

Grosvenor goes to public hearing; Revised plan for 1300-blk Marine stays same height

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Grosvenor's proposed redevelopment of the 1300-block of Marine Drive in West Vancouver will go to public hearing in November.

The proposal, which was last before council in June, is a mixed commercial and residential development that consists of two six-and sevenstorey buildings joined by an underground parking garage. Improved public spaces are an important part of the proposal, including a transformation of 14th Street into a festival street that could be used for a farmers market and other events.

The revised plan includes significant architectural improvements and second-floor office space as requested by council, said Andrew Browne, senior community planner. Rooftop mechanical equipment has also been removed from the proposal.

The design review committee recommended supporting the project after reviewing the proposal for a third time in September, he said. This was subject to a further review of plant species, further detail of the gateway's water features and a resolution of traffic and engineering issues such as off-site parking, but according to the staff report, these issues have largely been addressed.

A community amenity contribution of approximately \$11.6 million, which would be reduced by a \$250,000 credit for improving the streetscape past the centreline on 14th Street, was also recommended in a staff report in late September.

The public's reaction to the proposal Monday evening was mixed.

Resident **Melinda Slater** expressed concern about the public consultation process, noting that an address petition with more than 1,600 signatures requesting a smaller scale development appears to have had little effect.

Instead of selling the property, council should lease it, said resident Scenery **Slater**. "The 1300-block property is some of the most desirable in North America," she said.

Slater is concerned that the public has had no real input into density and height considerations for the project. "An unelected advisory committee predetermined the minimum density well above the prescribed OCP. The minimum density was then integrated into the property sale agreement, and the developer has indicated from the very earliest meetings that they had no plans to develop on a more modest scale," she said.

Mark Ballard, a resident and local real estate agent, said that limiting the height of the development would negatively impact the planned community space.

"If we only go to four storeys, we're going to get a very good development like we have at 17th Street and Marine Drive," he said. "But people don't congregate there, and this is an important part of what we want for Ambleside."

"You won't have done anything for the community. You have to give the developer an extra floor so they'll build something for us," he said.

Ballard also pointed out that despite some concerns, property values likely wouldn't drop because of the new development. "The excitement of the whole area will go up," he said.

Gabrielle Loren, past president of the West Vancouver Chamber of Commerce, said the organization strongly supports the development because it will contribute to the health of the business community and Ambleside's revitalization.

New retail and office space will bring new visitors and businesses to the strip, injecting a new vibrancy into Ambleside, she said, noting the community will also benefit from the addition of 92 much needed public parking stalls.

Ashley Bauman, a resident and director for UBC Properties Trust, said West Vancouver is losing young families because of a lack of vibrancy in the community. "There's a lack of places to walk and congregate," she said.

Coun. Craig Cameron noted that despite council's request, Grosvenor hadn't adequately reduced the building height or offered enough office space. He also expressed concern that the new proposal included a reduction in public parking stalls and an increase in private spaces, which would financially benefit the developer but not the public.

Instead of a loss of two of the 100 residential units, he also wanted to see an increase in the number of apartments, he said.

Mayor Michael Smith said council has an obligation to get the maximum value for the property because of the special nature of the site. Extensive consultations that included developers and residents have recommended that the district provide extra density with the sale, he said.

"Ambleside is dying, and we need to do something about it," he said.

Staff will now arrange two public open houses prior to the public hearing scheduled for Nov. 21 at the Kay Meek Centre.

Coun. Mary-Ann Booth recused herself from debate.

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