Minutes – Executive Policy Committee – September 21, 2006

REPORTS

Minute No. 634 Winnipeg Housing Steering Committee – Downtown Housing Plan File EX-9

EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

The Executive Policy Committee referred the recommendation of the Winnipeg Housing Steering Committee to the Administration to prepare a report outlining scope, strategy and process for housing in the downtown.

DECISION MAKING HISTORY:

Moved by Councillor De Smedt,

That the recommendation of the Winnipeg Housing Steering Committee be referred to the Administration to prepare a report outlining scope, strategy and process for housing in the downtown.

Carried

WINNIPEG HOUSING STEERING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On September 14, 2006, the Winnipeg Housing Steering Committee concurred in the administrative recommendation, as amended, and recommends to the Executive Policy Committee that, in order to provide a framework to promote the creation of new downtown housing, the Planning, Property and Development Department, in co-operation with the Winnipeg Housing Steering Committee, be directed to prepare a report on the preparation of a Downtown Housing Plan as part of an update of CentrePlan, the report to include but not limited to the following:

- information on the work plan
- goals and objectives
- a workable budget which would allow for community consultation, including stakeholders, and
- identification of potential funding sources

RE: HOUSING IN THE DOWNTOWN

RECOMMENDATION:

That, in order to provide a framework to promote the creation of new downtown housing, the Housing Steering Committee recommend that the Executive Policy Committee direct the Planning, Property and Development Department to prepare a report on the preparation of a Downtown Housing Plan as part of an update of CentrePlan. This report is to provide information on the work plan, the contents and a proposed budget along with the identification of potential funding sources.

REASON:

At their informal meeting of July 26, 2006, the Winnipeg Housing Steering Committee requested that the administration develop tools and incentives to promote downtown housing development and that a program and budget be prepared for EPC consideration. In response, the Planning, Property and Development Department is recommending that, as part of a reconfirmation and updating of CentrePlan, priority be placed on the preparation of a Downtown Housing Plan which would help focus existing tools and incentive programs as well as recommend new ones.

HISTORY:

At their regular meeting of May 12, 2006, the Winnipeg Housing Steering Committee invited delegations to present on *Housing in Downtown Winnipeg – A Discussion of Opportunities and Challenges*. A total of eleven delegations were heard. Several of the presenters spoke of the need for plans and programs to promote both affordable and market housing in the downtown

- Stefano Grande of the Downtown BIZ – spoke of a need for a Downtown Housing Plan that would encourage both affordable and market housing;
- Diane Bampton of CentreVenture – spoke of needing a market demand and market gap study, setting specific goals and targeting housing programs to meet those goals;
- Eric Vogan of Qualico spoke of the value of Neighbourhood plans and community goals in revitalization efforts;
- Peter Squire of the WREB spoke of the need for targeting specific areas for incentives and cooperating with other revitalization efforts;
- Peter Samson and Hijab Musba of Prairie Architects spoke of a need for market research and planning with an emphasis on developing an urban design framework for new housing;
- Jeff Badger spoke of developing a consensus on downtown housing among the various stakeholders and developers to strategically target existing incentives.

The common theme that arose from these presentations was the desire for a more focused approach to downtown housing that would help to target the existing tools and incentives as well as provide the basis for the creation of new ones. CentrePlan, under its Vision of Community and Belonging speaks of strategies to support downtown neighbourhoods and encouraging a mix of new downtown residents. Since the formulation of CentrePlan ten years ago several initiatives have been undertaken including the creation of the Winnipeg Housing and

Homelessness Initiative and the CentreVenture Development Corporation. Together, both groups have assisted in the establishment or commitment of 580 new residential units in the Downtown. This represents a significant accomplishment, however as some of the presenters have pointed out, there does not exist a housing plan specific to the Downtown other than the broader policies and strategies of CentrePlan. An action-oriented plan that would focus the efforts of all downtown stakeholders would help lead to further success in the development of new housing.

DISCUSSION:

Since the adoption of CentrePlan ten years ago, Downtown Winnipeg has undergone many changes, several new major developments have been undertaken, the overall economy has improved and the city's demographics are changing thanks to renewed levels of immigration. Therefore, an update of CentrePlan would be timely. This review would include an acknowledgement of the successes of the plan, a reconfirmation with the community that its policies and goals are still relevant, and an update to reflect the current realities and new dynamics in the Downtown. A "refreshed" CentrePlan would provide the backdrop to focus in on the issues surrounding the development of new Downtown housing. The planning process surrounding the CentrePlan update and the creation of a Downtown Housing Plan could begin to address many of the concerns raised by the above-mentioned presenters as well as issues raised at the recent City Summit, such as the priority to improve the liveability of neighbourhoods in the downtown. Under the Housing Plans and Advocacy Program, the City of Winnipeg Affordable Housing Initiative encourages community groups to undertake the development of housing plans. This program has been successful in helping these communities focus their efforts in the provision of affordable housing and neighbourhood building. This is the same approach that would be applied in the Downtown, however, as a larger more complex entity, a Downtown Housing Plan will be much more elaborate and may lead to the adoption of new policies and the creation of new programs.

With its roots in CentrePlan, the goal of this plan would be to encourage the development of new downtown housing for a variety of market segments including affordable, luxury and mid-priced housing, and identify specific targets and goals for these sectors. The main beneficiary of the plan would be City Council who would use it as an information tool to help focus the allocation of funding and incentives. The information gathered in the formulation of this plan and the direction it could offer would also benefit the development community and lead to a higher level of knowledge and certainty in the marketplace.

A Downtown Housing Plan would contain information on existing conditions such as the current housing stock and tenure mix, socio-economic information on downtown residents and current impediments to development. A market demand forecast, as well as an analysis of the financial constraints facing housing development for different market segments would be updated to reflect current market conditions and to help to set realistic goals and incentives. As part of this analysis, the plan would also examine the different sectors of the downtown in order to identify the needs and market potential of specific neighbourhoods to help target development. The outcome would be a plan that identifies specific actions for the City as well as potential partnerships and actions with other levels of government and the private sector. It would help

coordinate existing programs and incentives and suggest the development of new initiatives. The development of this plan will involve ongoing stakeholder consultation in the identification of issues, the filling of information gaps, and the advancement of recommendations.

The planning process would be led by the Downtown Planning Branch in cooperation with the Housing Development Division of the Planning, Property and Development Department and would seek direction from a steering committee of stakeholders. Funding could be allocated through the Housing Rehabilitation Investment Reserve of the City of Winnipeg Affordable Housing Initiative where an additional allocation would be requested for the Downtown Housing Program. Alternatively, a separate allocation could be requested from Executive Policy Committee. The bulk of the budget for this plan would be needed to fund the market demand analysis, as much of the consultation and plan development would be undertaken by existing staff within the Department. There may be opportunities for cost-sharing of this initiative among downtown stakeholders as this will provide marketing information that would be valuable to potential developers. A more detailed workplan and funding strategy would be the subject of a future report if there were a desire on behalf of the Standing Policy Committee on Downtown Development to pursue this initiative.

THIS REPORT SUBMITTED BY:

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