



DISTRICT OF WEST VANCOUVER
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7.

COUNCIL REPORT

Date:	May 27, 2022
From:	David Hawkins, Senior Manager, Community Planning & Sustainability
Subject:	Ambleside Town Centre Local Area Plan: Revised Approach
File:	2520-17

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the report dated May 27, 2022 titled “Ambleside Town Centre Local Area Plan: Revised Approach” be received for information.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT staff prepare three high-level, draft plan options for engagement purposes.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT staff report back to Council with the three high-level, draft plan options for subsequent direction in the first quarter of 2023.

1.0 Purpose

To recommend a revised approach to the preparation of the Ambleside Town Centre Local Area Plan (LAP).

2.0 Legislation/Bylaw/Policy

The policy context for local area planning is provided by the District’s Official Community Plan (OCP) Bylaw No. 4985, 2018.

As local area plans comprise part of the OCP, the Local Government Act (LGA) requirements for OCP content apply. Notably, plans must identify the “approximate location, amount, type and density of residential development” and the “approximate location, amount and type of present and proposed commercial” uses.

Additionally, the LGA enables the designation of development permit areas within an OCP to guide development in “an area in which a commercial use is permitted” and to establish “objectives for the form and character” of commercial and multifamily residential development.

3.0 Council Strategic Objective(s)/Official Community Plan

Council Strategic Plan

Council's 2021-2022 Strategic Plan directs the LAP preparation:

Objective 1.5: Initiate a Local Area Plan for Ambleside Town Centre

Official Community Plan

The OCP includes a range of policies to guide LAP preparation for Ambleside, including:

- 2.1.13 Create capacity for [...] new housing units through local area plans for the following areas, subject to provision 2.1.14 of this plan:
 - a. Ambleside Municipal Town Centre (1,000-1,200 estimated net new units);
- 2.1.14 Prepare local area plans by:
 - a. Reviewing and confirming boundaries and new unit estimates through the local area planning processes;
 - b. Determining densities, heights and building forms that respond to neighbourhood context and character (e.g., topography, natural features, site area, transportation and amenities); and
 - c. Prioritizing mixed-use and apartment forms in core areas and ground-oriented multi-family forms (e.g., townhouses, duplexes) to transition to adjacent single-family neighbourhoods.
- 2.3.1 Emphasize Ambleside Municipal Town Centre as the heart of West Vancouver with commercial land uses, such as:
 - a. Retail, service and restaurants;
 - b. Arts and culture spaces;
 - c. Offices;
 - d. Civic services and facilities;
 - e. Visitor accommodation, such as boutique hotel(s); and
 - f. Waterfront recreation.
- 2.3.10 Support the development of visitor accommodations, including but not limited to:
 - a. Boutique hotel(s) in Ambleside Municipal Town Centre;

The preparation of the LAP would also represent an implementation opportunity for other OCP policies guiding the consideration of centres including: placemaking and public spaces (2.3.13); the pedestrian and cycling network (2.4.1); streetscapes and transportation alternatives (2.4.9); parking management (2.4.17); energy and emissions reductions (2.6.19); public realm connections and trails (2.7.2); and art, culture, and diversity in the public realm (2.8.14).

4.0 Financial Implications

Resourcing of the LAP is in place under the approved departmental budget. Any changes to the proposed approach that carry financial implications would be addressed and reported on, as appropriate or necessary should they arise.

5.0 Background

5.1 Previous Decisions

At the December 13, 2021 Council Meeting, Council passed the following resolutions:

THAT the Ambleside Town Centre Local Area Plan Terms of Reference, attached as Appendix A to the report dated November 24, 2021 from the Senior Urban Design Planner, be received for information.

THAT staff:

- 1. commence the Ambleside Town Centre Local Area Planning process in accordance with the Ambleside Town Centre Local Area Plan Terms of Reference, attached as Appendix A to the report dated November 24, 2021 from the Senior Urban Design Planner; and*
- 2. target December 2022 to report back to Council with the results of Phase 2.*

5.2 History

Staff proposed Terms of Reference (Terms) for a four-phase LAP for approval on December 13, 2021. Council did not approve the Terms and further amended staff's recommendation, specifically to accelerate timing of Phase 1: *Envisioning* and Phase 2: *Scenarios*. Staff subsequently discussed the potential use of a citizens' assembly approach with CEC on May 4, 2022, as a possible method to condense engagement timelines and breadth into a 12-15 month process through a 24-member independent body.

A range of opinions and concerns were respectfully raised regarding these different planning and engagement approaches. These are expanded upon in Section 6.1 (Discussion) below. Staff have carefully reviewed all input from these Council and CEC meetings, have considered alternatives, and are proposing to reposition the process through a revised approach – the purpose and subject of this report.

6.0 Analysis

6.1 Discussion

This report recommends a revised approach for the LAP process that seeks to apply previous input in a diligent and constructive manner to frame subsequent public engagement and (with future Council direction) to support the consideration of a final plan for adoption. The overarching goal of the LAP remains to create and/or refresh local planning and design provisions, situate these within the broader context of the OCP's objectives and policies, and integrate them with any relevant recent and ongoing initiatives.

Building on What We Know and What We've Heard

Ambleside is located on the traditional territory of Coast Salish peoples, including the Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh and Musqueam First Nations. Today, it is home to about 7,300 residents (nearly one-fifth of the District's population) and around 3,500 jobs (one-third of the District's employment). Compared to West Vancouver overall, residents of Ambleside are older (median age of 64 years compared to 51 years), more frequently comprise one-person households (56% compared to 27%), and have lower household incomes (median income of \$50,000 compared to \$90,000).

Ambleside has been the heart of the community since before the incorporation of the District, and continues to be a focus for residents, businesses, and visitors with a diversity of signature parks, three schools within or adjoining the LAP, and many civic and community facilities (including the library, community and recreation centres). Since Ambleside's continued success is of importance to the neighbourhood as well as to the overall District, it has been the subject of a range of studies, plans and public engagement. These have identified concerns regarding the reduced vitality of the commercial core, with businesses reporting difficulty in hiring employees and residents finding that not all of the shops and services that they frequent are locally available. The relatively more affordable housing existing today – Ambleside's apartment area is home to more than 90% of the District's purpose-built rental stock – is aging and increasingly vulnerable to redevelopment.

Beyond the commercial and apartment areas, most housing within the LAP is in the form of single-detached homes, meaning that there are relatively fewer options for younger families and seniors wanting to age in place. Transportation is another factor shaped by growth in the region and beyond (versus local growth, which has been static to modest across recent census counts) and the community has expressed a range of opinions on mobility options regarding congestion, transit, parking, and pedestrian and cycling infrastructure.

While there is a broadly shared acknowledgement of the issues that require consideration through the LAP, there are different ideas about the appropriate responses that would enhance Ambleside. The intention of this revised approach would be to move beyond the issues to enable a

structured and transparent discussion about potential planning responses by providing three high-level options for the community to review, refine, and/or recast.

Preparation of the three options would build upon these previous studies, plans and engagement findings rather than replicate them. The use of three options would allow the community to see alternatives, consider trade-offs, and provide input on how objectives could be balanced and optimized.

Responding to Council Discussion and CEC Input

Staff sought Council approval for proposed Terms of Reference for the LAP process at the December 13, 2021 meeting. During its deliberation, Council determined not to approve the proposed Terms and provided direction to the effect that the visioning and scenario evaluation phases move forward in a more synchronized or expeditious fashion. Key discussion points from this meeting included:

- concern that the proposed pace of engagement and planning over 24 months and four phases was too lengthy;
- identification that the issues are known (e.g., aging rental stock, commercial revitalization, responding to missing middle and seniors housing needs), but the appropriate resolution is contested;
- consideration that early visioning phases (e.g., review of planning issues and objectives) would replicate previous engagement completed for Ambleside; and
- interest in the advisory roundtable finding the correct balance between stakeholders.

Staff considered alternative approaches that would better address the limitations identified in the previously received Terms and sought the expertise of Council's Community Engagement Committee (CEC).

Staff presented a verbal report at the March 2, 2022 CEC meeting identifying the potential use of a citizens' assembly engagement approach, before providing a full draft scope of a citizens' assembly model at the May 4, 2022 meeting. The central tenet of a citizens' assembly would be the selection through a random, "blind" draw of 24 representative members (i.e., assembly membership would reflect the existing demographics of Ambleside in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, housing tenure, and employment status), with these 24 members tasked with deliberating and then recommending on the framework of the overall LAP.

While CEC discussion demonstrated interest, various issues were raised with this potential approach, including:

- recognition of the large geographical area and significant planning complexity of the Ambleside LAP in and of itself, and on account of related and proximate initiatives (e.g., *Ambleside Waterfront Plan*);

- support for innovation in engagement, but concern that it is risky to utilize an untried approach for a major project such as the Ambleside LAP and the difficulties of 24 members adequately reflecting, capturing and proposing significant planning responses;
- confidence in staff's ability to lead planning and engagement processes based on the successful completion of other projects (e.g., the OCP and previous LAPs);
- identification that the LAP response could be better supported with three-dimensional, visual and other design resources earlier rather than later in the process; and
- support for utilizing previous public and stakeholder input to reduce the length of the process.

Importantly, the proposed citizens' assembly approach failed to provide sufficient confidence that it would meet its intentions. Chiefly: that randomness and representativeness might not be feasible (e.g., how composition would or should reflect residents vs businesses, Ambleside vs district-wide, existing vs future demographics); that opportunities for broader community input and CEC guidance would be delimited as a result of seeking to distill engagement into a "standalone" 24-member assembly process; and that this approach – with the realistic need for member orientation, assembly debate around complex issues, consensus-based production of recommendations, and wider community confidence in assembly outcomes – would actually lengthen the LAP process.

The proposed revised approach

In bringing forward a revised approach, staff are seeking to incorporate key themes of input received from both Council and the CEC (while acknowledging differing perspectives exist). An objective of preparing draft plan options is to improve the quality of subsequent community engagement, while reducing the duration of the process overall. This would be accomplished by staff undertaking in Q3-4 2022 the technical work that would have previously run "alongside" engagement. This technical work would include:

- building on what we know using completed resources (e.g. District studies, surveys, and plans, as well as external reports such as *ImagineAmbleside* and census data);
- identifying options through consideration of their ability to respond to issues, meet District objectives, and align with other initiatives (e.g., *Housing Needs Report*, *Economic Development Plan* update, climate emergency declaration, *Ambleside Waterfront Plan*); and
- communicating three options in accessible, primarily visual methods (e.g., three-dimensional modeling, building massing perspectives from key streets, land use, building height and public realm/mobility systems maps).

This technical work would be incorporated into three high-level, draft plan options to be brought to Council for direction in Q1 2023. The three options would provide tangible visions of three scenarios for the community to then respond to and to shape. Central to this approach is the understanding that this would in no way predetermine Council decisions or community responses, but rather would provide a material basis to facilitate those decisions and responses. This approach is proposed to respect both the time and energy that Council and the community have already invested to date, and Council's and the community's time and energy that would be sought moving forward with the LAP.

Pending Council's direction, staff would then seek CEC input in Q1 2023 on an engagement plan for eliciting public and stakeholder feedback on the three draft plan options. Engagement on the options would then be anticipated in Q2 2023 and would be structured to allow the community to respond to the draft options, indicate preferences, and suggest improvements or possible alternatives. This input would then be used in Q3 2023 to create a single draft plan that would be published for a second-round engagement in Q4 2023. After review of community input, it is anticipated that a proposed LAP would be brought forward for Council's consideration for adoption into the OCP in Q1 2024. This proposed LAP process is summarized below:

Draft options preparation, direction and engagement

2022	Q3-Q4	Staff preparation of draft options
2023	Q1	Council direction and CEC advisement
	Q2	Community engagement on draft options

Draft plan preparation, engagement and consideration

2023	Q3	Staff preparation of draft plan
	Q4	Community engagement on draft plan
2024	Q1	Council consideration of plan adoption

6.2 Sustainability

LAPs provide a significant opportunity to advance the District's environmental, social, economic, and cultural sustainability objectives as adopted through its 2018 OCP.

6.3 Public Engagement and Outreach

Should Council direct staff to proceed in accordance with this report's recommendations, draft plan options would be prepared. These options would then be used as the basis of public engagement. The specific engagement approach would be informed by the CEC in accordance with District policy. A full range of tools could be considered, such as: stakeholder workshops, community survey, design charrettes, and/or

other forums with a focus on providing authentic opportunities to participate and collaborate in refining options, and to shape the subsequent plan.

6.4 Other Communication, Consultation, and Research

The preparation of draft plan options would involve staff from various divisions and could involve external agencies with interests in the area. Additional research needs are anticipated to arise (e.g., land economic viability analysis) and will be addressed as appropriate.

7.0 Options

7.1 Recommended Option

At the time of consideration of this report Council may:

- a) Receive this report for information and direct staff to prepare three high-level, draft plan options and report back to Council.

7.2 Considered Options

- b) Receive this report for information, but direct staff to prepare a single high-level, draft plan option.
- c) Defeat the recommendation and direct staff to report back in the first quarter of 2023 for further direction at that time.
- d) Request further information or provide alternate direction.

8.0 Conclusion

The District's OCP calls for the preparation of the Ambleside Town Centre LAP. Staff recommend a revised approach as described in this report.

Author: 

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