

VCAN

Victoria Community Association Network

May 9th, 2019

Re: Council Consideration of OCP Amendments

Dear Mayor Helps and Council,

The member associations of VCAN are united in requesting Council and Staff follow best practices in land use planning by unequivocally upholding the Official Community Plan.

Background

The Official Community Plan (OCP) is the foundation planning document that governs long term planning and sustainability goals citywide.

Members of VCAN are concerned that requests for OCP amendments are coming forward on an ad hoc basis with little public consultation and are being considered by Council without the demonstration of a compelling public benefit. Ad hoc OCP amendments require only a 200-meter public notification distance, while the proposals, if approved, may have far reaching precedence citywide, encouraging further ad hoc amendments to the OCP with the result of the undermining of the public trust placed in our planning process.

The OCP was contemplated and enacted with the agreement of all of the citizen stakeholders within the community and this bylaw is considered by members of VCAN as an essential piece of the necessary balance between the interests of the development industry and the community. As such, amendments to this guiding document should be infrequent and only when demonstrably in the best interests of the residents of the community. This is consistent with the significance of the citywide engagement process that formed an important part of the development of the OCP and should be the starting point of any evaluation of a proposed development.

The current unpredictable, frequent and somewhat opaque nature of ad hoc Official Community Plan (OCP) amendments, and the meager public notification they require, only serve to undermine the public trust placed in the planning process and in local government. They also represent, at base, a failure at the level of implementation to respect the process, consultations and extensive stakeholder engagement directed and undertaken by the city to create the OCP in the first place.

Request of Mayor and Council:

The member associations of VCAN are united in requesting the following:

1. That no more amendments be granted to **Section 6: *Land Management and Development*** (pg 33 - 50) of the OCP, without first requiring and receiving a developer-funded independent study of where and why changes are being proposed that are contrary to OCP policy. This study must be provided prior to the CALUC meeting and would form part of the public notice.
2. That for **ALL** potential OCP amendments, developers provide a detailed rationale that responds to all social and physical policy directions contained in the OCP. This rationale is to be specifically addressed in the first staff report prior to first reading of any OCP amendment bylaw.

In summary, the undersigned VCAN member organizations do not support OCP amendments that do not comply with the two criteria identified above. We ask that these criteria be immediately applied to current developments or initiatives that require an OCP amendment.

We hope Council will undertake to preserve and support best practice in land use, consistent with other localities and with its own previously expressed intentions, by adopting the same position.

Sincerely,

Burnside Gorge Community Association
Downtown Residents Association
Fairfield Gonzales Community Association
Fernwood Community Association
Hillside Quadra Neighbourhood Action Committee
James Bay Neighbourhood Association
North Jubilee Neighbourhood Association
North Park Neighbourhood Association
Oaklands Community Association
Rockland Neighbourhood Association
Victoria West Community Association