



MINUTES
OAK BAY ADVISORY PLANNING COMMISSION
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2016 AT 5:00 PM
COUNCIL CHAMBERS, MUNICIPAL HALL, 2167 OAK BAY AVENUE

MEMBERS PRESENT

Andrew Appleton
Rus Collins
Pam Copley
Michael Low

Kris Nichols
Esther Paterson
Tim Taddy

MEMBERS ABSENT

Brian Holl

STAFF PRESENT

Helen Koning, Municipal Administrator
Warren Jones, Director of Corporate Services

Krista Mitchell, Building & Planning Clerk
Roy Thomassen, Director, Building & Planning

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 5: 08 pm.

2. Approval of Agenda and Late Items

The agenda was approved as presented.

3. Old Business

a. Residential Infill Strategy – Facilitated Workshop

P. Copley asked the membership to refer to the “Background Information for Infill Housing Project in Oak Bay” for key points on Established Neighbourhoods and the OCP as they move through the infill process.

Summary of the Facilitated Workshop – Part 1

The first part of the workshop produced the following key themes and comments.

Aging in Place

- Provide opportunities for aging in place
- Age in place- not enough options
- Ensuring balance for all residents

Infrastructure

- Condition/cost of infrastructure
- Look after basics first

Parking and Transportation

- Whatever you do don't make parking worse
- Parking remains an issue for many in general and related to infill housing
- Impact on traffic/parking
- Parking came up as a major concern for densification
- Traffic congestion
- Transportation: traffic flow, bike lanes, parking
- An abiding preoccupation with parking (and very little mention of alternative transport)

Suites

- Support for secondary suites
- Need to deal with secondary suites and we are ok with that
- Unregulated suites are a concern
- Legalize secondary suites
- Secondary suites
- Bylaw enforcement compliance

Greenspace

- People love trees and greenspace
- Preservation of ambient architecture, trees and streetscapes
- Loss of green space to densification
- Infill density is equated with loss of greenspace
- Protecting greenspace
- Protect forest canopy – keep our trees
- Preserve trees and nature access

Walking

- Support for bike lane, walking paths and traffic calming
- Most people like the walkability of Oak Bay
- Quality of like- walkable, open space, and safe
- People like how walkable our neighbourhoods are

Protect Heritage

- Sustain neighbourhood character
- Protecting heritage homes or character homes
- Protect heritage buildings
- Heritage character loss

Housing Options

- It would be nice to have more affordable housing options
- Lack of “affordable” options for young families
- Develop housing options
- Substantial openness to legal suites, duplex, conversions, laneway/carriage homes
- General acceptance of the concept of infill housing with conditions/regulations
- Housing needs differ by area as well as by other factors
- Densify with existing building conversions
- 60-70% of people think we need some sort of infill strategy
- Uplands took a lot of flak for lot size
- Infill housing should be supported near Oak Bay Ave, near university, arterials etc
- South Oak Bay- no infill

Keep As It Is

- Love our neighborhood as it is
- Concern that Oak Bay neighborhoods don't change
- Concern about change (why are we doing this? We like it the way it is)
- People like things the way they are
- A general tone that "things are better as they are"
- 30-40% don't want any change in density
- Fear/lack of support for densification
- Density is often considered negative

OCP

- May need to reassess priorities in OCP implementation
- Need clarification of intent of infill strategy as related to housing needs identified in OCP
- Education on the planning process

Data Collection

- People felt afraid to speak up at the RIS session at UVic
- Demonstrate need ie. "burning platform" what is the need for infill strategy

Outliers

- Comments reflect a microcosm of OCP survey results
- Heavy bias in respondents to long standing residents
- Comments are not a survey as such, but reflect feedback from open houses

Summary of the Facilitated Workshop – Part 2

The interview matrix process resulted in comments to the following four questions.

1. What did we learn from the affinity exercise?

- The community is divided on infill
 - But substantial support for some infill
 - Remember these are only comments, not an official survey
- Should do the "easy" pieces first
- Deal with suites first (duplicate comment)
 - Parking
- Reflects what we heard in other surveys
- No mention of strategy, just elements
 - Good point!
 - Never ask as a question?
- People want to protect Oak Bay, as well as neighbourhood character, trees, parking
- More information needed – general lack of understanding on goals of process (duplicate comment)
- Some residents have fearful/negative reaction to infill
 - Due to lack of understanding?
- General support for some type of infill, provided its done well. (duplicate comment)
- Consistency between OCP survey and comments from open house
- Many supportive of two or more types. Suites and laneway/garden homes, but not triplexes
- Strong minority against infill
- People like this community OB
- Concerns over suites – feel like it brings transient population

2. *Does a residential infill strategy fit somewhere? Why or why not?*

- Yes
 - Parcel (land) size is important – must be large enough
 - Help people age in place
 - Secondary to housing strategy
 - Develop long range vision for community
- Yes
 - Where it doesn't compromise community character
 - Locations where we can minimize impacts on green space tree canopy, parking, ie. major transportation routes
 - it comes after we have identified need, options and locations (where)
 - the community is changing and a RIS will provide structure to inform growth. Growth must be managed and planned to encourage vitality & healthy economies
 - providing we can say why it is important and relevant-how it will help preserve "unique character"
- Yes
 - General support exists for RIS throughout OB. Caution – needs to be in context of neighborhood and greenspace preservation
 - Why?
 - a. There is substantial demand by residents for infill
 - b. Will happen anyway in unregulated way, if we do manage development proactively
 - c. RIS allows us to be proactive and direct applications
- Yes
 - Need to manage the process that's already occurring due to market factors, population growth and pressure on land on south island
 - RIS does not mean embracing infill (densification?) but manages risk in the community
 - RIS is a change management process/tool and needs to be understood as that
 - Majority feels strongly that infill in some form is acceptable because they understand the need

3. *What are we trying to accomplish for the community?*

- Guard against unregulated development. Allows Oak Bay to be proactive instead of simply reacting to applications
- Offer different housing alternatives
- Range of housing for identified needs on the community. Mandate in OCP
- Implement the OCP by managing land use rather than letting the market drive it
- Trying to provide choices, trying to regulate and make suites safe, trying to not negatively impact the character of the community, trying to respond to segments of the community (looking for choices)
- Community aging and changing – we want residents to help inform housing needs that are evolving now and into the future
- Develop policies as to how Oak Bay is to grow (densify)
- Develop practical tool to execute aspirations of OCP. Define types of infill for community and where
- Age in place, have in-laws, inclusiveness
 - Welcome young families and embrace a diverse population.

- Provincial government says we should.
- Where Oak Bay fits into society, a changing society. Plan to move Oak Bay forward.
 - Accommodate diversity
- Develop a comprehensive plan identifying areas of Oak Bay which could accommodate various forms of housing, with detailed acceptable forms.

4. *What do we need to do or have to make this happen? (written in priority order with stars ratings). The stars rating indicated where there was consensus of the next steps.*

Stars Rating Item

12	Understanding the value added and letting the community know.
10	Find options that don't impact the community (eg. Suites) and find options that are acceptable to the community.
9	Clarify how residential infill can happen without impacting quality of life.
8	Create a broad understanding of why this is important to the citizens.
7	Change management strategy in order to help the population of OB understand what we are trying to do.
5	Identify a list of priorities for residential infill that include neighborhood preservation and green space.
3	Go back to the survey results in the OCP. Focus on the intention of the OCP (regarding infill) and align the OCP with zoning bylaws.
3	Need to clearly state why we are doing this and how to go about it.
3	More definite demographic data is needed. Who is moving in and who works in the community?
1	Council to support moving ahead with plans by preparing bylaws that encourage or support the vision council has.

Other Comments

- Understand and focus on already defined housing needs.
- Be transparent in our approach.
- Decide what is doable in the short term (suites) versus in long term and more consultation.
- May want to explain the residential infill strategy is a risk management tool. We need to explain the change in terms of "burning platform" and use change management models.
- Stepping back. Need to find ways to communicate effectively.
- Seeing hostility and concern
- Consult with the public on what kinds of infill they would like to see in their neighbourhood.
- Existing response is biased. Some indication that residents filled out the comment sheets more than once.
- Staff of businesses in OB, where do they live? Probably not in OB.
- Concern over density and traffic.

P. Copley suggested the members review the OCP, sections 4.3 and 8.3.1 for further understanding of the work being done with respect to the residential infill strategy. P. Copley also commented there seems to be a need to address a lack of understanding and communication.

A Commission member suggested overlaying the Urban Forest Strategy with the FAR and how that impacts on residential lots. It seems like it would preserve a forest canopy.

Commission members noted the need to provide clear information to the community, and particularly:

- Doing nothing is not an option. Leaving things as they are will not retain your community.
- Vocal minority want nothing to happen and there is a need to respond to the concerns with good information.
- Trust process and not be divisive, be creative.
- Density has negative connotation.

4. Next Meeting

The next regular meeting of the APC is scheduled for Tuesday, December 6, 2016.

5. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 pm.