

Big worries about small lots in upper Capilano

District holds open house to address subdivision concerns

[Brent Richter](#) / North Shore News

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The District of North Vancouver's property viewer app geoweb.dnv.org shows lot sizes in upper Capilano. graphic supplied

Some big concerns are being raised about smaller lot sizes in upper Capilano.

The District of North Vancouver sent a letter to residents west of Ranger Avenue between Montroyal Boulevard and Prospect Avenue, asking for feedback on a plan that would make it easier for property owners to split 66-foot frontage lots, down to two 33-foot ones.

The district is pitching the idea for smaller homes on smaller lots as much of the older housing stock in the area is redeveloped into the largest homes allowed under the current zoning.

"Having smaller lots is one way to maintain that neighbourhood look and feel," said Sarah Dal Santo, the district's section manager for planning policy. "Having smaller homes is one way of creating a different kind of diversity of housing choices for people who want to stay in single family homes or have a smaller lot that's somewhat more affordable."

About one-third of the lots in the neighbourhood are already 33 feet wide. Only 57 per cent of the remaining lots are big enough to be split and still meet the minimum 33-foot frontage, and a good number of those wouldn't be eligible due to geography, according to Dal Santo.

Critics, however, say the idea is bad urban planning, as the new homeowners will still be completely car dependent, and they say there are better ways to preserve the neighbourhood's character.

"Everything that I understand about sensible planning is that you have hubs and you have density that diminishes as you go farther from those hubs. The idea being, there's transportation, there's easy access to other things like

grocery stores,” said Clements Avenue resident Lesley Midzain.

And “affordable” is a highly relative word when it comes to real estate in the Lower Mainland, Midzain noted.

“Of the small lot houses that have sold on this street, the cheapest was \$1.4 million and that was one year ago, which means it’s probably more expensive now,” Midzain said. “It’s sort of frightening that my own children aren’t going to buy here. I’m just not sure that adding a bunch of small lot homes up in this neighbourhood would make any difference to them.”

Midzain said the smaller lots will still have homes built right out to the property line, imposing on neighbours the same way new larger homes do – something the district could address by tightening its existing zoning bylaws.

“I don’t see that by adding small homes they’re going to change that unless (the district) is willing to take some control over the look, the feel, **the devastation of all the plant life,**” she said.

Another anonymous resident has taken it upon themselves to distribute a form letter to the neighbourhood, decrying the proposal and alleging it was a push by developers. That letter contains a great deal of misinformation, Dal Santo said.

“Contrary to what the petitioner is saying, that this is an experiment, we’re actually responding to some enquiries from this community that stemmed from way back around 2011 when we were doing engagement on the official community plan,” she said. “At that time, we heard the community saying there was strong interest in exploring opportunities for more small lots in this area.”

The anonymous letter also raised fears the new homes could feature secondary suites, meaning “a lot that now houses one family will suddenly house four families!!!”

However, **secondary suites within single-family homes are permitted only on properties with lane access,** something most of the properties in that area don’t have and coach houses are not allowed on 33-foot lots, according to the district.

Perhaps this was wrt coach houses not secondary suites? -cjk

The district is hosting an open house on the plan Tuesday from 6 to 8 p.m. at Canyon Heights elementary, 4501 Highland Blvd.