

Signage for Vacant Sites in New Developments – Interim Report

ISSUE

During consideration of a rezoning application for an undeveloped site in Willowgrove, Administration was requested to report back regarding options to better communicate future land uses in developing areas.

BACKGROUND

At the October 22, 2018 City Council meeting, Councillor Jeffries made the following motion:

“That Administration report back about how vacant sites in new developments can be appropriately signed to better communicate future land uses identified in neighbourhood concept plans.”

This motion stemmed from consideration of a rezoning application for a site in Willowgrove, which had remained undeveloped for much longer than surrounding properties. Rezoning of the site was in alignment with the approved Willowgrove Neighbourhood Concept Plan, however it did not match the expectations or understanding of neighbouring residents. Concerns were expressed regarding how the future site use had been communicated and how it could be improved in the future to ensure residents have more awareness of planned future land uses in their neighbourhoods. Signage was discussed as one option. This option would be an easily visible method to communicate future intended uses of vacant sites.

CURRENT STATUS

The development and build out of a new neighbourhood takes a significant amount of time and may involve many changes over the course of the development. While the Administration and developers work together to phase build out of a neighbourhood, individual sites may remain vacant for several years, for a variety of reasons, while the area around them is built and completed. In the current state, Administration does not play an active role in communicating the intended future use of these vacant sites. If questions are received from residents, the Neighbourhood Concept Plan provides the current approved future development intentions for the site.

At any time, the owner of the site can come forward with a development proposal. This may be in the form of a development and building permit application, if the proposal is permitted in the current zoning, or it may be through a rezoning application and/or a concept plan amendment application. When a rezoning or concept plan amendment is required, Administration undertakes a public notification and consultation process. The standards used for this process were the subject of the May 11, 2020 report, to the Standing Policy Committee on Planning, Development and Community Services, titled “Review of Notification and Community Consultation for Development Applications.”

In the Willowgrove example, as well as a number of more recent cases, it has become clear there appears to be a gap in communication and understanding related to what types

Signage for Vacant Sites in New Developments – Interim Report

of building may be allowed under certain Land Use Designations and how land use in neighbourhoods can be changed over time. Addressing this information gap could involve a variety of options, including signage, communication materials, educational materials and other activities. Additional enhancements to the current notification and community consultation standards could be part of the solution, but it may also include a broader, proactive approach as well. At this point, further analysis is required.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

In order to respond fully to this motion, a review of municipal approaches across Canada related to communicating future land uses in new developments will be undertaken. In addition, engagement with industry professionals and other stakeholders to explore opportunities will also be done. Due to other priorities in the Division's work plan, this work has not yet been started. More time is required to undertake this analysis and engagement before preparing options for consideration.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial, legal, social or environmental implications identified at this time.

NEXT STEPS

Administration will report back in 2021 with options for consideration.

REPORT APPROVAL

Written by: Lesley Anderson, Director of Planning and Development
Reviewed by: Darryl Dawson, Manager of Development Review
Approved by: Lynne Lacroix, General Manager, Community Services Department

SP/2020/PD/PDCS/Signage for Vacant Sites in New Developments – Interim Report/pg