

THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF WHITE ROCK CORPORATE REPORT



DATE: January 11, 2021

TO: Land Use and Planning Committee

FROM: Carl Isaak, Director, Planning and Development Services

SUBJECT: Official Community Plan Review – Preview of Phase 2 Public Input on Building Heights outside the Town Centre

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Land Use and Planning Committee receive the corporate report from the Director of Planning and Development Services, titled “Official Community Plan Review – Preview of Phase 2 Public Input on Building Heights outside the Town Centre.”

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On November 23, 2020, Council passed a motion directing that the scope of the Official Community Plan (OCP) review be limited to focusing on the Town Centre and building heights outside the Town Centre (including waterfront/Marine Drive) as areas of priority interest. The original three-phase approach to the OCP Review, outlined in the diagram below (i.e., Phase 1 - Public Input, Phase 2 - Options Development, and Phase 3 - Recommendations), will carry forward in January 2021 under a condensed timeline.



The review of building heights outside the Town Centre is currently within Phase 2 of the consultation program (i.e., Options Development). The other two priority topic areas (i.e., Town Centre Urban Design and Waterfront Enhancement) went through Phase 2 in December 2019 and will be brought back with staff recommendations (Phase 3) in a future corporate report.

The purpose of this corporate report is to provide the Land Use and Planning Committee (LUPC) with a preview of the options to be shared with the public at a January 14, 2021 digital “public open house.” Feedback on the options will be requested through a questionnaire delivered on the City’s online public engagement platform (www.talkwhiterock.ca/ocp-review), available on January 15, 2021. A postcard advertising the event and the survey was mailed out as a flyer to

White Rock households in the first week of January, and the notice was also included in the January 7, 2021 edition of the Peace Arch News.

The options being presented at the event and through the questionnaire focus on three geographic areas: east and west of the Town Centre (the “Town Centre Transition” areas), the “Waterfront Village” area along Marine Drive, and the Russell and Maple block within the “East Side Large Lot Infill Area.” Further details on these areas and options to be presented to the public are provided in the Background section of this corporate report.

The staff presentation at the live event, which is scheduled from 5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., is anticipated to take between 30-45 minutes, in order to provide background on this complex and frequently contentious topic. The remainder of the time in the live event will be offered for Questions and Answers via that text-based function in Microsoft Teams, similar to the format of the City’s digital Public Information Meetings. A recording of this live event will be available for those unable to attend or to be viewed again on the City’s YouTube channel:

(<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCxIIOjGJ78o-ZQ28ABTVSpw>).

PREVIOUS COUNCIL DIRECTION

Motion # & Meeting Date	Motion Details
2020-570 November 23, 2020	<i>THAT Council directs the scope for the Official Community Plan (OCP) review be reduced at this time to only the Town Centre building height and density and building heights around the Town Centre and height at the waterfront along Marine Drive.</i>
2020-LU/P-027 September 16, 2020	<i>THAT Land Use and Planning Committee recommend that Council consider the Town Centre Phase 2 Engagement Summary and Recommendations Report prepared by DIALOG Design, attached to this corporate report as Appendix A, and direct staff to proceed with preparing the proposed implementing mechanisms as described in staff’s evaluation of the DIALOG recommendations in Appendix B.</i>

INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

At the digital public open house on January 14, 2021, Planning staff will provide a background presentation on the topic of building heights. This will include recapping the overall OCP Review and the community feedback received to date, introducing some of the perceived advantages and disadvantages of taller buildings, sharing information about existing building heights in the City and current policies, and describing the alternative policy approaches (options) for which the public will be asked to provide their feedback through the questionnaire.

Areas of Focus

The three geographic areas/neighbourhoods being considered for OCP policy changes in the “Building Heights outside the Town Centre” Phase 2 engagement are the Town Centre Transition areas (east and west of the Town Centre, north of Thrift Avenue), the Waterfront Village area (Marine Drive area) and the Russell/Maple block in the East Side Large Lot Infill area (east of Peace Arch Hospital). A map of these areas is attached as Appendix A. Each area and the options being presented, are summarized below.

Town Centre Transition

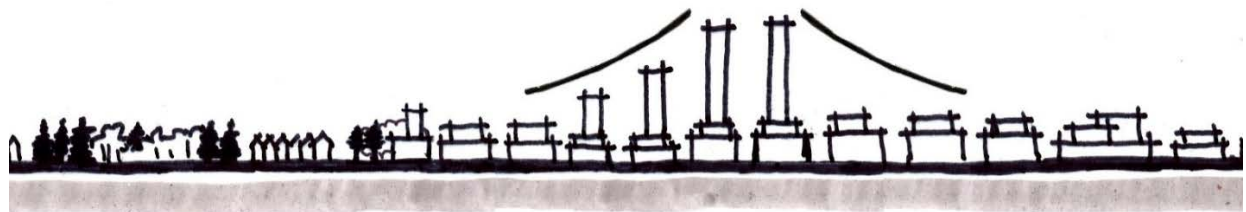
The feedback received on the online survey in Phase 1 regarding building heights in the Town Centre Transition (TCT) areas indicated similar support levels for both mid-rise (5-11 storeys) and low-rise (3-4 storeys) buildings as being appropriate building forms in these areas (approximately half of all respondents were supportive of each type), whereas high-rise buildings (12+ storeys) were supported only by 22% of respondents. Multiple respondents also noted a preference that any taller buildings be located along North Bluff Road. The three options below include retaining the current policies as well two alternatives, one with a greater allowance for mid-rise buildings and one which would generally cap heights at 3-4 storeys, with a small section of 4-6 storey buildings on North Bluff Road.

TCT - Option A (status quo)

The first option presented for the Town Centre Transition areas would be to retain the existing height mapping as presented in Figure 10 of the OCP (see below).



The current height policy for the Town Centre Transition areas is to be a small drop in height from the Town Centre (e.g. 18 storeys on North Bluff Road, beside the Town Centre which is approximately 25 storeys in height) and for buildings to gradually reduce in height as you move outward east, west, and south with 12 storeys at Oxford Street, 8 storeys at Hospital Street, and 4-6 storeys along Thrift Avenue (6 storeys closer to the Town Centre). This east-west skyline could be described conceptually as like a ‘tent’, as shown in the cross-section diagram below.

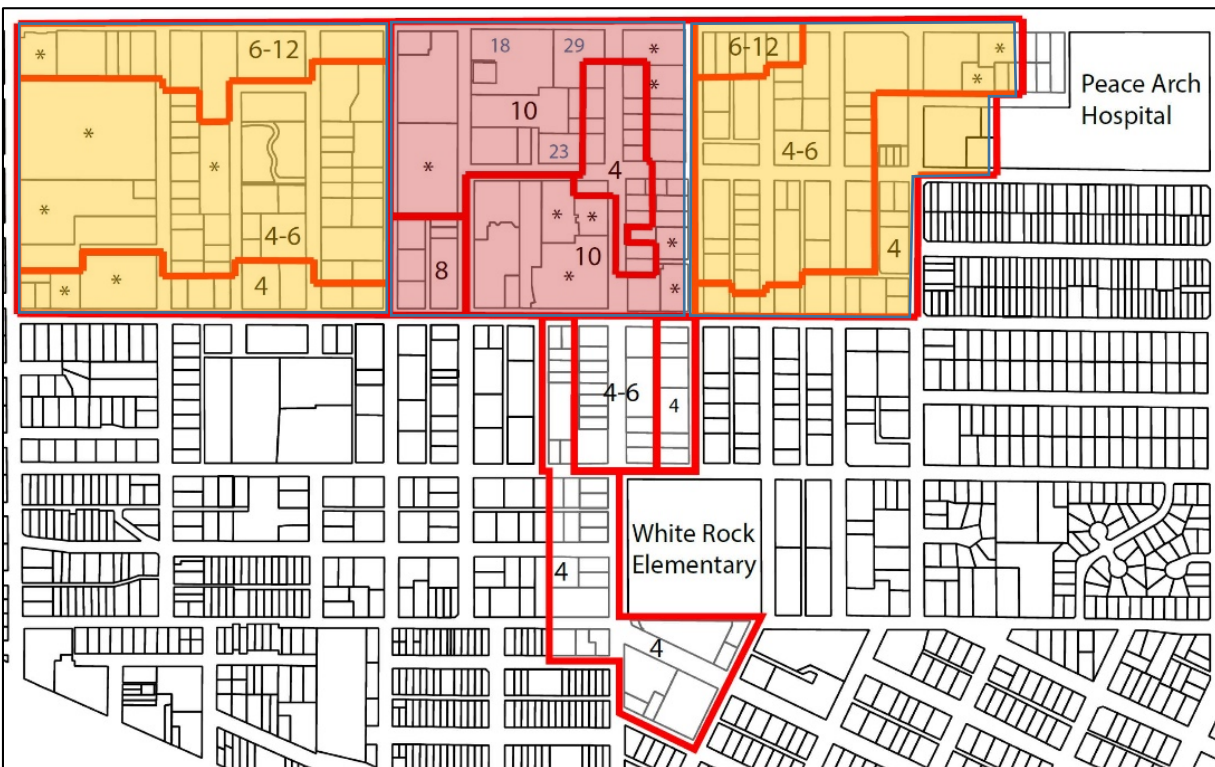


The “potential” heights in the OCP form a guideline such that if they were to be exceeded (e.g., a 13-14 storey building being located where the diagram indicates a 12 storey height), the Plan

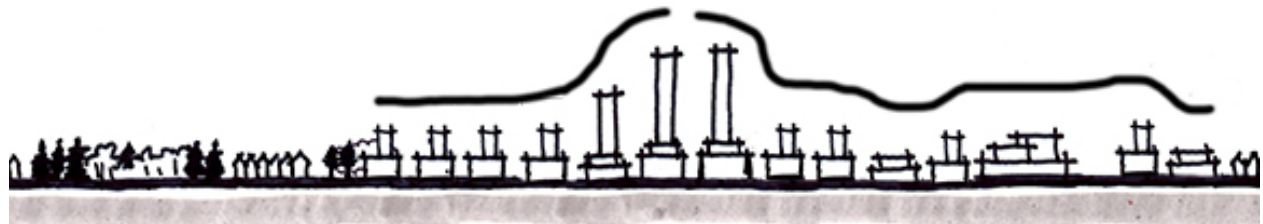
would not require amendment to accommodate the development; only changes to the density, building type or land use, as explicitly outlined in the Plan, would require an OCP amendment.

TCT - Option B

As an alternative to the ‘tent-like’ skyline enabled by the current policies, this option would recognize the existing 12 storey buildings along North Bluff Road (i.e., the ‘Belaire’ and ‘Vista Royale’) as the basis for the upper maximums along the northern boundary of the City. Further, Option B would establish a maximum of 4 storeys along the Thrift Avenue, which is the southern limit of the Town Centre Transition area. In between the north (top of hill) and south (bottom of hill) limits, buildings would be allowed in the 4-6 storey height range, subject to an enhanced policy framework that establishes the need for new developments to demonstrate compatibility of both land use and building form. Unlike the current policy, any new applicant requiring a rezoning for a building that exceeds these new height maximums would also have to make an application to amend the OCP; in other words, reference to height guidelines in the Plan would be removed with the heights presented in a revised Figure 10 becoming absolute limits.



Heights which are shown within the Town Centre (red) are conceptual and have not yet been approved. Properties marked with an * have buildings that exceed the proposed maximum heights. This version also excludes the Peace Arch Hospital Foundation parking lot and would re-designate those lands as Institutional in the OCP.



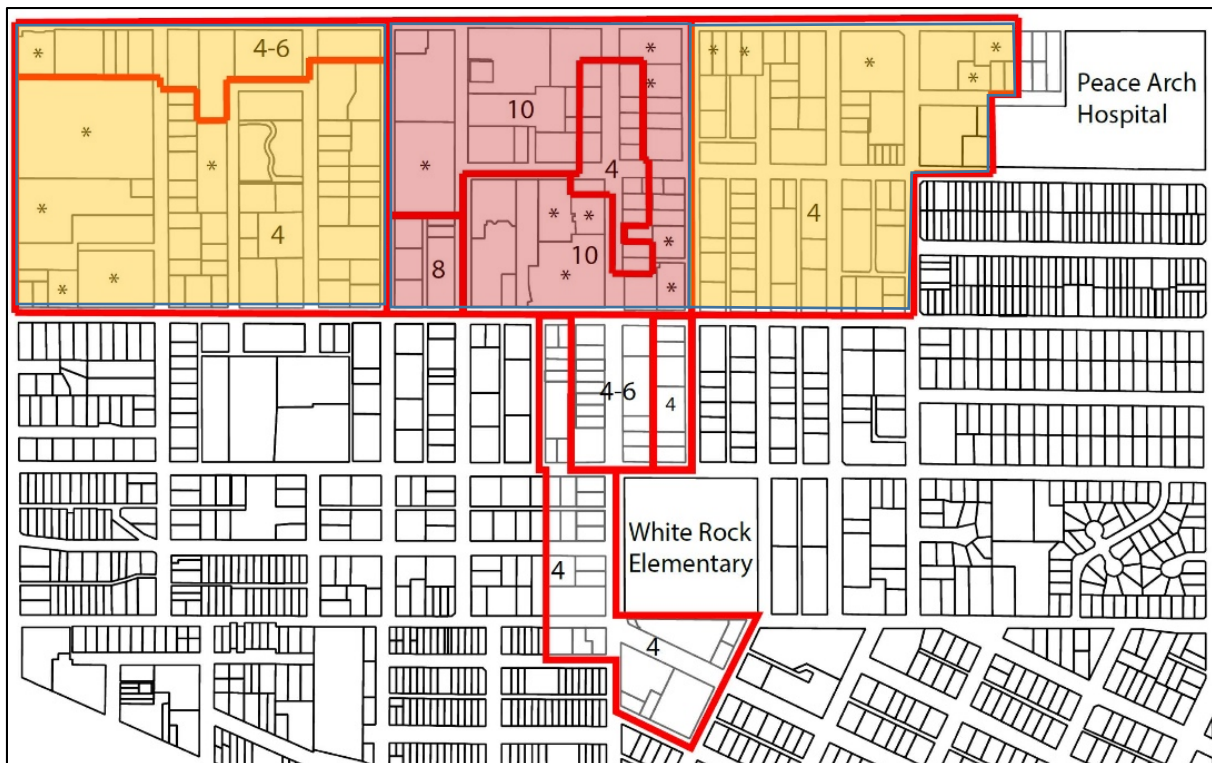
As the transition in this option from the taller buildings in the Town Centre is more sudden than that in Option A, Option B could be conceptually likened to a “dome” type of skyline (viewed at a distance from west to east), with a series of mid-rise buildings bracketing the taller high-rises

in the Town Centre (like the Parliament Buildings in Victoria flank the central rotunda). Option B creates a relatively sharp juxtaposition that would be created from buildings of 25 storeys in the Town Centre, and buildings being no taller than 12 storeys right beside the Town Centre.

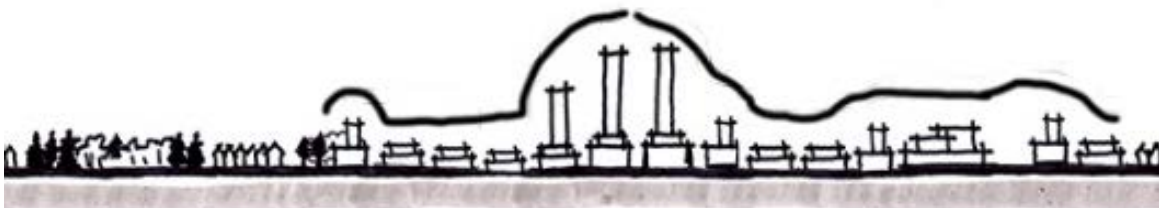
In this option it is proposed that where a range of storeys/density are allowed, that the height and density above the base 4 or base 6 storeys (i.e., up to 6, or up to 12 storeys) be conditional on the new building offering a certain portion of its units as affordable rental housing, in addition to any replacement rental units provided in accordance with the Tenant Relocation Policy.

TCT - Option C

This option largely limits building heights for new buildings to the currently predominant building heights in the areas surrounding the Town Centre (i.e., 3-4 storey buildings), and would only allow up to 6 storeys on North Bluff Road west of the Town Centre to Oxford Street. As in Option B, this alternative to the current policy would require an amendment to the OCP if the maximum height was to be exceeded. Given that there are already several 7-12 storey buildings along North Bluff Road, the east-west skyline of this alternative could be described as ‘peaks and valleys’ and would likely result in the least redevelopment, compared with Options A or B.



Heights which are shown within the Town Centre (red) are conceptual and have not yet been approved. Properties marked with an * have buildings that exceed the proposed maximum heights. This version also excludes the Peace Arch Hospital Foundation parking lot and would re-designate those lands as Institutional in the OCP.



Waterfront Village Area

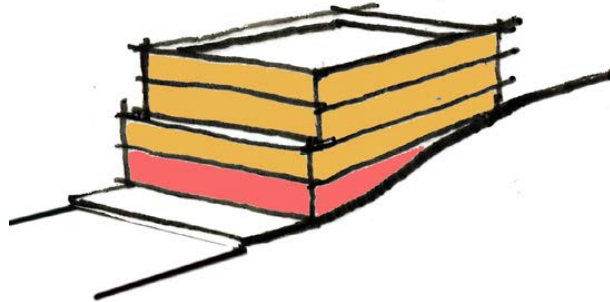
The feedback received on the online survey in Phase 1 regarding building heights in the Waterfront area indicated high levels of support for both low-rise (64% support) and 1-2 storey commercial buildings (61% support) as being appropriate building forms in the waterfront area, with 11% supporting mid-rise buildings, and only 1 out of 148 respondents supporting high-rise buildings.

Following this Phase 1 OCP Review engagement, staff brought forward separately a potential amendment to the West Beach Commercial/Residential Zone (“CR-3A”), during which the feedback from the public indicated that while 3 storeys is a generally accepted building height along Marine Drive, going beyond this height is a sensitive issue in the community and the greatest concern from residents is view impacts to uphill residents from a 4 storey building sticking out above the high point on the land.

The two options below include retaining the existing policy as well as an alternative that would continue to allow 3 storey buildings on all sites and define the conditions where a 4th storey would be acceptable and not require an amendment to the Official Community Plan.

WV - Option A (status quo)

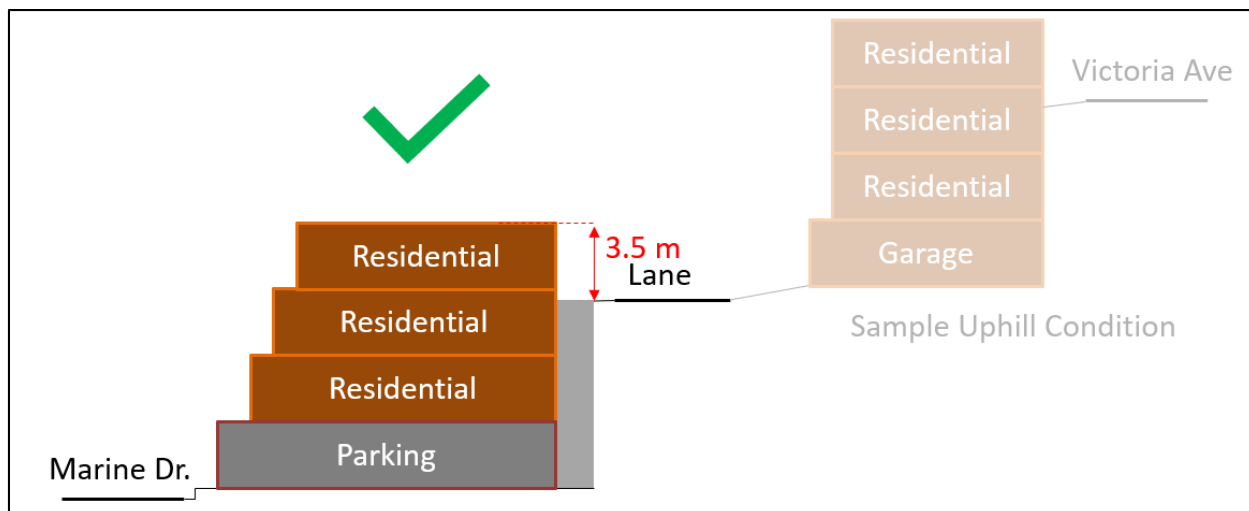
This Option would be to leave the existing policy framework intact. The current height policy in the Waterfront Village land use designation (area) allows buildings “up to 4 storeys in height”. The associated diagrams show buildings constructed on a hillside, with the lowest level typically commercial (adjacent to Marine Drive) and the remaining levels built into the hillside so only a portion of the building is above the property line at the high side of the property.



Under the current policy (Option A) there would be no requirement to amend the OCP for any proposal 4 storeys in height or less, and there is no specific guidance that would indicate when 3 storeys is appropriate. A floor area density of up to 2.0 FAR (gross floor area ratio) is allowed on all lands, regardless of whether they are commercial properties built right to the neighbouring property line, or apartment buildings with residential uses surrounding them.

WV - Option B

This proposed alternative would continue to allow up to 3 storeys on all properties (as is generally allowed in the Zoning Bylaw for properties in this OCP land use designation) and would establish conditions for when a 4th storey would be permitted during a rezoning process. The proposed criteria is that to allow a 4th storey, the building must be no higher than 3.5 metres (11.5 feet) above the highest point of the property boundary. This would reduce the likelihood of several storeys of building blocking the views to the water from properties uphill of the development site.



This approach would be implemented during a rezoning process if a proposed building sought to utilize the additional FAR density allowed in the OCP (2.0 FAR, as compared to 1.75 FAR allowed currently in the commercial zones). Under Option B, it is also proposed that a maximum FAR of 2.0 would only be permitted on commercial properties where there is a zero lot line setback with an adjacent property. For all other (residential) properties, the maximum FAR would be 1.5. This would reduce the bulk of new buildings in more residential areas.

East Side Large Lot Infill Area

ES - Option A (status quo)

This area-specific land use designation in the OCP permits specific heights on particular blocks in the area, including 6 storeys along Finlay Street adjacent to Peace Arch Hospital, 3 storeys along North Bluff Road (and up to 6 storeys if it includes affordable rental units), and 3 storeys along Maple Street. The designation includes a site currently under construction (i.e., the 13-storey 'ALTUS' building) which does not conform to the current policies as it was approved prior to the adoption of the OCP, and Option A would be to leave the policy framework unchanged. A current application to amend the OCP to allow a 5 storey building located next to the 13 storey ALTUS building (at Russell and Maple) can continue to be processed for a future decision by Council.

ES - Option B

Taking into account the approval and on-going construction of the ALTUS building, an alternative to the status quo would be to recognize the need for improved transition in building height and massing moving eastwards from the site. With this in mind, it is proposed that to blend/bridge the transition between the ALTUS and the surrounding low profile (i.e., currently single detached dwellings on Maple Street, with the potential for future three storey townhouse development) neighbourhood, the property to the east (at the corner of Russell and Maple) be allowed to have a maximum of 5 storeys, with portions of the building adjacent to Maple Street being 4 storeys. This alternative policy framework regarding maximum heights would provide a more gradual transition in built form as one moves west to east, into the City's Mature Neighbourhood land use designation.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no immediate budget implications associated with the OCP Review of the Building Heights outside the Town Centre, which is undertaken within existing departmental resources.

The approach of using a City-wide postcard mailout (at a cost of approximately \$1,850 for 10,700 households) to advertise for the digital open house and survey is new and being done as a trial to see if it is effective in encouraging greater participation and awareness of the OCP Review.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Section 475 of the *Local Government Act (LGA)* requires local governments to consider persons, organizations, and authorities who will be affected during the amendment of an Official Community Plan, and for any affected party to provide them with one or more opportunities that are considered appropriate for consultation. A formal resolution stating that Council has considered this will accompany any OCP amendment bylaw brought forward for first reading.

This consultation process is further specified in Council Policy 512 (Official Community Plan Consultation), with different groups identified for consultation in the White Rock context. In December 2020, staff contacted the following agencies at the staff level to advise them that the City's OCP Review scope has been reduced and that public consultation would be occurring in January 2021 regarding building heights outside the Town Centre:

- TransLink
- Fraser Health Authority
- School District 36
- Metro Vancouver
- City of Surrey
- Peace Arch Hospital Foundation
- White Rock Business Improvement Association
- South Surrey White Rock Chamber of Commerce
- Explore White Rock

The staff members at these organizations have been invited to participate, provide feedback, or discuss any questions they have on this topic with staff. Further, as any resulting OCP amendment bylaws are brought forward for LUPC and Council consideration, any formal initial comments from these organizations will be shared with Council in a corporate report, prior to a public hearing, and they would be sent the proposed bylaw(s) and given an opportunity to share comments with Council via the public hearing.

In addition to the above organizations, staff are also contacting Semiahmoo First Nation to offer an opportunity to discuss any of the proposed changes to the OCP.

Staff have not yet reached out directly to some of the other external organizations in the community that were previously identified in the original OCP Review scope of work. Engagement with the groups identified below via written correspondence or meetings would impact the timeframe in bringing amendment bylaws forward to LUPC and Council and would likely change the earliest opportunity for a public hearing from March 2021 to May/June 2021. In addition to the consideration of the extended timeline, should LUPC wish to seek feedback from these groups, or others, it may direct staff which groups should be contacted and specify the type of opportunity considered appropriate:

- BC Housing;

- Sources Community Resource Society;
- Peninsula Homeless to Housing Task Force;
- Committees of Council (Economic Development, Environmental, Advisory Design Panel).

COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

This corporate report previews the content of an upcoming virtual public open house and questionnaire on the OCP Review. Staff will report back to the LUPC on the attendance at the public open house as well as the results of the survey in a future corporate report.

INTERDEPARTMENTAL INVOLVEMENT/IMPLICATIONS

Not applicable.

CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

Not applicable.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The completion of the OCP Review has been identified as one of Council's top priorities.

OPTIONS / RISKS / ALTERNATIVES

The Land Use and Planning Committee may consider:

1. Directing staff to revise the options being presented to the public in Phase 2 of the OCP Review for building heights outside the Town Centre, as specifically identified by Council, which may postpone the start of the engagement currently scheduled to begin January 14, 2021; or
2. Identify additional persons, organizations and authorities it considers will be affected by the proposed amendments and direct staff to provide an opportunity for consultation with them.

CONCLUSION

Staff are restarting public consultation in January 2021 on the newly revised scope of the Official Community Plan (OCP) Review, with the "Building Heights outside of the Town Centre" topic going the Phase 2 "Options Development" stage of the process for public feedback.

This corporate report provides Land Use and Planning Committee (LUPC) with a preview of the options to be shared with the public at a January 14, 2021 digital "public open house." Feedback on the options will be requested through a questionnaire delivered on the City's online public engagement platform (www.talkwhiterock.ca/ocp-review), available on January 15, 2021, and staff will report back to LUPC with recommendations on this topic as well as the other topics (Town Centre and Waterfront Strategy) in a future corporate report.

Respectfully submitted,



Carl Isaak, MCIP RPP
Director, Planning and Development Services

Comments from the Chief Administrative Officer

This corporate report is provided for the Committee's information.



Guillermo Ferrero
Chief Administrative Officer

Appendix A: Map of Areas under Review in “Building Heights outside the Town Centre” topic

APPENDIX A

Map of Areas under Review in “Building Heights outside the Town Centre” topic

