

# north shore news

## Horseshoe Bay towers a go with 'locals first' rule in place

### West Vancouver council green-lights Horseshoe Bay condos

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A model for the Sewell's Landing development designed by Vancouver architect Paul Merrick shows a complex of 159 condo units in six buildings from three to 11 storeys tall and 14,000 square feet of commercial space. photo Paul McGrath, North Shore News

Big change, up to 11 storeys tall, is coming to Horseshoe Bay.

West Vancouver council voted unanimously Monday night to rezone a piece of land, mostly home to parking for Sewell's Marina, into a complex of 159 condo units in six buildings ranging from three to 11 storeys tall and 14,000 square feet of commercial space. The project also includes 500 underground parking stalls, LEED gold environmental design, a geothermal cooling system that uses nearby ocean water, as well as more than \$10 million in cash and in-kind amenity contributions for the District of West Vancouver from project developer Westbank.

Over the course of a three-hour public hearing Monday night, supporters of the project outnumbered detractors about six to one, with most arguing the Sewell's Landing project would provide a badly needed boost for the flagging business of Horseshoe Bay.

The handful who spoke against the development said the project was simply too tall and too dense for the sleepy seaside village.

Though it would be a dramatic change for the neighbourhood, most of the council discussion was taken up with the

unique “locals first” marketing plan for condo sales.

Buyers will have to sign a declaration assuring the Sewells that they, or a family member, will live in the unit they purchase, and that it will not be left vacant, flipped for a short-term profit or have the contract assigned to another buyer before taking possession. Current West Vancouver residents will also get a five per cent discount and the developer is pledging not to market the project abroad.

The Sewell family temporarily pulled the project in June when it was learned their development partner’s marketing agency was already promoting the condos in Hong Kong, before council had even approved the rezoning.

“We apologize for that oversight. There were some schedule changes and it was something we overlooked and we’re sorry for that,” said Michael Braun, Westbank’s marketing manager.

Westbank is planning to sell the one-, two- and three-bedroom units at an average price of \$875 per square foot. By contrast, the Grosvenor project in Ambleside is selling at \$3,000 per square foot, Braun said.

Coun. Nora Gambioli, who grew up in Horseshoe Bay, said that marketing snafu may have been a blessing in disguise as the locals first plan could serve as a model for West Vancouver and other councils.

“I was horrified to hear that this project was being marketed in advance in China, as were a lot of people who wrote to us,” she said. “But at the end of the day, I think this is going to be a better project as a result ...

“I think this declaration is a novel concept and I’m hopeful that it will be a precedent for our staff to use with future developments in West Vancouver and I would be happy if it was a precedent for other areas of the Lower Mainland.”

Under grilling from Coun. Christine Cassidy, Braun said he would ensure his sales staff, who are paid on a per-sale basis, do not skirt the locals first policy, given the high incentive to cheat.

“Yes, but there’s also a high risk of them being fired by me,” he said as the council gallery erupted in laughter.

Coun. Bill Soprovich said the best insurance he could think of to ensure the project would satisfy Horseshoe Bay residents is having the Sewell’s good name attached to it.

“For the most part, it comes down to trust. Could you imagine Dan Sewell and his wife taking a stroll and all the other residents chasing them down the street with a broom because they didn’t like what he did?” he asked. “The trust is there that he’s going to say and do what’s on that plan.”