

To: Mayor and Council
Re: East Fraser Lands Official Development Plan Amendments

I am writing to voice my opposition to the proposed amendment to the ODP for the East Fraser Lands (EFL) with regard to the definition of "affordable housing"

I have been an active member of the EFL Committee since 2002, when the committee was first formed. As a long-time resident of the West Fraser Lands, I wanted to see the new area developed as a sustainable, diverse community with appropriate amenities (community centre, daycare, schools, shopping etc.) AND with a high degree of affordability.

In collaboration with city staff and the developers, our committee worked hard to develop an ODP that addressed many of these concerns, concerns that were shared by this Council. To date, however, aside from several small parks, not a single public amenity has been delivered within the EFL and not a single unit of affordable housing has been built.

Now there is a proposal to change or "update" the definition of affordable housing as it now stands in the ODP. I am strongly opposed to this change.

In particular, the proposed change is confusing, refers to "objectives" (pg 8 1.1 Definitions 5.2.1(c)) as opposed to fixed requirements, and in its desire to provide "flexibility" guts the intent of the ODP to provide true affordability for low and middle income earners and those who require supportive housing.

Essentially, since the objective of affordability as originally defined (or re-defined as HILs) can't be met, the City wants to change the definition. Further, the proposal to change "affordable" to "social" is confusing at best, and is misleading. Let's be clear--the change in definition will result in a significant net loss of actual affordable units.

Let's look at an example. Say we take a parcel of land that was designated for affordable housing of 100 units. According to the ODP definition, and in line with the EFL Committee's vision, all 100 units would have to be "affordable". Under the new definition of "social" housing, only 30% of the units would have to be at HILs or less, and the remaining 70% would be at market (or 90% of market, as an "objective"). Yet 100% of the units would be counted as social housing!

That means that in the over-all build out of the EFL the total number of actual "affordable" or "social" units would be considerably less (6% as opposed to the original 20%) than originally committed to in the ODP. With the new definition, the city would be able to say that it met its target. This reality is never explained or made clear in the city's proposal. I wonder why.

The East Fraser Lands offers an opportunity in one of the last corners of the city to be developed on a large scale to address Vancouver's crisis of affordability in a meaningful way. Council should certainly exercise its option to purchase the land parcels designated for affordable housing as they come available.

With a new federal government committing more funds for affordable housing and other models such as the Land Trust developing sites in the West Fraser Lands, let's work to provide true affordability that makes sense.

Changing the definitions gets us farther and farther away from this goal.

Sincerely,

Sally Teich

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