



Voluntary Amenity Contributions

Some applicants requesting rezonings or Development Variance Permits (DVPs) in New Westminster offer to make an amenity contribution as part of their development proposal. Applicants usually seek the advice of City staff on what may be considered an appropriate type and value of amenity contribution. Given the size and variety of projects that can fall into these categories, the value and composition of the amenity package will vary considerably.

The City does not have a formal policy regarding these contributions; however, staff do follow a standard procedure to increase accuracy and procedural consistency for the benefit of the City and the applicant.

These guidelines will be useful to those applying for all rezonings, and DVPs that if approved, would enable the applicant to achieve additional floorspace or more units than are permitted under existing zoning.

Procedural Guidelines

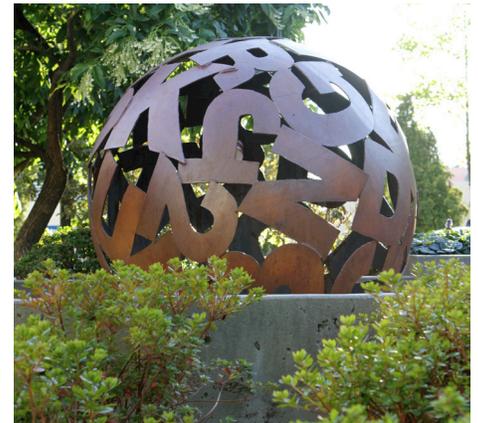
The following steps are used to evaluate voluntary amenity contributions:

1. The proposed development is first evaluated for conformity with the City's long range planning objectives. Staff work with the proponent to refine the proposal as necessary until it reasonably meets planning objectives (e.g. land use compatibility and high quality urban design). The standard off-site works and services needed to support the development are identified.
2. Once the use, density and form of the project have been established, the City retains a land use economist to determine the value of the development site under its current zoning, and if the rezoning/development variance application were approved. Staff, together with the economist, review this work with the applicant to determine the increase in land value that is available to fund amenities (i.e. total land cost less transaction costs).
3. Staff from Development Services, Engineering, and the Parks, Culture and Recreation Departments will meet as the Public Benefits Team. The composition of the Public Benefits Team varies depending on the project being considered, and staff from the Electrical, Finance, Police, and Fire Departments attend as needed.
4. The Public Benefits Team determines a range of potential amenity and infrastructure contributions using the principles in the following section. Amenity options could include on- and off-site amenities as well as cash in lieu of actual amenity contributions.
5. Development Services staff write a report to Council regarding the amenity options intended to offset the capital costs and address the community impacts of the proposed development. Council reviews this issue before considering the zoning amendment or DVP application.
6. Staff communicates Council's preference for the amount and type of amenity contribution to the applicant. The applicant can use this information when considering whether to offer a voluntary amenity contribution.
7. Staff secures provision of any amenity offered prior to adoption of the rezoning, or issuance of the DVP.

Principles for Determining Amenities

The following guidelines are used to identify amenity options for a project:

1. Amenities should be consistent with the City of New Westminster Strategic Plan.
2. Development gifts must be used solely for the public benefit.
3. Amenities provided through developer contributions should be clearly related to either:
 - Mitigating community impacts caused by the donor development; or
 - Addressing the demands of additional growth.
4. Amenities must be operationally viable, be within the City's service standards and have an identified source of operating funding.
5. Voluntary amenity contributions will not be used to obtain housing, amenities or infrastructure that would otherwise be provided by:
 - the private market,
 - the collection of development cost charges,
 - municipal or senior government investments and maintenance.
6. As much as is operationally possible, neighbourhood amenities (e.g. park improvements or public art) obtained will benefit the community in which the development is located in order to maintain and improve existing community livability and quality of life in neighbourhoods that are accepting of growth.
7. Amenities that do not benefit only immediate areas (e.g. non-market housing units, conservation of heritage buildings or facilities) will be located based on good planning principles.
8. Amenities should be owned by a public body, or be secured for public benefit by way of a covenant or housing agreement in perpetuity or, at a very minimum, for the life of the structure.
9. Amenities will be subject to quality standards to ensure they are desirable, accessible, and well-used by the public.



The Knox Sapperton Plaza at East Columbia Street and the Alpha Ball at the New Westminster Library were both provided to the community through voluntary amenity contributions.