

## Big changes proposed for old Fraser Mills site

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Coquitlam NOW

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A series of substantive changes to a sprawling proposed development in southwest Coquitlam was given a preliminary thumbs up from Coquitlam city council Monday.

With the exception of Coun. Fin Donnelly, council approved a handful of recommended changes proposed for the old Fraser Mills site at Monday's committee-of-the-whole meeting.

Among those changes are an increase in the amount of space designated for both commercial and industrial use; a potential purchase offer on the city-owned Wastech site; more public open space; and a proposal to merge the allotted post-secondary floorspace into the overall light industrial floorspace.

The Fraser Mills proposal is being orchestrated by the Beedie Group and would see a mixed-use community with industrial, employment, residential, commercial and recreational uses. The site would see anywhere from 3,200 to 3,700 units built to house a community of about 7,500 people.

Gary Pooni, a principal with Brook + Associates Inc., the lead planning consultant for the Beedie Group, ran through a number of the proposed changes made in conjunction with city staff since the project was first brought before council early last year.

Pooni first spoke to changing the amount of industrial space from 400,000 square feet on 12 acres to 650,000 square feet over 14 acres.

That shift would allow for a potential job creation in the neighbourhood of 1,500 to 1,600 jobs, as opposed to the 1,200 jobs that would be created under the previous designation.

"Last year, during the OCP (official community plan) amendment stage, every member of council wanted us to respect the employment function of the site, and this increase is allowing us to do that," Pooni said.

The proposed changes also increased the amount of commercial space from 175,000 sq. ft. to 275,000 sq. feet. That commercial space would be located around the Fraser River waterfront, allowing for an entertainment district, retail shops and restaurants.

Coun. Doug Macdonell wondered aloud what kind of parking would be available to service that area. Pooni said both a parkade and on-street parking would be used.

The Beedie Group has also proposed buying the Wastech site, a city-owned facility that sits on 6.7 acres of land at 1200 United Blvd.

"The Beedie Group is proposing to acquire the site, which would form part of the Fraser Mills neighbourhood and allow a direct vehicle and pedestrian link from United Boulevard through the site down to the waterfront village plaza," notes a city staff report. "This link is viewed by the Beedie Group's retail consultants and site planners and city staff as vital to the amount and type of retail commercial

floor space that can be supported on the site and is critical for the creation of a vibrant village core."

The site's inclusion in the Fraser Mills development would require a change in its official community plan designation from industrial to waterfront village centre.

Though the inclusion of a post-secondary institution at Fraser Mills was touted as major plus last year, BCIT's involvement at the site has been stalled.

Pooni told The NOW Tuesday that a specific parcel of land would be allocated for some post-secondary institution at Fraser Mills, but BCIT is currently unable to commit.

"They aren't in a position to officially commit to being a part of Fraser Mills right now," he said. "It's not a stumbling block, it's just that the timing of our planning process, and the timing of our development application, is not going to coincide with their decision."

Pooni suggested that members of the Beedie Group and city staff meet with BCIT officials to try and solidify the institution's involvement, but no timeline was given as to when that could occur.

Couns. Richard Stewart, Neal Nicholson and Fin Donnelly were all put off by the lack of a post-secondary commitment at Monday's meeting.

"My reaction to that is adverse. I'd very much like to see a commitment to a post-secondary presence on the site," Nicholson said Monday.

The amount of public space was also increased from last year's proposal, with 18 acres of open space being planned, as opposed to the original 16.

A riverfront park is also being proposed in the southwest corner of the development, one that would include a full-sized sports field, community amenities, an outdoor lawn theatre and a water park.

An elementary school could also be in that area, although those plans are contingent upon ongoing talks with School District 43.

Mayor Maxine Wilson was concerned about transit options and the roughly 1.5 kilometres between the proposed development and the Braid Street SkyTrain station.

Because the Evergreen Line will be built along the northwest corridor, Pooni explained that he has had discussions with TransLink officials to implement increased bus service in the areas of United Boulevard, Clipper Street and King Edward Street.

A number of additional steps will be taken should council give the proposed changes the green light at its May 26 council meeting -- a public open house hosted by the Beedie Group in late May or early June, as well as an exhaustive consultation process with the following parties: School District 43; the City of Surrey; TransLink; the Provincial Ministry of Transportation and Gateway Program; Fisheries and Oceans Canada; the provincial Ministry of Environment; the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority; the Como Watershed Group; the Maillardville Revitalization Task Force; and the Metro Vancouver Solid Waste Utility.

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