

Notes from Council and EDC Joint Workshop

Wednesday, February 5, 2020, 7:05pm to 9pm

Brovold Room

Present:

Council

Mayor Robert Vagramov, Councillor Diana Dilworth, Councillor Megan Lahti, Councillor Amy Lubik, Councillor Hunter Madsen, Councillor Steve Milani, Councillor Zoe Royer

EDC members

Taryn Barker, Lisa Beecroft, Edward Chan, Dustin Chelen, Matt Ferguson, Sharleen Karamanian, Brian Krieger, Sean Ogilvie, Greg Pepler, Christopher Pope, Robert Simons

Staff

Tim Savoie (City Manager), Andre Boel (GM of Planning and Development), Angie Parnell (GM of Corporate Services), Paul Rockwood (GM of Finance and Technology), Joji Kumagai (Manager of Economic Development)

Regrets: Mary Vellani

Councillor Madsen reviewed objectives for the workshop. Introductions were made around the table.

Discussion:

- Certainty and timelines of commercial development are important to recruiting businesses
- Further comments about SWOT analysis
 - Without the City taking control economic development, it will be planned for us; ad hoc results likely
 - Having staffing resources helps, Port Moody's advantages include a creative and entrepreneurial community, Port Moody is a hot commodity, waterfront access, arrival of SkyTrain
 - Competing with other communities; Squamish and Abbotsford have done a great job of leveraging strengths and having a clear vision - elected officials are able to speak clearly with confidence about their focus and opportunities
- Several points about Squamish were raised
 - Squamish's economic development website is easy to navigate, information is clear, streamlined permitting process is outlined
 - Note about a local Port Moody business opening a store in a neighbouring city and the ease of the process both in terms of engaging with staff and with the depth of information available online
 - Squamish is like Port Moody with brownfield sites near water, influx of new residents, old industry being phased out; they are very clear about their competitive advantages and are intentionally marketing themselves as distinct from Whistler
 - Tourism Committee also looked at Squamish as great example of branding
 - Quality of life is a key attribute that is core to Squamish's marketing

- Discussion about Tri-Cities Chamber presentation
 - Chamber CEO warned about impact of development in Coquitlam and from the industrial core proposed along Lougheed Highway in and around Falcon Drive; there is also major development in Burnaby
 - Port Moody has more to offer than Coquitlam but is not nimble
 - Coquitlam is also not afraid of density and about building on commercial space; there is clarity of where and what they are developing
 - Uncertainty in the Moody Centre TOD area will impact perception of Port Moody; will not be seen as being open for business and business friendly
 - There is less land in Port Moody so less room for error; the good things need to be nurtured in Port Moody and if development erodes these values, then we lose a strategic advantage
 - Port Moody staff should connect with Coquitlam staff and seek how we might be able to work together on economic development with Coquitlam
- Comments about the retail and office sectors
 - Need certainty in order to attract businesses to Port Moody
 - Need to work with developers to create inventory; there is a market for office in the Tri-Cities despite what some might say
 - Quality of commercial space is important to attract business; build around anchor tenants and good infill between with smaller businesses to create retail continuity
 - Commercial retail units (CRUs) need to have certain specs and not all developers are aware of this
 - Central business district should be considered around the entire Skytrain line with retail at grade, office on second floor, residential above
 - Not much consideration of type of retail and how CRUs are constructed when reviewing development applications
 - Evolution of retail with millennials more interested in buying from bricks and mortar stores while boomers purchasing online – very counterintuitive
 - Need a mix of uses to support changing trends; for example, people are spending more on food and frequently eating out
 - Already seeing transition in Newport, from its early days with predominantly retail businesses to more service-type businesses moving in recently
- Comments on mixed-use
 - Mix of uses shouldn't be overlooked e.g. residential above hotel, green roofs as amenity space
 - Ensure flexibility of space, can't anticipate all future uses e.g. during Yaletown redevelopment of commercial space, City allowed a variety of uses to support that change
 - Need to be strategic about building a live-work city; set specific targets e.g. what does a Port Moody resident need to earn, what sort of jobs does this person need, what sort of industry, set hard targets and build into plans
- Question posed about TOD and how cities change, whether driven by developers or by municipal planning processes such as master plans
 - Capture desired change in OCP but need to meet with property owners and developers as they are the ones that implement policy through new or renewed built form

- Utilise the EDC as an advisory body to work with the TOD developer group; potentially significant losses to the city if we don't act on TOD
- Revisions of an OCP take a lot of time; EDC has a lot of skills and capacity and could be used to accelerate TOD discussions
- OCP should be an inclusive process with all stakeholders including the community and developers so by the time it is passed, there is already ownership; shouldn't be a zero sum game i.e. OCP or developers
- Contradiction between OCP revision (slow) and being nimble; perhaps an OCP lite for the TOD would be a pragmatic approach
- Success in OCP-driven business development is possible but requires laser focus and needs to survive political turnover
- Tension between urgency to move forward vs expected OCP revision timeline
- Focus on TOD OCP lite approach
- From recent TOD Council discussions, what are the priorities for the TOD? Tradeoffs e.g. affordability housing will decrease commercial space
- Consider alternative measures such as percentage of commercial vs percentage of residential to give flexibility to Planning
- Prioritizing needs is challenging; local residents, developers, many stakeholders - level of organisation and/or access to money could impact their ability to contribute to the TOD dialogue
- Focused OCP work for TOD is a good idea if strong targets are created to guide developers rather than having them decide to the city; EDC could support this work
 - UDI might be a good resource, NAOIP, real estate associations
 - Outside help can do research but community needs to give direction
- Talk to businesses that have opened recently, with a goal of working with them as opposed to why it can't happen; broaden definition of quality of jobs – not base just on income levels; want to see improved daytime economy
- Council looks at job quality from the perspective of livability in Port Moody, not necessarily implying that lower paying jobs are “bad jobs”
- Economic development strategy (EDS)
 - Council strategic plan includes the development of a EDS
 - Need to market economic development strategy to both businesses and the community; good economic development benefits everyone; Council needs to be business savvy and understand the difference between tax incentives vs reducing holding costs, empower staff to make decisions, and strong customer service
 - Regulations between business and developers are different (requirements, timelines, etc.); holding costs are factored in for developers but not for businesses who have to absorb that cost
 - EDS and OCP both take time and can't be done in isolation; EDC has done a lot of great work; balance vision with data, what is current economic situation in the city, start with gap analysis
- Closing comments
 - OCP is a vision that has been built over time, next step has to be focused - what type of jobs, what type of units, evolution of thinking
 - Council needs to give direction for staff to work with EDC on an economic development strategy; consider discussing this at the March EDC meeting

- Planning can benefit by receiving direction about economic development
- Port Moody is not known as a business community, so need to shift perception and need diversity of commercial spaces to allow businesses to grow

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