

Subject: The newly proposed Lynn Valley Library should be more than just a replacement of the old Library.

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A MESSAGE FROM ERNIE CRIST

The proposed Lynn Valley Library is on the wrong track. Indeed the word "Library" itself may be inappropriate since it connotes a traditional place where one goes to borrow a book more or less. But Lynn Valley needs more. Merely replacing the old Library is not what the new Library should be about. Modern Libraries are intellectual hubs and community centers. Old fashioned Libraries are as outdated as horses on the Trans Canada Highway.

Modern town center redevelopment scenarios allow municipalities to collect sufficient money from developers to pay for facilities in exchange for rezoning privileges. This could have been the case in Lynn Valley. But the opportunity was ignored. The result has been a massive development of the Lynn Valley Core without any community benefits unless we count more pollution, more traffic and more parking problems, as benefits. The people who did benefit were the developers who came, built and left while the taxpayers got stuck with the bills amounting to millions of dollars for the cost of the infrastructure.

Modern Libraries are more than a collection of books. They are communication and information centers; they are places where people meet to discuss issues and hear lectures; they are places where there is enough space for minor cultural events and performances including music, book readings, discussions, debates and special film showings. In short they should serve as a community center.

But this is not going to happen in Lynn Valley because such a concept requires more space and a greater vision than is possible by conventional thinking.


The new proposed Library will be bigger than the one it replaces, but not big enough to accommodate new concepts. The usable Library space has already been reduced. The original space of 55,000 square feet has shrunk to 40,000. But without blinking an eye, the apologists are claiming that it will be plenty big enough and may even be too big. Even some members of the Lynn Valley Community Association itself, have joined in the chorus much to the satisfaction of the people who denied Lynn Valley its well deserved benefits in the first place.

The present debate centers around financing. The District does have sufficient funds to pay for the total project - not just for the Library but also for the commercial building adjacent to the Library. In addition, under the existing policy, the District may borrow money from the Heritage Fund to pay for community facilities with the ability to pay back both principle and interest. This was done with "Northlands". Since the complex can be treated as a unit, the commercial building could also carry the Library.

However, Council is now toying with the idea of bringing in a major developer who is interested in financing the project on his terms. This could mean subjugating the Library to the Mall interests instead of it standing alone as a civic monument. It would also mean more traffic, more pollution and even greater density including high-rises. But above all it would mean a facility for the past - yet another testimony to mediocrity and lack of foresight.

Ernie Crist, Councillor.

District of North Vancouver.

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