

District of North Vancouver debates traffic vs. affordability on parkway

[Brent Richter](#) / North Shore News

April 6, 2016 12:00 AM



file photo Mike Wakefield, North Shore News

District of North Vancouver may be easing off the brakes when it comes to development in the Seymour area.

Since March 2014, district staff have been advising would-be developers of lots in the Seymour Local Plan area that their applications would be considered “premature” until March of this year. The original motion, which included an exemption for the north side of the 3500-block of Mount Seymour Parkway, the old Dollarton Shipyards, and small single-family subdivisions of up to three new lots came from Coun. Doug MacKay-Dunn after his wife demanded to know what he was doing about traffic in the Seymour neighbourhood.

Excluding a seniors’ rental housing project, the parkway area has added 171 strata units over a 13-year period and another 24 townhouse units have been approved by council on the exempt blocks.

Another 95 units are under construction next to Cates Park.

But a motion to extend the policy (and add two more blocks to the exempt area) for another two years went down to defeat Monday night with Couns. Mathew Bond, Roger Bassam and Robin Hicks voting against. (MacKay-Dunn was not present for Monday night’s meeting and council motions must get a majority to pass.) It was the exemption for single-family homes that took up most of council’s discussion.

“I will be looking carefully at development in Seymour. ... What I believe makes the Seymour area special is its green spaces, its lower density compared to other regions of the Lower Mainland and I believe my mandate, for the most part,

as a councillor is to protect the Seymour area in its current form,” said Coun. Jim Hanson.

This time around, the focus of the debate wasn’t so much on how limiting development would impact road users, but rather how it would impact home prices.

The area’s original single-family houses were first built and lived in by everyone from doctors to janitors, Bond said, arguing denser housing is needed if the North Shore is to remain home to those same types of people.

“Now, when you look at who can afford a single-family house in Seymour, it’s not doctors, it’s not engineers, it’s not janitors. It’s people that have \$1.5 million to come in to buy a single-family house and another \$1 million to build a brand new one,” he said. “I think families my age are expecting and are realizing that our homes are going to be smaller, on smaller lots and they’re going to cost a lot more than they did for people who lived here in the first place, but if we don’t build these, who is going to live here?”

But the affordability train has left the station, Coun. Lisa Muri countered, with even older Seymour townhouses listing in the \$1-million-plus range. “No amount of housing, in my opinion, is going to bring the price down. The prices are rising based on speculation and amendments to building and it’s just not going to be affordable mostly due to the geography of where we live.”

And any growth happening outside the district’s town centres would be a form of urban sprawl, Muri added, which couldn’t be considered sustainable or in keeping with the official community plan. The intent was to phase developments in the area, Muri noted, something other neighbourhoods looked at in green-eyed jealousy.

“I can only apologize to those other areas in the district that didn’t get the same treatment as the residents in Seymour got,” she said.

After the quasi-moratorium went down to defeat, all six council members present agreed to salvage the original plan to begin considering redevelopments on the 3300-3500 blocks of the parkway and to discuss the single-family subdivisions in more detail at a future council workshop.