

From: Correspondence Group, City Clerk's Office
To: CityHallWatch (MetroVanWatch)
Subject: RE: Public hearing 21-Feb-2013, CityHallWatch SUPPORTS rezoning 4320 Slocan
Date: Friday, February 22, 2013 10:46:51 AM

Thank you for your comments.

All public comments submitted for the public hearing that are received not more than 15 minutes after the close of the speakers list for that public hearing will be distributed to members of Council for their consideration. The public comments must include the name of the writer.

In addition, these public comments will also be posted on the City's website (http://vancouver.ca/cyclerk/councilmeetings/meeting_schedule.cfm). Please note that your contact information will be removed from the comments, with the exception of the writer's name. Comments received after the start of the public hearing should not exceed 1500 words.

Public comments submitted for the public hearing that are received more than 15 minutes after the close of the speakers list, will not be distributed until after Council has made a decision regarding the public hearing application and the related bylaw is enacted, if applicable.

For more information regarding Public Hearings, please visit vancouver.ca/publichearings.

Thank you.

From: CityHallWatch (MetroVanWatch) §.22(1) Personal and Confidential
Sent: Thursday, February 21, 2013 7:36 PM
To: Public Hearing; Correspondence Group, City Clerk's Office
Subject: Public hearing 21-Feb-2013, CityHallWatch SUPPORTS rezoning 4320 Slocan

Mayor and Council,

We are writing to support the rezoning at 4320 Slocan Street.

This is a good example of density done well, and a good example of the Short Term Incentives for Rental program being used in a sensitive way, with good discretion, for a gentle increase in density to create rental housing.

CityHallWatch carries an article about this application, the text of which is copied below.

Sincerely,
Randy Helten
Coordinator, CityHallWatch

Good and Bad: Public hearing Feb 21 contrasts decent STIR rental project 4320 Slocan Street with 17-storey tower, gentrification project at 611 Main in Chinatown
<http://cityhallwatch.wordpress.com/2013/02/21/public-hearing-rezoning-stir-4320-slocan-21-feb/>

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Good and Bad: Public hearing Feb 21 contrasts decent STIR rental project 4320 Slocan Street with 17-storey tower, gentrification project at 611 Main in Chinatown

<http://cityhallwatch.wordpress.com/2013/02/21/public-hearing-rezoning-stir-4320-slocan-21-feb/>

The Public Hearing slated for 6 pm today, Thursday, February 21, 2013, has two items. First up is a rezoning for a 17-storey tower with high site density at 611 Main Street, and second is a rezoning for a 4-storey mixed-use building with commercial retail units at grade and market rental units above at 4320 Slocan. These two stand in dramatic contrast.

4320 Slocan is a rare example of the developer-incentive “**Short Term Incentives for Rental**” housing program being used intelligently and with good discretion. It is a proposal by **Yenik Realty** with **Allan Diamond Architect** for a gentle increase in density to 2.14 floor space ratio (FSR) to create 41 units of rental housing, with two rental commercial spaces. It seems clear that the owner wants a long-term rental property. This is the established site owner, not someone who acquired a site. In our opinion, this case is closer to what people should have expected from the STIR program, which started in 2009 and was replaced with Rental 100 in 2011 (STIR projects already in the pipeline are still being processed, like this one.)

611 Main Street is a request for City Council to approve a 17-storey condo tower (156 dwelling units, with mixed-use commercial space) with a proposed FSR of 8.26. It has been opposed by the advocates of civic justice and equity (see Carnegie Community Action Project, [City ignoring displacement of low-income residents in Chinatown](#)). For some people it is a sign of what might *appear* to be favouritism in our civic system. **Westbank Projects Corp.** is major political campaign contributor that helped one civic party get 8 seats of 11 on Council in 2011 and is making enormous gains through numerous controversial, community-disrupting project in Vancouver. How can any politician remain objective when the same person who funded their election campaign keeps coming back with more rezoning requests? How can staff remain objective on each application when they deal repeatedly with the same proponent? This company has also benefited generously from the STIR incentive program, which has generally been criticized by the public due to excessive height and density bonusing in other locations.

This article covers the 4320 Slocan application, with links and commentary. Much can be learned from this as a case study.

Meeting agenda and documentation is here:

<http://former.vancouver.ca/cityclerk/cclerk/20130221/phea20130221ag.htm>

Prolific blogger and civic activist Joseph Jones has written about this project here.

- Notice of upcoming open house in [4320 Slocan Street](#) posted on 16 June 2012.
- Norquay STIR context for 4320 Slocan Street in [Encircled by STIR](#) posted on 18 June 2012.
- Report on open house with reproduction of panels displayed in [4320 Slocan OH](#) posted on 28 June 2012.

Official information by City Hall and the applicant is here.

<http://former.vancouver.ca/commsvcs/planning/rezoning/applications/4320slocan/index.htm>

Neighbourhoods for a Sustainable Vancouver wrote Mayor and Council on April 12, 2011, in a letter critiquing policies for HA-1 and HA-1A Districts Schedule (download PDF [NSV-Chinatown Historic Area rezoning policy April 12-2011](#)), and wrote again on February 21, 2013, opposing the 611 Main Street rezoning, saying, “We strongly believe that the underlying policy enabling this application is flawed.”

The following commentary is provided courtesy of urbanist Ned Jacobs. Italics are from City documents, blue font is by Mr. Jacobs.

NJ: The proposal for 4320 Slocan is a 4-storey mixed-use building with 41 for-profit “affordable” rental units, secured through a STIR housing agreement.

NJ: On balance, this looks to me like a pretty good development that should provide a net benefit to this neighbourhood. Although not in the “Approved” category, it is apparently consistent enough with Community Vision Directions to be considered in the context of a rezoning proposal.

Renfrew-Collingwood Community Vision: In March 2004, Council endorsed the Renfrew-Collingwood Community Vision. Section 15 of the Community Vision asked about new housing types that would be supportable in the community. Direction 15.8 Low-rise

Apartments indicates the community was more supportive than opposed to new low-rise apartments with a maximum height of four storeys.

Section 16 asked about general locations where new housing types should be considered in the community. The 4320 Slocan site falls within an area that is considered to be both “around SkyTrain Stations” as well as “around parks” as discussed in the Community Vision.

Direction 16.3 “New Housing Types around Nanaimo and 29th Avenue SkyTrain Stations” and Direction 16.5 “New Housing Types around Parks” received more “agreed” than “disagreed” votes in both the general and random community surveys. These two directions indicate that the community was more supportive than opposed to new housing types in either of these locations.

NJ: At 400-metres (ca a 6 to 7-minute walk for most people) from the 29th St Sky Train Station, I think that characterizing it as “around SkyTrain Stations” is a bit of a stretch. I don’t know the distance to the nearest park. But it is on an arterial in a commercially zoned area suitable for neighbourhood-oriented services. Shadowing of adjacent lots and public realm would be minimal; the setback and landscaping to the lane (opposite side-facing detached homes) seems ample. The “urban agriculture” plots have good light exposure. Staff have concluded that this application is generally consistent with the Community Vision rezoning policy for affordable housing projects. The Vision notes that affordable housing projects secured through a Housing Agreement can be considered for site-specific rezoning without further area planning, as such proposals would meet City-wide policy objectives. If after the public hearing, Council approves this application in principle, the applicant will enter into a Housing Agreement securing all residential units as for-profit affordable rental housing for 60 years or the life of the building prior to the rezoning being enacted.

NJ: The applicant will forego payment of ca \$310,000 in DCLs for the housing agreement. A DCL of ca \$23,000 will be charged for the commercial space at grade. Because the residential space is 100% rental, the city calculates that there is 0 land lift—hence no CAC. The report doesn’t seem to estimate what an appropriate CAC would be if this was 100% strata, but given the modest size of the development relative to outright use, I would hazard a guess that the city is probably foregoing a CAC with a nominal value somewhere in the neighbourhood of less than \$100,000 for a total of about \$400,000 in public benefits exchanged for the STIR housing agreement. Unfortunately, the Collingwood/Renfrew area is starved for public amenities and this proposal provides none to help serve the expanding population. That wouldn’t be a problem if other development proposed under the nearby Norquay Village Plan would contribute more than a pittance—but it won’t. So while this particular proposal provides needed purpose-built rentals and neighbourhood-friendly design, in the broader social context current planning and development in Collingwood/Renfrew does not, in my view, qualify as “density done well.” The report offers the following to justify its characterization as “affordable.”

A key goal of the STIR program was to create housing that is affordable to households that cannot afford home ownership. Staff have compared the anticipated monthly rents in

this proposal to the monthly costs of homeownership for the average priced units in East Vancouver, using 2011 Multiple Listings Service data. Staff conclude that the rental units proposed in this application will provide an affordable alternative to homeownership. Monthly costs of ownership are higher than the anticipated rents by 75% for studio units, 64% for one-bedroom units, and 53% for two-bedroom units.

As comparable data specific to the Renfrew-Collingwood neighbourhood is not available, Table 2 compares rents proposed in the 4320 Slocan application to average market rents and ownership costs in Vancouver Eastside and the Mount Pleasant/Renfrew Heights area. Existing market rental stock in this neighbourhood is typically located in significantly older buildings or secondary (basement) suites within detached homes. Therefore, a direct comparison of the rents, particularly for two-bedroom units, does not provide an accurate point of reference as this application will provide a higher quality of product than what currently exists in this area.

Table 2: Comparable Average Market Rents (CMHC Data)

4320 Slocan Proposed Rents Studio \$770 1-Bed \$1,020 2-Bed \$1,455

Average Market Rent in Rented Condo Stock – Vancouver

Eastside (CMHC) Studio n/a /1-Bed \$1,068 2-Bed \$1,551

Average Market Rent – Mt. Pleasant/Renfrew Heights (CMHC)

Studio \$766 1-Bed \$915 2-Bed \$1,174

Monthly Costs of Ownership for Average-Priced Unit –(MLS 2011)1

Studio \$1,350 1-Bed \$1,671 2-Bed \$2,228

1. Monthly ownership costs are based on the following assumptions: average of all MLS sales prices in Collingwood in 2011 by unit type; 10% down payment; 5% mortgage rate; 25-year amortization; \$150-250 monthly strata fees; and annual property taxes at \$4.05 per \$1000 of assessed value.

The City Manager, pursuant to the Vancouver Development Cost Levy By-law, has determined this rental housing proposal to be affordable. Further review of the finishing, unit size and design features in this development in comparison with industry standards of construction would occur at the development permit stage to ensure that the affordable rental units are basic quality construction. The DCL waiver on the affordable rental floor area is exercised at issuance of building permit, when DCLs are payable.

NJ: Note that these are “anticipated” rents—not required starting rents under the agreement.

NJ: I think it is a weakness of the STIR and Rental 100 programs that maximum starting rents are not defined when development and agreement are approved by council.