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Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues

March 16, 2007

Terry Loat, Chair
First-Time Home Buyer Program
Asset Management and Public Works
City of Edmonton

Dear Terry:

Thank you for your letter dated February 15, 2007 regarding the opportunity for the Federation of Community Leagues to participate in the Advisory Group. We would be pleased to advise the Steering Committee through this group.

Given the Advisory Group hasn't yet held an initial meeting, I would like to take this opportunity to pass along a comment about selection of First-Time Home Buyer Program pilot sites.

I think it's fair to say there's substantial interest in the pilot program starting off "on-the-right-footing" and offer that a successful start has a great deal to do with local neighbourhood support. In that regard, communication with all respective community leagues to ascertain potential interest in their neighbourhood site(s) being considered for a pilot would be a good first step. While a couple of communities have expressed preliminary interest, it would be a sound move to more formally establish neighbourhood intent.

Where there is an expression of interest, I expect the community league would willingly host a meeting of neighbourhood residents where City of Edmonton representatives could provide residents with detailed information and discuss any concerns about the First Time Home Buyer Program. Additionally, I expect all the communities would appreciate receiving information arising from the City's review and assessment of their respective site(s).

Timely and effective two-way communication will undoubtedly prove key to successful community engagement and consultation.

Thanks Terry.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Russ Dahms". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Russ Dahms
Executive Director

February 15, 2007

Russ Dahms
Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues
7103 – 105 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
T6E 4G8

Dear Mr. Dahms:

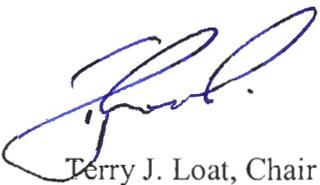
Thank you for attending the First Time Home-buyer Program (FTHP) Steering Committee meeting of February 1, 2007. The Steering Committee members found your presentation very helpful and appreciate Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues' (EFCL) offer to assist the FTHP program in areas process and communications.

The Steering Committee has developed a governance structure to allow the Administration to move forward implementing the Council approved FTHP. This has resulted in the creation of Steering and Working Committees mentioned in our February 1, 2007 meeting, and terms of reference are now in place for these groups.

The governance structure approved by the Steering Committee includes the development of an advisory group to support the work of both the Steering and Working committees. We are working out details regarding this advisory group; however, we are considering using this group as a sounding board on key issues, as well as responding to both steering committee and working committee when called upon for advice.

Given the scope of your organization and your request to be involved, we would appreciate it if you would participate in this group. Other groups that will be invited to participate will be city-wide community organizations and relevant private sector representatives, such as the Edmonton Home Builders Association. Please confirm your interest in participating in the Advisory Group so we can complete the committee composition, mandate, and leadership.

On behalf of the Steering Committee, I want to again express our appreciation for the leadership and support that the EFCL has extended since the announcement of the FTHP. We look forward to your continued assistance and guidance through your participation in the Advisory Group.



Terry J. Loat, Chair
First-Time Home Buyers Program



Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues

Summary of Meeting with Affected Community Leagues Surplus School Sites and the First-Time Home Buyer Program

Meeting time & location – Jan. 17, 2007; 7:30 pm; Strathcona Centre Community Hall

Attendance

- EFCL – Russ Dahms, Brian Kropf, Shane Bergdahl
- Community Leagues represented: - Blue Quill, Brookview, Dunluce, Evansdale, Homesteader, McLeod, The Meadows, North Milbourne, Twin Brooks, Willowby, Woodvale, Yellowbird East (not represented:- Hairsine, South Clareview, Caernarvon, The Ridge)
- Area Councils and homeowners associations represented: - SWAC, TRAC, West Edmonton, BCAL
- City of Edmonton – Walter Trocenko, Kathy Barnhart (8:00 to 8:45)

Purpose of the meeting – to share feelings and thoughts about the program and its implementation, get outstanding questions answered, and discuss options for the future

Agenda

7:30 – 8:00 – identify questions to ask, issues to raise (before City reps' arrival)

8:00 – 8:30 – hear from City reps – discussions and comments

8:30 – 9:00 – follow-up discussion of next steps (after City reps' departure)

SUMMARY OF MEETING

Questions and issues raised

A wide range of issues was raised and subsequently posed to City reps. They included questions about the school boards' processes and why they are benefiting from reserve land sales; how and why the 20 subject sites were chosen and others were not; what local impacts were considered; why over 40 properties were rezoned when only 20 are affected; how extensive the housing development will be compared to original assumptions about school building size or coverage; potential for contractors and homebuyers to "flip" sites and units after buying them; assurances about owner-occupancy versus renter-occupancy; and legalities of the Province's and City's actions.

City reps' discussions and comments

City reps responded to the questions and described how the program will be fleshed out and implemented. They noted that a Steering Committee of City managers exists to oversee implementation and that four working committees have already started to design the implementation processes:

- agreement with school boards on sharing of money from land sales,
- eligibility criteria for potential homebuyers,
- management structures and how to get contractors to construct projects, and
- how community will be consulted on the architectural design of projects.

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They also discussed the need for 2 to 4 sites to serve as “pilot” projects to test the processes and program objectives; what limits will and will not be placed on development size; and the City's commitment to consultation at the design stage and openness to involvement in developing the implementation processes. Finally, they revealed that City staff are currently reviewing certain aspects of the program to respond to several Councillors' questions. Those 4 reviews involve:

- availability of public open space in each neighbourhood,
- affect on Municipal Reserve land inventory in each neighbourhood,
- affect on the ratio of low density to medium density housing types per neighbourhood, and
- implications on the Belle Rive site considering its pre-existing site planning exercise and District park status.

Follow-up discussions

- The idea of pursuing court action to challenge the legality of the Province's and City's actions was discussed but no definitive conclusion was reached.
- The idea that the 16 affected community leagues should continue to act as a group was generally supported; EFCL could facilitate that. Some wondered if the 12 to 14 communities not selected as pilots should be actively involved while the pilot projects are underway, or should have a more passive observer role.
- Importance of designing the community/contractor consultation process right, right from the start, was stressed. Equally important is the way community leagues consult with their own residents and landowners – avoid lip service, have genuine discussions, allow enough time for learning about technicalities, jargon, process details, be as inclusive as possible, etc.
- Attendees supported the idea that communities should have a seat at the Steering Committee table in the form of EFCL representation. If it does, then good three-way communication between EFCL and the City and all 16 Community Leagues is essential.
- A need for professional assistance to communities in the form of independent mentors, design advisors or architects to help them understand concepts and terminology, draw appropriate conclusions and prepare positions was discussed.
- Before pilot sites are chosen, technicalities about how the processes will work should be defined so people know what they're getting into. There was support for making information about the program & processes widely available to the greater community in each neighbourhood before any commitment is made to become a pilot. Having each Community League take the lead in any such information sharing, with City and/or EFCL staff involved was suggested.
- Need to consider what will happen with the remaining 25+ sites that weren't chosen for this program but may face the same challenges after the 20 sites are done
- Photos and statistics about existing medium density row and/or semi-detached housing projects might help alleviate residents' uncertainty and concerns.

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- Some suggested that communities need to participate in more than just design and appearance issues – need to be involved in deciding how pilots will be chosen, location of eventual buildings (if and where to move the “X”), identifying any local features and constraints that should shape RFPs and contractors’ tenders, for example
- Some felt communities should wait to see what the 4 reviews say before committing to involvement, need to find out what the “typical” standards for neighbourhoods are and how they are measured

In closing, EFCL committed to:

- send summary notes of the meeting to all attendees and to presidents of the affected community leagues and area councils;
- promote the idea of EFCL representation on the Steering Committee;
- send the reports on the 4 reviews being done (implications of the program on the 20 sites’ host neighbourhoods) to presidents of the affected community leagues and area councils as soon as the City releases them for public information;
- ask the school boards to clarify their procedures for deciding why/when/how undeveloped sites intended for future schools will never be needed, and therefore are declared “surplus”; and
- establish regular communication with presidents of the 16 affected community leagues.