

Walter, Penny

From: City Council
Subject: FW: Email - Communication - Paul Christensen - Housing Accelerator Fund – Permitting Four Storeys Within the Transit Development Area – CK 750-1
Attachments: Letter to MPC - May 27, 2024.docx

From: Web NoReply <web-noreply@Saskatoon.ca>
Sent: Monday, May 27, 2024 10:39 AM
To: City Council <City.Council@Saskatoon.ca>
Subject: Email - Communication - Paul Christensen - Housing Accelerator Fund – Permitting Four Storeys Within the Transit Development Area – CK 750-1

--- Replies to this email will go to [REDACTED] ---

Submitted on Monday, May 27, 2024 - 10:36

Submitted by user: [REDACTED]

Submitted values are:

I have read and understand the above statements.: Yes

I do not want my comments placed on a public agenda. They will be shared with members of Council through their online repository.: No

I only want my comments shared with the Mayor or my Ward Councillor.: No

Date: Monday, May 27, 2024

To: His Worship the Mayor and Members of City Council

First Name: Paul

Last Name: Christensen

[REDACTED]

I live outside of Saskatoon: No

Saskatoon Address and Ward:

Address: [REDACTED] Munroe Ave S

Ward: Ward 6

What do you wish to do ?: Submit Comments

What meeting do you wish to speak/submit comments ? (if known):: Municipal Planning Commission meeting, May 28, 2024

What agenda item do you wish to comment on ?: Items involving the Housing Accelerator Fund (7.3 - 7.7)

Comments:

Please see attached letter.

Will you be submitting a video to be vetted prior to council meeting?: No

Date: May 27, 2024

To: Municipal Planning Commission (MPC), City of Saskatoon, SK

From: Paul Christensen, [REDACTED] Munroe Ave. S., Saskatoon, SK

RE: Proposed zoning / development changes under Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF) considered at the MPC meeting of May 28, 2024 (Agenda items 7.3-7.7)

Dear Sirs/Madams,

I am writing to express concerns regarding proposed changes to zoning within the City of Saskatoon under the HAF. In particular, proposed changes falling under the Corridor Residential within the Transit Development Area:

- Permitting four dwelling units per site.
 - Minimum site width of 15m (50ft)
 - Maximum permitted height of 10m
 - Maximum site coverage of 50% of the lot
- Permitting four storey residential development (5 units minimum with no maximum number of units, rental or condos) anywhere (elsewhere in Transit Development Area, only on lots fronting arterial and connector streets)
 - Minimum site width of 15m (50ft) – elsewhere is 21m (69ft)
 - Maximum permitted height of 15m
 - Maximum site coverage 50% of the lot – 60% at corners
- Permitting semi-detached and two-unit dwellings per site (new to R1 zone)
 - Minimum lot width 7.5 and 15m (50ft)
 - Maximum height of 8.5m
- No off-street parking requirements to be provided by builders

These changes strike me as rather dramatic, ill-considered, and not in keeping with the character of our neighbourhoods.

Consider a practical example. In our neighbourhood, some older homes on 50ft or wider lots are being purchased and replaced by two houses with legal basement suites – representing a 4-fold increase in housing density. They're obviously taller than the home that preceded them, but in my opinion at least, they look good. And they're in keeping with the character of our established neighbourhoods. They're also practical. Consider the following:

- The availability of a basement suite acts as a “mortgage helper” for home buyers.
- The basement suite offers more affordable housing for people who want to live in older, established neighbourhoods nearer a range of amenities.
- The (detached) garages offer space for at least two vehicles, each.
- The street frontage is sufficient to host two additional vehicles.
- Although a little tight, the alleyway behind the houses can host the 12 disposable bins (3 bins for each individual household).

Now imagine that suites were added above the (double) garages. There would then be 6 households. If, on average, each household represents one vehicle, then 6 parking spots would be required. And, in

total, the alleyway would have to host 18 disposal bins (unless there are plans for some sort of “consolidation” across households). In my mind, at least, this raises a few practical concerns:

- Where are the additional two vehicles going to park?
 - If these homes sit on a corner lot, then perhaps they can park on the street perpendicular to the front street.
- When temperatures plunge to -30C for a couple of weeks (like they do every winter), how are all occupants meant to reach their block heaters?
 - For cars parked in the garages, no problem.
 - For cars parked in front of the houses, a couple of extension cords will do the trick.
 - For the additional vehicles parked elsewhere (e.g., around the corner), access to an outlet will prove somewhat challenging.
- If EVs are in our future (and given the rapid pace of tech development and cost-effectiveness in that arena, EVs will definitely displace internal combustion engine-powered vehicles in time), households will in practice require Level 2 home charging capabilities (approximately 32-40 amp draw per charger at 240v).
 - Although households don’t need one Level 2 charger per vehicle (range capacities are already pretty good, and are just getting better), all vehicles will require periodic access to a Level 2 charger.
 - Installing Level 2 chargers in a garage is no problem. But what about the additional (4) cars parked outside the garages? Does the City plan on installing Level 2 chargers in front of homes (or, rather, update planning rules to insist that developers do so)?
- Where will these households store their 18 disposal bins?
 - Since they can’t be stored in front of the garage doors, there is very limited space for hosting all those bins in the alleyway.

Personally, I’m not opposed to the “3 suites per split lot” option. A 6-to-1 increase in density, a range of housing alternatives for differing people, and a “look” that is in keeping with our neighbourhoods. But I think practical questions like these need to be answered in order to ensure we’re not overwhelmed by cars, bins and extension cords.

Now let’s take this to the extreme (one that developers may find very attractive). A 4-story, 15m tall apartment building on a 50-foot frontage with inadequate parking. For sake argument, let’s assume that the apartment building has 16 suites (4 per floor) and four surface-level parking spots out back (accessed from the alleyway). In my mind, this raises some really pressing concerns:

- If, again, we assume an average of one vehicle per household, where will the additional vehicles park?
 - Each vehicle accounts for approximately 25 feet of lineal parking space. That means that 12 vehicles will consume approximately 300 feet of lineal space. That’s pretty much the length of an entire city block.
- How will these vehicles access outlets for block heaters during the winter?
 - Are we going to run 1000s of feet of extension cords along sidewalks or through the Elm trees?
 - Are occupants going to have to rearrange those extension cords every day depending on where they find a parking space?

- Where is anyone else meant to park?
 - Our streets already host quite a lot of cars belonging to existing households. Where will they park now?
- As we transition to EVs, where will we host the Level 2 chargers that will – for all practical purposes – absolutely be required?
- If each household represents 3 disposal bins (although, again, some degree of consolidation may be possible), that’s now 48 disposal bins.
 - Where are those 48 bins going to go?

With regards these practical concerns, there seems to be some notion that people within the proposed TDA will somehow cast aside their cars in favour of a bus pass. This is simply wishful thinking. Even if people use the bus for commuting purposes, for example, they will still own a car. (My wife and I lived in Vancouver’s West End for years. And despite excellent public transit, we – like almost everybody else – owned a car.) And those cars WILL need to be parked somewhere. And they WILL need reliable access to extension cords or Level 2 chargers.

In addition to these practical concerns, there are obvious aesthetic and other issues that affect the well-being of existing homeowners. For example:

- While a 2-storey home rises to about 7 meters, a 4-plex will reach about 10 meters, while a 4-storey unit will reach about 15 meters.
 - They will simply tower over existing homes and block out the sun almost entirely.
- While new 2-storey homes generally look pretty good and are in keeping with the character of our neighbourhoods, 10- and 15-meter-tall blocky apartment buildings are definitely NOT in keeping with the character of our neighbourhoods. They’ll stick out like a sore thumb.

Given all this, I’m personally dumbfounded by the City’s decisions in this regard – despite the obvious financial carrot dangled by the Federal government. They don’t appear to make much sense at all. And they will diminish the appeal of our neighbourhoods.

Thank you for offering me the opportunity to submit this letter. And I do appreciate the work you do on behalf of the citizens of Saskatoon.

Paul Christensen

CC: Cynthia Block (cynthia.block@saskatoon.ca) and Charlie Clark (mayors.office@saskatoon.ca).