

north shore news

District council split on Mountain Court project

Densification a concern for Lynn Valley town centre site

Jeremy Shepherd / North Shore News

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Polygon's proposed development for East 27th Street, across the street from Lynn Valley Centre, would see four five-storey towers constructed over a five-year period. Image supplied

A four-building, 321-unit development in Lynn Valley took its first step toward construction Monday following a split vote from District of North Vancouver council.

The East 27th Street project would divide 246 condos and 75 rental units among a quartet of five-storey buildings spread over four acres on Mountain Court.

A staff report notes the "easy walking distance" to a shopping centre, the Karen Magnussen rec centre and Viewlynn Park.

However, one more major construction project means there will be no peace in Lynn Valley, according to Coun. Lisa Muri.

"I do not understand how council can so easily move forward with so many of these projects and not understand how we're going to manage them," Muri said.

Muri blasted the project for failing to provide affordable housing and adding more cars to a gridlock-prone area.

Muri put forth a motion to defer Monday's vote until council debates design guidelines for Lynn Valley.

The motion failed but the longtime councillor was supported by council watcher Dan Ellis, who expressed concerns over council taking a "piecemeal approach" to the area.

"I'm baffled as to why it's coming forward before the guidelines have been resolved," Ellis said.

The consequences of council's approach could be a collection of indistinguishable low-rise rectangles that begin to resemble "Soviet baroque," Ellis cautioned.

Coun. Robin Hicks echoed those concerns about "sameness" among the proposed Polygon development and its neighbours at Canyon Springs and Branches.

"They're not unattractive in themselves, but the prospect of having several blocks of that ... to me is not terribly attractive," Hicks said. "By limiting height we've boxed ourselves in."

Mayor Richard Walton suggested he would be reluctant to lift restrictions on building height in Lynn Valley, which were forged after lengthy public discussions. "All the red lights are going on right now in terms of public trust," he said.

Buildings in the Mountain Court development would be limited to approximately 60 feet.

If approved, the project would be built over about five years and likely bring 500 cars to Lynn Valley.

That was too many for Coun. Jim Hanson, who voted against the project, citing concerns about increasing densification in Lynn Valley.

A consultants' report concluded the project would bring 215 cars to the area during rush hour. That traffic would be split between Mountain Gate at Mountain Highway and Library Lane at East 27th Street.

While he supported the project, Coun. Roger Bassam requested more details regarding the proposed community amenity contribution.

If council approves the project, Polygon development company has volunteered to offer the district \$100,000. The money is earmarked for public art.

Polygon would also pay for a new Library Lane and bankroll a wider 27th Street which would feature a separated bike lane.

Council is set to revisit the project following a review of design guidelines in Lynn Valley, which is tentatively set for June 1.

The Mountain Court project features studio units and three bedroom apartments ranging from 491 to 1,234 square feet.

The 75 rental units would be concentrated in one building while the 246 condos would be spread over the remaining three buildings.

Coun. Doug MacKay-Dunn did not attend the meeting.