

# West Van rejects waterfront plans after public outcry

BY JEREMY SHEPHERD, NORTH SHORE NEWS    APRIL 28, 2013

THE District of West Vancouver's guidelines for new businesses at the Ambleside waterfront were abandoned Monday after an outcry from a large contingent of residents concerned about large-scale development.

Council is planning to refine the plans for the area just below Bellevue Avenue between 13th and 18th Streets, possibly returning to the issue in early June.

Council was considering allowing a 75-seat wine bar, childcare centre for approximately 40 children, a ferry terminal, and a restaurant in the style of the Beach House Restaurant at Spanish Banks in Vancouver. Other possibilities included equipment rental shops and food and beverage concessions.

The motion's defeat left Mayor Michael Smith chagrined.

"This instant negativity that crops up when anything's proposed is frustrating," he said. "There's isn't another waterfront community in the world that they don't use their waterfront. Drive down to Ambleside now, you won't see anybody down there. A park does not have to be exclusively open space."

The district has sought to control waterfront land since 1975, buying 29 of 32 parcels in the area. The district's long-range plan is to acquire the three remaining lots, but Smith warned it might be an expensive proposition for residents.

"We would have to put taxes up 10 per cent just to buy one of those last three properties," he said. Smith said the logical course of action would be to generate money from the two most recently-expropriated houses on the waterfront. The houses would be torn down allowing a business to be built without sacrificing green space, said Smith.

"There's a feeling in the community that economic reality is somebody else's problem and it's not. It's all of our problems," he said

Smith cited the district's expansion of John Lawson and Millennium Parks.

"Where's the boogeyman?" he said. "We shouldn't be afraid of looking at change."

Former councillor Rod Day returned to council chambers to advocate "cottage style" development on the waterfront.

A 6,000 square foot restaurant was too big for many onlookers, including Paul Hundal.

"Why do we need a restaurant on the waterfront? We don't," said Hundal, who suggested a restaurant of that scale would be better suited to nearby Bellevue Avenue.

The restaurant could also siphon business from Ambleside eateries, according to Inn Cogneato Bistro proprietor David Hossini, who said restaurants on Marine Drive were "already suffering."

Other residents questioned the wisdom of expropriating additional land for park space and using

current park space for a restaurant.

There were some supporters for development in the area.

A seaside restaurant would draw more diners to the area, boosting business for nearby restaurateurs, according to Peter Schofield.

There is a dire need to draw more traffic to the waterfront, according to West Vancouver chamber of commerce head of advocacy Maggie Pappas.

As many as five Bellevue Avenue businesses will be out of business within the year, according to Pappas. Pappas said there is strong support for waterfront development. "I know that there are approximately 80 people here tonight; please don't be intimidated by that because hundreds more have already said that they want this," she said.

Changing the waterfront zoning to allow development is "potentially exploitative," according to Elaine Fonseca, a director of the Ambleside Dundarave Ratepayers Association. She called on council to designate the entire area as park space to ensure its use for future generations.

Former councillor Shannon Walker encouraged council to refine the plan and move forward.

"I would hate, because of negativity and intimidation of change, council doesn't go forward and consider this."

As an Ambleside landlord, Walker reminded council of the challenges facing many businesses. "Ambleside is not vibrant. Ambleside is struggling."

Council failed to clearly communicate the plan to the public, according to Coun. Michael Lewis, who said he'd received letters in which worried residents envisioned Coney Island springing up in West Vancouver. With 48 lots in the area, Lewis pointed out that council was considering adding three or four structures to the six lots already developed.

Lewis advised against allowing permanent food concessions or a childcare centre. "I also don't think that you use a \$3-million plus piece of real estate to put a childcare facility on the water," he said.

While calling for a reset on the proceedings, Coun. Trish Panz discussed the need to protect West Vancouver's seaside. "It's not always been the history in this community that things are assumed to be protected . . . we've had some situations where that hasn't actually come true," she said.

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