

north shore news

Polygon gets OK for West First midrise

Condos, office space approved for Lower Lonsdale

[Brent Richter](#) / North Shore News

April 20, 2014 12:00 AM

The entire block of West First Street and Esplanade between Semisch and Mahon Avenue is soon to be knocked down and replaced with a mixed-use commercial/residential development.

Polygon's project will house 208 condo units over 44,000 square feet of commercial space. The structure will peak at seven storeys measured from Esplanade or five measured from West First. The site is now home to Family Services of the North Shore and Hollyburn Family Services.

Though there were some lingering concerns about commercial space outpacing local demand as well as the potential for neighbourhood noise conflicts with nearby industrial buildings and Sailor Hagar's pub, council voted the project through 6-1. The vote followed a three-hour public hearing, with more than 30 residents, business owners as well as staff and volunteers from Family Services of the North Shore and Hollyburn Family Services, who turned out en masse wearing pink. Project supporters outnumbered detractors about three to one.

One of the big selling points for council was the extra 15,000 square feet of office space, which Polygon must rent to non-profits at rates 25 per cent below market value. This is the first time council has offered extra density in exchange for below-market non-profit office space.

"Very creative. I'd like to see if this could be a bit of a template to how we can do others in a way that's going to keep those non-profits that do such valuable work in our community," said Mayor Darrell Mussatto.

The Lower Lonsdale development discussion took an unexpected turn: there was some concern the building contained too much parking. Reducing the number of parking spots would have made the building cheaper and provided an opportunity to pass the savings on to the non-profits, Coun. Pam Bookham argued. With the project just two blocks from the SeaBus terminal and shopping and amenities in walking distance, residents wouldn't have the same need for a car as those outside Lower Lonsdale, she added.

"This would have been an ideal site on which to test those values we keep talking about. We want people walking more. We want people out of their cars," Bookham said. Though she approved of all the other aspects of the Polygon's project, Bookham cast a nay vote in protest.

Polygon had originally come to council with two proposals for the block, one of which was a highrise tower with a park. That plan was scrapped after it did not test well with members of the public.

© North Shore News