
Proposed Official Community Plan Amendment and Rezoning by Agreement – 1006 College Drive and 421 Clarence Avenue North

Recommendation

That a report be submitted to City Council recommending that at the time of the public hearing, City Council consider the Administration's recommendation that the applications to amend Bylaw No. 8769, The Official Community Plan Bylaw, 2009, and Bylaw No. 8770, Zoning Bylaw, regarding 1006 College Drive and 421 Clarence Avenue North, as outlined in this report, be approved.

Topic and Purpose

North Prairie Developments Ltd. has submitted applications to amend Bylaw No. 8769, The Official Community Plan Bylaw, 2009, and Bylaw No. 8770, Zoning Bylaw, with respect to the property at 1006 College Drive and 421 Clarence Avenue North.

The purpose of these applications is to provide for the development of a 12-storey multiple-unit dwelling with 171 units.

Report Highlights

1. A 171-unit, 12-storey, multiple-unit dwelling is proposed at this location.
2. The proposal supports the objectives of the Growth Plan to Half a Million (Growth Plan), which directs increased density to major corridors as part of their long-term evolution into thriving urban corridors.
3. The single-family environment at the centre of the Varsity View neighbourhood is preserved with this approach.
4. The proposal can be accommodated by local infrastructure, which includes the transportation system.
5. The proposed Rezoning Agreement would limit development of the site to the specific proposal outlined in this report.

Strategic Goal

This report supports the City of Saskatoon's (City) Strategic Goal of Sustainable Growth by facilitating appropriate intensification along a major corridor to support implementation of the Growth Plan and the City's objective to balance infill and greenfield growth. In 2017, the share of infill growth as a five-year rolling average was 13.7%.

Background

The subject property, located in the Varsity View neighbourhood, is currently zoned M2 – Community Institutional Service District and RM4 – Medium/High Density Multiple-Unit Dwelling District. The Varsity View Land Use Policy Map, part of Bylaw No. 8769,

The Official Community Plan Bylaw, 2009 (OCP), correspondingly designates this property as “Office/Institutional” and “Medium Density Residential.”

In general, the M2 District permits multiple-unit residential development to a maximum of three stories, along with a limited range of office and institutional uses. The RM4 District permits multiple-unit residential to a maximum of four stories.

The property was previously occupied by one-unit dwellings, all of which have been demolished, with the most recent demolitions occurring in 2011. The property is currently vacant. See Attachment 1 for location maps.

Report

Development Proposal

The development proposal submitted by North Prairie Developments Ltd. consists of a multiple-unit dwelling with the following characteristics:

- a) 171 dwelling units within 12 above-grade floors;
- b) 232 underground vehicle parking spaces, along with secure bicycle parking;
- c) a mix of one and two bedroom units with a range of floor areas;
- d) units located at-grade with individual street-oriented entrances; and
- e) vehicle access to the site from the rear lane only.

See Attachment 2 for the proposed site plan and Attachment 3 for building renderings.

To facilitate the development of this proposal, an amendment to the Varsity View Land Use Policy Map to designate the property “High Density Residential” and a rezoning to M3 – General Institutional Service District, subject to a Rezoning Agreement, is required.

Positive Design Elements

The proposal has a number of design elements that respond to the subject site and contribute to the development of a high quality, urban streetscape on College Drive, as follows:

- a. Ground floor dwelling units with individual street-oriented entrances contribute to a more pedestrian-friendly environment.
- b. The minimal setback from College Drive helps frame and define the street.
- c. A distinct base, middle, and top is expressed in the building design.
- d. A mix of exterior finishes and a high degree of glazing provide visual interest.
- e. Landscaping of open areas and the incorporation of pathways through the site improve ground level conditions and connectivity.

- f. Design of the rear lane side of the building echoes the front, ensuring that there is no identifiable “backside” interfacing with the neighbourhood to the south.

Site Characteristics that Support Increased Density

There are a number of characteristics of the subject site that make it an appropriate location for increased density, as follows:

- a. The site is adjacent to the intersection of two major corridors.
- b. College Drive has a high degree of existing transit service with Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service proposed in future.
- c. Proximity to Downtown (~19,000 jobs), Royal University Hospital (~4,800 jobs), University of Saskatchewan (~25,000 students and ~9,000 jobs), future Jim Pattison Children’s Hospital, and the Meewasin Trail supports active transportation.
- d. Varsity View residents choose an alternative mode of travel to work at higher rates than city wide. This includes transit use of 7.4% versus 5.1% citywide, walking at a rate of 24.8% versus 4.6%, and cycling at a rate of 12.1% versus 2.2%. Just under half of Varsity View residents travel to work by car versus 80.5% city wide.
- e. Shadowing impacts from the building are primarily to the north, minimizing impacts on adjacent properties.
- f. As a corner site at the northwestern boundary of Varsity View, impacts on single family properties are minimized. Immediate neighbours are institutional uses with Ronald McDonald House to the south and visitor lodges to the east. The nearest single-family homes are across a lane to the east and south, which are further separated by a parking station and landscaped area being developed by Ronald McDonald House.
- g. The proposal does not extend high-density zoning into any area zoned R2 – One- and Two-Unit Residential District, which forms the stable, single-family interior of Varsity View.

Policy Analysis

In considering this request, it is necessary to ensure that there is general alignment with existing policy for development in this area and objectives for Saskatoon as a whole. In addition to the summary below, Attachment 4 should be consulted for a complete overview.

1. Bylaw No. 8769, The Official Community Plan Bylaw, 2009
A fundamental value of the OCP is to support the vision of the Growth Plan in establishing a new growth model for Saskatoon. In this regard, the OCP encourages the consideration of progressive development proposals that align with the Growth Plan, and the undertaking of facilitative amendments to the Zoning Bylaw where warranted.

More generally, the OCP promotes a compact and efficient urban form where density is concentrated in or along designated nodes and corridors in order to maximize the use of existing community infrastructure and encourage the use of public transit.

2. Growth Plan

The Growth Plan identifies College Drive as a corridor for redevelopment and growth. The Red and Green lines of the BRT system are proposed to run on College Drive, with the nearest station proposed at College Drive and Munroe Avenue. Fifteen percent of future growth to a population of 500,000 is projected to occur along corridors to support the BRT, which will require the construction of 11,000 to 22,000 new dwelling units. To achieve the objective of corridor growth, increasing the density and scale of development along these corridors above what current zoning allows is imperative.

The proposal supports the Growth Plan in the following ways:

- a. Increased density and population is provided in a transit-supportive location.
- b. Residents are offered viable opportunities to move around by alternative means.
- c. Existing land and infrastructure is more efficiently utilized.
- d. The range of housing choices in the area to meet the needs of existing and future residents is enhanced.
- e. Enhanced neighbourhood edges improve connectivity between and within neighbourhoods.
- f. The pedestrian environment of College Drive is improved through design elements of the proposal discussed earlier in this report.
- g. High density housing is placed in a strategic and intentional manner along major corridors, rather than in a more random pattern that does not support the Growth Plan's objectives.
- h. It contributes to the creation of a community that is ultimately more affordable to run in the long term.

3. Varsity View Local Area Plan

The Varsity View Local Area Plan was endorsed by City Council in 2014, and set out a number of goals to guide land use and infill in the neighbourhood. The Varsity View Local Area Plan did not recommend any specific zoning changes for this site, keeping the established zoning pattern on College Drive unchanged. However, it did acknowledge Varsity View's obligation to share in broader community goals and increase neighbourhood density in a well-considered way. In this respect, two important considerations for intensification in the neighbourhood stand out when considering this proposal:

- that the stable, single-family environment at the centre of the neighbourhood be preserved; and

- that intensification be directed to the perimeter of the neighbourhood along major transportation corridors.

In discussing the Growth Plan (which was being prepared at that time under the “Growing Forward” banner), the Varsity View Local Area Plan states:

“It is hoped that targeted and appropriate densification in Saskatoon will help to preserve the core of existing residential neighbourhoods and allow stable areas to remain at generally lower densities, while the neighbourhood-wide density may increase over time as a result of new development along and near significant transportation corridors.”

The Administration recognizes that community expectations expressed through the public engagement undertaken of how much density or height is appropriate at this location may differ from what has ultimately been proposed with this development. It is also acknowledged that some feel that density should not exceed existing zoning, given that the Varsity View Local Area Plan did not recommend a change.

The Growth Plan, which was approved by City Council after the Varsity View Local Area Plan, requires significant change along the corridors to support a successful implementation of BRT and the plan as a whole. In this respect, zoning along many corridors is out of date with respect to accommodating the increased density and scale of development required.

In considering this application, the city-wide objectives of the Growth Plan must be reconciled with the vision and wishes set out by a community through its Local Area Plan. In this respect, this proposal provides increased density in a deliberate and rational location, along a major corridor to support the Growth Plan, while respecting the local community’s wishes to preserve the low-density heart of Varsity View that exists within its perimeter corridors. It does not replace any single-family housing, nor does it represent an encroachment of higher-density zoning into the neighbourhood’s interior.

The Administration believes that this proposal, in this specific location, balances the objectives of both plans and is of an appropriate height and density.

Vision for Future Development of College Drive

Consideration of this proposal has raised questions about the long-term development of College Drive beyond the focus of this specific site. The Growth Plan establishes the basic principles for its evolution into a thriving urban corridor, and this proposal ties into that vision.

Along with increased density and pedestrian and transit-oriented building forms discussed previously in this report, future improvements to public space within the

College Drive right-of-way will also enhance the pedestrian experience, connectivity, and general look and feel of the area. Taken together, interventions in both the private and public realm are intended to evolve College Drive to a walkable and urban transit street that is more inviting as a people place and that knits areas together; as opposed to its current condition as an auto-centric arterial that acts as a barrier and discourages walkability.

The Corridor Planning Program, in consultation with the community and stakeholder groups, will determine appropriate development standards for the rest of the corridor, including details around height, density, and building massing. Also under consideration through that program are potential improvements to the public realm.

In the interim, consideration of proposals that align with the Growth Plan are encouraged by the OCP, and require consideration on their site-specific merits. The height and density that is considered to be appropriate in this location should not be taken to necessarily apply to the rest of College Drive.

Technical Review of Proposal

A number of technical considerations required careful analysis to ensure that this development proposal can be appropriately serviced by local infrastructure and that potential impacts on the surrounding area are mitigated. These include:

- a. Traffic Impact – A Traffic Impact Assessment confirms that additional traffic generated by the proposal can be safely and efficiently accommodated by the transportation system. This study included identifying appropriate site access, which is provided by two adjoining lane segments that are recommended to be paved, and a proposed median opening on the 1000 block of University Drive that will be considered by City Council in a separate report.
- b. Geotechnical Analysis – A geotechnical analysis confirms that the proposed building does not negatively impact the stability of the slope at this location. Design recommendations from the geotechnical report must be complied with in final foundation and building design before a building permit will be issued.
- c. Site Servicing – The proposal can be appropriately serviced by the water, sanitary sewer, and storm sewer systems. Certain technical requirements will apply at the building permit stage.

Community engagement conducted for this proposal included extensive discussion concerning these matters, especially traffic impact. Follow-up information provided in response to the primary concerns raised can be found in Attachment 5. Refer to Attachment 6 for comments from the administrative referral process. No concerns were received that would preclude this application from proceeding to a public hearing.

Proposed Rezoning Agreement

If the recommendations of this report are approved, a Rezoning Agreement would dictate the specific development proposal permitted to be constructed at this location. Proposed terms of the Rezoning Agreement are detailed in Attachment 7.

Options to the Recommendation

City Council could choose to deny this application, which would prevent this development from proceeding. This decision is not recommended as the application aligns with existing policy, including the Growth Plan's objective to accommodate increased density along the corridors.

Public and/or Stakeholder Involvement

A public information meeting regarding this proposal was held on September 13, 2018, with approximately 60 members of the general public, the local City Councillor, representatives of North Prairie Developments Ltd., and City staff in attendance. See Attachment 8 for the Community Engagement Summary.

Main areas of concern discussed at the meeting, and expressed in correspondence since, include:

- a) traffic and parking impacts resulting from the development;
- b) existing traffic and parking issues in the area;
- c) infrastructure capacity in the area and ability to accommodate the development;
- d) disruption to the area during construction;
- e) proposed height and density of the development;
- f) alignment with the Varsity View Local Area Plan; and
- g) uncertainty regarding future development on College Drive, as well as setting of precedent.

Supportive comments concerned building design, improvement to the aesthetic condition of the adjacent intersection, opportunity for active transportation and BRT, and the need for increased density in Saskatoon. As referenced previously, follow-up information provided in response to primary areas of concern are included in Attachment 5.

Financial Implications

Prepaid service charges will be charged upon subdivision of the property, subject to the rates in effect and approved by City Council at the time of the subdivision application.

Other Considerations/Implications

There are no policy, environmental, privacy, or CPTED implications or considerations; a communication plan is not required at this time.

Due Date for Follow-up and/or Project Completion

A corresponding report from the Transportation and Utilities Department recommending that the adjacent rear lanes be paved by the developer and that a median opening on University Drive be permitted will be subsequently considered by City Council if the recommendation of this report is approved.

Public Notice

Public notice is required for consideration of this matter, pursuant to Section 11(a) of Policy No. C01-021, The Public Notice Policy. Once this application has been considered by the Municipal Planning Commission, it will be advertised in accordance with the Public Notice Policy, and a date for a public hearing will be set. The Planning and Development Division will provide notice of the public hearing date in writing to all property owners that received notice of the public information meeting, as well as all those that have engaged with Administration on this matter. A notice will be placed in The StarPhoenix two weeks prior. Notice boards will be placed on the site.

Attachments

1. Location Maps – 1006 College Drive and 421 Clarence Avenue North
2. Proposed Site Plan – 1006 College Drive and 421 Clarence Avenue North
3. Proposed Building Elevations – 1006 College Drive and 421 Clarence Avenue North
4. Overview of Relevant Policy
5. Follow-Up Information – Main Areas of Concern
6. Comments from Other Divisions/Departments - 1006 College Drive and 421 Clarence Avenue North
7. Proposed Terms of Rezoning Agreement - 1006 College Drive and 421 Clarence Avenue North
8. Community Engagement Summary

Report Approval

Written by: Brent McAdam, City Centre Planner, Planning and Development

Reviewed by: Lesley Anderson, Director of Planning and Development

Approved by: Lynne Lacroix, Acting General Manager, Community Services Department

S/Reports/2018/PD/MPC – OCP Amend – 1006 College and 421 Clarence/lc