

Arbutus Properties – Future Sustainable Community Project Update

ISSUE

This report provides follow up information requested by the Standing Policy Committee on Planning, Development and Community Services, as a result of the report presented to the April 8, 2019 meeting on this topic.

BACKGROUND

At the August 14, 2018 meeting of the Standing Policy Committee on Planning, Development and Community Services, a representative from Arbutus Properties spoke in regards to a proposed future sustainable community project called Solair. At the conclusion of the presentation, Arbutus Properties requested assistance from the Administration in refining the concept plan, including addressing any early-stage technical and policy issues such as infrastructure servicing, boundary adjustment, Official Community Plan amendment, as well as sector and neighbourhood concept plan approvals. Arbutus Properties also indicated that a formal concept plan could be completed as early as January 2019. The Standing Policy Committee on Planning, Development, and Community Services resolved:

- “1. That Administration meet further with Arbutus to discuss identified technical issues with the project; and
2. That Administration report back in the first quarter of 2019 on the feasibility of incorporating the Solair neighbourhood project into the Holmwood Suburban Development Area.”

The Administration brought forward a report outlining the results of these discussions with Arbutus and an overview of the policy considerations related to this proposal to the April 8, 2019 meeting of the Standing Policy Committee on Planning, Development and Community Services. Arbutus Properties submitted a revised version of their project proposal to Committee. At that meeting, Committee resolved:

- “1. That the reports and recommendation be referred to the Planning for Growth process for consideration and feedback as part of overall next steps of P4G planning process.
2. That the Standing Policy Committee on Planning, Development and Community Services recommend to City Council that the Solair Neighbourhood project be included in the Holmwood Suburban Development Area.
3. That a report be submitted to the Committee after P4G has considered the project.

4. That the report be referred to the RM of Corman Park and the Saskatoon Environmental Advisory Committee; and
5. That the Administration provide a report on the financial implications and process proposed to include the Solair Neighbourhood project in the Holmwood Suburban Development Area to accompany the Committee's report to City Council in the second quarter of 2019.”

The discussion at Committee was that the intent of the resolutions was to enable the inclusion of the Solair project in the Holmwood Sector Plan through amendments at the earliest possible opportunity.

CURRENT STATUS

Referrals

Following the Committee meeting, the Administration’s report was referred to the Saskatoon North Partnership for Growth Regional Plan group (P4G), the Rural Municipality of Corman Park (Corman Park), and the Saskatoon Environmental Advisory Committee (SEAC). All of these referrals have now been considered by the respective groups. A summary of the results are provided below, and where available, formal responses are included as attachments.

Corman Park considered the report from Committee at their May 6, 2019 Planning Committee Meeting. The Planning Committee resolved:

“That the referral from the City of Saskatoon’s Standing Policy Committee on Planning, Development and Community Services regarding the proposed Solair development be received as information.”

The report from Corman Park Administration is included as Appendix 1. Highlights include reiterating the process that should be followed should the City pursue boundary alteration, and support for due process with respect to updating the Sector Plan should the City pursue this annexation. The RM has highlighted there is an expectation that other proposals in the RM should be given the same opportunity for advancement in the development phasing as that being considered for the Solair proposal. This would include the extension of urban servicing.

Saskatoon Environmental Advisory Committee (SEAC) received the report at their May 9, 2019 meeting. In discussion, SEAC noted the proposal has a number of positive concepts and ideas that could be applied, in the proposed location and in other locations within existing city boundaries. It was received for information.

The Saskatoon North Partnership for Growth Regional Plan group received the report for information at the May 2, 2019 meeting of the Regional Oversight Committee. A letter from the Director of the Saskatoon North Partnership for Growth is expected to be received on this item.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

Official Community Plan Amendments Required

The Planning and Development Act, 2007, Section 40, states the Official Community Plan is binding on the municipality and no development shall be carried out that is contrary to the Official Community Plan. In addition, Section 44 states that concept plans must be consistent with the Official Community Plan. Given these legislated requirements, and the fact the Solair proposal is not in compliance with a number of policies contained in the Official Community Plan, amendments would be required should City Council wish to pursue this development. Appendix 2 outlines the pertinent sections of the Official Community Plan for reference.

The implications of making the required changes to the Official Community Plan (OCP) are important to consider as they would apply to not only this proposal, but to all future development proposals. It would represent a shift from a phased and deliberate planning approach to an approach based on individual development proposals. This approach is a foundational element of the current OCP and changing it would be inconsistent with the current intent of the Saskatoon North Partnership for Growth Regional Plan, with current funding practices for growth used by the City, and with best practice urban planning principles. Following a prescribed approach creates a method of ensuring fairness and certainty for development interests and all land owners. The sequential phasing of infrastructure that comes along with this approach also supports financial sustainability and provides predictability. These two factors create a transparent path to development.

Making the OCP amendments required for the Solair proposal would open the City up to receiving ad hoc development proposals going forward. If City Council is interested in considering these policy changes, it will require changes to the OCP and has implications for the City's financing and capital investments going forward to address the change in the approach to growth and development.

These amendments could also result in impacts on service delivery and the provision of amenities in new developments. Neighbourhood amenities are typically not developed until the residential portion of a development is substantially complete. This is done to ensure there is both adequate funding and enough customers to support amenities. Shifting away from a deliberate, phased planning approach has implications for demand of new residential development being dispersed amongst a number of concurrent developments, and could result in new neighbourhoods taking longer to fully develop. The pace of population growth in new neighbourhoods has implications for the timing of the construction of amenities built by both the City (i.e. parks, recreation centres) and others (i.e. schools, commercial and institutional developments).

Financial Implications

In order to provide a comprehensive overview of the impact of proceeding with this development, the Administration has developed a financial estimate of costs associated with moving forward on this proposal.

Costs that have been estimated include the following components:

- amendments to the Official Community Plan;
- amendments to the Sector Plan;
- boundary alteration;
- servicing analysis and required infrastructure;
- transportation analysis and required infrastructure; and
- an analysis of the impacts to the City’s financing mechanisms.

A detailed breakdown of estimated costs is included in Appendix 3. Typical funding sources for each component have also been identified. Cost advantages due to other related and existing work have also been factored into these costs.

Process to include Solair in the Holmwood Sector Plan

The Sector Plan process is laid out in Appendix 4. Considering all factors, including working with two municipalities and the required engagement steps, an accelerated approach to this amendment is estimated to take 18-24 months to complete. Should the Administration be directed to proceed with this Sector Plan amendment at this time, a resourcing plan will be developed and brought forward that best utilizes a combination of internal and external resources.

Summary

Arbutus Properties has proposed that the Solair project represents a significant change in urban development standards and the unique nature of this proposal justifies its prioritization. The Administration recognizes there may be unique attributes of the Solair proposal that may be beneficial and has undertaken a preliminary review to evaluate the proposal. In review, these attributes do not appear to be linked to the current location of the proposal (i.e. outside of City boundaries). Therefore, the City has identified there are a number of options that could be considered for how the unique elements of this proposal could be achieved within the current boundaries through:

- i) an amendment to the Rosewood Neighbourhood Concept Plan (Arbutus Properties currently owns approximately 300 acres of land that is undeveloped in Rosewood, with 121 acres under the Holding Provision);
- ii) a partnership with another developer with serviced land in an upcoming area (Brighton, Aspen Ridge, Kensington, future Elk Point, or even the University of Saskatchewan); or
- iii) a land swap with Saskatoon Land.

NEXT STEPS

The Standing Policy Committee on Planning, Development and Community Services has recommended to City Council that the Solair Neighbourhood project be included in the Holmwood Suburban Development Area, with the intent this change occur in the short term. With this resolution, this change will be made through a future amendment process to the Holmwood Sector Plan which will take 18 to 24 months. However,

adding the area of Solair to the Holmwood Sector Plan does not alone advance the development.

Should City Council decide to pursue advancing development of Solair ahead of the planned development phasing in Holmwood, the amendments to the Official Community Plan outlined in this report will be required.

Should the direction be to proceed with either or both of these steps, the Administration will develop and bring forward funding and resourcing options for the required capital budget.

Also as noted above, the Administration has undertaken a preliminary review of the sustainability attributes contained in the proposal and could report back in a future report, if desired.

APPENDICES

1. Administrative Report of the Rural Municipality of Corman Park
2. Official Community Plan Amendments Required – Preliminary Analysis
3. Estimate of Financial Implications
4. Sector Plan and General Urban Land Development Processes

Report Approvals

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