

Attachment

*Memorandum: Summary of Public Feedback
from June 19, 2023 Consultation Sessions:
422 Sixth Street*

MEMORANDUM

Climate Action, Planning and Development

To: Mayor Johnstone and Members of Council **Date:** June 26, 2023

From: Jackie Teed, Acting Director, Climate Action, Planning and Development **File:** REZ00241

Subject: **Summary of Public Feedback from June 19, 2023 Consultation Sessions: 422 Sixth Street**

Recommendation

THAT Council receive this memo for information.

Background

This report includes a summary of the feedback received at the two consultation sessions that were facilitated on June 19th, 2023.

The in-person event took place at the Century House Seniors Centre between 5:30 and 7:00 pm; the event had a total of 18 participants. The format for this session included a short presentation and small-group conversations. After completion of the in-person event, a virtual session was held between 8:00 and 9:00 pm and pre-registration was not required. Five members of the public attended the event.

Options

The following options are available for Council's consideration:

1. That Council receive this report for information.
2. That Council provide staff with alternative direction.

Staff recommends Option 1.

Summary of Feedback

June 19th, 2023 In-Person Consultation Session

Table #1

- Concern about drug use, friend's drug use and theft.
- Where do candidates come from and how stringent are the admission requirements, how thoroughly are candidates checked?
- Concerns about what happens on discharge.
- Are these individuals eligible for work?
- What will happen if individuals get caught stealing?
- Concerns that businesses were not directly consulted by Purpose Society and that this created unnecessary worry and fear.
- How do you know tenants aren't using, they can hide it for a long time?
- Need to calm the nerves of businesses.
- Concerned about the definition of "active in addiction".
- A fence should be secured on the west and south property lines at the rear of the building in the parking lot.
- The borders of the monitoring area in the Good Neighbour Agreement should be expanded to include the following areas:
 - Bent Court
 - The frontage of the 610/612 Brantford Street
 - Sixth Street from Brantford to Fifth Avenue
 - The rear of 612 Fifth Avenue
- What about the eviction process? Would like a way to ensure Purpose Society is required to connect individuals with new services.
- Want opportunities for future changes to the monitoring area through the Community Advisory Committee based on observed activity in the neighbourhood during its operation.
- There needs to be more information / certainty on the discharge procedure; can this be linked into requirements for Purpose Society?
- What does 'timely manner' in the Good Neighbour Agreement mean?
- What does 'daily basis' in regards to monitoring of areas mean? Once a day?
- Concerns about tenants being kicked out without anywhere to go and becoming a local challenge.

Table #2

- Some concern about a Good Neighbour Agreement representing presumptions about problematic behavior, and interest in using the Community Advisory Committee as a tool to ensure supportive housing residents have a voice and opportunities to engage in the neighbourhood.
- Residents noted they did not have to sign a Good Neighbour Agreement when they moved into their residence.

- Residents have had positive experiences living near non-market housing and recovery homes.
- Interest in ensuring supportive housing residents are members of the Community Advisory Committee. At least two to three residents should be included for a sense of safety, possibly in connection with Purpose Society Peer Network. Ideally residents could be involved in finalizing the Community Advisory Committee Terms of Reference.
- Are there ways to use the Good Neighbour Agreement and Community Advisory Committee to create opportunities to welcome supportive housing residents to the community, and create opportunities to be engaged in the neighbourhood (e.g. through group efforts such as community cleanups)?
- Could the Community Advisory Committee be a tool to build relationships? Could there be meals at meetings?
- Concern about financial burden of attending meetings for Purpose Society, the daycare and other organizations on the Community Advisory Committee.
- Should the child care business be on the Community Advisory Committee, or is that catering to a perception that supportive housing residents are a safety risk for children? It is important to differentiate between real safety risks, and feelings of discomfort.
- Concern about the one year residency limit; how will residents be supported to find alternative housing, and will there be opportunities to stay within New Westminster?
- Interest in ensuring housing solutions are systems-based.
- There needs to be sufficient housing across the continuum, and it is challenging to create that through patchwork senior government funding.
- When there isn't a systems approach, individual projects stand out and face more opposition.
- Need an abundance of options, to ensure the needs of different people can be met (including different types of supportive housing).

Table #3

- Concerns about safety; community members do not want to see issues flowing out onto the street.
- What happens when a tenant is required to move? Will the operator or BC Housing be responsible or support the tenant find new housing? What happens if a tenant needs to stay longer and there is a wait list with new applicants? Is this something that can be added to the Good Neighbour Agreement?
- Why wasn't this process started earlier? Why did the City have a tight timeline to get this project processed and approved?
- Purpose Society should get the messaging of this project out to the community earlier in the process. In addition to the City, the operator should also take responsibility for getting the messaging out.
- If the project is approved, will the operator run community sessions about the project?

Table #4

- Bent Court is a dynamic neighbourhood; interest in how this project fits in with the neighbourhood.
- There was a rat infestation in the neighbourhood that took the City six months to clean up. How was this rezoning able to be processed so quickly?
- There are increases in traffic in the Bent Court area.
- There are trust issues with the City; residents have been promised a Bent Court Study for decades.
- We all want the same thing; social housing is part of that.
- Worry that without a study, Bent Court will become a “diverse cluster of uses”.
- The statement that Bent Court is separate from 422 Sixth Street rezoning is confusing.
- Others in the neighbourhood do not support the project, but we are not in that position. We are more concerned with the development timeline, implications and broken trust with the City.
- How does this project fit in with the Bent Court Study Area? How do we know when issues arise they will be dealt with in a timely manner? (See comment about rat infestation.)
- My frustration is the process; Bent Court is always on the bottom of the priority list.
- How does the Community Advisory Committee function? What is the process / course of action / channel of communication?
- The Community Advisory Committee should be required not recommended.
- If I raise an issue, does the Community Advisory Committee report back to me?
- How is the membership determined? Is there an opportunity for more representation from Bent Court?
- First, Second and Third Reading feels like a done deal.
- How was the monitoring area determined?
- The monitoring area in the Good Neighbour Agreement should be expanded to include Bent Court.

Table #5

- Shared toilets is an issue in this building; there is concern about the lack of dignified housing for the tenants.
- Can the City encourage Purpose Society to provide individual bathrooms?
- There should be more representation from the community at large in the Community Advisory Committee; representation should be consistent with the number of local businesses.
- Concern about how this development will disrupt the Sixth Street commercial corridor.

- How is this proposal consistent with the Official Community Plan which envisions an active street front along Sixth Street?
- An exit plan is needed for residents once they are ready to transition out of this development.
- Given the difficult realities of the housing market, the operator needs to ensure housing available for these individuals once they are ready to transition to independent living.
- Concerns about loitering. I don't want people loitering or smoking across the street as there is a daycare in proximity.
- Contingency plan needs to be in place for a relapse scenario; this should be in the Good Neighbor Agreement
- How is BC Housing part of the accountability?
- The Good Neighbour Agreement monitoring area should be expanded to the south to include the 7-Eleven.

Flip Chart Feedback

- If the proposed project is unsuccessful for any reason, what is the recourse?
 - i.e. model is changed by authorities
 - inappropriate residents or other non-residents create disturbances.
- Are there locations in the city that are envisioned to be used specifically for supportive housing and will not require rezoning? If yes, what are the usual criteria to identify an area for this purpose?
- What's the experience of the operator on other projects – positive/negative?
- Read nothing about safety on our stress from new temporary residents keeping them clean, safe, not loitering, pedestrian friendly, etc.
- Who supervises them when they leave 422 Sixth Street?
- Never seen anyone from the Society engaging with nearby businesses – explain why not?
- Can you please help us understand how the Mazarine Lodge project is similar and/or different from this project?
- When will the “Bent Court Study” be complete? How can rezoning be rushed through when a Master Plan for this area has not been completed (or even started)?
- Will you be installing toilets in each resident's room and if not, why not?
- What will be the average length of stay for residents?
- Why is the Bent Court block being ignored in a comprehensive management/plan process?
- What assurance do we have that supportive housing isn't converted to harm reduction or emergency shelter?
- How will the City deal with issues arising – will this be cut off from Bent Court? Will problems be dealt with promptly?
- How is an 'active street front' envisioned in the OCP and how does this development exemplify this?
- What are the additional ancillary uses envisioned for this property as contemplated in the proposal?

- What are the implications for future planning Phase 2 of this project references an additional buildable area to support permanent housing (20 units in the parking lot)?
- What is the process to extend the funding deadline and has this been explored?
- How does rezoning at 422 Sixth Street impact larger zoning/development in the area (C2 high rise zoning)?
- How can residents in Bent Court trust that issues will be dealt with promptly when issues in the neighbourhood (zoning, development, traffic, garbage, rats) have been consistently ignored?
- Why was participation only by computer? On Zoom? Many seniors don't have access or knowledge?
- Why was the place of the meeting not in the notice?
- Enough people sleeping or begging on Sixth Street (threatening to many seniors)

June 19, 2023 Virtual Session

- Premier Eby says SROs are “not fit housing” and should be replaced with “dignified” options, adding they can no longer be part of the solution for those experiencing homelessness. Why are we not pushing for a more dignified option?
- What are the perimeters for advertising public engagement? I found out about this two minutes ago.
- Given this is the first time Purpose Society is undertaking such a project, what is the recourse if they are not “being a good neighbour”?
- What can be said about the type of people that would be housed here? What can be said to the crime issues experienced in the Carnarvon Street area and prevention of that on Sixth Street?
- Will there be anything that prevents active drug use on site or near site?
- As part of promoting this project the City made reference to the Elizabeth Fry operated transitional housing in Queensborough as a success story, however this is a women only facility which has in-suite facilities (washrooms/kitchenette), which is not reasonably comparative. Do we have any similar type of facilities that would be a better comparison?
- Based on my review of the floorplan, five units per floor, or 1/3 of the units would be tiny rooms without a window. I don't think this is providing these people with dignified housing.
- I read all responses, noted that 33% were in favour, 66% were not in favour, and interpreted many of the comments about the other Purpose facility, and the fact that they have not lived up to their commitment. Has the City considered making approval of this project a rectification of other issues with this operator?
- We have mentioned the deadline as a reason for pushing this project though without full consultation, did we discuss with the funders a need for more time to ensure approving the best project possible and not just approving any project? If not, we are under estimating our BATNA.

- Follow up to my prior question: You said that there are issues it could be brought to Council, but didn't specify what their powers would be if the operator is not meeting their commitments to the community.
- You said they needed 28-30 units to make this work, however, your additional examples were low 20 people, and they had bathrooms, so those seem to be financially viable having less units, with washrooms. Sounds to me we should be pushing back to get a better deal with our residents.
- Would prior experience with an applicant not be a part of the consideration when approving? As George W. Bush said...Fool me once, umm...
- Follow up question: You said following all the normal steps...Does the City typically waive holding a Public Hearing?

The recording of the virtual session can be viewed following this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dOglh90OGgY>