

Community Dialogue on Neighbourhood Character & Housing

Update on the 'Community Dialogue'

During 2007 and 2008, the District of West Vancouver undertook the Community Dialogue on Neighbourhood Character and Housing. This award-winning* program was guided by a working group of West Vancouver residents. It was a process of 'people talking to people' about the future of their neighbourhoods, and issues related to housing choice and affordability.

In September 2008, the Working Group presented its final report which included 20 recommendations for consideration by Council. These recommendations pertain to neighbourhood character, housing choice and affordability, future neighbourhood planning, and continuing public engagement on housing and neighbourhood character issues. For more information: westvancouver.ca/communitydialogue

The findings of the Community Dialogue have helped to guide the District's priorities and initiatives through 2011, including:

- Legalizing Secondary Suites (as of March 2010)
- Housing Pilot Program (underway)
- Zoning Policy Updates (underway)
- Strategic Transportation Plan (completed)
- Climate Action Plan (completed)

In May 2009, Council endorsed the Housing Pilot Program, and re-convened the Working Group for the purpose of developing and implementing the program during 2009-2010 (see inside).

** In 2009, West Vancouver's 'Community Dialogue' earned an Award of Excellence from the Planning Institute of British Columbia; and was profiled as a highly effective model of community engagement in "Housing in My Backyard: A Municipal Guide for Responding to NIMBY", a publications of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.*

Secondary Suites Legalized

Did You Know?

74% of residents support legalization of secondary suites

Secondary suites are a legitimate and important part of our housing stock. Secondary suites became legal throughout West Vancouver on March 1, 2010, meaning that suites are no longer limited to use by family members only.

Secondary Suites are limited to a maximum one suite per lot, and a maximum suite size being the lesser of 968 sq. ft. or 40% of the total floor area. In addition: a suite cannot be detached; the owner must occupy either the suite or the principal dwelling unit; and, in most cases one parking space for the exclusive use of the suite is to be provided.

The suite must meet life safety standards, and the owner of the property is required to hold a secondary suite business licence. For more information, contact the Bylaw & Licensing Services Department at 604-925-7152 or visit westvancouver.ca

"Houses that Fit Us and Fit In"

Join us at the Kay Meek Centre on **May 18th** for an important public forum on housing!

7:00 pm - 9:00 pm
(see back page for details)

IN THIS ISSUE:

Update on Community Dialogue	1
Secondary Suites Legalized ..	1
Housing Pilot Program	2
First Two Pilot Projects	3
May 18th Public Forum: "Housing that Fits Us and Fits In"	4
How to Get Involved?	4



Housing Pilot Program

Community Dialogue on Neighbourhood Character and Housing



Housing Pilot Program

The objective of the Housing Pilot Program is to enable the construction of a small number of housing 'prototypes' in West Vancouver neighbourhoods to address the community's desire for improved housing options. While the focus of this program is on new housing types, individual pilot projects will also provide opportunities to:

- employ sustainable land-use and building practices; and
- address neighbourhood character issues associated with new house construction, such as site and landscape alteration, and scale and massing of new development.

Each pilot project will be subject to the municipal approval process, including opportunities for public input. Approved projects will be comprehensively evaluated upon completion to:

- identify lessons learned;
- assess the appropriateness of these housing types for West Vancouver neighbourhoods; and
- provide direction for future policies, regulations, guidelines and/or conditions that would permit replication of particular housing types or models elsewhere in the community.

The Working Group and District staff undertook a two-phased pilot project selection process during fall 2009—i.e. a Call for Expressions of Interest (EOIs), followed by invitations to short-listed candidates to submit detailed proposals. Seventeen EOIs and seven detailed proposals were reviewed, and four projects were recommended to Council in December 2009.



Collectively, these proposals are seen as providing a rich educational opportunity for the District and the community to explore a variety of housing prototypes; work with different site conditions; and address neighbourhood character issues in different areas of the municipality. They offer a 'laboratory' for informing future District policies and regulations related to zoning, subdivision, green building features, and best practices for minimizing site alteration (i.e., 'designing with nature').

In December 2009, two proposals were selected by Council as initial 'pilot projects' for implementation in 2010 (see project descriptions on opposite page).

Pilot Project #1: "Lantern House" Downsizing Into a Modest House in the Forest

Rick and Shelley returned to West Vancouver as 'newly-weds' in 1983, and lived in a small half-duplex in Horseshoe Bay. In 1992, with a young family in tow, they moved to their present home at 6803 Hycroft Road, a property which includes an adjacent small remainder lot (6801 Hycroft Road).

With their children now nearly grown, and retirement contemplated in five to six years, they have been looking for opportunities to 'downsize' to a smaller house in their own neighbourhood.

Their pilot project proposal is to create a future building site for a modest-sized home, more appropriate to the needs of 'empty-nesters'—through subdivision of their own property. This would see a lot line adjustment to reduce the site area of the main lot, and a larger area for the remainder lot. This small house (dubbed "Lantern House") is being designed by

Did You Know?

63% of West Van residents believe that new houses being built today are too big; and 62% would like to see more housing units in the 1,000 to 1,500 sq.ft. range

renowned Canadian architect Barry Downs. The owners describe their vision as follows:

"It is an innovative 1,489 sq.ft. house designed specifically as a prototype to showcase the possibilities of residential development on West Vancouver's many oddly-sized, privately-owned 'remainder' lots, ... with a view to increasing housing diversity."

The value of this pilot project is:

1. to demonstrate how a building can be designed in concert with the natural features of a site, and built without significant landform alteration; and
2. the opportunity to examine the development potential of remainder lots in West Vancouver, and how these lots could accommodate similar modest-sized dwellings, designed to fit with a site's natural features. These lots can typically have difficult terrain or other site challenges, which require creative design and servicing concepts.



Pilot Project #2: Coach House A Detached Suite in Your Own Backyard

Susanna and Lewis settled in the Dundarave area because of its central location to schools and amenities, and easy walking distance to nearby transit. In 1995, they renovated an existing bungalow at 2602 Ottawa Avenue to accommodate their growing family of three children. Through the renovation, their views were re-oriented to look over their neighbour's beautiful back garden (at 2614 Ottawa) towards the water.

When the neighbouring property came onto the market, the couple believed that the small 1934 character house would be torn down and replaced by a new maximum-sized house. They bought the property to protect their garden outlook and water view, and have since used it as rental accommodation.

As they approach retirement, they would like to be able to move into a smaller, well-designed house that is easy to maintain and meets their future lifestyle requirements.

The value of this pilot project is:

1. to examine the potential for a modest-sized infill dwelling ("coach house") to provide homeowners with an opportunity for future downsizing on their own property;
2. in the interim, to provide a detached rental suite, or accommodate a caregiver or family member (e.g. adult child or elderly parent); and
3. to design and locate a low-impact building in a manner that respects neighbours' views and established landscapes.

Did You Know?

75% of residents believe that trees and established vegetation are very important to the character of their neighbourhoods



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District of West Vancouver Housing Forum: "Homes That Fit Us and Fit In"

Responding to the Changing Housing Needs of Our Community

The District of West Vancouver is hosting a free public forum as part of our Housing Pilot Program. The focus of the forum, titled "Homes That Fit Us and Fit In", is to learn about new housing forms and green building innovations, and opportunities for addressing community concerns over limited housing options. The speakers' panel will share experiences from other communities, including examples of built projects.

Date/Time: Tuesday, May 18, 2010 from 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm

Information Displays in Foyer starting at 6:00 pm

Venue: Kay Meek Centre - 1700 Mathers Avenue, West Vancouver, BC

SPEAKERS:		
	WELCOME & OPENING REMARKS MAYOR PAMELA GOLDSMITH-JONES District of West Vancouver	
	MICHAEL GELLER The Geller Group Adjunct Faculty, Centre for Sustainable Community Development, SFU	
	MODERATOR GORDON PRICE Director, City Program, SFU	
		ADINE MEES President & CEO, Canadian Business for Social Responsibility
		ROBERT BROWN Principal, Chesterman Properties

Limited seats available on a free shuttle service from the Seniors' Activity Centre to Kay Meek.
To register for a shuttle seat, call 604-925-7270 (please quote bar code 719917)

For more information on the Housing Pilot Program, visit: westvancouver.ca/housing
or phone the West Vancouver Planning Department at 604-925-7055.

How to Get Involved?

- Visit westvancouver.ca/housing for more information and regular project updates, and links to upcoming meetings, and local and regional events of interest
- Join the online discussion forum to share your thoughts about housing issues and opportunities, or to provide specific input on individual pilot projects:
westvancouver.ca/forums
- Attend the free public forum on housing on May 18th
- Participate in the pilot project evaluation process (following project completion)

Note: The "Did you know?" statistics in this newsletter are drawn from the West Vancouver Survey on Neighbourhood Character and Housing (Synovate), July 2008.