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## City development looking up

By Monique Tamminga - Langley Times - July 01, 2008

When you're a city of 10 square kilometres, you have to get pretty creative with the little space you have.

On June 23, City council did just that, approving new zoning regulations that allow for much increased density, encouraging developers to go up and not out.

High-rises are a real possibility now with the new bylaw allowing for up to 15-storey condo developments to be built within the downtown core.

Reducing restrictions on developers will create a more compact community, which goes hand-in-hand with the City's well promoted downtown master plan, said the City planning department.

"Prior to Monday, developers could build 100 units per acre [in commercial downtown areas.] Now they can build 150 units per acre," said the City's head developer Gerald Minchuk.

"The acre size stays the same so they will have no choice but to go up. It will be the impetus for a number of development inquiries at strategic locations downtown."

Minchuk said the four-storey condo developments most recently approved are in keeping with the current density distribution patterns around town, but developers have expressed interest in going higher.

All wood-frame construction, by building code, can't exceed four storeys, he added.

The Paddington Station development, at the corner of 201A Street and Fraser Highway will have street-level townhouses fronting the highway and four-storey condo complexes in the rear.

After less than three weeks on the market, the project is nearly sold out, despite a cooling real estate market across B.C.

The townhouses sold out in under four days and only six units in the entire project are left, said the real estate agent selling the units. He believes it's the affordability of these one- or two-bedroom suites that buyers can't resist.

Last Monday, a proposed four-storey 62-unit condo development entered the initial stages of council approval. That development will be located at the north side of 55A Avenue, near 200 Street.

The area is presently home to several homes which will be demolished.

What's unique about this project, is it will be the first development to take advantage of the increased density allowances, Minchuk said.

This bylaw will also encourage mixed-use residential/commercial density.

The City is hoping that the combination of work/live homes will bring more people into the area during the day and at night which will make for a safer, more vibrant city centre, said Mayor Peter Fassbender. Projections are for the City's population to increase from its current 24,000 to 39,000 in the next few years.

Developers find the City one of the best to deal with, citing testimonials written in a new City brochure about how fast staff push projects through to council and how low the City's development cost charges are.

"Our research shows that the development process in Langley City is second to none," said James Smerdon, of Colliers International.

"This is no accident. The mayor, council and staff have asked, researched and acted to ensure the development industry thrives. . . ."

The City has attracted developers from Vancouver and throughout the Lower Mainland.

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