

## **Good Evening**

Mayor Helps, members of Council, I'm here tonight speaking for the member associations of the Victoria Community Association Network. Many of my VCAN colleagues are here tonight. As you know VCAN is the association of associations for Victoria's communities and we meet formally to discuss best practices for community issues. VCAN members submitted a letter today to Council requesting both Council and Staff follow best practices in land use planning by unequivocally upholding the Official Community Plan for our City.

The Official Community Plan or OCP as you know is at the top of the hierarchy of planning bylaws. The current OCP is the result of a recently conducted, years long, citywide public engagement process and it represents compromises negotiated and committed to by all of the citizen and industry stakeholders through this process. This bylaw is considered by members of VCAN as a contract that balances the interests of the development industry and the community. As with any contract, amendments to this guiding document should be both rare and transparent and only considered when it can be clearly demonstrated to be in the best interests of the entire community.

Members of VCAN are very concerned that requests for OCP amendments are coming forward on an ad hoc basis that require little public consultation and are being considered by Council without a quantifiable and compelling public benefit. Ad hoc amendments to citywide OCP policies only require a meager 200-meter public notification distance, which is completely at odds with the citywide consultations and extensive stakeholder engagement that created the OCP in the first place. These same proposals, if approved, will have far reaching impacts citywide in terms of setting

precedence, and this chipping away of our core planning document will encourage further ad hoc amendments to the OCP with the result of the undermining of the public trust placed in our planning process.

The OCP is also meant to maintain some flexibility and its acknowledged that there will be technical and minor amendments necessary from time to time. However if the current OCP prescriptions, particularly those in Section 6, Land Management and development are deemed by all to be too restrictive, then it is appropriate to go back and engage the public in a new citywide review to update the OCP in its entirety.

But for the time being and in order to identify a compelling public benefit from any OCP amendment, 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*** 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.

To be clear VCAN member organizations do not support OCP amendments that do not comply with these two criteria and we ask that these criteria be immediately applied to current developments or initiatives that require an OCP amendment.

We hope Council will be consistent with its own previously expressed intentions and undertake to preserve and support best practice in land use, by adopting these same positions.

In closing I'd like to add that the members of VCAN have really come together on this issue and all 12 community associations are 100% united in the importance of this request, which in my opinion is pretty impressive. We trust that Council will be just as impressive in their resolve to support and maintain the integrity of our most important planning document.

Thank you for listening to the neighbourhoods, it is always much appreciated.