

WESTSTONE GROUP, BYLAW 2439

PROJECT SUMMARY INCLUDING PUBLIC HEARING JULY 24, 2023.

To the Mayor and the Council: This development is going from bad to worse. And it already has a long history of breaking several highly unusual records in its course, including:

- ADP (Advisory Design Panel) failed this project 4 times, which is rather unheard of. Most recently unanimously, when the project was at 4 storeys, not even the current 6 storeys. Councillor Manning then stated: "They (ADP) are pro-development. They have approved everything else". It should be noted that the ADP is a highly professional group consisting of architects, professional engineers, arborists, landscape architects, etc. providing expert advice to the Council. The ADP concluded that should this project ever come back, it would require SUBSTANTIAL changes. Otherwise, they were not prepared to see it again. It appears illogical to discard the ADP's assessment and substitute it with an opinion of staff or Council, neither of whom have any comparable qualifications or experience.
- Following that, the Council also failed this 4 storey version of the project – until they mysteriously resurrected it, without any new or changed information. And then, the staff failed to answer queries to explain why, leaving it all to the public's speculation. That should not have happened. It appears that the Council simply got manipulated and outmanoeuvred by the staff and Management that tried to push the project ahead at any cost. Upon checking the City's own rules and bylaws in detail, it seems clear the staff did not follow them, and likely knowingly. They realized that the only way they would be forced to respond to this matter would be if they were sued.
- To ensure the ADP would not reject this latest 6 storey version outright, the Management decided not to refer it to them at all. And, as an extra measure, gave the residents 4 days from the 2nd notice in PAN to review this much more negatively disruptive version of the application. This timeframe is in great contrast to the previous versions over the last 3 years, since 2020. Why the sudden rush?

This review encapsulates concerns and issues to date in a simple, easy to follow fashion, in order to save time. It is hoped that the residents are worth more than the 45 seconds (min.46:00 to 46:45) it took the Council to take a decision, which even included the decision not to debate it. Yet, this was the Council's first opportunity to hear what the public had to say. The mayor stated the obvious; that the application was recommended to the Council for approval by the City's professional staff. And that is the core of the problem. Because the staff successfully shielded the Council from seeing any information from the public throughout this application. This review includes the information the Council has not seen. So, please read these 4 pages, it only takes a few minutes.

Response of Residents. The developer attacked the residents and the Council in a PAN article, and used other underhanded tactics. A quick check turned up their "Ultra" tower in Surrey not built to code and in a lawsuit that caused the City substantial headaches. That forced the residents to form a group called the Coalition of Voices.

At the last Public Hearing, the detailed review of the "Correspondence on Table" shows that 100% of residents living on Vidal, Thrift and Everall (i.e. adjoining the development) and within its designated 100m boundary, oppose the project (except for councillor Klassen who did not vote, since he would have to recuse himself). Further away, items like item C-42 (Surrey Board of Trade), C-39 (community advocate, facilitator, connector), who are not even taxpayers, or a Mauritz Manor resident should not be counted as support. There was a lone support submission from a young realtor living elsewhere in White Rock. There was one opposing submission that was not entered in the Table even though it was sent to the Clerk's Office and the councillors (though councillor Trevelyan acknowledged its receipt).

At the previous (4 storeys) Public Hearing, the "Correspondence on Table" indicated that the majority was opposed to the proposal at a 3:1 ratio. Of those living on Vidal, Thrift and Everall (i.e. adjoining the development) only 2 were in favour, and they now also oppose it. The opposing residents were documenting the reasons in substantial details - in contrast with residents of Mauritz Manor (outside of the 100m of development) who were clearly instigated by the developer to come and "fend for themselves" by showing their support by their numbers at the meeting. Their building is slated to be demolished, and they were promised a replacement rental unit by the developer. Another support submission came from a hairdresser starting to work, but not living, in White Rock. Tabulations are available upon request.

Massing, Density, Building Height and Length. The latest version is a far cry from SUBSTANTIAL changes the ADP called for when the building was at 4 storeys, and it is worse with the current 6 storeys. The length of the building remains a big concern. A 12 ft. reduction in length is inconsequential. The ADP were adamant about

breaking the building into at least 2 stepped-up pieces to enable it to follow the natural slope of the street, rather than having one long, level, monolithic block.

Other major concern of the ADP, and of some members of the previous Council, was the building height. The staff (Mr. Calenda) argued that the previous version was a 4-storey building, but ultimately conceded that there are two ways to interpret it, and that added one floor. The ADP knew that as well, and therefore interpreted it as a 5-storey building from the start. For the public walking along Thrift, the ADP commented, it looked more like a 6-storey building. This “massive block” appearance is amply illustrated on page 11 of 17 of the Public Hearing submission. This page, “View looking Northwest-from the intersection at Thrift & Vidal”, **clearly shows 8 storeys from the sidewalk level (plus the 3 elevator, etc. shafts on the top of the roof)** with higher 10ft. floors. When a pedestrian looks at it from further downhill, actually from Thrift, it visually adds yet another floor. Its mass starts to compete with the Beverley building next to it, and it grossly contrasts with the 2 and 3 storey townhouses or apartments adjacent to it. The public perceives it by its appearance, they are not interested in technical nuances pushed by staff. The south end of the building blocks the view from Beverley such that the end of the pier can be seen only from the rooftop. A “natural scale profile” from Beverley to the sea by the architect should be provided to illustrate it.

The City encourages a policy where “the urban neighbourhood area should build on the character of existing surrounding areas, and be complimentary in terms of height, density and design”. This proposal does not do any of that, and it is not in harmony and consistency with this mature community no matter how often the developer tries to draw a parallel with Beverley. Beverley is a product of a bygone era, and even then, it was a barely approved anomaly hated by the neighbours.

Page 23 of this Public Hearing submission, states: “THAT Council direct staff to inform the proponent that Council are looking for a new project with less density and less massing on the site at 1441, 1443-45 and 1465 Vidal Street and 14937 Thrift Avenue”. This was dated November 22, 2021. Obviously, that indicates that the previous Council was quite concerned with the density and massing at this site then, and it was in tune with the neighbourhood's concerns and wishes. As far as density is concerned, Councillor Kristjanson is quoted to say that “White Rock had already fulfilled Metro Vancouver projections as far ahead as 2040”.

The previous version proposed 81 units. This version raised the number of units to 139 units, and added two storeys. The number of units is much higher than the adjacent Beverley (88 units) or Royce (87 units). On top of that, these developments have larger property areas with green spaces, even a playground, around the buildings. This development does not have anything that could be called green space. We fail to see the wisdom in giving the developer in this submission additional 2 storeys and 58 extra units – all in exchange for 14 affordable rental housing units, and only for 15 years (or is it 12, as noted elsewhere?). We would hope the Council is not this desperate and eager to reach this “deal”, and as a result totally disregard the neighbourhood and common sense.

When the original proposal was made in 2019, the policies of the OCP enabled a maximum height of approximately 18 storeys along North Bluff Road, transitioning to 4 storeys along Thrift Avenue. That still applies today. That was to provide transitioning to 2 storey townhouses on both sides of Thrift, and 2 or 3 storey townhouses elsewhere. But the developer now proposes 6 storeys on Thrift Avenue, even though in reality it is an 8 storey building (as noted earlier above).

The overall height of the building will definitely reduce the view corridors around. The amount of sunlight received by the adjacent properties to the east and west of this proposed building, as well as in the park to the north will be reduced year round. Why is the Shadow Study for this 6 (or 8) storey version not provided? Every previous version had it.

Traffic Concerns. Everybody in attendance at the two last Public Hearings noticed that all opposing views brought up traffic concerns in various bits and pieces. Traffic is a no.1 concern with this proposed development due to its enormous negative impact on the Vidal Street traffic. Vidal is the least suitable street for development of this size in the entire Uptown Area. Photos circulated on the internet showing one of the worst situations when all 3 lanes in front of Beverley were blocked for about 2 hours with no access to the parkade entrance, and it was already dark. There were many other similar incidents, medical emergencies, fire alarms. This development would only double the number. This is beyond the nuisance of congestion. Vidal Street has to provide an unhindered access for first responders at all times. It is obvious what the causes of the problem are. The main one is the mid-section of Vidal; it has only two lanes. The residents made the City's planner, Greg Newman aware of it, and he reluctantly acknowledged it. He stated that nothing could be done about it since the narrowing is there to protect the grove of valuable trees. And traffic signage there is not an adequate means of prevention as it already failed several times. In fact, even disregarding this narrow 2-lane mid-section, Vidal is

the only street in the entire Uptown Area with only 3 lanes. All other streets of the Uptown Area have 4, mostly 5, and even 6 lanes. It is also the only street not directly connected to both 16th Avenue and Thrift. On top of that, it has a dangerous right-angle cul-de-sac at Vine Street. It has the lowest classification within the hierarchy of street designation: a limited local. All of that was done on purpose; that was not an accident. City surveyors/planners of the time, when designing the “city grid”, recognized that Vidal was an upper end of a sizeable, environmentally sensitive ravine with streams, mature woodlots and slope stability concerns downstream – and that needed to be protected. Low density housing along the street contributed to this goal by having greenery around it that provided a measure of stormwater detention. Those stormwater management practices are in sharp contrast with the asphalt and concrete without any green space that this development offers.

Traffic at the Thrift/Vidal intersection presents a rather dangerous situation. Due to a long, sustained downslope from the east, vehicles often speed there. The volume of traffic on Thrift is second only to 16th Avenue. And it rapidly increases as a preferred route to about 1000 new homes around Thrift/Johnston Rd. area added just recently. Any, even momentary, congestion on Vidal will cause vehicles on Thrift trying to enter Vidal to stop and line up until Vidal is clear. That may block pedestrians crossing Thrift, right there, to the bus stop. The entrance to the garage, located close to the intersection, makes this worse. The size of this development and the new “public transit friendly” policies would increase the danger to pedestrians significantly.

There are move-ins and move-outs blocking a lane for most of the day, sometimes 3-outs and 3-ins per month at the Beverley alone. There are also various delivery vans and trucks (Amazon, Canada Post, FedEx, Food deliveries, workmen/repairmen, ground maintenance crews, etc.). The number of deliveries is rapidly increasing. There are also waste collection trucks picking up bins that block the curb lane for most of the day, twice a week for Beverley, and twice a week for other buildings, on other days. Overall, as a result, people are often forced to park illegally.

The underground parkades require floor pressure-washing twice a year. In case of the Beverley alone, with 3 floors of parking, that means 6 days when the residents have to move the cars out. With essentially no on-street parking left on the streets around, the residents have to congregate on the Semiahmoo Mall, and further away. This development would more than double that.

Most residents, especially those with kids, will need to have 2 cars. They could not rely on public transit. All parking stalls should be included in the rent. There is no room for parking on Vidal for decades. The play area at the Thrift intersection is an accident in waiting situation. Enlarge the park/plyground at the Beverley instead.

This proposed 139-unit (instead of the previous 81-unit) development would only add to the above current problems. What is even more disturbing is that after this development, the same developer intends to build 30 storey and 6 storey buildings right at the Vidal/Vine Street cul-de-sac. And his intent is to move the displaced residents into this 139-unit proposed building. The 2 towers on Oxford, approved in principle, will add to the traffic volume.

The traffic component alone, disregarding any other concerns, should be an absolute no-no for this development. Incidentally, nothing about the traffic noted above is even mentioned or considered in the Traffic Report. And it is not that the City did not know; it was brought up to the City many times. The staff would not even bother to respond. Given the reasons above, **we believe the traffic issues are not resolvable.** The Developer simply speculated, and chose a wrong location.

Fire Concerns. Recent studies show that there is a 40% increase in fire incidence between 4 and 6 storey wood frame buildings. A simple Google search will show hundreds of these 6 storey wood frame buildings on fire all over the continent. Refer to C-11b for more details. Similarly, and recently, due to the observed higher incidence of fire in this class of buildings, insurance companies in Europe initiated research to re-evaluate the building codes. We understand that the Fire Chief told the Mayor everything is in order, and under control. We would bet though that he would have given the Mayor the same answer just before the fire at the “five corners”, if she asked. We have already had a fire in a 6 storey wood frame building in Langley in April 2021. All that was left was the elevator shafts. The Deputy Fire Chief, Bruce Ferguson said “It’s one of the largest fires we had to deal with in a number of years.” During the fire at the “five corners”, the fire department drained all available water storage to extinguish the fire. Fire Chief Phil Lemere described it as the biggest and most catastrophic event he’s seen over the course of his career. Plus a similar fire in June in Maple Ridge.

The tall coniferous trees along the west property line are very close to the older townhouses with flammable vinyl and wood siding, as well as to the proposed building. They could burn as a torch, assisted by often present winds from the ocean along the street, and burn the townhouses down. The current fires in Lahaina and forest fire calamities elsewhere have shown this happening, and brought it more into focus. To compound the problem,

White Rock has a limited water supply. A 6 storey wood frame (concrete in previous versions) is not the way to go. Some of these trees are too close, and unlikely to survive the deep excavation for a shotcrete wall with anchor bolts driven across the townhouse property line for the construction of the parkade. Penalties for trees lost are not the answer.

Financial Implications. Since the developer is receiving an additional Density Bonus (essentially for two floors) for providing the 10 % affordable housing units in addition to the 40 % standard density bonus, why is it necessary to provide any additional financial incentive? Further, as proposed, the 10 % of the affordable housing component is not secured for the life of the building; it's limited to 15 years. Why? For clarity, the agreement should specify the amount of the affordable housing discount--that is, 20 % less than CMHC determined rents for buildings in the city. Also, the CACs should be spent locally. Hard surface the muddy pathways around.

The Housing Agreement section states that the 10 % affordable rental component is secured for 15 years. Since the total market rent component is to be secured for the entire life of the building why isn't the affordable component similarly protected? Certainly, the City does not believe there will be no need for affordable housing after 15 years. The applicant will reap a huge financial benefit from additional rents and an increase in the selling price of the property at some time in the future due to removal of the affordable housing covenant.

Livability Factor. The Housing Needs Report, pg.27, identifies various aspects of livability important to the community. Among them: a) Ground-oriented housing with gardens, sanctuary homes (not institutional), peaceful homes in quiet areas and stress-free environments with sound barriers, b) Addressing parking issues. This development would provide none of that.

Housing Crisis. White Rock is doing its part already. It is the ninth most densely populated city in Canada. It is adding more units per capita than any other city in Metro Vancouver. And it only has an area of 5.13 sq. kms compared to 2,882 sq. kms for the Metro area. That is only 0.8%. It is obvious that White Rock is not going to fix the housing crisis in BC; it is an insignificant player. Metro Vancouver solution lies elsewhere. The City's own Housing Needs Report shows a photo of a townhouse and states "More multi-unit ground-level development, such a townhouses, is in high demand in White Rock". We could not agree more. Also, money spent towards affordable housing can be spent more effectively elsewhere, in Metro areas where the development costs are cheaper. Also, the City does not even have a decent definition of "affordable" to start with.

Accountability to voters. Mayor Knight during the election debate promised voters that she had heard loud and clear from them that they did not want additional density and that she would stick to the current policies. She is also quoted in the PAN as saying: "You have to have an open mind. If I have my mind made up before I look at a proposal, I'm not doing my job as a member of council." We agree. But the 45 sec of decision deliberation does not support that.

Now is the time to demonstrate integrity by rejecting this proposal disguised as an "affordable housing" project. The Provincial Government is not mandating the City to spot zone and densify like this. And it is even unlikely to do so in the future; they been trying that with Vancouver for over a decade, and gave up. Therefore, the Council's approval of this development at the third reading appears to be a purely local political decision. It is hard to fathom how this decision could be perceived as anything positive.

Let's use residential feedback, review by the ADP, common sense, safety, and TRANSPARENCY when making decisions that will impact not just our generation, but future generations as well. Also, in the end, the developer already stated that they were satisfied with the previous 4 storey version. So, why to add two more storeys now? The developer simply did not do his due diligence, speculated, overpaid for the property, and now proposes a wrong building in a wrong place. At this stage, the previously approved 4 storey proposal, while still opposed by a wide margin, may now sound as a reasonable compromise by some. But adding 2 storeys (and ending up with 8) is really an insult to all of those who were involved over the past few years.

Closure. White Rock is a special place with a unique landscape and feel. In part, that is why people come here. Vidal Street is the easterly edge of an area of groves of mature coniferous trees. Not many of these are left in the entire Uptown Area. We are not NIMBYs, we support development. But it needs to be development that fits the special heritage and fabric of the community. While the City is no longer a village by the sea, we do not wish it to become the West End Vancouver. Let's preserve it for those of us who live here now, and for generations to come to make their homes in this beautiful city.

Photo attached

Regards,

Coalition of Voices



PROJECT NAME

View looking Northwest – from the intersection at Thrift & Vidal

