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## Highrise developments may be way of the future in Westshore suburbs

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Development is looking skyward in Colwood and Langford as more and more highrises loom on the horizon.

In the suburban landscape where four-storey apartments have been a rarity, Colwood councillors have now given their blessing to a \$90-million, 29-storey condo near Royal Roads University and are considering five mid-to high-rise towers of between eight and 12 storeys that's part of a \$350-million subdivision planned near Esquimalt Lagoon.

Rumours persist of a 30- or 36-storey highrise suggested near Westshore Town Centre (formerly CanWest Mall). And this past weekend Bear Mountain Resort on Langford's Skirt Mountain began advertising the proposed development of a 20-storey highrise called Soaring Peaks "nestled" between the 9th and 17th greens of the Bear Mountain Golf Course. It goes to public hearing July 5.

Bear Mountain is also advertising the Highlander, a 14-storey building with "a commanding" 18th green location.

Langford Mayor Stew Young said he is aware of proposals for highrises near West Shore but no formal applications have come into the municipal hall. He could provide no further details.

The towers advertised at the Bear Mountain Resort are conceptual and the zoning is not place, Young said.

Further, Langford's moratorium on new development applications north of the Trans-Canada Highway until a new Spencer Road interchange is built to handle increasing traffic effectively stalls building the towers, Young said.

"Everybody's testing the waters because of what [Colwood Mayor] Jody [Twa] did with the 29 storeys," Young said. "I don't know if the market studies are out there yet or if it's all viable."

He said confirmation of the interchange is key to new development at Bear Mountain going ahead.

"They can't do anything right now, but they are looking at their potential. ... They can't do it yet unless they want to take out all the residential units that they have approval for now."

With a six-storey luxury hotel, and an 18-hole Jack Nicklaus-designed golf course already in play, Bear Mountain expects over the next 10 to 12 years to grow to include 1,112 single-family homes, 1,997 condominiums and 220 townhomes.

Langford imposed the moratorium on new development applications north of the Trans-Canada because rapid growth there of housing and big-box retail is overwhelming

Millstream Road. In the meantime, the city is negotiating for provincial funding for the interchange.

Twa and Young believe highrises are a good fit in their communities.

"If you go downtown you have to buy two old buildings, knock them down and build. Out in Langford and Colwood we've got some excellent locations for footprints. We have footprints available that are still affordable versus Saanich and Victoria where it's more of an infill," Twa said.

"If they're going to preserve the green space and actually make it so I don't have the whole area covered in homes, then, yeah, I'd be looking at them for sure. It does make sense to go up," Young said.

Interest in highrise living at Bear Mountain is high, said Dale Sproule, the development's director of real estate.

"One of the issues we as developers all face is you need to make good use of your land if you want to keep your land," he said.

"Otherwise you just become urban sprawl on one or two levels going on as far as the eye can see."

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