

Council has heard from Gonzales residents that we are unhappy with our draft neighbourhood plan but for some of us it is as much about the process as it is the plan. In order to explain what I mean I have prepared a document comparing the process undertaken to create our 2002 plan vs the 2018 plan (attached).

The differences could not be more stark. Our 2002 plan was collaborative in nature and involved one city planner over a 2-3 year period. The 2018 plan was a top down driven process that seems to have involved a team of planners and consultants trying to convince us that what the city came up with is what we want. So in an effort to try and help further our plan along as well as possibly help future neighbourhood consultations I have come with 6 recommendations that may help restore confidence in the process:

1. When choosing people to be on a neighbourhood working group do not put special interest groups or developers who have a vested interest on them, as has happened here in Gonzales. This has caused people to question the legitimacy of the process and created a distrust of the city.
2. Plan to spend a few months just explaining the OCP, what it means to the community and what its impact will be. Our group has been conducting door to door conversations throughout Gonzales and we have found that most people do not know what the OCP is and what it means to the neighbourhood. To my knowledge this discussion did not happen here in Gonzales and so this explains the resistance now. There has been **no buy in and no agreement** on the growth strategy in the OCP. Until such time that there is buy in at the local level for the OCP, proposed plans will be fought in every neighbourhood.
3. Develop a process that is more collaborative in nature. The top down approach has not worked. The city should tell the community what the major goals that need to be adhered to are (such as the OCP) and then trust that people will make the best decisions to meet those goals. The working group is the best vehicle for these decisions to be made and should be given the power to make them with the city guiding the discussion.
4. Create documents that people will actually read. A 75 page document full of technical jargon is beyond the scope of what the average person is going to read.
5. Change the city policy that allows anyone to comment on a plan. The city says that very few people outside the community provide comments and if that is the case then change the policy. Again, the city has created animosity when it is not helpful and only hurts the process. We have found this to be universally agreed upon whether you are for or against the contents of our plan - the only people who should comment on a plan are the ones that live there.
6. Create plans that are 10 to 15 years in length. 20 years or more is unrealistic. People are worried about the long term implications of their decisions. This causes them to become overwhelmed with the process and frozen into inactivity. I realize the city has committed to reviewing plans periodically but nobody believes this is going to happen. Create plans that allow for bite sized pieces of the OCP to be adopted. **The fear for people is not so much densification but the speed at which this is going to happen.** People need a chance to get used to change and this is what was allowed to happen with our 2002 plan.

COMPARISON OF THE 2002 and 2018 GONZALES NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING PROCESS

2018

Apr - Dec 2016: Planning process initiated. A *Working Group* was struck by the city comprised of 10 Gonzales residents with a mandate to advise city planners on ways to conduct consultations in the community

September 7, 2016 - Here is a sample from the *Gonzales Neighbourhood Plans Working Group* meeting minutes of what participants wanted in the neighbourhood plan:

- Protect existing historic structures
- Maintain and create affordable and accessible housing diversity for families
- Protect existing villages and character
- Maintain and retain tree canopy, urban forest
- Identify potential green spaces that are unofficial – designate them

May - Oct 2017: Draft Plan Engagement - a variety of engagement processes were initiated. All of them involved city staff taking in information from the public and revising the plan. Most engagement processes were structured in such a way as either to diffuse concerns or direct people towards a pre-determined outcome. The purpose of which was to ensure basic concepts the city would like to see adopted be maintained throughout the various drafts of the plan such as the concept of a “growth model” or densification. Or the adoption of transportation objectives that are not clearly described in the plan. For instance, it is not written anywhere in the plan that the city intends to put speed bumps on Richardson Road and it is only through persistence and questioning that this was revealed by the city transportation department. There were other discrepancies discovered that provide cause for concern as to whether the city is forthcoming with all information. Certainly it is too much to ask of the average homeowner to read a 75 page document in-depth in order to understand the implications of the plan to their neighbourhood. It is also important to note that the city has a policy of allowing anybody to comment on a community plan, whether they live in the community or not, which may skew the results of any engagement process away from what the community wants to what people from outside may want.

December 2017: Report to Council on Proposed Plan

March 8, 2018: Town Hall Meeting at City Hall - Council allows for residents to provide input on the draft plan. No one present supported the plan. On March 15 City council put forward motions to revise the plan.

June, 2018: Revised Plan and Re-engagement of Gonzales neighbourhood

2002

A group of 13 Gonzales neighbours responded to an ad in the newspaper and were then selected by the city. The city provided a planner to work with them through the process. They met for 2-3 years and debated various options for the neighbourhood consulting with other neighbours and conducting walking tours. All aspects of the plan were determined and agreed upon by this group with guidance from the city planner. At least two town hall meetings were held in Margaret Jenkins School at which time feedback was received and changes made and the plan was ultimately approved by city council. The plan won a Planning Institute of BC Award in 2004. It was the first neighbourhood plan to permit secondary suites in houses of any age, limit

house sizes and other regulations to improve the fit of new houses and development with the existing neighbourhood character.