# THE RESIDENCES ON MATHERS <br> REZONING \& DEVELOPMENT PERMIT FOR 370 \& 380 MATHERS AVENUE, WEST VANCOUVER 



RESUBMITTED NOVEMBER 7,2014

August 21, 2014

## PRELIMINARY OCP AMENDMENT and REZONING APPLICATION:

## NORTH SHORE UNITARIAN CHURCH (NSUC) - REZONING RATIONALE

## 1. BACKGROUND

## The NSUC Community

The North Shore Unitarian Church (NSUC) is a religious community of over 350 people based in West Vancouver that has served the North Shore for 45 years. It moved to its present location at 370 Mathers Avenue in 1984, when it purchased the served the North Shore for 45 years. It moved to its present location at 370 Mathers Avenue in 1984, when it purchased the
church property from the Alliance Church, which had built the main church building in 1970. In 2002, NSUC constructed a $\$ 650,000$ education building at the back of the property

## Problems with the Building

With NSUC's capital funds going toward the new education building, NSUC has never been able to modernize, upgrade or make necessary improvements to the 42-year old main building -- the original heating, plumbing and electrical systems are still in place, the sanctuary is too small for the enlarged congregation, the kitchen and washrooms are woefully inadequate, and the structure has not been seismically upgraded. Of greatest concern, the building has never been made adequately accessible to the disabled, and lacks such essentials as an elevator to connect floors, and washrooms that are wheelchai accessible.

NSUC's financial problems with keeping the old building functioning became painfully clear in 2006 with discovery of the need to make approximately $\$ 200,000$ of repairs to the roof. Fully aware the roof problem might be just the tip of the iceberg, NSUC undertook a review of possible alternative strategies for coping with its financial quandary. Four alternatives were explored: 1. Stay in place and have a capital campaign to upgrade and modernize the building, make it accessible, etc.
2. Subdivide and sell the property for single family housing
3. Sell the property to a developer subject to rezoning for multifamily housing
4. Sell the property to another religious organization that could use it for building a much bigger church or other religious structure, taking advantage of our existing PA zoning that will permit a much larger structure
Of these alternatives, NSUC concluded alternative 1 was not feasible, and alternative 2 would not raise enough money to allow NSUC to buy and build elsewhere. It decided to explore alternative 3 , selling to a developer for multifamily housing at a price high enough to buy and build a new church elsewhere on the North Shore. This was felt to be preferable to seeking ou a religious buyer in need of a large new building.

## Desire for More Accessible Location

In addition to the major inadequacies and problems with the building itself, the site at 370 Mathers Avenue has major drawbacks as the location for NSUC

- The location is not reachable by public transit. This is a major drawback for the NSUC congregation, with its strong environmental ethic and its commitment to being open and welcoming to people from any economic background and income level.
- The location, deep within a residential area, hides the church and makes it difficult for the greater community to know about and take advantage of the church's services and activities.


## Development Agreement with Darwin

With NSUC's decision in 2007 to follow the strategy of selling the property to a developer subject to rezoning for multifamily housing, the church contracted with Hynes Developments, a local developer, and Hynes submitted a rezoning application to the District. Due to financial and other difficulties encountered by Hynes in pursuing its application, the contract with Hynes was terminated in early 2011. Thereafter NSUC entered into a wholly new development agreement with Darwin Properties, with Darwin undertaking to design an entirely new development plan, and submitting an entirely new rezoning application. After reviews by District staff, the Design Review Committee and discussion with the neighbourhood, changes were made and comprise the current resubmission.

## 2. PROPOSAL CONCEPT

Darwin's proposal, known as the "The Residences on Mathers", has gone through a number of iterations and now calls for 17 homes, including 9 detached houses and 8 duplexes. This is a reduction of two units from the original rezoning application in 2013. The proposed form and density are not unprecedented in the area. The proposed density is slightly less than the density of the Esker Lane development adjacent to the south

The proposal is intended to broaden housing choices in West Vancouver by supplying smaller homes which would appeal to empty-nesters, small families and retirees. Currently, there is a shortage of such housing in the District, and the subject site is well-suited to accommodating a number of well-designed, compact homes.

The impacts of the proposed development on the adjacent community have been minimized by:

- retaining and enhancing vegetation around the perimeter of the property, providing visual screening
- removing 2 formerly proposed single family units from the north-east quadrant of the site, adjacent to existing single family development;
- reorienting the single family homes along the eastern property line resulting in a better transition to the single family homes to the east meeting the OCP Housing Objective to "provide sensitive transitions in form and density between existing and new development";
- the variety of architectural form and character has been revised to respond to surrounding development and the iconic Elliott House;
- increasing rear yard and side yard setbacks to minimize overlook and obtrusiveness and increase on-site green space
- limiting the heights of the homes to two storeys - often lower than neighbouring structures;
- ample on-site resident and visitor parking; and
eliminating the one-way circulation system, thus obviating the need for an egress on to Lawson Avenue. This will eliminate through traffic on Lawson previously generated by the site.

Essentially, the proposal will be compact and unobtrusive in its neighbourhood setting - not visible from Mathers Avenue, and will have less traffic and parking impact on the street system than currently exists.

## 3. DISTRICT OF WEST VANCOUVER OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN

The District of West Vancouver Official Community Plan (OCP) goals and objectives are generally supportive of multi-family development in order to accommodate a variety of lifestyles and housing needs. The Housing Objectives section states: "Choice: Encourage a variety of housing types, forms, tenures, sizes and densities that meet diverse needs." (OCP, Housing, pg. 49).
The OCP acknowledges the growing need for smaller homes to accommodate the changing lifestyle of residents, including downsizers:
"Demand for Smaller Homes and Multi-Family Housing. Changing lifestyles (activities outside the home, travel, dual working couples, older singles) and an aging population are creating increased demand for smaller homes that are more affordable, more energy-efficient and that require less maintenance than detached single-family houses on large lots....Young adults also seek a range of non-single family options, including apartments and suites" (OCP, Housing, pg. 45).

The OCP also outlines the need to accommodate smaller homes in order to address housing turnover
"Housing for Young Families. Meeting the housing needs of younger families has become increasingly difficult to achieve, given the high cost of land in West Vancouver. The limited availability of smaller lots and suites also impacts housing affordability. In addition, the degree to which older residents can move to other homes affects the turnover of homes to younger families" (OCP, Housing, pg. 45)

The OCP also discusses the importance of housing diversity in association with built form and neighbourhood character. Built Form Objectives section specifies this need:
"Support the development of a more complete community that addresses the needs of all residents and maintains and improves the quality of life - a community where residents can live, work, and play" (OCP, Built Form, pg 56)

The 2007 Community Dialogue on Neighbourhood Character and Housing echoes this policy direction. It recognizes the need for new housing types to accommodate a larger variety of lifestyles (OCP, Housing, 48)

In addition to supporting housing diversity and smaller footprints, the OCP also includes specific precedent-setting policies in the vicinity of the subject site. The site is located directly adjacent to the Esker Lane multi-family development which is allowed for under a Development Permit Area BF-B 8. The proposed development would provide similar discrete density, while providing alternate housing options for residents.

## 4. DESIGN, CHARACTER AND FEATURES

## Site Plan

The surrounding neighbourhood context has been respected by:

- Retaining and enhancing peripheral landscaping and fencing to screen neighbouring properties
- increasing side and rear yards to improve livability and increase landscape screening
- limiting the height of the proposed houses to less than that allowable in the adjacent single family zone. Low profile roofs further mitigate any visual impact of height and mass;
- fronting the new detached house at the northwest corner, on the site of the current Elliott House, directly on to Mathers to fit into the neighbourhood;
- $\quad$ providing visitor parking tucked into landscape and paved with permeable paving. Similarly, permeably paved driveways are sized to accommodate vehicles in addition to those in double garages to help ensure that visitors do not need to park on neighbourhood streets; and
- preserving the significant copse of trees at the north end of the site by incorporating an " S " curve at the entrance. This not only helps preserve specimen trees, but ensures that there is limited visibility into the site from the surrounding neighbourhood.


## Architectural Treatment

The Elliott House (see Appendix A)
The Elliott House is an iconic presence on the site. While it has significant architectural merit, a number of intrinsic flaws in its design and construction have seriously compromised its current condition, and its potential for retention in the project.

These design flaws include: no overhangs; face-sealed envelope; single glazing and jalousie windows; and a style of site-built glazing (small clerestory lights set into routed grooves) that could not be replaced with modern sealed units. The original house has been significantly modified over the years. Its windows have been closed in, because there was too much northfacing single glazing, overwhelming its antiquated heating system. As well, a carport, visible from Mathers Avenue and not part of the original design, has been added.

While using the palette of materials and colours used elsewhere in the development, the proposed detached house on the site of the existing Elliott House refers directly to the original architecture of the Elliott House (see accompanying comparison). Flat oofs and wide eaves contribute to its character: that of a mid-century modern house, a style contemporary with the original Elliott House.

## Form and Character

In order to respond to the iconic historical influence of the Elliott House, to create a more sensitive transition to neighbourhood context, and to provide architectural variety in the development, 3 distinct yet related architectural character areas have been created on the site.


Character Areas
Area 1
This is the site of the original Elliott House. The footprint of proposed new building mirrors the original. It's form and character as described above are directly informed by the original design.

## Area 2

Here the mid-century modern language of the new building in Area 1 , with its strong reference to the original Elliott House, is put in play.

Area 3
Here, to relate to the character of the directly adjacent single family development, and Esker Lane to the south, a more traditional domestic, west coast influenced, architectural expression is applied. To reflect the variety of style and form in the adjacent neighbourhood, a modernist house is interjected, thus bookending Lawson with mid-century modern expression. A in the other Areas, wood is used as a feature material, but architectural concrete is replaced with stone. Low profile hip roofs with wide eaves, a traditional west coast form found throughout West Vancouver, are used.


In general, varying roof forms enhance a mix of architectural styles throughout the site, providing variety while ensuring neighbourhood fit. Glazed garage doors throughout the development, provide a sense of light and scale without the utilitarian feel of typical garage doors. Maximum glazing in the main living areas provides the strong connection between indoor and outdoor space that is the hallmark of West Coast contemporary architecture. Wall surfaces, other than concrete, stained wood or stone are painted with a colour selected from a carefully chosen palette of earth tones so that no neighbouring buildings are the same colour.

## Landscape Features

Of primary importance is the retention of significant existing trees to both to acknowledge their importance in creating a sense of place and to provide a privacy screen from Marine Drive and from adjacent properties.

The Marine Drive frontage and vehicle entry point will maintain the neighbourhood character and emulate the existing single family character.

The establishment of a strong internal streetscape is created through the planting of street trees. Tree species will be varied to highlight nodes along the roadway.

A specific landscape node, incorporating a rain garden with an integrated marsh at the south end of the property, will serve as both a focal point and $\backslash$ provide spatial screening to Esker Lane to the south. The rain garden will collect storm water and allow it to percolate and be "scrubbed" before entering the municipal storm system,

The pedestrian connection from the site to Lawson Avenue will be given special consideration as a street end and community linkage

## Aging in Place Features

Because part of the target market for the proposed housing includes retirees and empty nesters, more than one quarter of the units have a master bedroom on the main floor.

All units provide the sense of privacy, space, and interior appointments of a single family home without the need to maintain a single family lot.

## Design Changes

In response to District and community feedback the following changes were made to the conceptual design

## DARWIN properties lto.

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## Design Changes

In response to District and community feedback the following changes were made to the conceptual design:

## A. Reduce the size and / or number of units and modify units to reduce density

## Response

- The number of units has been reduced from 19 to 17 (9 single family and 8 duplex)
- The floor plans of the single family units has been refined and reduced slightly in area
- Overall density has been reduced to 0.357 FSR


## B. To provide for adequate visitor parking

Response

- We are proposing six (6) visitor parking spaces distributed amongst the site
- Exceeds the required number of visitor spaces
- Driveways have been expanded and are large enough for additional visitors to park
C. Provide more contextual information Response:
- Additional context photos have been submitted as part of the formal resubmission package
D. To increase useable open space, provide outdoor space for the units and provide landscape buffers between the neighbours
Response:
By reducing he unit count from 19 to 17, we were able to reconfigure and reorient the units to substantially increase the amount of useable open space
- The reduction and reconfiguration also allowed for a generous increase in setbacks to the neighbouring properties equalling or exceeding those required for $R S-3$ single family dwellings
- The increase in these setbacks allowed for additional and larger landscape buffers


## E. To ensure ease of vehicle turnaround within driveway

## Response:

The reduction in unit count and reconfiguration allows for increased yards and driveways, allowing for easier on site maneuvering

## F. To introduce more variety, materiality and roof forms and consideration to the Elliott House

## Response

- In consideration of the Elliott House, form for the single family dwellings has been varied while ensuring harmony with neighbouring development
- Materials and colours have been further refined to lighten the previous colour palette as well as provide a variation of colour and natural material choices while still maintaining the context of the neighbourhood


## G. To provide details about the proposed sustainability measures and landscape

 Response- The Developer will undertake to ensure a minimum standard which is equivalent to LEED for Homes silver.

404 - 197 FORESTER STREET, NORTH VANCOUVER, BC V7H 0A6 TEL: 604-929-7944 FAX: 604-929-5475

## 5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In addition to a number of meetings with individual neighbours, and the strata councils of Esker Lane and Mathers Mews, two neighbourhood events have been held to date.

## Event Details:

## Workshop

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| Date: | Wednesday, May 30, 2012 |
| Time: | $5: 30$ PM - 7:30 PM |
| Location: | North Shore Unitarian Church (370 Mathers Avenue, West Vancouver) |
| Notification: | Flyers were distributed by hand to residents living in the area |
| Attendees: | 15 |

## Community Meeting:

Date: $\quad$ Thursday, July 12, 2012
Time: 5:30 PM - 7:30 PM North Shore Unitarian Church (370 Mathers Avenue, West Vancouver)
Notification: Flyers were distributed by hand to residents living in the area
Attendees: 10

## Feedback

Attendees of the two events raised the following issues:

- too dense for the character of the neighbourhood and the size of the site; and
potential for increased traffic.
The following community amenity ideas were also raised by the attendees:
- small trails to improve access to existing trails
- sidewalk on Mathers Avenue; and,
- traffic circle at Mathers Avenue and Hadden Drive.


## DARWIN properties ltd.

## Neighbourhood Meeting:

Date: $\quad$ Monday, August 18, 2014
Date:
Time:
323 Mathers Avenue, West Vancouver
Notification: Coordinated through established neighbourhood contacts
Attendees:

## Feedback

Attendees of the event raised the following issues:

- too dense for the character of the neighbourhood and the size of the site; and
- concern over the Lawson extension and safety issues for pedestrians and children.


## Comments

Attendees of the event had the following comments

- a majority of the attendees liked the proposed reconfiguration of the easterly single family homes
- a majority of the attendees appreciated the increased setbacks along the western property line

Note: Attendees of the event were offered the opportunity to have a view analysis conducted from their residence

## REFERENCING THE ELLIOT HOUSE

The top drawing to the right shows the principal elevation of the Elliott House, facing Mathers Avenue, as it was originally conceived by Wensley and Rand Architects in 1960. The drawing below shows the same view of the proposed design.
The proposed design refers to the original building in many ways, beginning with its fundamental massing. Exposed concrete used at the base in the lower east quadrant, to anchor the mass in the way the original design used concrete block. The pattern of fenestration, particularly at the lower level, is similar. The overall proportions of glass panels is similar. Glazing goes all the way to ceiling with a similar proportion of transom to full height in each panel. In the proposed design, at the upper level, the amount of glazing is reduced and sill heights raised in recognition of the need for privacy to upper floor bedrooms, noting that the original building bedroom windows on this street-facing elevation were ultimately permanently boarded up with plywood cladding. Floor to ceiling glass in the main living spaces on the west end in both the original and proposed design, produce the ambiguous boundary between indoors and out, a hallmark of west coast modernism
The original building has no overhangs. In the proposed design, in recognition of current accepted building envelope design principles and construction practice overhangs have been added. While this is different from the original design, at the same time these overhangs help to emphasize "horizontality", an important aspect of the character of the original.

The original design had no covered parking, though a carport was eventually added. The proposed building has a garage, a concrete mass with a glazed panel door, in recognition of current market expectation and to add to the general strategy of producing enough on-site parking to ensure that neither residents or visitors need to park on neighbourhood streets
Departing somewhat from the original massing, a mass has been added to the east end of the lower level. This mass houses a main floor master bedroom provided for the aging-in-place empty-nester target market. Essentially hidden from view from Mathers by existing rees, this mass also provides the opportunity of a covered roof deck that will enjoy significant city views to the south


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North Elevation





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