

REQUEST FOR DECISION

TO Council **MEETING DATE** December 4, 2024

FROM Kevin Pearson, Senior Policy Planner

SUBJECT OCP Amendment Bylaw No. 492-35 – Consideration of Third Reading and Adoption (Residential Density/Height Policies)

FILE NO 3900-02 492-35

RECOMMENDATION

That Official Community Plan Amendment Bylaw 492-35 be read a third time and adopted.

PURPOSE

Official Community Plan (OCP) Amendment Bylaw No. 492-35 would update residential density / height policies to align with past, current and anticipated housing development trends.

BACKGROUND

First reading was initially granted in November 2023 and after some amendments a new second reading of the bylaw was approved by Council on October 2, 2024. The latest version addresses relevant concerns raised at various meetings and input sessions this year, while still maintaining the original intent and purpose of the amendment.

Attachment 1 is the report for the third public hearing. On the next page, staff comment on some of the public hearing comments that question the need for density policies in an OCP, and regarding the proposed changes to the Neighbourhood Centre designation.

Legislative Context

With no conditions of approval for this OCP amendment, Council may consider the bylaw for third reading and adoption in one meeting (*Local Government Act, sec 477*).

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

Bylaw No. 492-35 would add “General” clarification of the amendment to the beginning of Part 5, and replace the current Figure 17 with the revised version that would reference the land use maps in Schedule C. The focus of the bylaw is for areas serviced by water and sewer. In particular, lands designated in the OCP as: “Special Infill Areas”, “Multifamily/Mixed Residential”, “Downtown Centre”, “Neighbourhood Centre”. Increased floor area ratios (FAR) would become the primary measurement for residential development density.

Proportionately, allowances for taller buildings may be needed to mesh with additional floor areas. The amendments to the bylaw after the second public hearing in July were presented to Council on October 2 for second reading and then at the third public hearing on November 6.

In terms of the public hearing comments regarding the “Neighbourhood Centre” land use designation, the proposed increases noted below may seem unattainable in Wilson Creek and Davis Bay and other residential neighbourhoods.

<u>NC Policies</u>	<u>Existing</u>	<u>Proposed</u>
Density FAR	0.8	1.7
Height in Storeys	“Typically 2 - 4”	“Up to 5”

However, the above does not necessarily mean that large, five-storey buildings will be developed in all Neighbourhood Centre designations. Actual building mass, height and floor area depends on a variety of factors such as: lot size, the uses, servicing, access and frontage upgrades, building and landscaping design, and the zoning regulations. After careful review and adjustments, the proposed density and height policies for the Neighbourhood Centre and other land use designations are positive and forward looking, with measured and sustainable community growth in mind.

CONCLUSION

Official community plan bylaws are intended to set out broad objectives, policies and guidelines for future land use and development. Bylaws for zoning, development cost charges, amenity cost contributions, tree removal and preservation, subdivision and development servicing lay out the granular regulations associated with land development. Understanding and utilizing the difference between an OCP and regulatory bylaws is important for this proposed amendment and moving forward with housing and mixed use applications.

As required content of an OCP, the policies must consider “the approximate location, amount, type and density of residential development required to meet anticipated housing needs over a period of at least 20 years” according to the *Local Government Act* and recent *Housing Statutes Amendment Act* (Bill 44). The proposed amendment utilizes the land use designations mapped out in the current OCP, while simplifying an overly complicated network of density policies (some written in regulatory language) scattered throughout the document.

Bylaw 492-35 is also consistent with the 2024 Housing Needs Report received by Council in September. To accommodate up to 2,800 new housing units by 2041, floor area ratios and building heights will need to increase in all serviced neighbourhoods. For the time being, the focus is on increasing densities and building heights on land already designated for moderate to higher density and building heights.

The amendment will move the District of Sechelt closer to meeting the Provincial requirement to update key residential policies by the end of 2025, and well beyond next year.

Respectfully submitted,

Kevin Pearson, RPP, MCIP
Senior Policy Planner

Attachments:

1. 2024-11-06 Public Hearing Report