



## Development fees to rise 37% to pay for more social amenities

### Downtown South area grew faster than anyone had expected

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Vancouver Sun

*Thursday, May 17, 2007*

VANCOUVER - Vancouver city council has approved a 37-per-cent hike in development fees to raise \$58 million for public amenities in the downtown south neighbourhood, which has transformed more rapidly than expected.

Some 15,000 people now live in an area that city planners thought would only be home to 11,000 by 2016, with a lot more children than expected.

And with further development expected to increase that population another 10,000 by 2021, the city has revised its official public amenities strategy to provide more childcare spaces, more social housing and some of the park spaces it wanted carved out of downtown's concrete jungle when it first laid out the plan in 1992.

To pay for the plan, the city is increasing development cost levies on downtown residential development almost 37 per cent, to \$13 per square foot from \$9.50.

The new fees, which will take effect in November 2008, are expected to generate \$58 million.

That's 71 per cent of the \$81 million the city needs to complete the planned new package of public amenities by 2021. The balance of the money would come from city capital funds.

City planner David Ramslic said the 1992 public amenities plan called for development fees to account for 40 per cent of the amenities' cost, with the balance to come from provincial or federal governments.

"Just because of the speed of development [in downtown south], and the fact we're only covering 40 per cent of costs, we realized that we need to rejig this plan to make sure we're supplying some amenities here and readjust our rates to make sure we're going to deliver everything," Ramslic said.

On a map, downtown south looks like a series of overlapping rectangles within the area between Pacific Boulevard and Robson Street, and Homer Street to Burrard.

The city hasn't completed the initial list of amenities it envisioned in the 1992

plan, but Ramslie said progress has been made on some of them, and "in the next 10 years, you'll probably see delivery of pretty substantial amenities in the area."

Under the new plan, the amenities will include:

- 1.54 hectares of parks. The first part of Emery Barnes Park (.36 hectares) at Davie and Richards and a small .17-hectare park at the Nelson and Mainland have been created. Another .53 hectares have been acquired to complete Emery Barnes.

However, this is short of the 2.8 hectares the city wanted to create when the plan was first drawn up in 1992. Rapid inflation of land prices and the rapid pace of development have made it difficult for the city to secure park sites. Cost of the park plan to the city is \$25.4 million.

- 1,238 units of social housing. The city has created 533 units of the 688 units that the 1992 plan envisioned would be needed to replace single-room-occupancy units lost. Cost to the city of the housing plan is \$39.8 million.

- 323 childcare spaces. Some 74 spaces of the 189 that the 1992 plan called for have either been secured or funded. However, with census data showing that five per cent of downtown residents are children, more are needed. Cost to the city is \$9.84 million.

- A greenway along Helmcken street and improvements to transit. The greenway is intended to partially mitigate the shortfall in park creation. Cost to the city is \$6.12 million.

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