

## **Fraser Mills development clears council hurdle**

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A Coquitlam development on the banks of the Fraser River that the City of New Westminster, TransLink, the Greater Vancouver Regional District and others have lined up to oppose is one step closer to reality, after council gave preliminary approval to a bylaw change at its meeting Monday.

The Beedie Group is planning to build 3,700 units of housing and a BCIT trades training campus on the old Fraser Mills site, as well as provide a community shuttle bus to transport future residents to Braid SkyTrain station.

But opponents of the development have a range of concerns, including increased traffic congestion along the crowded King Edward-Lougheed Highway corridor, loss of industrial land if the 32.8-hectare (82-acre) site is rezoned to allow for condos, and the geographic isolation of the proposed "village," which would be separated by busy roadways from the rest of Coquitlam and the Lower Mainland.

Coun. Brent Asmundson -- the sole opponent to first reading of a citywide official community plan amendment the project needs to go ahead -- said Monday council should defer the vote until city staff finish a report on Coquitlam's industrial land use strategy.

Coun. Fin Donnelly agreed, saying the issue of what Lower Mainland municipalities do with their remaining industrial land is "critical," and that council should hear what the industrial and business communities have to say about the proposed project.

Others, however, argued that the project should go to the public hearing stage immediately.

"We all know that we need more industrial land," Coun. Lou Sekora said. "But is industrial land creating jobs?"

Sekora said the development will have an affordable housing component and that Maillardville residents are anxious to see it built.

Mayor Maxine Wilson said the land's previous owner, Interfor, consulted members of the public on the future of the site and heard a desire "that they not be denied access to our waterfront."

She added that the proposed development has been well received by streamkeepers, who see it as a chance to revitalize the local watershed.

After Asmundson's move to defer the vote failed, Donnelly sided with those in favour of first reading of the bylaw change.

Donnelly said he's "disappointed" council won't wait for the report, but added that the plan is "quite a proposal" -- yet also calls for an isolated development that would not be part of a complete community.

Asmundson said a decision to go ahead with the project -- potentially one public hearing and three more council votes away -- may take resources from the redevelopment of established neighbourhoods such as Burquitlam and Austin Heights.

- The public hearing is expected to take place on Wednesday, Feb. 21, at City Hall.