys effectively “freezes” any future redevelopment for those buildings as development becomes uneconomical. Staff noted that the OCP will attempt to create a balance between realistic redevelopment opportunities and the community desire for a lower scale of development along Beacon Avenue.
- “Fine grained” building frontages would be the kind seen currently on Beacon Avenue; smaller storefront windows with materials such as brick or wood creating a more traditional main street look rather than a modern steel/glass look.
- The designated blocks be stated as “between First Street” rather than “between Second Street”.

*Policy Direction: Actively pursue opportunities for improved public space in downtown Sidney, including a public square, a “pedestrian priority” street design for Beacon Avenue and opportunities around the waterfront.*

The Commission discussed the following aspects:

- Development Cost Charges (DCCs) and other associated fees paid by development should be revisited after the OCP has been updated to ensure that the town is achieving the desirable level of public amenities from new developments.
- Land in downtown Sidney is already quite expensive and the opportunity to obtain land to create a village square and improved pedestrian corridors will diminish as time and infill development proceeds.
- Downtown public plaza hasn’t been realized due to the high cost and small size of most downtown lots/developments, and the limited potential to carve off a piece of land large enough for such a project.

*Policy Direction: Designate “Downtown West” the area from Patricia Bay Highway to the half block before Fifth as Sidney’s “Regional Hub” with a limit of four storeys. A fifth storey may be permitted, only in this area, via discretionary approval (i.e. a rezoning or variance application) where a substantial public amenity is proposed (e.g. social housing, etc.). Regulate the form and character of the area through downtown guidelines, including step backs from streets (especially along Beacon Avenue) for buildings above four storeys and use of natural materials (e.g. wood, brick).*

The Commission discussed the following aspects:

- There is an opportunity for additional development away from downtown Sidney but this is complicated by the lack of Highway 17 access from all directions in the north end of Sidney. Likely area of future access improvements (e.g. Rapid Bus, highway overpass, etc.) is in the Beacon Avenue area.
- Consideration should be given to retaining some uses where the only appropriate place may be in the downtown area; i.e. gas stations or fast food restaurants. These uses will need land going forward as well. Staff responded that the existing uses of this type are likely to stay in place as long as there is market demand for them, but that they would still be permitted going forward.

## **B. Policy Direction – Ground-floor Residential in the Downtown**

*Policy Direction: Areas of Downtown outside of “Downtown West” and “Downtown East” will be limited in scale to 4 storeys, and density bonusing and other zoning regulations will be adjusted accordingly. Allowable uses on the ground floor will be expanded to include a limited number of ground-oriented residential units (e.g. townhomes) and live/work units located primarily around the periphery of downtown.*

The Commission discussed the following aspects:

- Retail in Sidney continues to thrive in spite of challenging conditions, supporting the need for commercial space at street level with possibility of integration of residential space in some areas.
- Appreciation that not every street in the downtown is entirely suited to commercial use; support for the Council resolution to allow some residential at street level where it makes sense.
- Relevant policy and design guidelines from the existing Downtown Local Area Plan will be incorporated within the new OCP.
- Definition for live/work space and townhouses/ground floor residential within the downtown core area to be better defined to better serve livability strategies.

## **C. Policy Direction – Expanding Uses in Sidney’s Residential Neighbourhoods**

*Policy Direction: Encourage garden suites, secondary suites, and duplexes to be built throughout Sidney’s residential neighbourhoods. Develop Form and Character guidelines that regulate safety and privacy and enhance neighbourhood character. Allow Townhomes and Multiplexes to be built in appropriate locations (e.g. near neighbourhood commercial modes), regulated by neighbourhood form and character guidelines.*

The Commission discussed the following aspects:

- Reference map indicating higher density housing will be developed by staff.
- Concern regarding interface and transition between housing types in terms of housing types, heights and density.
- Concern regarding what the current Zoning bylaw allows in terms of Multi-family density and heights.
- Members agreed they would like to see more careful “up zoning” in order to protect existing Single Family Dwelling areas.
- Dog friendly environments, livability of neighbourhoods and public realm is important.

#### **D. Policy Direction – Implementing a Cycling Network across Sidney**

*Policy Direction: As part of the upcoming Active Transportation Plan process, the Town will prioritize creating a cycling network across Town with all ages and abilities cycling facilities, to make it easier and more attractive for residents, visitors, and tourists to travel north-south and east-west in Sidney.*

The Commission discussed the following aspects:

- Commission supports this initiative.
- Pedestrian and accessible infrastructure should be made/created as well as cycling improvements. Broaden focus beyond just cycling, and consider bigger transportation system issues.
- Sidney West Side needs to be incorporated into the transportation accessibility plan.
- Facilities for secure bicycle storage at connection points to transit needs to be considered.
- Facilities for bike parking also be encouraged in the downtown core.

#### **E. Policy Direction – Environmental Restoration through Redevelopment**

*Policy Direction: Explore feasibility of encouraging redevelopment of older single-detached home properties adjacent to portions of Mermaid Creek, allowing for consolidated lots to increase density with medium-scale (i.e. 2-3 storey) town houses or apartments in order to:*

- *Increase setbacks of buildings from the creek beds, allowing for public open space,*
- *Assess feasibility of daylighting piped sections of the creek*
- *Improve storm water management,*
- *Increase tree and native species cover next to the creek beds, and*
- *Enhance public amenities (e.g. a Creekside trail or park) in an ecologically sensitive way and encourage community stewardship (e.g. through interpretive signage).*

The Commission discussed the following aspects:

- Members felt goal is well developed;
- Mermaid Creek close to Roberts Bay is where more impact can be made with the back-end/upstream of Mermaid creek taking longer to achieve and more future oriented.
- Members agreed that larger scale environmental restoration requires a long-term plan with a commitment over time.
- Tree removal due to development, as well as new plantings should be done with support of a professional arborist in order to maximize benefits and minimize long term issues that can arise from poor selection and placement.

#### **General comments on the OCP Key Directions Report**

The Commission discussed future planning regarding sea level rise and flood hazard. “Seaside character” was also discussed and what it means when used in the context of an OCP. Aspects include sense of community, scale of development, less so architectural vernacular.

The Commission discussed the level of consultation with WSÁNEĆ First Nations, expressing concern over impacts of OCP changes within the three municipalities. Members agreed that sensitivity toward reconciliation throughout the public engagement process was necessary. It was also noted that integrated community planning between adjacent municipalities, particularly in the boundary areas, is required for form and character continuity within those areas.

**Moved by D. Watt, seconded by D. Gelinas That the Advisory Planning Commission recommends to Council that the Key Directions Report be received for information with key points noted within the minutes to be considered by Council.**

**4. ITEMS DISPOSITION BY COUNCIL:**

Councillor Chad Rintoul gave an update on Council's decisions with regard to recent Development Applications.

**5. ADJOURNMENT:**

**Moved by R. Novek, seconded B. van der Meer that the meeting be adjourned.**

**CARRIED**

Meeting adjourned at 3:59 p.m.

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CHAIRPERSON