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Residents sound off on Lynn Valley town centre

[Jeremy Shepherd](#) / North Shore News

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To redevelop or not to redevelop? That question dominated Tuesday's four-hour public hearing on the proposal to swap Zellers for residential towers at Lynn Valley mall - which will either rejuvenate an exhausted shopping centre or tighten the traffic stranglehold choking the North Shore - depending on who you believe.

It was standing-room only in council chambers, with residents packing two nearby rooms and an atrium as more than 40 speakers took to the microphone to make their case.

If the project is approved, Bosa will demolish Zellers to make way for six towers between four and 12 storeys. The height of the buildings ranges from 55 to 150 feet.

The 4.8-acre development includes 377 apartments and 22 townhouses. Four of the towers will sit on a onestorey podium - totalling 50,000 square feet of commercial space.

Besides the Zellers, the project would also swallow up the former District of North Vancouver library.

The project's proponents have described the mall as a morgue, but Lynn Valley resident Marilyn Harkness questioned that assertion.

"It is currently difficult most days to find a parking space at the mall even though the mall is constantly being referred to as dead," she said.

There are currently more than 1,000 units in various stages of consideration and development slated for Lynn Valley, which irked Harkness.

"I do not understand why all the development in the district has to occur at the same time. It is almost as though council has a rampant addiction to speed up the destruction of our treasured paradise," she said.

Harkness was one of several speakers who suggested the towers would be too imposing.

"The proposed height and density are almost criminal and will destroy the ambience of the mountain community," she said.

The entire project would have a floor space ratio of 2.36, which measures the development's total floor space against the area of the lot.

Harkness concluded by saying there was no reason to expect greater public transit in Lynn Valley, given that Surrey's major growth has not alleviated that city's transit woes.

Harkness received a round of applause for her remarks, but a majority of Tuesday's speakers favoured the redevelopment.

Proponents noted the three plazas totalling more than 15,000 square feet and the design of the buildings, which incorporates timber and stone. Several speakers also suggested the site could accommodate downsizing seniors and young people shopping for their first home.

One-bedroom units would likely start at around \$350,000.

As a Lynn Valley resident for more than 50 years, Maureen Bragg said the development offered a chance to maintain Lynn Valley's trails and vistas.

"The only way we can keep this magnificent backdrop is to concentrate the density - that is inevitable - in the very centre," she said.

The alternative is to watch houses creep up the mountainside, according to Bragg. "We do have to open our minds to compromise by accepting this opportunity to redevelop this land. .. which is no longer giving us its highest and best use," she said.

The development offers a chance for the district to start solving its housing problems, according to Bragg. "Those who stock our grocery store shelves, mow our lawns, clean our houses, run our childcare services, teach in our schools, work in our clinics and hospitals, our police and firemen: all these people need a place to live. They are Lynn Valley people," she said.

The package also includes six units of affordable rental housing to be operated by a non-profit society. Each unit is slated to be sold at approximately \$150,000 below market value.

Suzanne Klassen, an advocate with the North Shore Disability Resource Centre, supported the project.

Traffic congestion was a major theme among the project's detractors.

Glenn Mackenzie asked council to consider development throughout the District and City of North Vancouver when making their decision.

Calling Lynn Valley a "transit desert," Hazen Colbert questioned the projections showing a modest increase in traffic.

"The traffic review fails to present the truck prohibition on Mountain Highway, so during the 10-year phased development period, trucks will only use Lynn Valley," he said.

If the project is approved, Bosa would be on the hook for \$4.5 million in district amenities, including \$1.6 million in transportation improvements, \$500,000 for public art, and other money for trail improvements.

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