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April 5, 2019

Biliana Velkova
Public Art Planner
City of Richmond
6911 No. 3 Rd.
Richmond, BC V6Y 2C1

Dear Ms. Velkova:

Re: Proposed Changes to the Richmond’s Public Art Policy

I would like to thank you for providing an update on the proposed changes to the City’s Public Art Program to the Richmond Liaison Committee on March 27, 2019. On behalf of the Urban Development Institute (UDI) and our members, we respectfully provide the following comments regarding the City’s proposals.

UDI is supportive of the flexibility being added to the program in terms of the how money from the Public Art Fund is allocated. Funds would still be directed to public art projects in the City, however, the Council could also allocate funds for expenditures on facilities such as art galleries which can be accessed and enjoyed by the public.

Regarding the eligibility of artists under the program potentially being limited to those in the local area, this would be an unnecessary restriction. We fear that it would limit the diversity of public art created, and could potentially result in higher costs because the pool of talent available to developers would be reduced.

You also noted that Council continues to want to approve public art installations in the City – including those funded by developers on their own development sites. UDI has several concerns about this proposal. We appreciate that Council has limited time resources and many pressing issues to address, and are concerned that the increased involvement in, and approval of public art pieces will become very time consuming.

UDI is also concerned that projects may be delayed because reviews of art pieces are being duplicated. The City’s Selection Panel and Public Art Committee must approve art pieces already, and now another approval will be needed - this time from City Council.

If Council proceeds with this policy, we recommend that decisions regarding public art on sites be separated from Council approvals of Rezoning and Development Permits. Otherwise, there is the potential for significant delays in project approvals because of an art installation, which is a small component of a development project.

We also recommend that if Council is involved in the approval of public art, the timing of the approval be early in the process. Our members would like to avoid making substantive investments in a piece of public art – only to find that Council does not approve it.

Finally, we are concerned that this decision may be a precedent for other issues. As an example, currently, architectural reviews have been left to the Urban Design Panel, however future Councils may choose to become involved in this process if they are already making design decisions related to public art.

Thank you again for providing an update to the Richmond Liaison Committee on the potential changes to City's Public Art Program. It is critical to our members that the Public Art program remain flexible, and any changes do not delay what is already a lengthy review process for their projects.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anne McMullin', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Anne McMullin
President & CEO