

Regina developers to pay more in servicing fees

BY EMMA GRANEY, LEADER-POST JUNE 25, 2014 7:12 AM



Regina developers will be shouldering more of the burden when it comes to expanding the city.

Photograph by: Rachel Psutka, Leader-Post

REGINA — Regina developers will be shouldering more of the burden when it comes to expanding the city.

At its Monday night meeting, council adopted an interim phasing and financial plan, in place for the next two years.

While the number of houses going up will stay around the same, only three out of the six new developments pegged to bring Regina's population to 300,000 by 2040 will go ahead — Westerra, Harbour Landing West, and a new neighbourhood north of Lakeridge.

Coopertown, slated for the city's northwest, is conspicuously absent from the list.

As Regina developments expand to the city's boundaries, so too does the cost to provide infrastructure to those homes.

The city used to pay upfront for the likes of new roads and sewer lines, but in the change voted in unanimously by council, developers will bear the brunt of those costs.

The plan adopted Monday also includes provisions to hire three new senior engineers, at a cost of \$391,710, and ups the servicing fees developers pay the city to cover the costs of “big-ticket items” like arterial roads, parks and community centres that service new neighbourhoods.

In a report presented to council, administration noted the change means adhering to the principle that “taxpayers should not be required to fund infrastructure that would not be built if the city stopped growing.”

The plan’s emphasis is on phasing-in development “in a manner that does not compromise the financial security of the city” and, on Monday night, councillor Mike O’Donnell said the change “might be the biggest financial decision we make as a council over the next few years.”

Following the vote, Mayor Michael Fougere said the move would avoid burdening taxpayers with the costs of new development.

“It’s absolutely fundamental we get this right so taxpayers don’t subsidize development,” Fougere said.

As well as Westerra, Harbour Landing West and a new neighbourhood north of Lakeridge, the nine existing developments in the current Official Community Plan — which will meet the city’s 235,000 growth target when complete — will also go ahead.

That means a dozen new neighbourhoods will likely be under development over the next two years. The report says that will provide homebuyers with “ample market choice.”

Coopertown, Northridge Land and The Towns North, though, will be put on hold to ensure “there is not undue risk placed on taxpayers as a result of growth.”

The report starkly notes that “the city cannot afford to continue to pay for growth-related capital projects” under the current — hence the change.

“It’s an interim agreement for two years, where certain parts of the city will develop and other areas will be held back for later development,” Fougere said.

“We’re phasing in the growth, phasing in the expansion, and that’s affordable.”

If council had not adopted the plan, taxpayers would have had to generate “considerably more” tax revenue — the equivalent of a one-time seven per cent mill rate increase.

DEVELOPMENTS GOING AHEAD:

235,000 population:

Maple Ridge

North of Maple Ridge

Hawkstone

Somerset

Kensington Greens

Greens on Gardiner

The Creeks

Towns South

Harbour Landing

300,000 population:

Westerra

Harbour Landing West

North of Lakeridge

DEVELOPER PAYMENT INCREASES:

235,000 developments:

2014 — \$264,273/hectare

2015 — \$304,960/hectare

300,000 developments:

2014 — \$345,278/hectare

2015 — \$359,089/hectare

egraney@leaderpost.com

Twitter/LP_EmmaGraney

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