

STRATHEARN HEIGHTS APARTMENTS REDEVELOPMENT

Summary of Community Consultation Activities

Submitted as part of 720.4 (e) of the (DC2) Site Specific Development Control Provision Application

Submitted To:



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1.0 Vision

The vision of the Strathearn Heights Apartments Redevelopment Project is to evolve one of Edmonton's most attractive, mature communities into a contemporary urban village offering a mix of residential and sufficient commercial uses to meet residents' daily needs, creating a neighbourhood that encourages walkability and casual social interaction. The proposed redevelopment would be sensitive to, and compatible with, the existing neighbourhood. Providing linked green spaces and spectacular views of the North Saskatchewan River Valley, the redevelopment would offer a wide range of housing products.

2.0 Pre-Consultation Process

Community feedback, both verbal and written, was documented throughout the consultation process at the various design charettes, meetings, workshops and Public Open Houses. Acting upon the advice of the City of Edmonton Planning and Development Department staff, an Advisory Committee was formed with local representatives to help in developing the redevelopment concept, through a design charette, and to better keep the community informed and to provide opportunities for feedback on the redevelopment process. In addition, a website (www.strathearnrejuvenation.ca) was developed to give Strathearn residents, neighbours and other Edmontonians complete and accurate information about the Strathearn Heights Apartments Redevelopment Project and an opportunity for residents to ask questions of the owner/developer about the project.

The nine-month community consultation for this DC2 application far exceeded the City's requirement. Section 720.4 of the City's Zoning Bylaw states that the applicant shall:

"contact the affected parties, being each assessed owner of land wholly or partly located within a distance of 60.0 m of the Site of the proposed development and the President of each affected Community League and the President of each Business Revitalization Zone Association operating within the distance described above, at least 21 days prior to submission of a Rezoning Application."

The following summarizes the community consultation activities that were conducted prior to the rezoning application submission to the City Planning and Development Department.

1. Meeting with Strathearn Community League Executive - March 16, 2006

The owners of the site (Rockwell Investments Ltd and Nearctic Development Corporation Ltd) and members of the project team held a pre-consultation meeting with 6 representatives of the Strathearn Community League Executive on March 16, 2006. A variety of topics were discussed with regards to the redevelopment of Strathearn Heights Apartments site including: the need to integrate the site into the entire community; incorporation of the existing park into the redevelopment concept; connection to the river valley park system; provision of green space, amenities and neighbourhood commercial uses and services; the potential impact of building

heights; effect of the project on property values; the community's dissatisfaction with the existing traffic calming measures on 95 Avenue; and the need to ensure an effective and community consultation process.

As a result, the project team proposed the formation of the Strathearn Advisory Group composed of community league executive members, residents of Strathearn Heights Apartments, local residents, business owners, seniors, churches, a City of Edmonton Planner, and a Parks Branch representative.

2. Meeting with Strathearn Advisory Group - April 12, 2006

The owners and the project team had a start-up meeting with the 12 members of the Strathearn Advisory Group at the Strathearn United Church on April 12, 2006. The purpose of the meeting was to introduce the members of the project team, Planning and Development Department and Parks Branch representatives, and the Strathearn Advisory Group. The project team provided an overview of findings of the initial research and site analysis they had undertaken and presented a preliminary work plan and a project schedule. City representatives described the DC2 application process and the roles of the City, the community and the applicant in the process. A question and answer period was then held.

3. Pre-Consultation Public Open House – April 24, 2006

The owners and the project team held a pre-consultation Public Open House at the Strathearn United Church on April 24, 2006. A Public Open House notice advertising the April 24 and May 29, 2006 Public Open Houses was prepared and distributed to 696 property owners in the Strathearn neighbourhood as well as the presidents of the Strathearn, Bonnie Doon, Cloverdale, Forest Terrace Heights, Holyrood, and Idylwyld and Community Leagues. Additionally, 504 notices were provided to the property manager of the Strathearn Heights Apartments complex for a mailbox drop to residents. A notice for the Public Open Houses was advertised in the Edmonton Examiner at least one week prior to the April 24, 2006 Public Open House inviting residents and stakeholders to attend.

The purpose of the Public Open House was to serve as a starting point by introducing the project team, City representatives from the Planning and Development Department and the Parks Branch, project ideas, and to provide residents with an overview of the site analysis and the preliminary development objectives of the applicant.

Approximately 140 people attended the Public Open House and 42 comment forms that were provided were completed. Traffic impacts, recent traffic calming measures on 95th Avenue and the impacts of an increase in the population were the primary concerns of participants.

4. Strathearn Advisory Group Design Charette May 6, 2006

The owners and the project team held a design charette with 15 members of the Strathearn Advisory Group on May 6, 2006 at the Strathearn United Church. City representatives from the Planning and Development Department and the Parks Branch were also in attendance. The purpose of the design charette was to review preliminary redevelopment concepts and to provide input to the project team and the developers.

A presentation was given by the project team, which focused on the following planning objectives of the project: integration with the community; creation of a village centre;

optimization of landscape resources; and building a sustainable community. The presentation then reviewed criteria for an urban village such as: identifiable retail focus; front doors on the street; diversity of residential demographics; central common (neighbourhood park); eyes on the park (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design); walkability/connectivity; community hub; transit link; and critical mass. The number of proposed residential units that was discussed was between 1500 – 2000.

Advisory group members were split up in smaller working groups and participated in one of the following groups: built form (buildings); public realm (streets); and open spaces (parks). Each of the groups discussed the planning and design principles that they developed during the charette and the project team took notes of the participants' remarks to incorporate them wherever possible in the review of the proposed redevelopment concept to be presented at the next meeting. The project team decided that two different redevelopment concepts should be presented at the Strathearn Advisory Group meeting held on May 25, 2006.

5. Presentation to the Strathearn Advisory Group - May 25, 2006

The owners of the site and the project team held a meeting with 17 members of the Strathearn Advisory Group at the Strathearn United Church on May 25, 2006. The purpose of the meeting was to present the findings of the design charette held on May 6, 2006. The preliminary Traffic Impact Assessment indicated that the transportation system would be able to accommodate up to 1,750 units. The project team also presented the two alternative redevelopment concepts that were to be presented to the community at the upcoming pre-consultation Public Open House on May 29, 2006.

6. Pre-Consultation Public Open House – May 29, 2006

The owners and the project team held a pre-consultation Public Open House on May 29, 2006 at the Strathearn United Church. A Public Open House notice had previously been prepared at the beginning of April 2006 and sent out to the community advertising the April 24 and May 29, 2006 Public Open Houses. The notice had been distributed to 696 property owners in the Strathearn neighbourhood as well as the presidents of the Strathearn, Bonnie Doon, Cloverdale, Forest Terrace Heights, Holyrood, and Idylwyld Community Leagues. Additionally, 504 notices had been provided to the property manager of the Strathearn Heights Apartments complex for a mailbox drop to residents. A notice for the Public Open House was advertised in the Edmonton Examiner at least one week prior to the May 29, 2006 Public Open House inviting residents and stakeholders to attend.

The purpose of the Public Open House was to provide residents with an understanding of the project background and to present the two alternative redevelopment concepts to the community for input, both concepts proposed 1,750 residential units.

Option 1 features were:

- Five high rise towers ranging in height from 10 – 25 storeys with a total number of 89 storeys.
- Removal and the redevelopment of Silver Heights Park and the location of a single larger park space located in the centre of the proposed redevelopment.
- Retail development along 95th Avenue and 88th Street.

Option 2 features were:

- Six high rise towers ranging in height from 10 – 25 storeys with a total number of 100 storeys.
- Silver Heights Park would remain at its current location.
- A new park would be developed at the centre of the development.
- Retail development along 88th Street.

Approximately 266 people attended the Public Open House and 85 comment forms were completed with residents noting such potential benefits of the project as: a more vibrant community; higher quality development; more functional green space and parks. Participants also expressed concerns about traffic, parking, parks and open spaces, building height and density.

7. Strathearn Advisory Group Meeting June 26, 2006

A Strathearn Advisory Group meeting was held at the Strathearn United Church on June 26, 2006 with approximately 30 members of the Advisory Group. In addition to the project team and the Advisory Group member's approximately 105 community members observed and participated in the meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to update the Advisory Group on the outcomes of community consultation activities to date, to discuss issues that had been identified during the consultation process and to inform the group of the work plan that the developer would be undertaking over the summer.

A variety of topics were discussed. Participants reinforced their concerns about traffic, parking, the relocation of Silver Heights Park, the height of proposed towers, and the proposed density of the project. A new concern was identified being the location and amount of retail.

The project team took notes of the participants' comments to incorporate them wherever possible during the review of the proposed concept plan over the summer.

The project team also proposed that new working groups should be formed according to the main issues, and invited all residents to sign up and participate according to their concerns. The working groups were to meet at the end of the summer prior to the next Public Open House to allow the project team to incorporate their remarks into the revised concept. The following working groups were formed: transportation; height and density; and open space and parks.

8. Transportation Working Group - August 2, 2006

The project team held a working session with two (2) members of the Transportation Working Group on August 2, 2006, at the Strathearn United Church, to discuss how a Traffic Impact Assessment is conducted, what the perceived traffic concerns were with the proposed project such as on-street parking and traffic calming. Participants expressed concerns that traffic calming measures would worsen traffic conditions on 95th Avenue and stimulate shortcutting through the neighbourhood. The project team took notes of the participants' comments and would review the project to present alternatives at next meeting.

9. Height and Density Working Group - August 2, 2006

The project team held a working session with the ten (10) members of the Height and Density Working Group on August 2, 2006 at the Strathearn United Church. The purpose of the meeting was to review participants' concerns regarding height and density with respect to the proposed redevelopment. Issues identified at the meeting included: the number of residential units proposed (1,750) and the resulting traffic implications; height of proposed apartment towers; potential shadowing and its implications for existing residences; potential impact on existing neighbourhood character; successful integration of the proposed development into the community; and safety/crime levels.

10. Transportation Working Group - August 8, 2006

The project team held a second working session with five (5) members of the Transportation Working Group on August 8, 2006 at the Strathearn United Church. The purpose of the working session was to present to participants feedback on the issues discussed at the August 2, 2006 working session. The project team provided feedback on how a Traffic Impact Assessment is conducted, and noted that new roadways will provide additional on street parking, new internal roads will have parking garages oriented toward them to internalize traffic flows down to 95 Avenue, residential units will have underground parking, adequate commercial parking shall be provided, and traffic calming alternatives were presented.

11. Open Space and Parks Working Group - August 15, 2006

The project team held its first working session with fourteen (14) members of the Open Space and Parks Working Group on August 15, 2006 at the Strathearn United Church. The purpose of the meeting was to review issues regarding parks and open space with respect to the proposed redevelopment.

Participants inquired about the public park development process and the proposal for the relocation and redevelopment of Silver Heights Park. They expressed concerns that the proposed location of the park would feel as if it belonged to the new development instead of the whole neighbourhood. Questions were also asked regarding, municipal reserve dedication, existing pedestrian walkway connections, the integration of open spaces with the neighbourhood, safety, the proposed pocket parks, and the future of existing facilities (swimming pool, hockey rink, community league building).

12. Strathearn Advisory Committee, Open Space and Parks, Height and Density and Transportation Working Groups - September 23, 2006

Meetings were held with the Strathearn Open Space and Parks, Density and Height, and Transportation Working Groups and the Strathearn Advisory Group on Saturday, September 23, 2006 from 9:30 am – 4:00 pm at the Strathearn United Church. Approximately 24 Advisory and Working Groups members participated.

The Parks and Open Space Working Group was held from 9:30 am – 10:45 am, followed by the Density and Height Working Group from 11:00 am – 12:30 pm, the Transportation Working Group Meeting from 1:00 pm – 2:30 pm and the Summation and Next Steps in the Process session from 2:30 pm – 4:00 pm. The principle objectives of these meetings were to inform the working groups as to where the project team is in the process, what the team had heard, and to provide a response to the issues identified in the previous working group meetings.

13. Pre-Consultation Public Open House - October 4, 2006

The owners of the site and the project team held a pre-consultation Public Open House on October 4, 2006 at the Ecole Publique Gabrielle-Roy (in the Gymnasium), 8728 93rd Ave. A Public Open House notice advertising the October 4, 2006 Public Open House was prepared and distributed through a Canada Post mail drop to residents of the Strathearn neighbourhood. Letters of invitation were mailed to the presidents of the Strathearn, Bonnie Doon, Cloverdale, Forest Terrace Heights, Holyrood, and Idylwyld and Community Leagues. Additionally, 504 notices were provided to the property manager of the Strathearn Heights Apartments complex for a mailbox drop to residents.

The project team considered the input and information gathered with working groups over the summer and prepared a revised redevelopment concept to share with the community and gather feedback on.

Approximately 250 people attended the Public Open House and 103 comment forms were completed with participants reinforcing their concerns about traffic and parking, the height of proposed apartment towers, and the proposed density of the project.

3.0 Community Consultation Results

Throughout the process a number of residents have expressed support for the project and project elements such as:

- Mixed-use 'urban village' concept
- Variety of open spaces and site amenities
- Pedestrian connections throughout the site
- Quality design and architectural treatment
- Variety of housing types
- Integration with surrounding community

Community feedback, both verbal and written, was documented throughout the consultation process as per the requirements of the Zoning Bylaw. The project team has endeavored to incorporate changes to the redevelopment concept at every stage of the pre-consultation process.

Section 720.4 (e) states that the applicant shall:

"document any opinions or concerns; expressed by the affected parties, and what modifications were made to address their concerns."

Density

Concern was expressed regarding the project's proposed density and that increased density would result in additional traffic, population and noise.

Concern was expressed about the increased population. It is estimated that adding the proposed 1750 units, which will replace the existing 504 units, would result in a net increase in population of approximately 2,400. These new residents will help to counteract the decreasing and aging population that the Strathearn neighbourhood has been experiencing and which contributed to the loss of the Strathearn Elementary School.

Concern was expressed with regards to the potential for increased crime and safety issues as a result of increased density. Literature indicates that intensification of development is not inherently prone to criminal behavior. In addition, the active residential and commercial frontages "doors and eyes on the street" will provide a feeling of safety in keeping with Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles.

The proposed density is required to offset the cost of developing a high quality landmark project with new park spaces, underground parking, landscaping, distinctive architecture and quality building materials.

The project team thought that ideally 2,000 units would provide the critical mass needed to support the qualities of the urban village concept being proposed (variety of housing and neighbourhood retail). The number of proposed residential units was decreased to 1750, which reflects the Traffic Impact Assessment recommendations as to what can be accommodated on the adjacent roadway system.

During the community consultation process the size of the redevelopment site was expanded by 6%, from 8.51 hectares to 9.08 hectares, which decreases the overall density on the site. Density is measured in two ways, floor area ratio (the ratio of total building floor area to site area [FAR]) and dwellings per hectare (DPH). The DPH for the proposed project is 193 dwelling/hectare, which is less than what is allowable 224 DPH under the current (RA8) Medium Rise Apartment Zone. The proposed FAR, which is a good measure for a mixed-use development as it considered all development is 2.1. While this FAR is higher than is permitted in the (RA 8) Medium Rise Apartment Zone (FAR 1.5) it is lower than the FAR of 3.0 that is permitted in the (RA9) High Rise Apartment Zone. The proposed density for the project falls between an RA8 and a RA9 zone and is comparable with other DC2 provisions approved for infill developments in the City.

The project proposal reflects the land development strategies contained in the City-approved Smart Choices by promoting neighbourhood reinvestments, residential infill, walkability, and urban design.

Height

Concern was expressed regarding the height of the proposed towers in a low density neighbourhood and the potential change that this may have on the look and character of the area. Respondents commented that the proposed apartment towers may contribute to a loss of privacy, views, and shadowing on adjacent residential areas.

The size of the site at 9.08 hectares (22.4 acres) allows the proposed high rises to be located in the centre of the site away from the existing single-family neighbourhood and helps to mitigate community concerns with regards to overlook and loss of privacy. Activities at ground level in the existing neighbourhood would not be clearly discernable at the distances and heights from which tower residents would be looking. Because the surrounding neighbourhood is located on flat terrain and is treed with boulevard trees the proposed should not interrupt any specific view corridor.

Through a transitioning of height the proposed concept provides for an attractive alternative, in contrast to more traditional low and medium density developments that are typified by a long homogenous wall of buildings, limited open space and surface parking. A transitioning in height is achieved by locating 2 1/2 storey town houses adjacent to existing low density residential

development and stepping building height back to the centre of the site where the proposed towers would be located.

Community concern regarding shadowing has been addressed by a sun/shadow study that was undertaken following City of Edmonton requirements. As required by the City, the study time and dates were 9:34, 12:34 and 15:34 MST on March 21, June 21 and September 21 on buildings within the site and surrounding areas. The study outcome showed that the proposed development does not cast any shadows outside the Strathearn Heights Apartments site on the chosen time and dates.

The visual impact of the proposed towers will be minimized with tall slim buildings. Slimmer towers have a smaller floor plate, which reduces the perceived building mass, reduces shadowing and allows for more green space at ground level. The towers will be distinguished from human scaled (6 storey) base buildings with active residential and commercial frontages. In addition, the towers' aesthetics will be enhanced with quality finishing materials and building setbacks. Throughout the pre-consultation process the applicant made modification to the proposed concept, which resulted in the following:

- o The number of towers was reduced from 6 to 4, which resulted in the number of total tower storeys being reduced by 18 storeys.*
- o The height of the highest building was reduced from 25 storeys to 23 storeys.*

The concerns regarding the proposed building heights are largely subjective given the transitioning in building heights, the absence of a serious shadowing impacts, the absence of any significant overlook, or disruption of any specific view corridor.

Traffic and Parking

Some respondents were concerned that with the proposed project there would be an increase in the number of cars in the neighborhood and worsening of on-street parking issues.

The Traffic Impact Assessment (TIA) concluded the road system as planned can accommodate traffic generated by both the proposed 1,750 residential units and the proposed commercial retail development and will not utilize all of the existing road capacity. The TIA notes that traffic-calming measures along the 95 Avenue corridor have been planned in conjunction with the redevelopment to respond to community concerns and to mitigate existing shortcutting activity along this route. To address community concerns regarding parking, all residential, business and visitor parking will be accommodated underground, and existing on-street parking is to be maintained. The addition of roadways within the site will add an additional 100 on-street parking spaces.

Parks and Open Space

Concern was expressed regarding the proposed removal of the Silver Heights Park and the creation of a larger park located at the centre of the proposed redevelopment site. Community members indicated that they felt that the new park would not belong to the community as a whole and that amenities such as the playground, rink, and hall would not be replaced in a timely manner. In addition concern was expressed about the need for additional green space in the community and the forms that this would take.

A Park Impact Assessment (PIA) has been prepared and submitted as part of the DC2 application process.

Although the movement of the Silver Heights Park was initially proposed (Option 1 in the earlier stages of the design process) to allow for the creation of a large neighbourhood park, due to community concern, Silver Heights Park will remain in its current location with its existing trees, playground, rink and hall.

Open space will be maximized with almost 50% of the site being open space and streets as a result of proposing taller slim towers. The site will be developed to include a variety of open spaces such as tree lined boulevards, a neighbourhood park, and six additional smaller open spaces including park blocks and garden squares. A new park will be developed at the centre of the redevelopment site and be dedicated to the City as Municipal Reserve. In addition, pedestrian linkages and internal street system will be developed to foster connectivity from various parts of the site, the surrounding neighbourhood and the river valley.

Dislocation and Loss of Rental Stock

Some concern was expressed regarding the dislocation of existing Strathearn Heights Apartments tenants and the loss of rental stock in the area.

The applicant is providing ongoing communications with Strathearn Heights Apartments tenants and has indicated that those individuals who want to remain in the complex during the redevelopment will be relocated to available existing apartments on the site at the applicant's expense. In addition, it is the intent of the applicant to provide approximately 200 – 300 residential rental units to be managed by the applicant.

Need for Affordable Housing

Some respondents expressed concern with regards to the provision of affordable housing in the proposed redevelopment.

The applicant is agreeable to work with the City to arrive at a solution to best implement the City's requirements for 5% of the units to be affordable housing as outlined in the Edmonton Cornerstones Plan.

Noise / Disruption During Construction

Some respondents expressed concern about construction noise and a general increase in noise levels once the project is complete.

As the project consists primarily of residential uses, high noise levels are not anticipated. The City has a Noise Bylaw, which addresses noise generated during development construction and noise emanating from completed buildings, streets and open areas. In addition, construction noise can be managed through an agreement with the City on hours of construction and specifying truck routing.

4.0 Summation

The nine-month community consultation process for this DC2 application far exceeded the City's normal requirements. During this time period nine (9) meetings and workshops were held with the Strathearn Advisory and Working Groups, one (1) design Charette was held with the Strathearn Advisory Group, and three (3) Public Open Houses were held. The applicant worked with the Strathearn Advisory and Working Groups and the community, making modifications to the

redevelopment concept to mitigate concerns throughout the pre-consultation process. The proposed redevelopment concept that is reflected in the DC2 application mitigates community concerns with regards to density, height, traffic and parking, parks and open space, the need for affordable housing, dislocation and loss of rental stock and noise /disruption during the construction period.

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