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DISTRICT OF WEST VANCOUVER
 750 17TH STREET, WEST VANCOUVER BC V7V 3T3

COUNCIL REPORT

Date:	June 2, 2020
From:	Michelle McGuire, Manager of Current Planning and Urban Design
Subject:	Interim COVID 19 Public Consultation Strategy for Development Projects
File:	2500-01-2020

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the report titled Interim COVID 19 Public Consultation Strategy for Development Projects be received for information.

1.0 Purpose

To provide Council with information on the interim public consultation strategy for development applicants who are required to conduct public information meetings during the COVID 19 pandemic.

2.0 Legislation/Bylaw/Policy

The District's Development Procedures Bylaw and Preliminary Development Proposal and Public Consultation Policy set out the current public consultation requirements and procedures for development applicants to seek public input and feedback on development proposals:

Development Procedures Bylaw

The Development Procedures Bylaw outlines requirements for the review, processing, and consideration of development applications. As part of these provisions the bylaw outlines the requirements for public notification and public information meetings. For rezoning, OCP amendment, and heritage revitalization agreement applications the bylaw requires that applicants host a public information meeting between first reading and public hearing. For major development permit applications the bylaw requires that applicants host a public information meeting prior to consideration of the permit.

Preliminary Development Proposal and Public Consultation Policy

The Preliminary Development Proposal and Public Consultation Policy outlines guidelines for the review of preliminary development proposals received by staff prior to submission of rezoning, OCP amendment and heritage revitalization agreement applications. The policy requires that applicants host a public information meeting prior to submission of an application to get community feedback. The applicant is then expected to provide a public consultation summary to staff with their application

submission along with a description of how the submission has responded to feedback.

Additionally, applicants of major projects sometimes choose to conduct optional supplementary public consultation meetings.

3.0 Official Community Plan

The Official Community Plan (OCP) is the principal tool for managing land use, growth and change in the municipality. It includes policies to guide planning decisions that promote the long-term goals of the community.

4.0 Financial Implications

There are no financial implications to the District in endorsing the proposed public consultation strategy. Development applicants are required to advertise, notify, host and facilitate all public consultations at their own cost.

5.0 Background

5.1 Previous Decisions – Not applicable.

5.2 History

Since the declaration of a global pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) in March 2020, public consultations and engagements were temporarily suspended in the District, and similar measures were enacted in most other municipalities in the Province. This includes consultations that form part of the standard process for development applications, such as rezonings.

On May 1, 2020, Provincial Order M139 was enacted, which enabled municipalities to hold meetings without public attendance and by electronic means and to hold public hearings via means of electronic or other communication facilities. Council has recently begun holding meetings, that are primarily electronic and where in person attendance in accordance with Provincial health directives is possible, to consider development applications. As well, the District has reinitiated meetings for other Council-appointed committees in virtual format, again also providing for in person attendance in accordance with Provincial health directives.

6.0 Analysis

6.1 Discussion

In order to continue important business functions including the provision of housing units while also providing consultation opportunities that are consistent with health directives, a strategy has been developed. The proposed strategy divides development projects into two categories based on scale of development:

Small Projects – Virtual Public Engagement Only

Small scale projects are defined as 0 to 4 residential units, up to 3 storeys and small scale commercial projects. Applicants would be required to undertake virtual public engagement only by:

- Hosting a webpage that includes project information and a comment form.
- Providing a phone number of a staff member available for providing comments or asking questions.
- Mailing out a notice to the required notification area and inviting neighbours to “visit” the virtual engagement and to comment on the proposal. Mail outs should be timed to accommodate potential mail delays due to the COVID 19 pandemic.
- Submitting a public consultation summary to staff of the virtual engagement as per the standard process.

Large Projects – Virtual and “In-person” Public Engagement

Large scale projects are defined as 5 or more residential units and/or more than 3 storeys. Applicants would be required to undertake both virtual and “in-person” public engagement by:

- Hosting an “in-person” public information meeting with protocols in place to adhere to physical distancing requirements.
- Hosting a webpage that includes project information and a comment form.
- Providing a phone number of a staff member available for providing comments or asking questions.
- Mailing out a notice to the required notification area and inviting neighbours to either the “in-person” or virtual engagement and to comment on the proposal. Mail outs should be timed to accommodate potential mail delays due to the COVID 19 pandemic.
- Submitting a public consultation summary to staff as per standard process.

Staff would review all materials prior to posting and attend any “in-person” public information meeting to observe and answer questions related to District policy, processes, etc., as per standard process. Staff are also developing a standard checklist of materials and information to provide to applicants so that minimum standards for illustrating and describing a project are met.

The proposed strategy is intended to ensure adequate and convenient opportunities are provided for residents and community members to provide input on development proposals based on the scale of the project during the COVID 19 pandemic. During the pandemic, staff have reviewed

all development proposals that are required to conduct public consultation meetings in the near and medium term (within the next 8 months). Based on review of the scale and variety of applications, the proposed strategy for conducting public engagement under the current conditions will ensure public safety guidelines are followed while still meeting the intent of the District's Development Procedures Bylaw and Preliminary Development Proposal and Public Consultation Policy for seek public feedback on development proposals.

6.2 Sustainability

Establishing a public consultation strategy during the pandemic will support economic and social sustainability as it relates to development applications and the provision of housing. The review and consideration of development applications plays an important role in building permitting and the construction industry, among others. As well, increased processing times for applications results in increased costs – a prolonged delay in processing could jeopardize some projects. Allowing for public consultation on development applications will balance the need for input on applications with the community need to participate in public consultation.

6.3 Public Engagement and Outreach

The proposed strategy was reviewed by the Community Engagement Committee (CEC) on May 28, 2020. The committee provided comments and suggestions on the interim strategy that have been incorporated. The following is a summary of comments and suggestions received:

- Mail outs should consider potential delays related to COVID and ensure that community members have enough lead time to attend meetings and/or provide feedback.
- Applicants should be required to follow a standardized checklist of materials and information.
- General discussion about potential alternative and supplementary innovative consultation techniques and tools including more interactive platforms.
- Suggestion to include a "phone in" option for those who may have limited access to a computer or the internet. Discussion regarding the potential for townhall meetings to be conducted via phone.
- Discussion about how the strategy has to recognize the potential ongoing changes to health guidelines and the pandemic situation.

6.4 Other Communication, Consultation, and Research – Not applicable.

7.0 Conclusion

The interim public engagement strategy will provide a clear framework for the public and applicants about public consultation as part of development projects during the COVID 19 pandemic. It is expected that the strategy will remain in place during the duration of the pandemic.

Author:



Michelle McGuire
Manager of Current Planning and Urban Design

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