



June 9, 2008

To: Mayor and Council, City of Vancouver
Subject: Revised EcoDensity Charter and Actions

INTRODUCTION

The Vancouver City Planning Commission (VCPC) supported the general initiatives of the draft Eco-Density Charter at the special Council Meeting on February 26, 2008. Numerous comments were made with regard to suggested improvements. The VCPC now wishes to comment on the updated EcoDensity Charter and Actions of May 13, 2008.

SPECIFIC OBSERVATIONS

- We support the change in emphasis from density as a goal to density as a tool as an important improvement.
- We support the review of C-2 zones as a critical element of the plan.
- Linking density and walkability is an important component of the plan.
- Protecting space for 'jobs' as opposed to specific zoning typologies is an important distinction in the document.
- We support using density to enable more affordable housing, and the provision of other public benefits in the document.
- We support a study of Historic Precinct Height, with two primary considerations:
 1. Preservation of the historic fabric is paramount.
 2. Density and diversity of land use are critical to the continued vibrancy of these precincts and should be pursued in these areas in a sustainable and sensitive manner.

MOVING FORWARD

- The VCPC encourages the Planning Department to explore, through the EcoDensity initiative, increased density and height in C-2 corridors, especially in identified neighbourhood centres.
- Encourage the development of laneway housing, especially where there is neighbourhood acceptance and, more specifically, where there is better access to public transit and proximity to commercial zones and major amenities like parks.
- A population assessment should be part of the process moving forward, setting targets for 10-, 20- and 30-year horizons.

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- A significant portion, if not all, of the DCCs and CACs collected in a given community should be returned to that community for the provision of needed public benefits to meet the needs of the existing and new residents.
- Implementation in a timely manner is critical.
- Supporting existing land-use regulations and by-laws over EcoDensity principles when they are in conflict is a good short-term solution, but the larger issues of climate change and long-term sustainability should mean that EcoDensity initiatives and charter actions take precedence within a defined time frame.
- More emphasis should be placed on non-exclusivity of commercial and industrial zones as exclusively employment areas. Mixed-use, dense and walkable places should include employment wherever possible, including light and even, under certain specific terms, heavy industry. Over time, intense pressure on the land in Vancouver will necessitate this type of creativity with mixed-uses.
- Apply LEED[™] or an equivalent rating to all buildings, not just rezoned projects.
- Opportunities for the installation of district energy systems should be a priority in evaluating re-zonings and new developments.

CONCLUSION

If ever there was a time for us - as a City and as a community - to NOT be resistant to change, this is it.

As a society, we are facing the daunting reality of a changing climate and all the uncertainties and stresses that it may bring.

It is time to put aside self-serving short-term approaches in favour of a broader view that strengthens our city's resilience, and to do what is right for this community.

In this context EcoDensity, as recently revised, is a worthy first step.

THE VANCOUVER CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

The Vancouver City Planning Commission is a citizen advisory group created by Council. It is currently comprised of people representing a variety of disciplines including urban planning, community advocacy and government. Our role is to speak as citizens of Vancouver and Metro Vancouver, rather than from the perspective of our working lives.

Submitted on behalf of the Vancouver City Planning Commission,

Alan Boniface, Chair