

north shore news

District of North Vancouver debates light industry neighbourhood's future

Commercial mix eyed for district's 'dirty underside'

[Brent Richter](#) / North Shore News

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District of North Vancouver council is expected to debate potential changes to zoning in the Main Street area following consultation between district staff and area business owners. Photo Mike Wakefield

The District of North Vancouver is looking to tweak the zoning in the light industrial area north of Main Street area so it “evolves” as the area east of Mountain Highway redevelops into a residential and commercial hub.

The district’s committee of the whole members got a look Monday at some of the ideas being floated for the area following consultation with a group of business owners, many of whom also own buildings they operate out of.

Among the ideas that are being pitched: Change the zoning to allow more commercial, allow property owners to rent out unused space, and add in sidewalks, landscaping and other things to beautify the area.

One change of use not on the table is residential development.

In the cities around the world that district staff studied, introducing residential uses ultimately precipitated the failure of the area for industry, thanks to eventual redevelopment.

Today, the area has numerous auto body shops, glazing businesses and other blue collar employers.

Council members were highly wary of anything that may result in the unintended consequences of making businesses harder for existing tenants — or chasing them out entirely.

“I’m very worried by the suggestion we’re going to make this area nice with outdoor patios and sidewalks,” said Coun.

[Lisa Muri](#).

“This is an industrial, working area. It’s not Granville Island, as much as I think some people would like it to be. It’s not.

It's where people work."

Council, in the past, has only eroded the industrial area by allowing large-scale commercial businesses to move in, like Canadian Tire and Michaels, Muri said.

Coun. Roger Bassam too warned the committee about creating an accidental snowball effect, like bringing in improvements that change valuations and, by extension, assessments and tax bills, forcing current businesses off the North Shore.

The area has a very low vacancy rate, he noted.

"If there's demand, why do we need to change?" Bassam said. "Every city needs a dirty underside. You really do have to have somewhere to go and do the dirty work that has to be done. If it's not here, where is there?"

"I think there's some potential here. I think this is certainly worth pursuing but with a fair bit of caution."

But staff stressed that the district is only looking to go ahead with ideas that will complement already existing business.

Council is expected to debate any potential changes to the area in more detail in the future.

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