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LETTER: Questions linger over taller, denser proposal

North Shore News

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Dear Editor:

When city council approved the new official community plan in March 2015, a last-minute change added a special study area at the corner of Lonsdale Avenue and West 13th Street adjacent to city hall.

As stated in the OCP: "This site's location at the southern extent of the Central Lonsdale City Centre makes it visually important in defining the city centre. This study would consider the possibility of an increase to maximum building height at this location."

This was as a result of a proposal by Hollyburn, which reads in part "... we have found that the mix of uses and density for this site in the 2014 OCP is appropriate. We also believe that the city should allow more height flexibility."

A new proposal from Hollyburn was submitted in September 2015. The mayor and council subsequently directed the city planner "to process the development application with a density bonus and transfer." More density — not just height.

Hollyburn's 19-floor proposal is 70 feet higher (60 per cent greater) than the OCP maximum height of 120 feet. The design has a floor space ratio of 4.86, which is 22 per cent over the OCP.

The city has conveniently offered to sell a density transfer of 23,713 square feet to Hollyburn to support this proposal.

Why is a density increase being considered when Hollyburn originally said that the density in the OCP "was appropriate"?

Is the city operating at arm's length in supporting a density increase given that the density is being transferred from the city hall site?

How is this study to be done? The city planner intends to "review and refine the building design, including the fine grained retail character on Lonsdale." Is this sufficient to ensure that the end result is "visually important" in defining the city centre? What solutions are proposed to address the increased traffic congestion at the intersection of 13th Street and Lonsdale Avenue?

Is taller really better? Is increased density at this intersection better? Will alternate building designs, which conform to the OCP, be considered?

There is merit in putting this site under study due to its location next to our award-winning city hall and the Prescott and Centreview developments. Hollyburn will be presenting its proposal at an information session on Jan. 12. Let's all make sure that Hollyburn and the city fully meet the intent of the special study area.

Jim Nicholson
North Vancouver

What are your thoughts? Send us a letter via email by clicking [here \(http://www.nsnews.com/opinion/send-us-a-letter\)](http://www.nsnews.com/opinion/send-us-a-letter) or post a comment below.

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