

Matts, Kathryn

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Rez Ref # 21-12

Bylaw # 14457

From:
Sent: Tuesday, June 28, 2022 2:42 PM
To: Clerks
Subject: Opposition to Metrotown Rezoning Application #21-12, 6031 Wilson Avenue, Bosa Properties, June 28, 2022

Categories: PH - Info Complete, Public Hearing

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Dear Burnaby Council:

When I reflect on the ongoing rezonings in my direct neighbourhood of Metrotown I always find myself overwhelmed by what I perceive as a Pandora's box of architectural, environmental, process, and social problems that the Metrotown Plan unleashed on what used to be an immensely livable neighborhood for people from all walks of life.

- Remember when City officials assured a delegate to a 2020 council meeting that "*the poor door is not something that exists in Burnaby and likely will not in the future.*" Reality is Rez #21-12 proposes segregated amenities and a side entrance for non-market renters at James St. As that delegate pointed out "*the psychological impacts of having to go through the poor door every day*" will lead to "*unintentional segregation.*"
- Remember the Metrotown Plan characterizing the rezoning's neighbourhood, designated *Central Park East*, as "*tranquil parklike?*" Reality is Rez #21-12 proposes a 53-storey tower just three blocks from Central Park. Reality is that every affordable low-rise rental building in my direct neighbourhood from Patterson Ave to Willingdon Ave and Kingsway to Central Blvd will be demolished to make room for some twenty high-rise glass towers up to 70 storeys with attached low-rises or podiums. At least 70% of the new units will be condos. Suffice it to say, the proposed condo ratio of Rez #21-12 is 85.6%. Such is the face of gentrification. Tranquil? Parklike?
- Remember the Metrotown Plan envisioning this land "*to be enhanced with publicly accessible pocket parks.*" In the real world, not one additional green space is added despite a massive density increase to the tune of beyond 6,000 residential units. To the contrary, all remaining wooded pockets are destroyed to make room for towers and streets. Most recently, Bosa Properties destroyed the wooded east side lots of what locals colloquially call Kathleen Forest along Kathleen Avenue to make room for another 34-storey tower. (see savekathleenforest.wordpress.com) Remember when Bosa Properties arrived one morning with a contractor and a wood chipper to cut two Western Red Cedars on the publicly owned parts of Kathleen Forest, claiming in a letter that City Planning advised them they do not need a tree removal permit to destroy these trees. The trees still stand only because one courageous neighbour physically protected them while Bosa Properties called police on him. As it turned out, options existed.
- Remember the Metrotown Plan including a "*cycle/pedestrian corridors*" between James St and Willingdon Ave? One rezoning at a time, the car centric implementation of the Metrotown Plan turns even this planned green corridor into a full-fledged street, to accommodate the traffic arising from literally tens

of thousands new underground parking across Metrotown. Rez #21-12 proposes to turn the stretch of that planned cycle/pedestrian corridor from James St to Wilson Ave into a street.

- Remember the massive density that City Planning allowed Bosa to transfer from their luxury *Central Park House* condo development at 5977 Wilson Ave to their low-end rental development at 5970 Kathleen Ave for the construction of 94 replacement and inclusionary rentals? Just months after City Planning and Bosa inked that deal, Bosa announced having received another \$100 million of what *westerninvestor* calls a “free money loan” from the federal government through CMHC. Perhaps, just perhaps, we can avoid uncoordinated double financing in future development projects, especially for environment- and community-destructive projects.

While I could go on and on with examples how reality diverges from planning and rhetorical assurances when it comes to the Metrotown Plan, within the scope of this letter I can only focus on one particular concern related to indoor livability in what Rez #21-12 proposes as a replacement rental podium of the 53-storey strata tower. The sizes of these replacement units will make it almost impossible for some tenants not to refuse their ‘*right of first refusal*’ to return.

When the Mayor’s Housing Task Force disbanded, most everyone, including the Chair of the task force, walked away with an understanding that 1-to-1 replacement would “*work on a square footage basis*,” allowing tenants to return to livable housing conditions. Unfortunately, this is not the case. When Rez #21-12 proposes 59 one-bedroom replacement units with 538 – 618 sq.ft., a closer examination of the architectural diagram reveals **an average of 551 sq.ft. with 55 of these 59 one-bedrooms being equal or lower 563 sq.ft.** While all is perfectly livable for single tenant occupancies, reality is the majority of those one-bedroom replacement suites are occupied by two and sometimes more people. It is inconceivable that such households can live comfortably on a living space as small as 7 x 7 square meters, all included – bedroom, bathroom, living room, home office or study area, kitchen, closet and storage areas, W/D closet, etc. Partners that were able to split a second small room from a 640 sq.ft. one-bedroom apartment will not be able to do so anymore when assigned a 540 sq.ft. open-concept unit with the bedroom door opening directly into the living room. This situation increasingly worsens as businesses adopt work-from-home employment models, schools move to online learning – at least partially – and health authorities tighten requirements for employees and students to stay home when experiencing Covid or other symptoms. All demands quiet uncluttered space for work, online meetings, study, or health recovery. It shall be noted that Bosa Properties knows how to lay out the overall floor space properly when it comes to stratas, offering a composition of smaller and larger units with half of the one-bedrooms in a more appropriate size range of 609 to 740 sq.ft. But when it comes to non-market housing almost all one-bedroom units are minimum-sized as per the zoning bylaw.

Moreover, **of the 70 below market units that Rez #21-12 proposes, only 7, or 10%, are two-bedrooms.** This is because of City Planning’s minimalistic interpretation of 1-to-1 replacement, always opting for the bare minimum. Note that Burnaby’s independent Housing Needs Report recommends that 64% of new units in Burnaby have two or more bedrooms. While 64% seems too high for replacement rentals, the proposed 10% is clearly far too low. Vancouver’s Broadway Plan institutes that at least 35% of apartments have two or more bedrooms – not only for multi-family strata housing, but equally for secured market rental and below-market rental developments. Again, **Bosa knows how to properly design the unit type composition for stratas, proposing 43.5% of the strata units in Rez #21-12 as two- or three-bedroom apartments.**

I ask council to have City Planning work with Bosa to extend 1-to-1 replacement to overall square footage, as intended by the Mayor’s Housing Task Force. I ask to increase the ratio of larger, livable replacement units. Clearly, a significant number of small 540 sq.ft. one-bedrooms are needed for single tenant occupancies and temporary tenancies, but the 100 sq.ft. that Bosa Properties gains relative to a demolished 640 sq.ft. unit shall be used to increase the number of small 700 sq.ft. two-bedroom apartments. Such two-bedrooms can offer a second small room for households to adapt to the many situations they may find themselves in – for instance, equipped with an office desk to work from home, a storage area to avoid clutter in the living area, a baby crib for a young family of three, or a bed if one becomes ill, you name it. This will allow returning tenants to maintain their established living conditions, and it will also offer subsequent inclusionary renters an indoor environment that is livable long-term.

Bosa Properties has received enough goodwill and public financing already. I am more than confident that the density offset and RMr grants, as well as other programs, cover the financing of a livable indoor environment for generations of Metrotown tenants into the future.

Sincerely,

Reinhard Schauer

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