

Gentle Density

Background, Rationale and Proposed Policy Recommendations

September 1, 2018

Mayor and Council and Planning Services:

As a conclusion to several months of work by a wide range of Fairfield community residents and Planning Services staff, we offer the policy recommendations below as a strategy to maximize Gentle Density as a land use tool and community-building outcome in Fairfield.

Gentle Density's strength is its demonstrated broad-based appeal, based on community surveys and consultations here and in other mature Canadian city neighbourhoods, as the appropriate vehicle to increase not just residential capacity but also housing adaptability while preserving the scale, form and texture of communities through dispersed, low-impact infill housing.

Through the mechanism of Gentle Density, communities are able to successfully navigate towards social goals of aging-in-place, opportunities for intergenerational families as well as providing diverse forms of housing that satisfy an expanded range of needs and financial capacities, set within a culturally rich and social varied environment.

Leaving such social and community arguments to the side for a moment, the centrepiece argument in support of Gentle Density is the City's own 2041 population growth projections for Fairfield, which call for an additional 500-600 'doors' (raw population growth of 1,000-1,400) over the next 23 years (numbers appear to vary slightly by survey or source, but these are valid approximations).

Our position is that:

- This represents an annual average of 24 new dwellings (though we note that such growth projections are, as an annual average, being aggressively exceeded by recent and current development in portions of Fairfield);

- these growth targets or even larger numbers can be easily achieved throughout Fairfield utilizing a Gentle Density growth strategy;
- this can be undertaken without the disruption and damage to community character exemplified by dense and out-of-scale products of R-3 and similar zoning.

We close this introduction by reminding you that, as the policy recommendations below make clear, Gentle Density is not some strategy devised to preserve homeowner ‘privilege’ in Fairfield, or to restrict affordable housing which, we contend, is an expression of various market factors, not building type or density. Gentle Density, obviously, does not oppose density or housing affordability, but promotes density in a community-preserving form.

Our policy recommendations are:

- Under proposed guidelines below (and others that may be added), Gentle Density may be created as-of-right throughout Fairfield, subject only to the conventions of normal development permit protocols;
- No expression of Gentle Density may exceed three storeys or a floor space ratio of 1.0;
- All expressions of Gentle Density will respect conventional side-yard and rear-yard setbacks, leaving front-yard setbacks available for negotiation, specifically bearing on sensitivities concerning the provision of on-site (rear-yard) parking;
- East of Linden Avenue and extending to the northern, southern and eastern borders of Fairfield, expressions of up to 6 dwelling units permitted on lots minimum 50’ wide, subject to various on-site parking requirements and landscaping/privacy provisions;
- West of Linden Avenue to the northern, southern and western borders of Fairfield, expressions of up to 8 units permitted on lots under 60’ wide, and up to 12 dwellings units on lots 60’ or wider, all subject to current on-site parking requirements and landscaping/privacy provisions;
- The entitlements above will be approved on a local area (ie Fairfield) basis, assuming that a change to the Official Community Plan is not required to facilitate them. If OCP amendment is required, then the

- city, working with the Fairfield community, will attempt to create an approval process less onerous than site-by-site rezoning;
- Concurrent with the overall approval of Gentle Density for Fairfield, the City will eliminate/abandon all new expressions of R-3 or equivalent zoning from Fairfield including Large and Small Urban Villages or more heavily traveled roads (so-called ‘arterials’) or intersections. Existing anomalies in various parts of Fairfield will not be considered as justification for new R-3 proposals.
 - As well, any urban residential property within 75 metres of the lot line of a traditional residential property, as designated in the OCP, shall only be developed/redeveloped as a Gentle Density form.

We close by thanking Mayor and Council for its support of this process, planning staff for significant time and professional investment, and an uncountable number of Fairfield community volunteers and citizens for their significant efforts.

We believe that Gentle Density will easily meet the City’s short- and long-range growth targets for Fairfield while doing much to preserve the character and identity—the vital social wealth—of the Fairfield community

This is a worthwhile endeavor and a worthy accomplishment.

Thank you,

Gentle Density Steering Committee

Community Representatives include:

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