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Thursday, March 23, 2023

To whom it may concern,

Re: Rezoning Amendment Application: 9153 Twinberry Drive, Prince George, B.C.

My name is Lauren Ray. I am a Prince George resident living at 3677 Meadow Rim Way. My spouse and I bought our house in the summer of 2018. We were finally able to save enough money for our first home. We were very proud of that.

We recently received a letter from the City of Prince George, that proposed rezoning the vacant land on our street/neighbourhood into a mobile home park. This is inappropriate. I am very much against this proposal. Yet I want to be very clear that I am NOT against Mobile Home Parks. They play a valuable role in our community.

My presentation covers three main points. The three points are: economics, practicality and following through on real and implied direction.

Looking back

In 2018, when looking at houses, we put a great deal of thought into the neighbourhood we wanted to live in. Two highlights were to have a comfortable home, and to own a home that would give us a good return on our investment. Based on that, we chose to buy a newer home in a newer subdivision. In that way, we would have a great place to call home, and a solid investment. We also got a home surrounded by vacant land that was zoned for residential. It was what we were looking for. We were set-up for success.

When we bought our home, our neighbourhood was zoned for residential. As mentioned, we strategically bought in our area because it was zoned for the kind of area we wanted to live in. In 2018, when we were looking for a home, there was a big bold sign at the entrance to this community. In fact, there were two signs on this site. The developer put the signs there to invite people to the area with the words: "Come home to Meadow Park."

The signs had a diagram showing a simple map of the community, including five phases of the community plan. It advertised that the area was "zoned for 150 homes." The developer sold us a vision of the neighbourhood, with several different phases, none of which included a Mobile Home Park. For us, it seemed like a perfect place in a perfect community. We bought one of those homes.

Later, when we signed the paperwork for the purchase of our home, our Notary gave us the Schedule of Restrictions for the neighbourhood. He explained that a Schedule of Restrictions (aka Building Schemes) are placed upon a property by a developer at the time of subdivision.

Developers use these restrictions to ensure that the neighbourhood has a certain "look and feel" based on community interests and to enhance the marketability of those properties.

Our paperwork clearly stated:

1. "No mobile home shall be installed or erected on any land"
2. "No prebuilt or prefabricated homes shall be installed or erected on any lot without express consent in writing of the developer."

In fact, I clearly remember that our notary pointed out that these restrictions are a good thing because no buildings can be built that would diminish the community. In other words, mixed use of the land and types of houses would negatively affect the look and feel in the area. That made us feel secure in our investment.

Our School System

This proposal would be far too much of a burden on our school system. Our catchment area is Heather Park. Heather Park is the largest elementary school in Prince George. Heather Park is a closed catchment school, meaning they are at full capacity. There is no room for more kids. If we now add more students from a Mobile Home Park, it would put huge stress on the system that is already filled with stress.

The school bus System

The school buses are now beyond capacity. There is no secret to that. The City of Prince George is fully aware of the unreliability of the current school bus system. We do not have a school system or a school bus system that can accommodate the number of families that could potentially be on that land. We are at maximum capacity. The system is most certainly over-stretched and broken. If you want evidence, ask our residents who have been told many times that the school buses are cancelled. My son's bus was canceled 7 times this year. We have even been told that kids will be driven to/from school, but only in one direction. The kids will have to find their own ride for the other way. This is particularly stressful when both parents are working. We are often left with the option to leave our kids at home. But what if our kids are in early grades? What if they find out, part way through the day, that their 7 year old no longer has a ride home? What then?

We live with this burden and it can't be "prettied up." We all know that if you put lipstick on a pig... it's still a pig.

The land in question is roughly three times the size of our current neighbourhood. Newer mobile home parks in Prince George, like North Park Heights along the John Hart Highway, shove a substantial amount of Mobile Homes on a small plot of land. The number of Mobile Homes that could be fit on this land is astounding.

The City Bus System

On the Statistics Canada website, they advertise a study on Mobile Home Parks. The study concluded that households in mobile home parks have lower incomes than those in single family detached houses. At the time of the study, only %14 of the mobile home families made more than \$60,000. People in Mobile Home Parks will be lower income.

This is not a discrimination against lower income families. I'm very happy that they have found a way to buy a home. They deserve praise.

But, with lower income residents the system must be shored up to support them. We need to help protect their interests. This means that there is a need for public transportation. However, there will not be solid support in this area.

Right now, there are no pedestrian connections to existing transit services within walking distance of daily needs amenities. The only access to amenities is along a provincial highway, 4.3 kilometers to the nearest shopping center and 1.3 kilometers to the nearest bus stop. In winter, that bus stop is available only if a person walks more than a kilometer, on the dangerous Highway 97. And I mean the word "on."

I have looked at the Transit Future Action Plan. This plan outlines several transit service delivery goals for the system within a five-year timeline. I do not see *** on that plan, nor can I see it trumping current plans. Who knows, maybe in another five-years.

In the City of Prince George Official Community Plan under section 7.5 (Housing) it states it's focus is creating "a range of housing types that can accommodate people of different ages, life stages, incomes and abilities." Until city transit is available in the area, our neighborhood of Twinberry/Meadow Rim Way, doesn't align with the aspects for affordable diverse housing as it cannot accommodate lower income families and individuals that do not have private transportation to get necessities.

The dollars and cents

Owning the best homes in an area of Mobile Homes harms the local house owners.

Re/Max recently put together a very interesting article. In part, it discusses the hazards of owning the "better homes" in a community. Such would be the case in this Rezoning Amendment Application. It would be putting lower cost units in our area.

Here are some points from the article:

- The rate of value increase will be much slower for the better houses on the block than with other homes.
- The principle of regression states that the value of an expensive house will go down when less expensive properties surround the property.
- Regarding higher value homes in an area:
 - you will have a much smaller pool of buyers when you start trying to sell.
 - Your home may not appraise at the value you are hoping for.
 - The value of the homes that surround yours will help to set the value of your own home.

This all negatively impacts the current residents in our area.

Following Through With A Real and Implied Strategy

When structuring the current Schedule of Restrictions, the Developer knew that Mobile Homes were not intended for this area. That is why they controlled the “fit” of them. When approving that Schedule of Restrictions, the City of Prince George agreed with the Developer. They approved that specific Schedule of Restrictions. The City of Prince George knows that Mobile Homes devalue the homes in the surrounding community. They proved that by approving the Developer's Schedule of Restrictions.

There is a “felt” belief that there is a negative impact to Mobile Homes and mobile home parks. The developer and City knew Mobile Homes were a negative thing. They ensured there was no appetite for MHs by excluding them from the development. The City agreed and supported his conditions. The City of Prince George was complicit in leading us to believe this sub-division was an area for houses only. Let's simply move forward with what was intended.

In summary, my objections are based on three points:

1) Economics:

- There is no doubt that the value of our property, and that of our community, will go down if this is passed.
- This change would harm current homeowners.

2) Practicality:

- The area is not ready to have a significant increase in population.
- The education system is not prepared to support growth in our community.
- The public transportation system is not able to support growth in our community.

3) Real and implied direction.

- This community was set in a direction to have a community with houses.
- Advertising implied houses, not mobile homes.
- The Schedule of Restrictions was purposely biased against Mobile Homes.
- Many people bought their houses confident that mobile homes would not be part of the area.

Thank you for your consideration,

Lauren Ray

PS: I have attached a copy of each sign that was used to promote the development. I referred to them in my text.

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