

Lynn Valley proposal loses rental units

Council wants to hear from public

Deneka Michaud

newsroom@nsnews.com

Lynn Valley residents have to decide what's more important: preserving rental units or avoiding a new highrise.

A proposal to tear down and rebuild the housing complex at Whiteley Court and East 27th Street will be the subject of a public hearing, likely in September, after District of North Vancouver council voted 6-1 in favour of the hearing at Monday night's council meeting.

"I think it's about time council hears from the public," said Coun. Janice Harris, noting there have been roughly 10 meetings with residents so far. Now the district needs to be in the loop, said Harris.

The current complex consists of 46 rental apartments and townhouses in two two-storey buildings. The proposed development will see these buildings demolished and replaced with three four-storey buildings. Two of these buildings will contain market-priced condos, totaling 135 units. The third building will contain 32 rental units.

The new complex will mean a loss of roughly 30 per cent of the site's rental units.

"I don't know how we can let a project go forward that will displace so many people," said Coun. Lisa Muri.

"I agree with Coun. Muri. I really want to retain rental units," said Coun. Doug MacKay-Dunn.

But a reduction in rental space is necessary if a tower is going to be avoided, explained Michael Hartford, a community planner with the district. There were several previous inquiries about developing the location, each suggesting a highrise so all 46 rental units could be preserved.

Public consultation regarding these tower suggestions revealed strong distaste for a highrise, said Hartford.

"My understanding is there was overwhelming opposition to a tower," said Hugh Ker, vice-president of development with Polygon Homes, the developer.

Many councillors suggested the community perspective might have changed since these early consultations.

Although the current proposal can't retain all of the rental units, this loss could be offset by rentals within the market condo buildings, said Ker. It is expected that between 10 per cent and 20 per cent of the market units will be bought and then rented out, he said. These percentages equate to an additional 13 to 26 rental units.

The plan was put before local residents at a public information meeting on May 8. There were 80 to 90 people in attendance, 37 of whom submitted comment sheets. Thirteen responses supported the proposal, five were neutral and 19 opposed it.

Those in opposition stated traffic, pedestrian safety and the need for more on-site parking as their main concerns. Some also expressed the need to replace all rental units.

Following this meeting, more parking was added to the plan. The proposal now calls for 314 parking spaces in an underground garage, including 42 visitor stalls.

The plan also includes a central courtyard between the three buildings, a public seating area and art feature, and street upgrades such as new sidewalks, trees and landscaping.

Muri was the only councillor to vote against having a public hearing on the plan. "I just don't think this is good for the area," she said.

published on 08/30/2006