Development Approvals Process Pilot

Overview

The Balanced Housing Solutions Lab (BHL) is an innovative partnership of local governments on the North Shore of the Metro Vancouver area, and includes the City of North Vancouver, District of West Vancouver, and Squamish Nation. BHL is an engagement and technical exercise intended to generate new solutions that shift the way our housing system as a whole is addressing the current housing crisis, particularly the growing problem of affordability for moderate to middle-income earners on the North Shore.

One focus area identified in the Solutions Lab is the need to reimagine the current development approvals process, which can be divisive, time-consuming, and contentious. This focus area aims to answer the following question:

How might we...

Reimagine the development approvals process such that it builds, rather than divides, community?

As part of the work in this focus area, input from lab participants from the first phase of the BHL has informed the design of an alternative development approvals process that promotes more meaningful opportunities for community members, Municipal Staff, Council, and developers to co-create and engage with proposed housing projects.

Purpose of the Pilot Project

The alternative development approvals prototype outlined below is intended to provide community members a 360-degree view of the potential development concept and more opportunities for diverse voices to be heard in the early stages of the process. It is also intended to inform the City of North Vancouver Council and City staff of concept designs and ensure projects align with broader community objectives in the earlier stages of the project. It is also intended to inform the City of North Vancouver and District of West Vancouver Councils and municipal staff of concept designs.

In order to select projects that will help the City and District pilot this prototype, two key criteria are being used to select projects: the proposed concepts should include a component of mid-market housing and conform with the Official Community Plan policies.

Please note: This pilot project is a work in progress and this brochure will be updated over time as the City of North Vancouver and District of West Vancouver and its partners gather learnings and insights from participants of the program. The following pilot process will be illustrated using the City of North Vancouver as an example.

Stages of Development Approvals Process

STAGE 1: PRE-CONSULTATION *MONTH 1*

Description:

- **Developer** and **City of North Vancouver staff** (e.g. engineering, planning, fire, building, etc.) discuss early development concept and any potential technical challenges to the proposed project concept
- **Developer's** early project concept should provide a high-level site plan and demonstrate how the project intends to meet the policies in the City of North Vancouver's Official Community Plan.
- **City Staff** will provide high-level feedback on designs (e.g. comments on site access, height, massing, known off-site requirements) and identify any concerns
- A public call will be posted on the City's project page for community members to apply to participate in the co-creation workshop. When applying, community members will be asked about their demographics, lived experiences, and professional expertise. Selected community members will be trained on OCP policies, zoning bylaw, and other City policies and provide advice on the development concept.

Participants:

- City Staff
- Developer
- External Facilitator

- **City Staff, developer**, and an **external facilitator** will manage the public call and select up to 20 stakeholders, with high consideration for selecting those with lived experiences or who identify as Indigenous or groups that are underrepresented, to participate in the co-creation workshop (Stage 2) from the following groups:
  - *Advisory Design Panel representatives*[1]
  - *People who have faced housing challenges on the North Shore*[2]
  - *Local business representatives*
  - *Local neighbourhood representatives*
  - *Local services (e.g. fire and police department, school districts, hospitals)*
  - *Other relevant stakeholders as determined on a case-by-case basis*
- A date will be mutually agreed upon by the developer and City Staff for the co-creation workshop with community stakeholders in Stage 2
- **City staff, developer**, and **external facilitator** will identify key questions and themes that will guide stakeholder and public engagement and further shape the project concept
- **City staff, developer**, and **external facilitator** will select the appropriate engagement mechanisms for stakeholder and public engagements

[1]Two to three Advisory Design Panel representatives will be selected for the process based on relevance of their professional expertise and on a rotating fashion.

[2]According to best practices, stakeholders with lived experiences will be compensated for their participation.

[3]To support a World Café style workshop during COVID-19, City staff and developer can use a virtual meeting platform that follows the City's guidelines for virtual engagement. City staff can manage and can use the "breakout rooms" function in a virtual meeting platform to mimic the idea of rotating tables. Using the breakout rooms function, City staff can manually assign participants to different rooms with City staff, the developers, and architect. After a set amount of time, City staff can switch the rooms of participants.

STAGE 2: CO-CREATION WORKSHOP WITH COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS (CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT)

MONTH 1

Description:

- **City Staff** and **developer** will host a World Café style workshop with community stakeholders and representatives of the advisory design panel
- **City staff** will present Official Community Plan policies and what the land use designation allows for the subject site (e.g. land use, density) at the beginning of the workshop
- **Developer** will present their project vision and brings their architect to engage in dialogue with community stakeholders
- Tables will be set up around a room with a mix of City Staff, the developer, architect, and stakeholders that create opportunities for dialogue and collaboration to explore key engagement questions and topic areas. Stakeholders will move from table to table.
- **Stakeholders** will provide local knowledge, lived experiences, understanding of local neighbourhoods, and professional expertise to inform the concept development (e.g. guiding principles, history, vision, outcomes, aspirational goals)
- **City staff** and **developer** will facilitate and guide conversations, take minutes and record conversation and synthesize project outcomes. Input received in the co-creation workshop will inform the concept development prior to Stage 3

**We aim to work with two developers through this process; one will lead the co-creation independently, and one will have the support of an external facilitator. In piloting this, the external facilitator will use Urban Matters as part of the prototype evaluation process.*

Participants:

- City Staff
- Advisory Design Panel representatives
- Developer (and architect)
- Community Stakeholders

Description:

- **City staff** and **developer** will present the concept developed in Stage 2 to the public through a virtual platform and engagement process that includes a menu of options for engagement
- **City staff** will launch an online City project page that will act as a digital hub and allow the public to learn about the project, stay updated with upcoming engagement events, and share their experiences through all stages of the project
- This stage is intended to serve as an alternative to the Public Hearing Process, which can be contentious and may not always capture a diverse cross-section of community voices. This public engagement is intended to find a variety of ways for the public to engage with the project and provide input in advance of First Reading. These opportunities meaningfully engage participants to ask questions, express concerns or excitement for the project, and to check in on the project progress.
- In addition, this stage is designed to increase access of engagement by offering multiple formats for both residents and stakeholders to participate, at different times throughout the day, and encourage dialogue between the **developer**, the City, and the public.
- The public can register through the City's project page to stay informed throughout the pilot project by providing their email and postal code
- The public is invited to provide feedback to the concept through various forms of engagement and dialogue with **City staff** and the **developer**
- **City staff** will incentivize the public to engage by demonstrating that their participation and feedback will have real influence on the outcomes of the process

Engagement Tools:

Engagement tools and approaches may vary depending on the purpose, project cycle, and target audiences. The engagement tools described below provide a menu of options for the two pilot projects. The selection of tools and approaches will be tailored to each pilot project and compared against each other for effectiveness of meaningful engagement. The City and developer will work together to determine the most appropriate engagement approaches.

For the purposes of the pilot project, an additional evaluation survey will be posted to the City's project page and emailed to participants at the end of each engagement stream for the public to provide feedback on their experience of the overall engagement process. This evaluation survey is not intended to be replicated outside of the pilot project, rather the findings from the survey will be used to improve the overall process in either Pilot 1 and Pilot 2 (whichever occurs later).

Participants:

- City Staff
- Developer
- External Facilitator (optional)

Virtual Town Hall:

- **City staff** and **developer** will host a virtual town hall using an online meeting platform that follows the City's guidelines for virtual engagement.
- **City staff** will advertise the virtual town hall on the City's project page and through the City's social media platforms (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram)
- Participants will sign up to attend the live town hall on the City project page and will be asked to provide their name, email and postal codes[4]. City staff will use participant postal codes (collected via log in) to track community perceptions by geographic distribution.
- **External facilitator** will help moderate Q+A sessions between City Staff, developer, and participants at the end of their presentation
- Participants can use the 'raise your hand' option on online meeting platform to comment or ask questions in turn.
- **Developer** will answer specific comments and questions related to the concept in real-time
- The virtual town hall can be recorded and shared on the City's project page for those who were not able to participate during the live presentation

Survey:

- **City staff** will design the project survey to include questions that will provide a better understanding of the diverse range of respondents and their perspectives on the project (see Appendix A for sample questions)
- **City staff** will advertise project survey on the City's social media platforms (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram)

Community QR Code Survey Advertisement:

- **City staff** will put up posters and advertisement about the project in locations where residents shop or visit (e.g., grocery and retail stores, schools, community centre) and for those who work in the North Shore but cannot afford to live here (e.g. bus shelters, SeaBus terminals, hospitals, fire halls)
- Posters and advertisement will include a short description of the project, the project page link, and a QR code that can be scanned by residents using their phone cameras. QR codes will direct residents to a short survey about the pilot project on the project page with a chance to win a prize draw (e.g. gift card) at the end.
- **City staff** will design the project survey to include questions that will provide a better understanding of the diverse range of respondents and their perspectives on the project (see Appendix A for sample questions)
- **Developer** will provide gift card for draw

Digital Posters:

- **City staff** will post digital posters, including concept renderings and infographics, on the City's project page to provide information about the pilot project to the public

[4] Providing postal codes will not be mandatory

STAGE 3: PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT ABOUT CONCEPT *MONTH 2*

Online Forum:

- **City staff** will create a moderated forum section on the City's project page that allows the public to submit comments related to their experience or ask questions of City Staff and the developer related in Stages 3 to 8
- **City staff** will approve posts that abide by City guidelines and rules
- **City staff** and **developer** will post answers to questions from participants within 2 to 3 business days
- A visual map of where virtual town hall and engagement participants live can be included on the project page to show where respondents are responding from and increase transparency of the process.

Digital Advertising:

- **City staff** will use social media advertisements and project graphics to promote and boost posts about the project, the project page, and survey on all platforms

Webchat Forum:

- **Developer** will set-up a webchat (e.g. Discord, Slack, etc.) forum to facilitate online discussions with the public
- Participants will sign up for the Slack forum on the City project page and will be asked to provide their name, email and postal codes. City staff will use participant postal codes to track community perceptions by geographic distribution
- **Developer** will monitor and moderate posts. Questions will be automatically set to be posted privately and made public once approved.
- **Developer** will reply to comments and questions from participants within 2 to 3 business days.
- **City staff** will participate in the Slack forum and reply to comments and questions that are applicable
- Online forum will abide by general City guidelines and rules while an external communication channel hosted by the developer will allow for a more streamlined process for the developer to participate.

Pop-Up Booths:

- Due to COVID-19 and its implications, City staff and developer will be unable to organize pop-up booths to engage with the public at convenient locations at this time; however, this could be a viable option for future projects

STAGE 4: CONCEPT REVISION *MONTH 3*

Description:

- **Developer** will review the feedback received from the public in Stage 3
- **Developer** will consider community feedback and incorporate changes to the project concept while maintaining viability of the proposal. City staff will also ensure that high-level feedback from Pre-Consultation has been incorporated into the concept.

Participants:

- Developer

STAGE 5: PROJECT BRIEF AND INITIAL STAFF REVIEW *MONTH 4*

Description:

- **Developer** will provide a project brief outlining the proposal that outlines certain parameters (e.g. density, height, community amenities, etc.)
- **City Staff** will review the project brief to ensure that the major challenges identified in Stage 1 that could stall the proposal at the application stage are addressed by the developer
- **City Staff** will provide a summary of geographic representation of engagement participants from across the City, neighbouring communites, and beyond, as well as community perceptions by postal code using findings from Stage 3 to inform Council's decision making
- **City Staff** will prepare a report back to Council outlining their recommendation for Council to approve the proposed project subject to certain conditions or to reject the proposal until certain provisions are met. These could include, but are not limited to, review and refinement of the public realm and off-site works, further negotiation regarding proposed project amenities, and further design refinement to address issues and concerns identified in previous stages.
- **City Staff will prepare a draft zoning bylaw amendment based on the proposed project brief**

Participants:

- City Staff
- Developer

STAGE 6: FIRST AND SECOND READINGS *MONTH 5*

Description:

- **City Council** will receive the staff report on recommendations to inform their decision making
- **City Council** will receive the draft zoning bylaw amendment
- **City Council** opts to proceed or reject the application. If the application proceeds, Councilundertakes the first and second readings and determines any conditions required to be resolved prior to adoption.
- If Council decides at this stage that a public hearing is not needed, i.e. the proposed project and the proposed zoning bylaw are consistent with the OCP and the engagement approach and summary report of engagement findings is sufficient, then Council can waive the public hearing.
- If the public hearing is waived, then the application proceeds to the next Stage. If the public hearing is not waived, then a public hearing will be held after notice is given.
- City Staff and the applicant work to resolve any conditions required prior to adoption.

Participants:

- City Staff
- City Council

STAGE 7: DETAILED APPLICATION *MONTH 6*

Description:

- If the project concept passes second reading, then the **developer** revises the proposal based on the conditions laid out.
- Developer submits a detailed application to City Staff for consideration.
- The application is checked by **City Staff** for completion to ensure it meets all technical requirements.
- If the application is complete, it will proceeds forward to the Advisory Design Panel, then to Council.

Participants:

- City Staff
- Developer

STAGE 8: THIRD AND FOURTH READINGS *MONTH 8*

Description:

- Staff ensures all proposed amenities and commitments are secured through agreements as required.
- City Council will undertake 3rd reading. If the application moves forward, then the final reading will be undertaken during the same session.
- After final reading, the zoning bylaw amendment is adopted and the application is approved.

Participants:

- City Staff
- City Council
- Developer