

City of White Rock Mayor and Council Members City of White Rock Planning Dept.
March 19, 2021

WestStone Group's Development Application File No. MJP 19-011

Subject Properties: 14937 Thrift Avenue, 1441, 1443-45, and 1465 Vidal Street

Since the above noted submission, the Coalition of Voices have come across several petitions and letters of opposition with respect to this proposal. Most concentrate on deficiencies in traffic, parking, height, and the 13-fold increase in density. Subsequent conversations with surrounding community residents have reinforced our position that this proposal is inappropriately suited for the area. Typical comments from residents include: *"Vidal was a short, narrow, hidden away street until Beverley came along. We opposed it, the City staff did not like it either, but it got built anyway. And now this?"*. One resident is quoted *"...it should really be clear to anyone just walking the streets of the neighbourhood that this proposal does not fit here and is wrong for this street"*. It was a perspective that we took to heart, and we did just that. We walked the streets of Town Centre and Town Centre Transitions. The following are our observations:

1. All streets in this area, from Oxford to Finlay, run as straight lines between North Bluff (regional arterial road) and Thrift (major collector road) – except for one, Vidal Street.
2. All these streets have at least four (4) travel lanes, some have five (5), even six (6) lanes – except for one, Vidal Street.
3. All these streets have parking on both sides – except for one, Vidal Street. At its mid-section, there is no parking at all.
4. Vidal Street has additional drawbacks and hindrances compared to other streets – it is the only street with only three (3) travel lanes, and they are also slightly narrower than on other streets.
5. In the middle of Vidal Street, there is a further narrowing which resulted from an effort to save sizable coniferous trees and incorporate them into a park/playground area. This creates a “choke point” of only two (2) wider lanes (not 3), stressing traffic flow patterns and further reducing the street's capacity.
6. As previously mentioned, Vidal does not connect to North Bluff as do other north/south streets. At its north limit there is a right angle turn leading to Vine Street, another equally narrow street, and this required the construction of a cul-de-sac at that point to enable traffic flow through there. However, it is an unsafe, accident-prone area, with ample anecdotal evidence from nearby residents.
7. Both Vidal and Vine are the only “limited local” streets between Oxford and Findlay. This designation is the lowest one in the ranking order of streets, and for a good reason. Only lanes have a lower ranking order. This ranking further validates our position that these streets can not accommodate the additional traffic generated by the WestStone’s 129 units. The street’s capacity had long been reached at the time when Beverley was constructed.

8. City Council at the time of Beverley's approval process had the vision to require provision of substantial green space around the building including a public park with a playground for the local area. Additionally, the face of the Beverley building has a substantial set back from Vidal Street. Should the WestStone development be required to be held to the same standards and offsets, then the size of their building would necessarily be significantly reduced.
9. Studying the various towers between Oxford and Finlay, the Beverley and the Royce are notable due to their generous surrounding green space. Both properties set a preferred precedent. The WestStone's proposal is contrary to this position with little green space surrounding the building footprint, as well as minimal offset from the street. Further, it proposes to add 129 units, a significantly greater density than either the Beverley or Royce.
10. We maintain our position that the Traffic Report is so deficient and misleading that it constitutes an impediment in the review process. Simultaneously, the report readily admits that without variances to lower the design minimums in the width of the parkade access, its distance from Thrift, number of off-street parking, etc., the development is not feasible. Additionally, trucks leaving the loading bay would only have 1-2 ft. clearance of parked vehicles at the east curb (Binnie's drawing 05). In our opinion this poses an unacceptable risk of both third-party property damage and personal injury. It is not a stretch of imagination to see a new traffic hotspot in the making.
11. We are not against development. In fact, we welcome development on these lots. However, it needs to be consistent with and complimentary to the current mature community. That means a maximum height of 3 storeys, same as the newest townhouses on Vidal and adjacent Everall, all around this proposed development.

To facilitate your further understanding and appreciation of our position, and save you some time, below we include several photographs with commentaries illustrating the above noted viewpoints.

VIDAL STREET

Vidal Street, at about its mid-length, looking south. Vidal has 3 travel lanes that are reduced to 2 lanes by a 25 ft. “choke point” (shown here) to save sizable coniferous trees, further stressing traffic flow patterns and reducing the street's capacity (“the chain is as strong as its weakest link”, as the saying goes). At its north limit, Vidal turns via accident-prone cul-de-sac into Vine Street, which is again only 3 travel lanes for its entire length.



EVERALL STREET

Everall Street, just 1 block west, at about its mid-length, looking north to North Bluff Road. It is 36 ft. wide, and has 4 fairly wide travel lanes. The street could be delineated into 5 lanes, should there be any need for it.

It services 3-storey townhouses and apartment buildings on its east side, a seniors' home (with light traffic), and the Royce (with no parkade access off this street) on its west side.



VIDAL STREET

Chaos on Vidal Street in front of Beverley. All 3 lanes blocked for about 2 hours. Traffic backed up; resident vehicles prevented from entering the parkade entrance. No access for first responder vehicles. There were many other incidents, fire alarms, false alarms, medical emergencies. While this is not a daily occurrence, it is beyond the nuisance of congestion. Vidal Street has to provide an unhindered access for first responders at all times.

With 4 lanes (which is a minimum on all other streets in the Town Centre and the two Town Centre Transitions) instead of 3, this would not be happening.



VINE STREET

Vine Street at Blackwood looking west, essentially a continuation of Vidal Street. It has only 3 travel lanes but frequently there is only one lane available for traffic in both directions. Multiple types of service vehicles, delivery trucks, commercial vehicles, Canada Post, moving vans, etc. illegally occupy the south curb lane around the apartment building's entrance. And it is literally shocking that the same developer has a re-development proposal for additional 308 units with a parkade entrance on the north side of this short street (i.e., behind the "Culligan" truck).



MARTIN STREET

Martin Street at Thrift, looking north, just 2 blocks east of Vidal. It has 5 sizable travel lanes. It resembles Vidal Street with the Foster Martin high-rise towers on one side and the shorter 3-storey buildings on the other. But it has 2 more travel lanes to service them.



FOSTER STREET

Foster Street at Thrift, looking north, 3 blocks east of Vidal. It has 4 very wide travel lanes that could be delineated into 5, should there be a need for it. At this location, it also resembles Vidal Street with 8-storey buildings on one side, and 3-storey buildings on the other. Yet, it has 2 additional travel lanes to service them.



MERKLIN STREET

Merklin Street at Thrift, looking north. It has 4 wide travel lanes. There are 3-storey apartment buildings on the west side, and only single-family residential homes on the east side.



BEST STREET

Best Street at Thrift, looking north. It has 4 wide travel lanes. At this location, it services mostly single family homes and an occasional 3-storey apartment building.



FINLAY STREET

Finlay Street at Thrift, looking north. It has 4 very wide lanes, which could be delineated into 5 travel lanes should there be any need for it. This configuration continues further north through an area of single family/duplex homes, and then the Altus development past Russell Avenue.



GOGGS AVENUE

Goggs Avenue at Finlay, looking west. It services a newly re-developed area of single-family homes. With its 4 travel lanes, it has one more lane than Vidal or Vine. It is wider and has better traffic flow

capacity than Vidal Street. Yet, Vidal Street services 3-storey apartments and townhouses, 88-unit Beverley, and possibly the proposed 129-unit WestStone proposal.



EXAMPLE OF DEVELOPMENT IN HARMONY WITH THE REST OF VIDAL STREET

These fairly recent 3-storey townhouses (at Overall and Thrift, and further north) border the proposed WestStone development along it's west side. Very similar, also recent, 3-storey townhouses, are located just opposite the WestStone development on Vidal Street. These structures are consistent with the current mature community, and were set up in expectation that the remaining in-fill area of

Vidal Street (i.e. the WestStone development) would not deviate from this character. The current Official Community Plan (OCP) states that the “urban neighbourhood area should build on the character of existing surrounding areas, and be complimentary in terms of height, density and design”. It is obvious that the proposed development does not satisfy either the OCP criteria or its intent. Also, any attempt by the developer at a nuanced or vague comparison to Beverley is ill-founded. Beverley simply was an anomaly, not even supported by the City staff, when it was approved years ago, and it remains so. It would have no chance of approval these days. Even so, its impact on Vidal Street was rather well managed. The WestStone proposal’s impact on Vidal Street is diametrically opposite in all respects, as we previously documented in detail in our report dated November 22,2020.



END

