

## **Fraser Mills development approved**

Dissenting councillors cite traffic, noise and flood concerns  
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A controversial development in Maillardville received another green light at a Coquitlam council meeting Monday.

Council approved second, third and fourth readings of a citywide official community plan amendment needed for The Beedie Group's redevelopment of the old Fraser Mills site.

The project would see 3,700 housing units and a BCIT trades campus built on the site, as well as commercial and industrial facilities.

Couns. Fin Donnelly and Brent Asmundson voted against the proposal, which has met with disapproval from city staff, TransLink and the City of New Westminster, among others.

Asmundson voiced his concerns about the potential for flooding, noise and air pollution, a lack of public transportation in the area and the prospect of toxic substances being left in the site's soil.

"There is no need for the city to rush to such a major change," Asmundson said. "We owe it to the citizens of Coquitlam to make sure we do the right thing for future generations. It is great to have a vision, but let's make sure that it's a sound vision."

Both Asmundson and Donnelly said the decision was fast-tracked and should not have been made until the city's industrial land strategy was completed.

Donnelly said he likes the concept, but is not in favour of the proposed location. He also voiced concern over the city losing the largest parcel of industrial land remaining in Coquitlam.

"When you put people in the middle of industry, unfortunately industry loses," Donnelly said.

The latest Fraser Mills vote followed a Feb. 21 public hearing on the issue, and approximately 65 people gathered in council chambers Monday to hear the decision.

Though Mayor Maxine Wilson voted in favour of the bylaw, she did express some concerns leading up to Monday's vote, including flood potential, traffic and transit problems and job creation.

"We ... are giving The Beedie Group the challenge of starting an extensive process to answer questions and to deliver a product that we will be satisfied with," Wilson said. "I want to assure our residents that traffic problems that could be created must be addressed before I will approve any type of forward movement of the project."

Coun. Lou Sekora said the overwhelming feeling he had coming out of the public hearing was that the majority of Maillardville residents support the plan. "You have to have a vision -- what should the community look like 20 or 30 years from now?" Sekora said. "The people that are closest to that development are supporting this very much."

Coun. Doug Macdonell voted in favour of the proposal, citing job creation as a positive spin-off from the development. He also said the province's Gateway Program, an extensive plan to aid the movement of goods on Lower Mainland roadways, would help alleviate traffic concerns in the area.

"I think this development will be a jewel for Coquitlam," he said. "I believe this is a win-win situation."

Coun. Mae Reid dismissed concerns about noise and traffic in the area, and said people moving into the development would do so with explicit knowledge of the location's potential traffic and noise problems.

Coun. Barrie Lynch lauded the proposal for its job creation opportunities.

"When all is weighed out, I think this proposal gives Coquitlam something very unique and something it doesn't have right now," he said. "Even the people who are opposed to this think it's a good concept."