

# north shore news

## 15-storey tower proposed for Keith Road

Victoria Park blvd could be sold for density

[Brent Richter](#) / North Shore News

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A new condo/rental building proposed for Keith Road at St. Georges Avenue. Photograph by: image supplied, North Shore News

A new condo/rental building proposed for Keith Road at St. Georges Avenue. Photograph by: image supplied, North Shore News

North Vancouver residents will soon be able to speak their piece about a new highrise building planned for central Lonsdale.

City of North Vancouver council voted Monday night to hold a public hearing for FDG Property Management's proposal for a 15-storey tower at 161 East Keith

Rd. If approved, the project will include 52 condos and 41 rental suites, which must remain rental for the building's lifespan.

Council has been seeking to beef up the city's supply of purpose-built rental housing since most existing rental buildings were built between the '50s and '70s when senior governments offered incentives and today, those buildings are at risk for redevelopment. Because developers are less inclined to build rental units when stratas result in a much faster return on investment, the city allows higher density in a project in exchange for market rental apartments.

In order to create a lot large enough to allow the density proposed for the 93 units, the developer will have to buy the adjacent boulevard from the city at a cost of \$1.8 million. The land must be kept as a boulevard and be improved and maintained at FDG's expense.

The new tower will come at the expense of an existing 12-unit rental building from 1954 that is now in "relatively poor" condition, according to a city staff report. The building's tenants will be offered four months' notice before eviction, one month of free rent, free access to moving vans and boxes, and assistance finding a new place to live, according to the report.

But the project will be by no means a slam-dunk at council if reservations expressed by council members Monday night are any indication of coming opposition.

"I am not inclined to support this particular project. I feel that it represents an example of the kinds of concerns we were hearing in the public input period about density going where density was not expected," said Coun. Pam Bookham, adding that the sale of the boulevard to get the area required for density amounted to "sleight of hand."

"It's not sitting well with people who live in close proximity who, having done their due diligence on purchasing their properties, were led to believe such a small site would not support this scale of development... I think we do a disservice to our community when we encourage a developer to come forward with this kind of proposal. I don't think it should have gotten out of the starting gate, myself."

Coun. Guy Heywood joined Bookham in showing concern about the size of the building compared to the size of the lot, but added he doesn't like the city's arrangement of swapping density for market rental housing.

"I know it's enshrined in the current OCP but I think the city is, in effect, subsidizing a business because the process of making and managing market rental housing is a business," he said.

The public hearing for the project has not yet been scheduled.

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Interesting principles at play here. The project needs to have extra density to have the required market rental housing. But they don't have enough land ...so the project needs to buy abutting lands - in this case part of the abutting roadway/boulevard. The CNV will "sell" it if the buyer pays CNV \$1.8m AND the boulevard/roadway kept open to the public. In essence the developer gets density bonussing upon payment of \$1.8m - ie. the CNV sells - for a fee - extra density beyond what is allowed in their OCP. The precedent this would set is enormous. Municipalities own many roadways/boulevards within their boundaries. "Selling" them - but keeping them open for the public - would allow far larger densities than would have been anticipated in all their respective OCP's! The OCP's never mentioned that public boulevards could be "sold" to further densify the area. "Selling" abutting public parkland would surely follow. - cjk