

Evelyn Drive plan draws mixed review

Many at town hall meeting want action

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The latest proposal for developing the Evelyn Drive area met mixed, though slightly more positive response than last time at a West Vancouver town hall meeting on Wednesday.

Many who spoke at the meeting attended by more than 100 people at the West Vancouver Seniors' Activity Centre were anxious for development to begin. However, others argued for a proposal with less density.

Council will likely make a decision as to the next steps for the plan at Monday night's council meeting.

Speakers like former Evelyn Drive resident Duncan Holmes pushed for action. "I believe that it is time to be thinking about a wrap on this;" said Holmes, "that we have some boldness in this; that council can have some courage and say 'Yes, it is time we move.'"

The latest proposal for the area bounded by Park Royal Shopping Centre's north mall to the south, Keith Road to the north and Taylor Way to the east, calls for 350 units. The plan limits duplexes, townhouses and single-family homes on the north side to three storeys in height, but allows up to eight-storey apartments on the south side, closest to the mall.

The plan also outlines a minimum of each type of housing to be built: five per cent must be single family homes, three per cent must be duplexes, 15 per cent townhouses, and at least 60 per cent of new units would be apartments.

There will also be a new road connection to Keith Road at the northeast of Evelyn Drive, to help manage increasing traffic along Taylor Way and Keith Road.

A consultant and a community guidance committee, formed by council after last year's proposal failed, created the latest plans.

Their vision is less dense than the July 2005 proposal, which was dropped when it did not get enough council support for an official community plan amendment, necessary for the project.

Some residents remaining on Evelyn Drive called for action.

"More debate about this issue is not going to make an ideal community happen, it is just going to make my community worse," said Mike Tafti, an Evelyn Drive resident who did not sell his property.

Tafti said he has temporarily moved away, after the theft of his iron gates, a garbage can and even an attempted theft of flowers from his front garden.

"I think we need to put all this debate behind us and choose a path and go with it," Tafti added.

"I think West Vancouver is a community that is reluctant to change. We do it very, very nervously, with great trepidation," Duncan Holmes added, who was pushing for redevelopment of the area.

Many other speakers spoke in favour of redevelopment, citing the need for cheaper, higher density housing for younger families and older people hoping to downsize within the community.

"Those people who wish to stay in our community do not have the options to do that, to downsize and live in alternative accommodation," said David Thomas, a West Vancouver resident and real estate agent.

A few speakers like Amy Lee commented that they would like to live in West Vancouver, and would, if only more housing options were available.

But others remained steadfastly opposed.

Berni Claus lamented the loss of his parent's home, saying his childhood neighbourhood was destroyed by the development efforts.

Interestingly traffic, a chief concern in earlier Evelyn Drive meetings, was not a hot topic.

"We recognize that we have a traffic problem on Keith Road, not necessarily by the development but by traffic shortcutting Taylor Way and Marine, along Keith and Inglewood," said Brent Dozzi, manager of roads and transportation for the district.

Dozi said that traffic calming could accompany redevelopment in the area.

But final approval for the project is far away, even if it passes next Monday, reminded Geri Boyle, manager of community planning. First an amendment needs to be made to the district's official community plan, and then council needs to pass a bylaw to rezone the area.

"If council decides Evelyn Drive should be rezoned and that the official community plan should be amended, a public hearing will be called for," explained Mayor Pamela Goldsmith-Jones, "And that could not be scheduled any sooner than the end of October, due to notification requirements."

That means a final decision on the current proposal will not take place until November at the earliest.