

Request for Decision



To: Committee of the Whole

From: **Development, Engineering & Planning**

Date: June 10, 2019

Subject: Proposed Text Amendment to Official Community Plan Residential Density in the Commercial Core Bylaw No. 1919-A3 (FILE: 4750-OCP1901).

Recommendation: **THAT the Committee of the Whole recommends that at the Regular Meeting of June 10, 2019, Council gives first and second reading to Bylaw No. 1919-A3 and directs staff to proceed with the statutory requirements for public notice.**

Background

Overview

Section 3.0 of the Official Community Plan (see Appendix "A") designates general land uses for all properties in the City. Some of these land use designations specify maximum residential density requirements (i.e., in the "Commercial Core" designation it is 60 units per hectare and in the Low Density Residential designation it is 40 units per hectare).

Due to recent inquiries and discussions with housing providers and the development community, it has come to the attention of staff that a change to the Commercial Core density is required to permit future residential development on upper floors in the downtown and to legitimize the existing residential units in existing commercial buildings.

Because the lots downtown are small relative to other areas of the City, the 60 unit per hectare density cap negates virtually any residential development from occurring downtown except for on a few of the larger lots. Further, numerous policies in the Official Community Plan ("OCP") and universal sustainable best practices support encouraging residential and densification in the downtown.

For example, a typical lot on Market Avenue is about 0.04 hectare, which could only accommodate about 1 unit to be built above or behind the commercial space. A typical larger corner lot along Highway No. 3 downtown is about .1 hectare which could only accommodate about 6 units to be built in combination with commercial.

It is noted that in March, 2018, a major amendment to the Zoning Bylaw was enacted which was designed to encourage densification, infill and higher density residential density downtown. Due to the flood and other City priorities, the OCP amendments to align with this zoning bylaw amendment have not been implemented. This is a step toward aligning the two bylaws.

The proposed Bylaw No. 1919-A3 is attached in Appendix “B”.

Conclusion

To bring the OCP into alignment with the Zoning Bylaw with respect to residential density, and to accommodate existing and future residential development in the downtown, it is proposed to eliminate the residential density cap. The use, form and size of buildings can be regulated through height, setbacks and on-site parking regulations in the Zoning Bylaw.

This bylaw amendment also responds to the City’s downtown improvement and economic recovery initiative by encouraging redevelopment and retrofitting commercial buildings. This may, in turn, help attract new businesses to Grand Forks.

Benefits or Impacts

General

Strategic Impact



Community Engagement

- The OCP amendment bylaw will be advertised in the local newspaper and a public hearing will be held to hear any concerns from the community.



Community Livability

- A healthy commercial/residential mix downtown will help to enliven the downtown streets and allow residents to live close to shopping and services. Additional “eyes on the street” at night will help improve nighttime safety.



Economic Growth

- Allowing for residential development on smaller lots may encourage new business to locate downtown and existing business to diversify and add space to their buildings.



Fiscal Responsibility

- Densification in the downtown core will maximize the use of existing infrastructure.

Policy/Legislation

The Local Government Act and the Official Community Plan.

Attachments

Appendix "A": Section 3.0 OCP Land Use Plan

Appendix "B": Proposed Official Community Plan Bylaw Amendment No. 1919-A3, 2019

Recommendation

THAT the Committee of the Whole recommends that at the Regular Meeting of June 10, 2019, Council gives first and second reading to Bylaw No. 1919-A3 and directs staff to proceed with the statutory requirements for public notice.

Options

1. THAT Committee of the Whole accepts the report.
2. THAT Committee of the Whole does not accept the report.
3. THAT Committee of the Whole refers the matter back to staff for further information.