



CITY OF VANCOUVER
POLICY REPORT
DEVELOPMENT AND BUILDING

Report Date: July 5, 2007
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TO: Vancouver City Council

FROM: General Manager of Engineering Services and Manager of Sustainability Group in consultation with the Director of Development Services, Director of Planning, and Director of Legal Services

SUBJECT: Vancouver Charter Amendment Proposal - Unbundling and Other Flexibility in Parking Requirements (the "Proposal")

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council endorse the submission to the Province of British Columbia of the Proposal to amend the Vancouver Charter so that the Province provides the authority to the City to enact by-laws to:

- (a) Regulate the number of off-street parking spaces required for a development based on ecological sustainability considerations;
- (b) Relax minimum off-street parking requirements required for a development based on ecological sustainability considerations;
- (c) Relax minimum off-street parking spaces in an existing development based on demonstrated surplus of off-street parking spaces; and
- (d) Require sellers and landlords to unbundle off-street parking by selling or renting strata units in new developments separately from the sale, rental, or licensing of off-street parking spaces within the development or off the property, including separation of price.

GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The General Manager of Engineering Services recommends approval of this Recommendation.

CITY MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The City Manager recommends approval of this Recommendation.

COUNCIL POLICY

- March 1st, 2005: Council approved the South East False Creek (SEFC) Official Development Plan and parking strategy, which offers a 10% parking reduction for unbundled parking supply.
- March 29, 2005: Council approved the Community Climate Change Action Plan, which establishes a Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emission reduction target of 6% below 1990 levels by 2012.
- November 14, 2006: Council approved the EcoDensity Initiative to consult with the broad public to develop strategies to densify the city in ways that improve ecological sustainability, maintain livability and improve affordability.
- April 10, 2007: Council approved the Green Building Strategy to develop specific parking policy recommendations to enhance the ecological and human health performance of all Part 3 buildings (generally over 3 storeys, or greater than 600 square metres in building area).

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to seek Council approval to request an amendment to the Vancouver Charter. The amendment will provide Council the power to change the Parking By-law to reduce the ecological impact of developments and support sustainable transportation in the community.

BACKGROUND

Population and density within the city continue to increase. By maintaining existing roadway capacity only, it is expected that there will be an increasing need to curtail the growth of private vehicles. One way to do this is to require the provision of adequate, but not abundant, parking spaces in new developments through parking regulations. Currently, Council is empowered to reduce parking based on building classifications and the Heritage Conservation Act, but not for ecological sustainability.

DISCUSSION

The EcoDensity Initiative underway is exploring ways to improve ecological sustainability through densification as well as the services and activities that density helps enable, including more efficient transit and reduced reliance on the private automobile. This report is seeking amendments to the Vancouver Charter to consider changes to our parking strategies as a complement to the land use and development focus of EcoDensity. Given the importance of ecological sustainability, it is desirable to amend the Vancouver Charter to give Council a clear and lawful mandate to assess parking and to relax parking in relation to sustainability objectives.

The first two amendments, (a) and (b), would allow Council to base parking requirements on factors such as car-share parking, site proximity to public transportation, time-share parking, and customer base, and to expand on current relaxation powers for similar types of considerations.

The third amendment, (c), addresses changing circumstances at an existing development site, such as introducing co-op vehicles or the opening of a nearby rapid transit station, which may lead to a reduction of required parking. This may introduce additional zoning/use considerations because surplus off-street parking spaces may then be converted to uses such as storage space, bike rooms, or amenity space.

The fourth amendment, (d), empowers Council to require separation of the sale price for a parking space from the sale price for a freehold or leasehold property or strata lot. Once the City is empowered to require unbundled parking, with public consultation the Parking By-law will be updated to include the ability to require unbundled parking as and where appropriate.

The concept of unbundling parking is to provide consumers greater flexibility in purchasing property because they can choose whether or not to purchase a parking space. Separating the cost of parking from housing can help to increase housing affordability. Developers will also benefit if the provision of unbundled parking is associated with a reduced parking requirement. The SEFC project is one example where there is a 10% parking reduction option for the unbundled parking provided. The reduced parking would help to reduce construction costs and may eliminate potential barriers to maximizing density on a particular development site. Unbundled parking is consistent with the City's EcoDensity objectives.

Some local developments are already offering unbundled parking voluntarily. They include the Spectrum development (Vancouver), the Capitol Residences (Vancouver), SFU's UniverCity development (Burnaby), and the Dockside Green development (Victoria). Parking provisions in these projects were reduced as part of their development strategy. In other major cities, such as Brooklyn, NY, and Washington, DC, the unbundling of parking is a common practice. The City of San Francisco has recently begun requiring unbundled parking in new multi-family developments with 10 units or more in its downtown core.

In preparation for this report, preliminary public consultation was conducted on the four proposed amendments, with response as follows:

- The Real Estate Board's Government Relations Committee commented that the legislative amendment should enable the City to negotiate unbundling of parking with developers and landlords, but not require unbundling of parking. Further, they express that more thorough consultation is required before any parking unbundling requirements are brought into place.
- The Urban Development Institute (UDI) is in general support of unbundling that allows a lower parking requirement, and other City initiatives to promote more sustainable developments, as long as doing so is optional and incentive-based rather than mandatory. The primary concern is the uncertainty of demand such that a developer could be left with a large number of parking spaces that could not be sold or rented.
- The Co-operative Auto Network supports the proposed Charter changes.

In recognition of some of the concerns expressed about the mandatory unbundling of parking, there will need to be further research and public consultation. No specific changes to the Parking By-law are currently being recommended. Only amendments to the Vancouver Charter that allow Council to change the Parking By-law in relation to sustainability objectives are being requested at this time from the Province.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications to the City.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

The Vancouver Charter amendments requested in the Proposal are consistent with the ecological sustainability objectives of the City. In particular, it allows Council to reduce GHG emissions by encouraging lower car ownership and promoting more sustainable transportation modes. Any reduction in required parking also lowers construction costs and improves housing affordability, consistent with the City's EcoDensity initiatives. Reductions in parking provisions could also be exchanged for increased support for transit usage, walking, bicycling, or car-sharing. By managing parking supply and demand, one could reduce car ownership, boost ride-sharing, reduce vehicle kilometres driven, and ultimately reduce GHG emissions.

CONCLUSION

It is recommended that Council endorse the submission to the Province of the Proposal that empowers Council to change the Parking By-law so that parking relaxations and requirements can be assessed based on sustainability objectives. Should the Province support the requested amendments to the Vancouver Charter, Council can then, after further public consultation, decide what specific changes to the Parking By-law would be in the best interest of the city.

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