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Council halts Seymour projects

Moratorium, with exceptions, endorsed over gridlock concerns

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District of North Vancouver municipal hall. Photograph by: file, North Shore News

Developers beware: the Seymour area is largely off limits until 2016, following a unanimous vote by District of North Vancouver council Monday.

Exceptions have been granted for the north side of the 3500 block of Mount Seymour

Parkway, three singlefamily subdivisions, and the McKenzie Barge properties. A trio of four-storey apartments proposed for the industrial site passed first reading earlier this year.

All other development will be considered premature until March 2016.

Recalling a summer spent in gridlock, Coun. Doug MacKay-Dunn said he was happy to stymie development in Seymour.

"Just the other day, my wife - she who must be obeyed - was telling me that she ran into a traffic jam on the way out of Seymour and she ran into a traffic jam on the way back in to Seymour and she asked me: 'What are you doing about it, Doug?'" he said.

Coun. Roger Bassam also noted traffic problems, emphasizing the need to alleviate the "nightmare" faced by commuters

trying to get to Blueridge while a traffic jam clogs the Ironworkers Memorial Second Narrows Crossing.

While the council resolution is not a moratorium on development, it does render a new project's chances "practically nil," said Coun. Alan Nixon.

"You put in an application for redevelopment or rezoning at your own risk," he said. "I'm not eager to see too much more development happen at Seymour until infrastructure and the transportation network can tolerate it."

As long as the pace of development outpaces transportation improvements, growth will limit access to bridges, hospitals and schools, said Eric Andersen, who was speaking on behalf of the Seymour Local Plan Monitoring Committee.

Seymour has seen 222 new units in the past 11 years. However, if developments on Tsleil Waututh land and other nearby projects are included in the tabulation, that number swells to 851 units in 11 years.

It is entirely appropriate for council to "apply the brakes" until infrastructure has a chance to catch up, according to Andersen.

The district needs to focus on sustainable development as opposed to "continuing to sprawl up our mountainside," said Coun. Lisa Muri.

With myriad developments in various phases of completion, residents need a respite from what can be a very stressful process, according to Muri.

"The days of continuing to battle development applications needed to come to an end," she said. "We're just very cognizant of piling too many projects on at once."

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