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City agrees to creative parking solution

First in N. America to try double-decker parking

BY BRENT RICHTER, NORTH SHORE NEWS FEBRUARY 27, 2013

Eg. <http://carstackers.com.au/csa-product-duplex.html>



If approved, a renovated industrial building in Lower Lonsdale will include a 2Park, electric lift parking apparatus.

Photograph by: Photo submitted, for North Shore NEWS

CITY of North Vancouver council approved the rezoning and renovation of an industrial building at 246 East First St. Monday night, but it was the unique parking challenges - and solutions - that dominated most of the discussion.

The renovated building will be the first one on the North Shore to include a mechanically elevated, double-decker parking system and the developer will install new on-street angle parking.

Using the Israeli-made 2Park system, the driver eases the car onto a metal platform, which is then lifted in place over another parking spot below. Similar systems are common around Europe, Asia and Israel, and increasingly in North America, architect Kent Halex told council. Parking a car on the top layer takes about one minute, and only trained employees at the building will be able to use it. The system will cost about \$150,000 turn five parking spaces on the lot into 10.

Once complete, the renovated building will feature a new top floor housing two offices, a second floor redeveloped as restaurant/ catering space and industrial storage, while the main floor will remain industrial with a 500square-foot coffee shop added. The increase in commercial density meant the developer would have to add more on-site parking spaces the lot simply didn't have room for.

The area is already known for having way more drivers wanting to park than spaces available, as several local business owners pointed out during the first part of a public hearing held on Feb. 4.

Council adjourned the public hearing to ask staff to work with the developer to see what other parking solutions could be included to alleviate neighbours' concerns.

To sweeten the deal, the developer has agreed to convert 12 parallel parking spots on East First along Derek Inman Park to 20 spaces of angle parking at an approximate cost of \$130,000.

The majority on council agreed the net addition of parking to the neighbourhood, including eight new spots available to the public on First Street, was a good compromise, as did several neighbours who withdrew letters and statements opposing the project.

While even the most strident supporters of the redevelopment acknowledged the already existing parking stress in the neighbourhood, overhauling the existing building would allow for more employment-generating land use in Lower Lonsdale, which has been one of council's goals.

Not every neighbour agreed with the electric lift parking, however.

Jeff Birch, owner of an apartment building at 255 East Second St., urged council to turn down the application for fear that, in time, the mechanical parking spots would become an unkempt eyesore, especially for the tenants in his building.

"Why does the City of North Vancouver want to be guinea pig for North America for testing out this type of system?" he asked.

Birch also pointed to the potential for other industrial landlords in the neighbourhood to add more density without adequate parking, or future owners of the building not using it for its intended use as reasons to reject the application.

Not sharing Birch's trepidation, Coun. Linda Buchanan countered that the city was facing an opportunity to use a creative solution to a perpetual problem.

"My response back would be, 'Why not?'" she said. "Why wouldn't we want to be innovative? Why wouldn't we want to take something that hasn't been used in the metro region and see if it works?"

The motion to allow the redevelopment passed 5-2 with Couns. Pam Bookham and Don Bell opposed.

Bookham praised the design and use of the building but stressed the rezoning sought wouldn't fit within a framework of policies available to everyone.

"I don't like change, one application at a time. I don't think it lends itself to identifying the basis on which we move forward on a set of principals that can be replicated by other property owners in the neighbourhood," she said.

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