Submission to Executive Policy Committee

November 14 2023

Re: Item 19, "Housing Accelerator Fund"

By

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Minister Fraser requested that the City's application for Housing Accelerator Funding include the following:

- Legalizing four units as-of-right city-wide;
- Legalizing up to four storeys as-of-right within 800 metres of transit; and
- Ensuring that new mid-rise housing zoning reforms targeted for mall sites and commercial corridors - as proposed in City Council's Strategic Priorities Action Plan – allow for as-of-right development to facilitate quick approvals and construction of new rental housing.

Wow! That is a big ask.

I urge councillors not to throw away the extensive zoning policy work, neighbourhood plans, and city-wide plans which the City has done in recent years, in exchange for Housing Accelerator funding.

The Housing Accelerator Fund is an extremely attractive offering that could be of huge assistance in increasing the availability of affordable housing in Winnipeg.

However, with this request from the Minister for the city to adopt very significant zoning changes, the Housing Accelerator Fund now looks like a Trojan Horse.

The fact that proposals such as those outlined by Minister Fraser did not emerge from recent City-driven planning and zoning policy reviews, demonstrates that these are not approaches which Winnipeg thought appropriate to consider.

Don't be hasty to accept the imposition of such stark terms in order to access funding.

There is a widespread enthusiasm for densification, but there are good ways and bad ways to increase density. Every city, every neighbourhood, has different circumstances and needs. Density can be done right, as in Paris, or wrong, as in so many other cities. The art of governing is in choosing the right solutions.

There will be room for negotiation on the wording of the zoning commitment required from the.

The City should ensure that it agrees to wording that increases density without throwing over all its previous planning work.

For instance,

My neighbourhood, Crescentwood-Enderton Park, was designated as a Heritage Conservation District (HCD) on March 23, 2023.

> "Official designation of an HCD ensures that the heritage values and character-defining elements of a neighbourhood can be conserved over the long term and that new development is consistent with objectives and policy directions jointly created by the community and the City of Winnipeg."

This means:

> "A property owner will be required to obtain a heritage permit for certain work in accordance with the HCD Plan. Furthermore, an historic property notice will be registered as a caveat on the titles of all properties within the HCD."

The HCD standards are designed to:

> "Conserve the heritage value of the historic place. Do not destroy intact character defining elements (CDEs); …
>
> Make new additions to a building visually and physically compatible with, distinguishable from, and subordinate to the historic place. …
>
> For the design of new infill buildings in the context of an HCD, the standards for new work as noted above should be applied. For greater clarification, new infill buildings are to be visually compatible and subordinate with the historic place."

Applying Minister Fraser's zoning changes to our neighbourhood would defeat the purpose of the Heritage Conservation District designation, if they were applied without reference to the HCD.

It greatly depends on what "as-of-right" means. There are various definitions, including:

- As-of–right shall mean that development may proceed without the need for a special permit, variance, amendment, waiver, or other discretionary approval. Projects cannot be prohibited, but can be reasonably regulated.

The City must engage in some careful negotiation, including the definition of "as of right" for this agreement, to allow for the increased density which Minister Fraser seeks as a condition of providing Housing Accelerator funds, while still allowing the City to regulate how new infill fits into City and neighbourhood plans.