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THE VANCOUVER SUN

West Van residents pack public hearing: Bylaw change would allow for redevelopment of a 24-hectare site

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West Vancouver residents packed another public hearing Monday expressing their concerns about proposed bylaw changes that would allow for a 9.7-hectare development north of Park Royal North Mall.

Proposed bylaw changes and revisions of the area's Official Community Plan by West Vancouver council would allow for about 500 townhouse and apartment units where about 55 single family homes currently exist west of Taylor Way.

"This is a large-scale site at 24 acres, so in West Vancouver, these [projects] don't come by on a daily basis," said Steve Nicholls, West Vancouver's director of planning, on why residents have been so vocal about the project.

Almost 200 speakers have spoken at three public hearings since late June, and more than 280 letters submitted since April supporting or opposing the project.

Area residents have expressed fears that the development would increase traffic on already-congested Marine Drive and Taylor Way, increase pollution, reduce or block views of Burrard Inlet, and affect neighbouring property values.

"These bylaws violate the spirit of the OCP, allowing too much density in a traffic-sensitive area," said area resident Frank Rutter, one of more than 250 people who attended Monday's public hearing. "They do allow high-rises, no matter what gloss you might put on it."

Resident and former municipal councillor Bob Wickham told council that the number of newcomers the project would bring to the area would inflame traffic problems.

"These folks are not going to be non-car-owners. These folks are not going to take public transportation; they are going to be car owners, they are going to be driving their cars to Park Royal and they're going to be driving their cars over the [Lions Gate] bridge."

A flyer issued by the Taylor Way and Sentinel Hill Alliance and the Sentinel Hill South Slope Homeowners Association says the development would add about 1,200 more cars to the area, and claimed it would increase area density by 1,000 per cent.

On the city website Monday, West Vancouver city staff countered claims made in the flyer and posted staff recommendations on the project, saying it would provide only three times the square footage of single-family housing, and its density would be only 60 per cent that of the existing Ambleside apartment zone.

In response to residents' fears that the views from homes north of the project would be ruined, staff have recommended building height restrictions of 4.5 metres (15 feet) higher than Keith Road and 24 metres (80 feet) higher than ground level at Park Royal North Mall. Nicholls said these recommendations, if accepted, would be more restrictive than previously suggested by staff in an independent consultant's report.

Proponents of the project say the Evelyn Drive area is one of the best areas to put the development, which would be close to existing transit routes, amenities, and local businesses.

IMAGES



Richard Lam, Vancouver Sun
 Sue Bayley speaks about a condo development behind Park Royal Mall during a public hearing Monday.
 (FPinfomart: Restricted, Canada.com: Restricted)

Nicholls noted that the Evelyn Drive area was described as a special study area in the Official Community Plan approved last year for possible rezoning.

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Illustration:

- Colour Photo: Richard Lam, Vancouver Sun / Sue Bayley speaks about a condo development behind Park Royal Mall during a public hearing Monday.

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