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CITY OF VANCOUVER

POLICY REPORT URBAN STRUCTURE

Report Date: 20 November 2007
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Meeting Date: November 27, 2007

TO: Vancouver City Council

FROM: Director of Planning in consultation with Manager of the Sustainability Group, General Manager of Engineering Services, Director of the Housing Centre, Director of Social Planning, Director of Development Services, Managing Director of Cultural Services, Director of Real Estate Services, and General Manager of the Park Board

SUBJECT: Next Stage of EcoDensity Public Consultation: Draft Charter and Draft Initial Actions

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council receive this report on the "Draft Vancouver EcoDensity Charter and Draft Initial Actions," and refer the drafts to further public consultation, including a Special Council Meeting on February 26, 2008, to hear from the public.

Recommendations for February 26, 2008 Special Council Meeting subject to revisions brought forward by staff as a result of public input:

THAT Council adopt the Vancouver EcoDensity Charter (draft contained in Appendix A).

THAT Council approve the Initial Actions 2008-09 (draft shown on the next pages); and instruct staff to report back on priorities, timing and resources for those Actions that involve further work.

Draft EcoDensity Initial Actions (2008-2009)

Part I: Raising green standards

- 1. Greener buildings (4 storeys and over)**
 Achieve a new green standard in rezonings, effective immediately, by requiring at least LEED Silver equivalency for rezonings for buildings to which LEED may be applied (i.e., larger than 600 square meters; typically, these buildings are 4 storeys and over) with an emphasis on the City priorities (e.g., energy efficiency); and consult with the development industry about moving to LEED Gold equivalency or better at an appropriate time.
- 2. Greater sustainability for Large Site developments**
 Where planning policy or rezonings are undertaken for Large Sites or significant changes to existing CD-1 zones, allow consideration of development beyond the density and/or scale set out in Community Vision Directions or other area policies when the proposal shows exemplary leadership in environmental performance while also addressing affordability, and community amenities.

 This policy to be immediately effective for rezoning inquiries and applications for which policy development is initiated.
- 3. Incentives for Green Design**
 To encourage design considerations that improve green performance in the short term, investigate potential energy performance incentives through floor space exclusions that directly relate to green design and technologies, in advance of more detailed strategies through the Green Building Strategy.
- 4. EcoDensity demonstration in lower density areas**
 Encourage projects that demonstrate an exceptional level of leadership in innovative green design and sustainable practices, by adopting in principle the concept of an Interim EcoDensity Rezoning Policy, that would allow projects that meet specified green criteria to be considered for site-specific rezoning in advance of area planning. Projects would conform to Vision Directions about type, location, and scale.

 The specific Rezoning Policy would need to be reported back to Council for approval.
- 5. EcoDensity leadership on City land**
 To show City leadership and to improve understanding of, and generate interest in, emerging sustainability practices, develop a proposal to use City land for one or more EcoDensity demonstrations, at potentially varying scales and that could include a variety of EcoDensity and related features, such as deep green design, renewable energy sources, alternative parking standards, affordable housing, and urban agriculture.
- 6. Priority to applications with green leadership**
 To encourage the development industry to build at an exemplary level of green, investigate the creation of a prioritised application review system for ultra-green projects to be implemented post-2010.

Part II: Developing options for new housing types	
7.	More options for secondary suites within buildings Develop options to require, allow and/or encourage secondary suites in buildings at all scales, from single family and duplex to apartments in order to increase the density of housing units within current housing forms, as well as create lower-cost rental housing.
8.	New options for backyard laneway infill housing Develop options to create a new type of lane-oriented infill, involving features such as implementation on 33' lots without loss of existing houses; low scale forms; green performance; and rental tenure.
9.	New options for arterial mid-rise housing Develop options to create new models of mid-rise arterial housing rather than the current 4-storey model In order to provide more housing close to shops, services, and transit.
Part III - Developing supporting tools	
10.	Enabling District Energy Develop a City-wide renewable energy strategy, including district energy systems, and evaluate specific regulatory and implementation opportunities through consultation and research projects using existing operating budget and contributions by other stakeholders.
11.	Amenity tools Pursue additional policy tools for obtaining public benefits through development and for providing public benefits in order to ensure that growth is accompanied with adequate community amenities.
Part IV: Moving toward a long-term more sustainable city pattern	
12.	Plan for the longer term Develop a program that will provide a city-wide context for determining where and how to make land use changes beyond existing plans and policies, in order to further improve sustainability, affordability, and livability - the program to start with mapping the city's existing development pattern and plans, as a base for broad public discussion of additional opportunities and options.
13.	Amenity strategies for the longer term Develop a program, involving all City departments, for a comprehensive amenity strategy review, starting with documenting existing standards, delivery mechanisms, capacities, and plans, and using this as a base to evaluate and develop new strategies, with public input.

amenity needs for growth (i.e., Financing Growth) which includes, among other policies, a requirement for all developments pay a per square foot Development Cost Levy; however, additional tools will be needed to keep up with growth, especially in light of EcoDensity's environmental emphasis. Upon approval of this Action, staff will commence an amenity tool review, including looking at examples from other municipalities, such as density bonus zoning schedules that yield payments to be used for specified community amenities.

Draft Actions Part IV: Moving toward a long-term more sustainable city pattern

12. Plan for the longer term

Develop a program that will provide a city-wide context for determining where and how to make land use changes beyond existing plans and policies, in order to further improve sustainability, affordability, and livability - the program to start with mapping the city's existing development pattern and plans, as a base for broad public discussion of additional opportunities and options.

The community consultation on EcoDensity generated many ideas for new denser, greener housing types, as well as conditions for amenities and services, and for public involvement in planning that will affect communities. Some of the Actions described earlier in this report lead to immediate, or near-term, on-the-ground change, while others respond by creating demonstration projects and developing the new tools that would be necessary to implement ideas.

Once new tools have been developed, the next question is: where and how across the city would changes best be made? To answer this in a strategic way, a city-wide context would provide a way to judge whether one type of change will better achieve objectives than another, where, and when.

For example, if infill housing is allowed in areas that are later determined to be better for rowhouses, it will be difficult to achieve rowhouse redevelopment after new investment has already been made in infill. Or, if many arterials are rezoned to higher density at the same time, it will be more difficult to focus growth around shops, services, and transit, or where amenities exist or can more easily be provided. As a result, the phasing of new density needs to be done carefully. Also, many of the ideas overlap with policies already approved through Community Visions, so without a city-wide context, it is difficult to determine where we go ahead as before, versus where different kinds of change are needed.

Council approval of this Action would mean that staff will report back on a proposal for a program for long-term plan development. Staff already have some ideas of what to incorporate in such a program. It would include creating a base of information by mapping our current city pattern, and also mapping the pattern embodied in approved plans and policies but not yet built. It would include a strong public consultation component. It would involve developing criteria with which to evaluate options and illustrate trade-offs. The base mapping would be a way to place new options in context, in terms of where additional density would most strategically achieve sustainability, affordability, and livability. Essentially, this program

revisits or adds a layer to, the existing CityPlan. While such planning is usually a long term process, a city-wide context can also show where some Actions make sense in the shorter term.

13. Amenity strategies for the longer term

Develop a program, involving all City departments, for a comprehensive amenity strategy review, starting with documenting existing standards, delivery mechanisms, capacities, and plans, and using this as a base to evaluate and develop new strategies, with public input.

Many people during the public process endorsed the value of more density to improve environmental sustainability. At the same time, community members often raised the need to accompany growth with amenities. Many City departments have also been doing extensive work over recent years on developing priorities and strategies for various types of community facilities. It is the intention of this Action to bring all of this together so that there is a city-wide amenity context (just as, in Action 12, there is a city-wide land use and transportation context). This context will provide a way to take stock and see where new strategies are needed, and to implement the tools developed in Action 11.

Draft Actions Part V: Accountability

14. Measurement tools

Continue to investigate and develop tools to measure ecological footprint performance at various scales and contexts, and indicators to assess and report on Vancouver's progress.

Measuring improvements in sustainability performance at the small scale is not straightforward. Some tools measure household energy use, but do not take into account location features that affect transportation use. City staff have been working with consultants and academics to better develop tools that would be most relevant to Vancouver's context. This work needs to continue.

15. Panel

Set up a Panel of advisors comprised of Vancouverites including academics, builders, interest groups, and residents from across the city, to provide advice as needed to further the goals of EcoDensity.

There are many committed residents across the city, as well as innovative green builders, and academic experts. All of these people have contributed to the EcoDensity work so far. Establishing a Panel would facilitate their continued contribution. The Panel could, for example, provide comment on the criteria for preparing a report card on EcoDensity. The Panel will be in addition to and will be expected to participate in the broader consultation required for EcoDensity.

16. Progress Report Structure

Prepare a structure to assess progress and success in meeting the commitments of the EcoDensity Charter which may include an occasional EcoDensity 'summit' and a report card prepared at arms-length.

Regular evaluation of the EcoDensity Initiative's progress will help maintain an ongoing pressure on the City to meet the policy commitments of the Charter, and will allow for learning and improvement as implementation moves forward. The Panel of advisors (see Action 15, above) could play a key role in reporting on progress.

5. OTHER CITY INITIATIVES ON SUSTAINABILITY AND AFFORDABILITY

The draft EcoDensity Charter has zeroed in on the contribution of density, design, and land use to environmental sustainability, affordability, and livability. In doing so, the draft Charter also commits EcoDensity to align with the many other City initiatives that are working toward environmental, social, cultural and economic sustainability from many different directions and departments. Indeed, as EcoDensity and Sustainability permeate the City organization, it has generated momentum for many of these related initiatives. Many of these directions also reflect ideas that people put forward during the EcoDensity public consultation and staff have passed these on to these other departments.

- Green buildings: The Green Building Strategy, presently underway, will ensure that all new buildings offer better environmental and health performance. This strategy will include mandatory and optional strategies to achieve greener "baseline" building performance. New green Building Code standards will be brought forward for Council's consideration in the early new year. The City has also resolved to achieve carbon neutrality in all new buildings by 2030. As well, all new civic buildings greater than 500 square meters (including retrofits) are required by City policy to achieve LEED Gold certification.
- Climate Protection:
 - Vancouver has adopted very aggressive greenhouse gas reduction targets for 2012, 2020, and 2050.
 - Vancouver has also started construction of the Neighbourhood Energy Utility for South East False Creek. By capturing heat energy from the sewer system and distributing it through a system of hot water pipes to individual buildings, the related greenhouse gas emissions for this development will be reduced by over 50 percent. The City is also evaluating opportunities for district energy in the East Fraser Lands development;
 - The land fill gas recovery program captures harmful greenhouse gas emissions and utilizes them to generate heat and power. The program continues to be a model within the region. The landfill is currently taking part in a pilot to look at new ways to utilize the gas and additional markets that could be developed for it;
 - The Community Climate Change Action Plan provides a blueprint of how business, industry, residents and institutions can work together to cut down on energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions;

- Vancouver's Corporate Climate Change Action Plan sets an ambitious goal of reducing its own greenhouse gas emissions by 20 percent of its 1990 levels by 2010 by targeting its operations within Civic Facilities, Corporate Fleet, Street/Park Lighting and Traffic Control Signals, Corporate Waste Reduction and Landfill Gas Recovery, and Corporate Demand-Side Management; and,
 - Vancouver was among the first signatories to BC Climate Action Charter pledging a cooperative approach between local and Provincial governments on climate change, and committing local governments to carbon-neutral operations by 2012.
- Food security: To further a just and sustainable food system, the City recently adopted the Vancouver Food Charter. The Charter sets out Vancouver's commitment to the development of a coordinated municipal food policy, and engages the community in conversations and actions for food security. As part of the Green Building Strategy, Urban Agriculture Guidelines have been developed which will create opportunities for urban agriculture to be incorporated as part of the amenity package in new developments.
 - Waste and recycling: The City has a user pay system for garbage collection which provides an incentive to reduce waste; collects recyclable materials and yard trimmings separately; makes available low cost compost bins; supports a demonstration garden and composting facility, and has recently implemented a demonstration project to compost fruit and vegetable waste from a major grocery store chain in cooperation with Metro Vancouver.
 - Southeast False Creek (SEFC): Consisting of both City-owned and privately-owned lands, SEFC is being developed as a community that incorporates principles of energy-efficient design and demonstrates a model sustainable community. The development includes a network of paths and streets designed for pedestrians, cyclists and transit; building design for efficient use of energy resources and water; parks and open space that meet ecological objectives; projects with advanced environmental technologies, such as renewable energy supplies, water management, green building design and urban agriculture. Construction of a Neighbourhood Energy Utility in SEFC is also underway. By producing heat in a community energy centre, using heat pump technology to capture heat energy from the sewer system and distributing it through a system of hot water pipes to individual buildings, the related greenhouse gas emissions for this development will be reduced by over 50 percent.
 - Transportation: The Province and region are preparing a new long-range region-wide Transportation Plan. The City and TransLink are working to improve rapid transit service (e.g. Canada Line, Millennium extension, new Rapid Bus routes) and are examining a bike sharing program. The City continues to upgrade walking and biking infrastructure. It has also recently reduced some parking requirements as well as encouraged co-op cars in some developments. In addition, the City is also pursuing *Vancouver Charter* amendments that would allow consideration of ecological sustainability in determining off-street parking requirements as well as the mandatory requirement of unbundled parking.
 - Affordable Housing: The City now allows secondary suites in all single family neighbourhoods; considers rezonings for social housing in advance of neighbourhood plans; adopted rate of change regulations to manage the loss of the older purpose built rental stock; buys sites or provides capital grants for social housing; and is working with MetroVancouver on its proposed Affordable Housing Strategy, which recommends comprehensive policy frameworks for housing in each municipality.

- **Heritage:** The City works with the Heritage Commission to conserve and protect existing places of significance which advance cultural sustainability, sense of place, and the ecological sustainability of existing buildings and materials.
- **Parks:** The Park Board creates and maintains Vancouver's public green spaces and protects our natural environment. It provides facilities that support wellness and bring people together. The first of the five strategic directions in Park's 2005-2010 Strategic Plan "Greening the Park Board" is for the development of sustainable policies and practices that achieve environmental objectives while meeting the needs of the community in the development and maintenance of parks and recreation facilities as well as Park Board's corporate practices.
- **Social Infrastructure and Social Development Plans:** The City has initiated a Social Infrastructure Plan to guide investment and location decisions for social infrastructure throughout the city. It will be a key component in building social sustainability and developing complete communities. An overarching Social Development Plan is also underway which will provide a framework for wide-ranging social policy and social sustainability in Vancouver.
- **Economic sustainability:** The City has an Industrial Lands Strategy to protect needed industrial land, and is finalizing the Metro Core Jobs and Economy Land Use Plan to ensure adequate land supply for future job growth and economic activity in the Metro Core. The City has adopted Guiding Principles for Economic Development in Vancouver. The Vancouver Economic Development Commission has been working on a business climate strategy and set up a Blue Ribbon Council for Vancouver's Business Climate (BRC). The City is also working on a new Arts and Culture Plan which will inform the City's role in the creative economy as well as enhancing liveability.

FINANCIAL AND PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial or personnel implications at this time.

COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

Upon Council referring the draft Charter and draft Initial Actions to further consultation, staff will put in place a communications program to make people aware of the draft ideas, and how to get more information about them. This will include newspaper ads, website information, e-mail notifications, and meetings with interested groups. Individuals and groups will be encouraged to provide their comments via e-mail, at meetings, and/or by appearing as a delegation at Council.

The consultation will include up to four public workshops throughout the city to allow for additional learning and community feedback on the attached drafts in a collaborative manner. Furthermore, the City will convene a Special Council Meeting at the end of February to hear public delegations.

CONCLUSION

This report describes the EcoDensity concept and the initiation of the EcoDensity program of public outreach, information, and idea-generation. Based on comments through that process, this reports puts forward a draft EcoDensity Charter and draft Initial Actions, and asks City Council to refer them for further public consultation including public workshops and a Special Council meeting February 26, 2008 before Council makes decisions.

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DRAFT

The Vancouver EcoDensity Charter

How Density, Design, & Land Use

Will Contribute to Environmental Sustainability, Affordability, & Livability

WHEREAS in the City of Vancouver:

- Increasing climate change and the use of resources faster than the planet can replenish them represent serious threats to our future livability.
- Environmental sustainability is critical for Vancouver's long term resiliency and is the foundation for future social, cultural, and economic sustainability.
- Important steps have been taken over many years to create a livable city of neighbourhoods and compact, mixed-use, walkable communities.
- The need for deeper and more rapid change has become clear as our achievements are being challenged by accelerating environmental threats.
- We need to do more, for ourselves and future generations, and as our contribution to efforts being made around the globe.
- We have the opportunity to influence change, by using density, design, and land use to create more sustainable and affordable communities that are great places to live.

THEREFORE, the City of Vancouver makes a commitment to:

AN OVER-ARCHING ENVIRONMENTAL PRIORITY

- Make environmental sustainability a primary consideration in decisions about density, design, and land use - that will at the same time improve affordability and livability.
- Follow through on existing plans and policies that improve sustainability, and build on them to achieve even greater gains.
- Improve environmental performance across the city in all communities and in individual projects, while enhancing affordability across the city.
- Emphasize environmental sustainability now where existing policies allow, and develop new policies, rules or standards to overcome current barriers.

A GREEN LAND USE PATTERN

- **Locate new density strategically by continuing to reinforce walking, biking, and transit, and in further support of accessible local jobs, shops, and services, and consider new green criteria for location, such as shared energy efficiencies.**
- **Contribute to economic prosperity and ensure adequate space for diverse jobs and economic activity close to home as the city grows, including protection of key commercial and industrial districts for economic activity rather than housing.**

A RANGE OF HOUSING TYPES, NEEDS, AND COSTS

- **Accommodate density of different types and scales to meet a full range of housing needs, including singles, families, empty-nesters, and seniors -- ranging from continued high density downtown; to new opportunities outside the downtown for a variety of housing types, from high and medium density apartments, to rowhouses, duplexes, small houses, coach-houses, and suites.**
- **Use density to enable greater housing affordability through a generally increased supply of more inherently affordable housing, and through consideration of how new development can help achieve social housing objectives; and by reconciling new development with the retention of existing affordable rental units.**

GREENER AND LIVABLE DESIGN AND A SENSE OF PLACE

- **Design density with new and existing architecture that meshes greener performance, with values for neighbourhood context, character and identity, for high quality and neighbourly buildings and developments, at all scales.**
- **Combine respect for heritage conservation, and for the sustainability inherent in retention/reuse of existing structures and materials, with greener technology and denser development.**
- **Apply ecological best practices for public realm design to achieve green, beautiful, safe, accessible, adaptable, and engaging streets, parks, and public places in all communities.**

GREEN AND LIVABLE SUPPORT SYSTEMS

- **Facilitate greener energy systems, in all density contexts, in recognition that density generates the users to make new systems more feasible.**
- **Work to provide the amenities, services, and infrastructure needed to support new and existing density levels, using existing and new financial tools, with continued contributions from developers, City budgets, and other sources.**

AN ECO-CITY

- **Champion new, holistic ways to align density, design, and land use with other tools** for environmental, economic, social, and cultural sustainability, to achieve mutual benefits -- including strategies for transportation and parking, green building strategies, heritage conservation, affordable housing strategies, urban agriculture and food policy, recycling, new energy systems, social development planning, and the many other related City initiatives.

AND the City of Vancouver will continue to respect and apply these process principles:

- **Engage and consult** with the broad public and with communities to prepare plans and policies to guide change and to build and reflect broad community ownership and capacity-building for a sustainable, resilient city; tie planning processes to community capacity building that supports communities' distinct approaches to meeting their needs.
- **Bring to bear the needed resources and timeframes** for responsible, thorough, transparent, and successful planning and consultation.
- **Base actions on Council-approved plans and policies, rather than ad hoc decisions; and plan and implement actions suitable for the short, medium and long terms;** encourage experimentation and look for ways to reward innovation; move further ahead as more is planned, known, and doable.
- **Work with other municipalities and levels of government;** seek partnerships with senior levels of government necessary to achieve goals; learn from others; and create models that will provide leadership for others.

ECODENSITY QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

EcoDensity is about how density that is well-designed, well-located, and carefully-implemented provides a powerful tool to improve environmental sustainability, affordability, and livability. The questions and answers below reflect this approach.

- **How does density help the environment?**

Two key contributors to climate change are transportation and building energy use. EcoDensity can help reduce both. Well-located density puts people close to shops, jobs, amenities and services, meaning more trips are made by walking, biking and transit, instead of by car. This also creates a larger customer base for local shopping areas, supporting a wider array of shops and services, which in turn, means that even more needs can be fulfilled close to home. Similarly, putting people close to transit means more trips are made using transit, and makes better transit service more feasible.

Density also reduces building energy use. Housing with shared walls uses less energy. Density also makes renewable energy sources more feasible and affordable. Systems like neighbourhood energy utilities generate energy with little or no greenhouse gasses. And, density combined with green building features, will go even further to reduce greenhouse gases, as well as to conserve water, reduce waste, and provide other environmental benefits.

Containing sprawl also minimizes the regional impacts on vital agricultural and conservation lands.

- **How does density help affordability?**

Density can contribute to affordability by adding more inherently affordable housing types and tenures (i.e., smaller units, rental units); if demand nonetheless outpaces supply, increasing supply helps to moderate the price increases. Density also has the potential to facilitate more affordable living arrangements (i.e., reduced car ownership, lower energy costs and mortgage helpers such as secondary suites, coach houses).

In addition, density can help provide deeper affordability through large scale rezonings that can provide social housing. While increased supply is a necessary foundation to affordability, it cannot replace funding from the Federal and Provincial governments to achieve the most affordable units.

In a built-up city like Vancouver, affordability is extremely complex with many factors outside City control. EcoDensity goals suggest the balancing of new supply with retention of existing affordable rental. One example is the City's recent rate-of-change by-law to protect rental housing in apartment zoned areas throughout the city where there is a large stock of older affordable rental housing.

- **Who might housing density benefit?**

Well planned density means providing more housing types for new residents as well as for people to stay in their own neighbourhoods. This includes today's children who will become young people looking for suites and their first apartments; families wanting housing similar to, but more affordable than, a single family house; and new choices for people as they

grow older and wish to downsize from their single family home. And, more housing choices also means more opportunities for people who work in the city to live in the city.

- **How is density connected to livability?**

Livability encompasses many aspects of life -- neighbourly development; retention of neighbourhood character, heritage buildings, and a sense of place; safe and attractive parks and public places; needed communities amenities and cultural facilities; and a generally

Well-planned, well-located, and well-designed density can maintain and enhance livability. For example, local shopping areas can be strengthened through density, and public places made safer. Other aspects of livability, particularly providing needed amenities, are challenges that density must meet to be successful. EcoDensity also challenges all of us to see that the status quo is not one of the options; the city has and will continue to change. Finally, EcoDensity challenges us to think about the subjective aspects of livability, and asks what will our livability be like if we don't make changes?

Perhaps most importantly, density done well provides ecological sustainability benefits that assist in maintaining our long term livability in the face of climate change threats and the end of cheap energy.

- **Does more density just mean more developer profits?**

Through City policies and by-laws, developers contribute to the cost of providing amenities to serve the population they build for. Every new development in the city pays a per square foot Development Cost Levy (DCL,) used to help pay for new parks, child care, social housing, and transportation-related improvements. Last year developers paid \$21 million to the City in DCLs; in 2007 to date, DCL revenues already exceed \$53 million.

In addition, large scale rezonings provides additional opportunity for developers to contribute significantly more amenities in addition to the DCLs. Downtown rezonings have long illustrated the high quality of amenities, from school sites to cultural facilities to parks and seawalls that are provided as part of the development contribution. Outside the downtown, two recent rezoned developments along Kingsway are examples: as part of a rezoning at the corner of Knight and Kingsway, the new development is contributing space for a new Kensington branch library; the development at Nanaimo and Kingsway the development is providing a fully-outfitted child daycare facility, as well as start-up and endowment fund contributions.

- **Does more density mean more traffic?**

Although the city has been growing, there are fewer vehicles entering the city than there were 10 years ago, and average distances being driven by Vancouver registered passenger vehicles were down almost 30% between 1993 and 2002. When density is well-located close to shopping areas and community amenities, more people can travel without a car to obtain goods and services. These non-work trips are the fastest growing types of trips. And, while not everyone can live close to their work, locating more housing close to transit increases the number of work trips that are not by car.

- **Does rezoning mean higher property taxes?**

Property assessments, and thus property taxes, can increase for some properties more than the average for various reasons, including market attractiveness of neighbourhoods, as well as due to rezoning.

The specific example people have asked about recently is the area around Kingsway and Knight. This was the first area to be rezoned by the City about a year ago to small house/duplex zoning, and to courtyard-rowhouse zoning, as part of the Neighbourhood Centre Program. One of the issues that caught public attention early this summer was property owners in the area receiving tax bills from the City with very large tax increases. The City had made an error in omitting the area from the usual three-year averaging program. This has since been corrected and people have been refunded.

After the issue of the three-year averaging had been sorted out, the question remained: how much of a property assessment increase occurred in the area and what was it due to?

In discussion with the BC Assessment Authority, City staff estimate that the average property assessment increase due to the rezoning was in the range of \$20,000 to \$25,000. This amount was a portion of the total assessment increase of \$146,000. The difference was due to general market forces which had much more of an impact in this area last year on property values than did the rezoning.

The tax increase due to the rezoning translated into an average annual tax increase of \$37 for that year. Future taxes will depend on market forces (both general and due to rezoning) and City tax rate decisions. Due to the low scale nature of the new zoning, staff expected that the rezoning impact would be small. However, it will be important to monitor the situation.

- **Are Norquay and other Neighbourhood Centres already EcoDensity?**

The Neighbourhood Centre Program was initiated several years ago as a way to implement the housing and shopping area directions contained in approved Community Visions. The first Neighbourhood Centre was successfully completed a few years ago in the area around Knight and Kingsway.

The second Centre, Norquay Village has been underway over a year and a half, with a process involving newsletters in two languages (three in the shopping area), newspaper ads, banners in public places, open houses attended by hundreds of people, two resident working groups putting together proposals for the housing area and the shopping area, and a survey asking community opinion on these proposals. Planning work in the area is continuing, to develop a final proposal that will best reflect community input. During the process, good questions and suggestions have been raised that will help to improve the Neighbourhood Centres Program for its next round. Council will receive a separate report to update the Neighbourhood Centre Terms of Reference before planning for the next two Centres begins. In all, there are about 18 Neighbourhood Centres identified through Community Visions.

EcoDensity is a different program from Neighbourhood Centres. It was initiated much after Neighbourhood Centres was already underway. Up until now, EcoDensity has been in a dialogue and idea-generating phase. Many of the ideas overlap and potentially expand upon

Neighbourhood Centres and Community Visions. This November 27 Council Report does not suggest changes to Neighbourhood Centre planning.

- **How is EcoDensity different from what the City has already been doing?**

The EcoDensity Charter acknowledges the progress Vancouver has made over many years of planning to build a livable and sustainable city. However, with environmental threats mounting faster than anticipated, more work is needed. The Charter commits to follow through on existing plans and policies that improve sustainability, and expand on them to achieve even greater gains.

- **What is in the EcoDensity Plan that has been approved and how will it change my neighbourhood zoning?**

There is no EcoDensity 'plan', nor any immediate zoning changes. The EcoDensity program was established by City Council a year ago as a dialogue -- an idea generating phase, not a plan-making phase. The next proposed phase of EcoDensity is described in the November 2007 Council Report. A new draft Charter has been prepared for further discussion; and to respond to many of the ideas suggested by the public, the report recommends Actions including demonstration projects and developing a range of tools for new kinds of zoning and tools for amenities, renewable energy, etc. After this, likely starting in 2009, the EcoDensity dialogue will be about plan-making -- where and how to best use these new tools. Like any long-range planning for the city, this will take time and will include public involvement to identify short term and long term changes to overlay and update our existing plans and policies.

- **Are communities going to be involved in EcoDensity?**

The proposed EcoDensity Charter contains a commitment to public engagement, consultation, and ownership. These have been a cornerstone for Vancouver planning over the years. It is always a challenge in planning to engage and hear from all voices, and programs often develop new approaches to best suit the circumstances. Some decisions are made at a city-wide level (e.g., single family zoning was changed to allow legalized suites across the city a few years ago). And some decisions are based on more detailed community-level planning (e.g., Community Visions). In all cases, there is also a strong city-wide framework (e.g., CityPlan) which has been developed based on the needs and voices of many people across the city.