

Ambleside LAP: Apartment Area Town Hall

Summary of Discussion

Thank you to the ~200 people who attended the Town Hall meeting for the Ambleside Apartment Area proposed OCP Bylaw amendment on Thursday, February 29, 2024. The following is a summary of the discussion. Staff notes have been added in italics to provide additional information where useful.

1. **Member of the public:** What if somebody has a 50-foot frontage older home in Ambleside? With the new Provincial legislation, would these proposals be on top of what the Province is proposing?

Mayor Sager comments: The province is mandating more growth. West Vancouver allows a coach house and a secondary suite in every home. Right now we believe the rules do not apply to much of West Vancouver. It is possible that they will say Park Royal is a new transportation hub and density may change.

Staff comments: Details of the Provincial legislation were introduced recently. Tonight is about the Ambleside Apartment Area, but staff can confirm we will be reporting back to Council in response to the new Provincial legislation in the near future.

Information note: The provincial deadline for compliance with Bill 44 is June 30, 2024.

2. **Member of the public:** There are a lot of single-family homes in the Apartment Area in behind the apartment lots that you are saying are going to be condos – the 1400 block, all along that strip. What about the north side of Fulton? Is that included in the Apartment Area?

Mayor Sager comments: Only the south side of 1500 Fulton.

Information note: The Apartment Area was the topic of the Town Hall and does not include any proposals for single-family homes. One exception is the District-owned lands on the south side of the 1500 block of Fulton Avenue, which have proposed apartment uses, to be determined by Mayor and Council.

3. **Member of the public:** Is this going to be enough? Some gentle density will accommodate the much-needed missing middle, but have you had discussions with the development community if this is enough to get things built? The private sector gets things built, not the District. It's nice to get what you think you want, but what you sometimes get is nothing at all. It's a bit of a concern. Some older buildings need to be brought up to date. How robust is it to enable things to get built?

Mayor Sager comments: If you are an owner in these buildings, the density may not be enough. We encourage owners to talk to us to learn what can be done.

4. **Member of the public:** If you are hoping to apply for one of these new homes, when is a good time to apply for a rental unit?

Mayor Sager comments: The Kiwanis building is going up now, so approximately 12 to 18 months on that. Certainly anything in there, I would suggest putting your name in 6 months before completion. St. Stephens is proposing a variety of types of suites in their building. We did receive good news about Inglewood Care Centre– this is still in discussion. We have lost a lot of long-term care beds and it appears the Province may be funding a full replacement of long term care beds and rental housing owned by the Baptist Church where Inglewood Long-Term Care Centre is. We could see a new facility without displacing anyone.

5. **Member of the public:** I'm here representing a property on the 1800 block of Marine Drive on the south side. A lady earlier brought up a good point. We believe there is not enough incentive. Based on the new OCP proposal, we only get to build residential, which doesn't make sense. The entire 1800 block of Marine Drive is commercial on the first floor. For us to build residential it doesn't make sense – I've talked to architects and they agree. You eliminate the much needed commercial space in West Vancouver. On the south side of Marine, we can only build up to 2-storeys under existing zoning and 3-storey residential under the new policies. We ask for more height, density, and mixed-use residential to be able to build up to at least 4-storeys.

Mayor Sager comments: Tonight we are only talking about the Apartment Area. For commercial, we really want to keep Ambleside maintained as a quaint village. A street I love in Vancouver is on 1st Ave when you turn right after the Burrard Bridge. They have both businesses and residential, and it's what I'd like to see the 1800 block look like.

Information note: No changes have been made to the existing zoning for the 1800 block of Marine, which currently allows mixed-use or residential-only buildings. The proposed OCP policy for the 1800 block would provide opportunity for expanded residential-only development options.

6. **Member of the public:** I want to take it back to the early comment about if this is enough. I stress to hear you say you are meeting the government's plan, but I don't think we are meeting that plan. I've lived here for many years. If you grew up here and are 45, you can't afford to live here because we haven't built many rental or low cost units. We've lost 80% of our workers. House prices went up 500%. In terms of the most recent OCP review, we haven't met all the requirements of this yet. None of the housing proposals are meeting the needs of

our lost generations. My concern is that we need to replace missing housing and identify what the market price is that we want, and then we have to tell the developers what we want. We have to look at bringing back our youth. Over the last 50 years, West Vancouver built only one-sixth of the Metro Vancouver average. We are way behind. All the generations are gone and we can't go back because rents are high. Let's look at what we want to build and tell developers what we want.

7. **Member of the public:** My concern is that we don't lose our green space. A lot of the stratas you build take away greenspace. I would love to hear every time we talk about building we talk about the traffic problem. I would love to hear transportation go hand in hand with development.

Staff comments: You will find we are – and will continue to be – looking at that. In terms of the relationship between growth and transportation, West Vancouver hasn't been growing much, and sometimes not at all, across recent census counts. If transportation is increasing, it's not because we've been growing. Three out of four of West Vancouver workers commute. The more we push housing outside of our community, the more we have workers coming in, leading to more traffic coming in. It's similar for local schools, the Ambleside ones have a quarter or even a third of students coming in from elsewhere. If we instead have people be able to walk to jobs and shops, there is less traffic. A greater risk in what's proposed is that we don't grow. A transportation study was recently completed that looked at modelling for 2040 and projected Lions Gate Bridge vehicle traffic generated from Ambleside would represent only 3% of the total traffic stream on the bridge.

8. **Member of the public:** This is a wonderful seaside village. It's a seniors neighbourhood. Be careful that you don't let developers turn this into Yaletown. The solution is simple. Many people are on fixed income and disabled people need to be looked after. Council has to look after this. Just be careful when you bump density from 1.75 FAR to 3.0 FAR in the last meeting. If it's for people here, great, but if it's to jack-up the density, it's not good. 2-4-storeys may not be bad, but 55-storeys has become normal in Vancouver. We don't want that here. No disrespect.

Information note: The topic of the Town Hall meeting was the proposed OCP bylaw amendment for the Ambleside Apartment Area. The reference to an increase in FAR from 1.75 to 3.0 by a member of the public relates to direction for staff to prepare a Zoning Bylaw amendment to the RM1 and RM2 zones only on 30 existing purpose-built rental sites. None of the OCP policies discussed in the town hall propose heights above mid-rise forms.

9. **Member of the public:** Just a point of clarification regarding the large lot infill proposals. What they represent is that developers can start digging a hole right away? For example, next to Pink Palace, there could not be a high rise but there could be missing middle infill? So that I can go back to my building and others I own, I'd like clarification.

Staff comments: If I'm understanding, you are referring to the Pink Palace? It is a large rental site and has additional opportunity for infill housing on the site. The form of development would be decided. Nothing could happen without a change in zoning.

10. **Member of the public:** It would be interesting for citizens in the District to know who owns these homes being redeveloped. When you increase the FAR, there is huge uptake in value. Where is that additional value going and to whom?

Staff comments: Staff have been leading this, not developers. Ownership is "academic" and staff are neutral. The Mayor mentioned only a limited number of sites where there is known development interest, but otherwise we don't know. Our job is to make recommendations that would shape what could happen. Council has the ability to negotiate for Community Amenity Contributions (CACs) for the community's benefit, the criteria is what's in the public interest.

Mayor Sager comments: Many buildings we frequent are owned by people who don't live here. I as mayor am putting out the word to have people locally own these buildings and bring forward things that suit this community.

11. **Member of the public:** A point of clarity in relation to the presentation slide for the proposed waterfront infill sites. Did it say the buildings already there are going to stay there? You said it's protected as a rental.

Mayor Sager comments: If an owner wants to tear a building down we can't do anything, but we can protect the people who live there. The new rental building policy could include tenant protections like rental rate protection.

Staff comments: Based on Council's direction regarding existing rental sites, staff will begin work tomorrow morning in preparing that policy and bylaw.

12. **Member of the public:** I am a little surprised, this seems very gentle and I was expecting more. Is this to protect views? Are there limitations? This seems very subtle.

Mayor Sager comments: This is what we describe as gentle densification. We have other projects like Cypress Village that could also accommodate what we need to meet the requirements of the Province.

Councillor Gambioli comments: This is only one part of the Ambleside LAP. The Commercial Area is a whole other part of the project with a future process, with different housing, and different proposals.

13. **Member of the public:** I have a question in regards to the proposals for the 1300 block, the two buildings on Clyde and Duchess Avenue. Previously, zoning allowed up to 12-storeys, and now it is saying we can build 6-9-storeys. This is not enough incentive for developers to build. These sites are prime for development. At 1340 Duchess, many owners are keen to build higher.

Mayor Sager comments: If you are in that building, we really encourage you to come in and meet with planning staff on what is economically viable. These are buildings that need to be replaced.

14. **Member of the public:** I have more of a comment than a question. We recently started the Ambleside Tenants Association. At the Council meeting last Monday we were happy with the outcome and David mentioned tomorrow staff will start working on the bylaw and policy. Our association just started, and if you want to join and give input, take one of the pamphlets outside the door. There has been a lack of communication with the tenants in the buildings about the rental protections. We've come to a good place but need to make sure we get what we need.

15. **Member of the public:** Regarding the question of traffic again, people coming to work here often live outside of West Vancouver because it's cheaper. How can you create cheaper housing for them to live in West Van?

Staff comments: If you want to see more be done to help this issue, staff could be directed to create more non-market housing. Arguably, we should be providing more density to make housing more affordable and create more opportunities for non-market housing.

16. **Member of the public:** I'm from St. Stephens Church and we want to express our appreciation for the planning department and the sizeable benefits you are bringing to the community.

17. **Member of the public:** In response to the previous question about cheaper housing, the only way the planning department can do that is by relaxing density rules and increasing density. Doesn't that run contrary to the planning you are doing now?

Staff comments: That is exactly the challenge. There are some concerned with growth and some think there is not enough growth. Getting housing means increasing density and trying to get non-market or at least rental. Density is the currency we have to regulate land use and get housing.

18. **Member of the public:** The available land is in North Vancouver. Recognizing many people have to cross a couple of bridges, why isn't the pressure on the District of West Van? You are creating an anti-force to the normal. This is the highest value property in Canada. You are attempting to densify it and lower it? How can you come up with a formula to achieve that? It doesn't seem to have reason. The important thing is to get stuff done, not just do studies.

Mayor Sager comments: I look around the community and see lots of beautiful or larger homes sitting empty. In San Francisco they have big homes, but the government has allowed them to be stratified. The cost of building is enormous. If we could repurpose what we have and let stratification take place that would help.

19. **Member of the public:** You comment that none of this will happen overnight, but it would be great to know how far from today things would get underway. I think you missed some force on the traffic comment. I heard concern about how projects are getting underway and can cause traffic. If you don't have control of that it may become painful in the meantime until we get to where we are getting. I want to give you the benefit of the doubt, you described the issue as academic which is where the force of comments unfold. I'm hopeful about this community – people care but want it to become more diverse and inclusive. You are trying to thread a needle, but when you stop making it academic and it starts to become practical, it may be a messy rollout and not practical. I'm cautiously pessimistic. There are lots of competing urges and I don't want to see a community with traffic from Lionsgate stretching on Marine Drive, neighbours fighting, not taking care of the elderly, and no young people. Not much changes and it is painful to get there.

20. **Member of the public:** I'm the president of the Lincoln Gardens. Is there anything you are doing with the Province to change what is in the Strata Property Act? Even if developers made an offer nobody can refuse, it would be refused because you need 80% agreement to make it pass. I'd also like Mark to confirm something you said. I'm trying to see if you are expecting strata's to do the work and come to you?

Mayor Sager comments: Yes. And if you think the threshold is too high, you should email the Provincial government.

21. **Member of the public:** I live in Lincoln Gardens. My concern is do you have a ballpark of timeline? We are a 34-year old building and have a deficiency report to do every 3 years. We just spent \$200,000 replacing elevators. Our ownership could drag this out because they want to wait for a developer and may delay. At that point, resale value has completely capsized. 3 years from now, value could be completely reduced as we wait to see what happens.

Staff comments: I want to be clear in response to the question earlier if there were any unintended consequences by the word choice “academic” – all I meant was that the proposed policies are not developer driven, not that it’s academic for residents, we get that it’s your homes and neighbourhood. The legislation is the legislation of the province. My job is to make proposals. Your property right now is built at 1.05 FAR, and the proposed policy is for 2.0 FAR. What is hard for me to answer is if that is enough to incent or enable redevelopment. Timing is going to depend case-by-case and if there is ownership interest. We probably will only see 1 or 2 projects seek to apply in the near term, but we don’t know for sure, and we know less for future years. Right now labour, leveraging, land and lumber are all expensive, so we are in a slow development phase. The community does face a risk with policies not letting development happen.

22. **Member of the public:** I want to commend Mayor and Council for Monday’s rental motion. I want to build on the Mayor’s comment reflecting that we need to protect the people who live in the community, and that includes the homeless community. Nobody knows how many we have, but there are people in this community who are vulnerable and deal with addictions. We as a community have a duty to protect them. You’ve identified all these categories but we also need to add another to protect the homeless.

23. **Member of the public:** How much property is within control of the District that could potentially be used for housing and where are they? **Follow-up:** How much of a priority would it be to offer rent-to-own or co-op? It would be good to see and it’s in your control about being able to offer this.

Staff comments: There are District-owned sites we’ve identified on a map in the proposed OCP bylaw amendment (1500 block south of Fulton) and have proposed these sites be used for these kinds of purposes – addressing things like rental and below-market rental housing based on Council’s decisions.

24. **Member of the Public:** I live in Ambleside. You say the Commercial Area is the next step and putting in a hotel. Are there height restrictions?

Mayor Sager comments: This will come forward in the next discussions, but we are not looking for towers on Marine Drive. I'd love to see a hotel in the commercial area similar to the old Park Royal Hotel.

Staff comments: The most recent update was in July. More work will be done in collaboration with the community after the Apartment Area is complete. The short version based on work to date is the village would prioritize low-rise development, with mid-rise on exceptional sites or for exceptional reasons (like a hotel).

25. **Member of the public:** Can you clarify the policy with the three buildings that are rental and have space for infill? You show strata, but that seems inconsistent.

Staff comments: The existing rental or number of rental bedrooms would need to remain on that site. Owners could keep the existing rental, but the infill has an option for strata.

26. **Member of the public:** That seems to put out a risk. You are opening up possibility of a mix which could lead into a next step of not being rental.

Mayor Sager comments: No. The existing rental is protected as of Monday night's direction.

27. **Member of the public:** How might proposed changes to FAR better-utilize under-used spaces in existing strata high-rises? Is it reasonable to envision balcony enclosures in existing living spaces to allow for larger families?

Mayor Sager comments: The additional FAR to 3.0 fixes that issue from Monday night.

Member of the public follow-up: Then would that have to be addressed on a one-on-one basis?

Mayor Sager comments: No, across the board.

28. **Member of the public:** Is there any part of the rental apartment policies that will allow three-bedrooms and not just two, to allow for families?

Staff comments: Yes, we want to encourage a range of bedroom sizes.

29. **Member of the public:** For further comments, do you have a place you want to direct people?

Staff comments: Yes, you will find the project contact information is available on the project webpage. Further conversations are always welcomed.

30. **Member of the public:** At the end of 22nd Street on the waterfront, a fairly large building could go in but I'm thinking about climate change. Does Council have any thoughts?

Staff comments: Climate change is an issue. We have policies and regulations in place beyond the LAP tonight. An example if you're referencing sea-level rise is the Foreshore Development Permit Area (DPA) and it does various things to mitigate against the effects of climate change in terms of set backs and building to a safe level.

31. **Member of the public:** I spoke earlier and I just want to repeat again about the 1800 block of Marine and suggest continuing the rules of the 1300 block up to the 1800 block.

Mayor Sager comments: I encourage you to meet with David. We want to see things happen.