



URBAN DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE – PACIFIC REGION
#200 – 602 West Hastings Street
Vancouver, British Columbia V6B 1P2 Canada
T. 604.669.9585 F. 604.689.8691
www.udi.bc.ca

June 26, 2017

Mayor Richard Stewart and Council
City of Coquitlam
3000 Guildford Way
Coquitlam, BC V3B 7N2

Dear Mayor and Council:

***Re: Burquitlam-Lougheed Neighbourhood Plan and Urban Design + Development
Permit Areas Part of the Citywide Official Community Plan***

The Urban Development Institute (UDI) would like to thank Coquitlam staff for consulting with the development industry regarding the *Burquitlam-Lougheed Neighbourhood Plan (BLNP)* through our Liaison Committee with the City. We understand that Council is approving both the *BNLP* and the *Urban Design + Development Permit Areas Part of the Citywide Official Community Plan (COCP)*. We are generally supportive of both. The *BNLP* focuses needed growth near three SkyTrain stations – the Burquitlam, Lougheed and Braid stations. The proposed urban design policies will improve the livability of and the architecture in Coquitlam. There are a few areas where UDI has comments.

Burquitlam-Lougheed Neighbourhood Plan – Chapter 9.2 of the COCP

We believe the City's objective to increase housing options in Coquitlam will be met through the *BLNP*, as there are a variety of housing types proposed in it. Focusing higher density growth near TransLink stations is important to the future of Coquitlam and the Region. Greenhouse gas emissions are reduced and affordability will improve as people are less likely to need automobiles to reach their destinations as other forms of transportation become more viable. As well, new housing in these areas will be multi-family, which is more energy efficient and less expensive than single-family homes.

Future residents in the Burquitlam-Lougheed Neighbourhood will also be more active and healthy as the proposed land use mix, street layout, urban design, park space and amenity package will offer residents, workers and visitors a vibrant and pedestrian-oriented urban core. Additionally, we are pleased that one of the policies of the *Plan* is "... to expand, enhance and improve school facilities which benefit both the school and the community, and ensure the viability of school sites in the future." This can best be done by increasing the number of new families in the area as the *BLNP* does.

UDI has a few suggestions regarding the *BLNP*. Although overall there is increased growth in the neighbourhood by 15,000 new residents, there are areas near stations where density could be increased. First, single-family housing is being preserved in the Oakdale area. We understand that moving forward at this time may be difficult, but we do hope that this

Future Planning Area will be reviewed again soon. Having people live and/or work near transit stations increases ridership and is important to the viability of the transit system.

Secondly, because Oakdale is remaining single-family, it is even more important that other areas near the Burquitlam Station are planned to fully leverage the new transit line. Just east of the station there is an area that is designated medium density within 400 metres of the transit station. Higher densities are more common in areas this close to a rapid transit station. Staff have said that high density development is not compatible with the six storey buildings that have been recently constructed in the area. This argument could be used indefinitely, so we are concerned that this area's density could be limited for an extended period of time – if not permanently. If there is a concern that there needs to be a buffer because townhouses will be built nearby, a mid-rise zone could be designated just outside the 400 metre area around the station. The townhouse zone would have to be moved further east, but this would further assist the City's efforts in making the neighbourhood more urban and transit-oriented.

Thirdly, like Oakdale, we also hope that the Whiting Way/Appian Way Future Planning Area will be reviewed soon. Although this is further away from a transit station, it is located mid-point between the Burquitlam and Lougheed stations, so it is an important growth area.

The fourth area that we hope will see increased densities in the future is the just north of the Braid Station. We are pleased that the draft *Plan* includes the recommendation "... to improve pedestrian and cycling linkages across Highway 1, at the Brunette Interchange, to improve access to Braid SkyTrain Station." UDI supports this. We hope that when this is completed, Coquitlam will consider increasing the densities in those areas closest to the Braid Station.

The City has aspirations to increase the employment opportunities in the area, and it should. Adding employment along the rapid transit lines will increase the use of them, and allow businesses to access a larger numbers of employees. Mixed uses also adds to the vibrancy of urban areas. However, the Burquitlam-Lougheed Neighbourhood is a transitional area. It will be difficult to attract millennials to work there until a significant amount of redevelopment has occurred. As such, substantial increases to job generating uses will need incentives for retail and office spaces. We are pleased that staff have recognized this as the *BLNP* was developed, and have had consultants review the issue. UDI would encourage Coquitlam to be flexible in the implementation of employment generating uses along the Evergreen Line.

In terms of commercial store frontages, UDI agrees that generally the frontages should be smaller "... to encourage variety and interest." However, in some cases significant retail needs much wider frontages. These types of stores can also attract shoppers to the area, which benefits all retailers. Having different sized storefronts would also vary the streetscape. Another issue is the height of the commercial store frontages. The City has a minimum height clearance of 4.5 meters within retail spaces. Small retail does not require height that is greater than its width. We would encourage Coquitlam to be flexible in the implementation of these policies.

Under section 3.3.1 (a), the City plans to "*Acquire additional parkland, over time ...*". Given escalating land values in Coquitlam, which will likely be exacerbated by urbanizing the

neighbourhood, we recommend that the City acquire parkland earlier rather than wait until the area is nearing buildout.

Under section 3.5, the City is considering rehabilitating/improving natural areas and wildlife corridors, in part, through development. UDI would like to discuss the funding mechanism for this with staff before implementation.

The City may need to be flexible with regard to streets. We agree with the notion of complete streets that accommodate and encourage pedestrian and bicycle usage through better design and the widening right-of-ways. However, in other jurisdictions, we have found that complete streets can be very wide (beyond a human scale), which can discourage the pedestrian traffic that brings vibrancy to neighbourhoods.

We are pleased that the City is considering "... *the implementation of a variety of parking management strategies (e.g., time limits and pricing)*," in the *BLNP*. UDI has long advocated for this approach to address many of the parking issues in Coquitlam, so we would support any efforts to increase on-street parking regulations and enforcement – especially in urban areas served by transit. UDI also supports (and would be interested in working with City staff on) developing a "... *Transportation Demand Management (TDM) policy with a suite of potential TDM measures that may be utilized to justify parking relaxations*," as noted in section 7.1 (g).

We have a suggestion for an added key performance indicator under section 7.2. As the *BLNP* is intended to be a TOD neighbourhood, it should increase ridership on TransLink's bus and SkyTrain systems. As such, we recommend that transit ridership be monitored as well.

Urban Design + Development Permit Areas – Part 4 of the COCP

As part of the Public Hearing, Council is being asked to approve the *Urban Design + Development Permit Area Part of the COCP* that will impact development across the City. UDI has a few comments on the guidelines.

It is being proposed that, "*Entrances to parking and loading should be from the lowest order street...*". UDI recommends the City be flexible with this policy. Given that some of the new road networks are years or even decades away from being constructed, reconsideration should be given to allow curb letdowns to give the retail (or 'employment generating') components a chance to be viable. Although transit riders do provide support for local businesses, most businesses outside downtown Vancouver still need support from the driving public. If drivers can't find a place to park easily, they may go to other retail areas.

Under section 2.1.2 (b) of the proposed urban design policies, the City is incorporating measures to minimize noise impacts from the SkyTrain guideway. One of the measures is to have "*sensitive site and building design*" which would move less noise sensitive uses closer to the guideway and those uses that are more noise sensitive further away. Therefore, we recommend allowing parking above the first floor retail to elevate residential components above and away from the guideway.

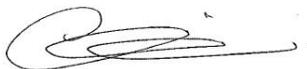
While UDI is very supportive of increasing the height of townhomes to 3-storeys in TOD areas; however, there are other changes in the *Urban Design + Development Permit Area* proposals where we have a few comments:

- Section 3.2.2 (b) (i): For ground oriented townhomes it will be difficult to meet the policy of the front door and garage not being adjacent or on the same façade.
- Section 3.2.3 (b) (i): In general UDI agrees with this but we suspect that builders may be nervous about stepping units within a building block, versus making a flat platform with retaining walls. In fact, depressed front yards can be a good way to take up grade. We also want to ensure that no density will be lost from this policy.
- Section 3.2.3 (c): We have some concerns with townhome sites being required to have public walkways through the strata property. There are some circumstances where this is beneficial, but not as an absolute starting point for all applications.

In implementing these policies we hope the Coquitlam staff and Council will allow for flexibility.

We would like to again thank staff for involving UDI and its membership in the development of the *BNLP*. UDI is pleased with the direction Coquitlam is taking to increase density in areas near transit. There are a few areas where we believe that more growth should occur, and we ask Council and staff to consider this as the *BLNP* is approved and implemented. We also hope you will consider the comments we have made on the urban design policies. UDI looks forward to working with the City on these initiatives as they move forward.

Yours sincerely,



Anne McMullin
President and CEO