

How well thought-out do you think the current Grandview Heights General Use Plan (GLUP) is?

Grandview Heights was originally envisioned as a comprehensively planned community consisting of several cohesive and sustainable neighbourhoods, all designed to respect the natural environment and ecological assets of the area.

According to the General Use Plan drafted in June 2005 for Grandview Heights, the land use concepts and policies contained in the document would be used to guide the preparation of the area's Neighbourhood Concept Plans ("NCPs").

The GLUP states clearly that the pastoral ambiance of Grandview Heights will be maintained wherever possible, specifically through the retention of lower residential densities. Furthermore, it specifies that new development will not proceed until NCPs have been completed with public consultation, and have been approved by Council.

There is an old adage, one should not lose sight of the forest for the trees, but that is precisely what has happened in Grandview Heights. The community has been parceled up in to zones with some having approved NCPs, some in the approval stage, while others lack entirely a plan to guide them in their development. Density and the loss of second-growth forest have been of prime concern to residents. Public consultation has been nearly non-existent.

The GLUP and the OCP ought to prevent spontaneous development in rural & suburban zones like Grandview Heights, and both should prevail in cases where an NCP is absent or pending approval. Yet, last June the Surrey First council approved a 36-lot subdivision in Grandview Heights, despite the fact that there is no NCP in place; area homeowners overwhelmingly opposed this decision.

To my mind, the entire process of development approval in Surrey needs to be re-evaluated from a standpoint of community consultation and changed to ensure that individual NCPs are fully integrated in to both a holistic general use plan as well as remaining true to the OCP. While the GLUP serves as a guide to the drafting and approval of NCPs, it too often downloads the allocation of density, the mechanisms to ensure proper public services, and the protection of green space to the NCP stage. This creates a piecemeal process, one that sacrifices consistency and has lead to Surrey becoming several cities within a city.

What do you think about the extensive density increases that often occur at the Neighbourhood Concept Plan (NCP) level?

Aside from the lack of public hearings in the approval stage, the main objection the NCP has always been a shortage of infrastructure to support the increase of population by increasing density in an area. By adding density to an area distant to city services it means a huge investment in infrastructure such as sewer and water. In turn, the only way to make that development financially viable is to develop every last square foot of that area—something that few communities wish to see happen.

NCPs are “guidelines” not by-laws. What do you think of the ability of developers to apply for amendments to zoning & other NCP elements?

Residents in South Surrey have operated under the impression that fundamental changes to the density and land use in their neighbourhoods would not occur if a NCP were not in place; we know that now to be untrue. Development will too often occur in the absence of an approved NCP. Furthermore, approved density levels are too easily amended without proper consultation with the public. This is something that must change immediately.

What does 'good environmental & social stewardship' mean to you in relation to city planning?

We must prevent losing high quality habitat to urbanization. As councilman, I would push for the City to place greater weight on the environment assessments brought forth by the 12-member Environmental Advisory Committee, which advises council on ecological issues. Too often the NCP steamrolls highly sensitive, bio-diverse areas and fails to protect and cherish Surrey's ecological assets for what they are, public jewels.

Practicing good environmental and social stewardship in relation to commercial development means protecting significant stands of trees, safeguarding areas of environmental sensitivity, provide significant buffer areas and adequate transitions between zoning, and defending and maintaining the Agricultural Land Reserve from ecological and commercial pressures.

Social stewardship encompasses architectural conservancy as well. We know that in the midst of massive development, the preservation of old, familiar

places, which often define the character of communities, helps to offset the stress and anxiety brought on in an ever-changing world.

In your opinion, who 'owns' a neighbourhood? How do you weigh the 'ownership value' of long-term residents and new residents who plan to stay, over other, shorter term interests such as political pressures & the development industry?.

Ownership rests with those residents who reside in a neighbourhood, and who hold a vested interest in the short and long-term development of their community—those who are most directly and often dramatically impacted by decisions made at City Hall. I believe there ought to be a better balance between the commercial wishes of the development industry and the prevailing needs of the residents of Surrey. Community consultation is paramount to proper development.