

Westboro Station development unanimously approved

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The city's planning and environment committee last week unanimously passed a staff recommendation to allow the development of the Westboro Station Phase II condominium.

The Westboro Community Association (WCA) has been

fighting the development, which will rise to a height of eight storeys, arguing that the six-storey height regulation in the recent community design plan (CDP) should be applied.

Kitchissippi ward Coun. Christine Leadman said she argued for the status of the CDP, but was told by city staff that without adoption

into the Official Plan, the CDP does not hold the status required to influence proposed development.

"What we were told was that the Official Plan is really the overriding document," she said.

WCA president Wallace Beaton said he and the association members are disappointed, not specifically

with the development but with the lack of adherence to the CDP.

"I'm certainly left questioning whether the community design plan, which was the basis on which we were seeking a lower height for Westboro Station, really left wondering if it has any teeth or not," he said.

While the CDP was not

applied in this case, Coun. Leadman and Mr. Beaton said that the item has been targeted for adoption as a secondary plan in October.

"That's the first public commitment we've had on that," Mr. Beaton said. "There have been previous indications from staff that it was coming forward, but those deadlines have passed. But this was (Coun.) Peter Hume, the chair of the committee who stated that on the record."

Coun. Leadman said she is disappointed that it has taken so long to give the necessary strength to the CDP, since it was passed by city council.

"I know the chair said this takes some time, it's never been done before," she said. "But I think a year and a half is a bit excessive."

Coun. Leadman said she can understand the residents' hesitancy to believe that something will come from their work producing the plan, but added that she wouldn't call the exercise a waste.

"It was a new initiative, and I thought it was really worth while because it was the tool that the community had to address smart growth," she said.

Gary Luddington, who worked on the public advisory committee for the development of the CDP, said he can understand why some people in Ottawa become frustrated with the way work is done at city hall.

"We started the process in June 2005," he said. "Here we are in August 2008. And all of that work still hasn't done us any good."

Putting the plans on paper was a big challenge, she added, requiring a huge time commitment from the resi-

dents in the Richmond Rd./Westboro community.

"And they took on that challenge, but now it's ignored because (the plans are) paper tigers," she said. "That's the way I see them."

Mr. Luddington agreed, saying that though staff have indicated approved plans follow the "general intent" of the CDP, the specific implications of the plans are not enforced.

"The developers are ignoring it," Mr. Luddington said.

"The city staff seem to be agreeing with the developers."

Mr. Beaton said that while he hasn't even been a year in his position with the association, he's already feeling quite cynical about the planning process in the city. He said that the process of consultations with residents regarding proposed development needs an overhaul.

City staff need to be more involved in the process, he stated, as currently either the developer or local community association take on the job of holding consultation meetings.

"If you're going to consult the community, I think it has to be meaningful, and I think all the appropriate information has to be on the table," Mr. Beaton stated. "I think the right staff from the various city departments have to be there and part of these meetings to provide the community with enough information to make reasonable decisions; to make up their mind with as much information as they can on the table."

The CDP is expected to come to the planning and environment committee for adoption as a secondary plan during the first meeting in October.



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