



Sechelt Village Residents Association

Delegation—Committee of the Whole (Planning Committee), December 12, 2006

Pacific Spirit Properties (Sechelt) Ltd.,
joint venture of
Co-operators Development Corporation Ltd. and North Shore Credit Union
Application No. 3360-20 2006-11

Waterfront Development located at the foot of Inlet
between Teredo and Boulevard

Introduction

We are here on behalf of the Sechelt Village Residents' Association to speak about our concerns relating to the development proposal known as Pacific Spirit.

We have 6 topics to address briefly:

1. Revision of the original plan

At the Council meeting of October 4th, Council did not give first reading to the bylaw for this proposal and instead returned it to the developer, recommending further revisions.

On November 7, the developer presented 5 alternative concept proposals. Each was larger and more dense than the original proposal. This is a time-honoured tactic: when all of the developer's alternatives appear worse than the original, naturally most people lean to preferring the original, which suddenly doesn't look as bad as it did. The developer has now come back with a new proposal.

- It is larger and more dense than the original proposal *and* the concept proposals.
- It has gone from 79 units to 90 units.
- It is even larger than the first proposal—by more than 27,000 square feet.
- It remains at 5 to 6 storeys so it is not consistent with the OCP.
- It is not a “village” type of building so it is not consistent with the OCP.
- The new stairs will not be inviting – walking along Inlet would remain the better way to get to the Boulevard.
- The view corridor is the same as or slightly narrower than in the original proposal.

2. The OCP Myth

It is often said here that the OCP is “not law” and is only policies and guidelines that can be ignored. And, that the neighbourhood plans are “only” schedules to

the OCP so they have no force at all. Each of these ideas is a myth. A schedule to legislation is part of that legislation and has the same force and effect as the main body of the legislation itself. OCPs are enacted by bylaw so the entire bylaw, including the schedules, is local law.

Also, once an OCP has been adopted, every bylaw enacted after that is required by the Local Government Act to be consistent with the OCP. When the language of the OCP is not mandatory—“should”—the interpretation is somewhat optional. But where it is mandatory—“must” or “shall”—it is mandatory.

The Downtown/Village Neighbourhood Plan contains mandatory language relating to buildings on the Trail Bay waterfront and in the Seaside Terraces Development Permit Area. The effect is to prohibit buildings over 3 storeys within 90 metres of the ocean shoreline and to require a 15 metre setback from the natural boundary of Trail Bay. The community representatives felt so strongly about protecting the park that they specifically stated that the setback “*not* be relaxed through the issuance of Development Variance Permits and Development Permits.”

From my discussions with Sechelt residents about this proposal I can report to you that they strongly agree with adhering to the Village Plan. Almost every time I show the rendering of the proposed building to a resident, the response is “They can’t do that here!” They insist that there is a 3 storey limit and they like that limit.

3. Benefits

Who would benefit from this development? At a simple level, the District would benefit from the anticipated tax revenue. The developer would benefit from the profits.

How much would the developer benefit? Don Liu has told the Association that Co-operators paid \$4million for the property. At \$4million, the cost of the land per unit would be approximately \$44,000. The BCA land value on the Regional District website is about \$2.5million. That value would result in a cost of land per unit of about \$26,000. When view lots are on the market at more than \$100,000, it stands to reason that the developer anticipates an impressive profit from the development. The cost of the land to the developer does not justify the height or the density proposed.

But—there is potential for far greater benefit to the Village, and the District, if the Boulevard were to be fully developed as a tourist attraction.

I have learned the full extent of the Boulevard as a people magnet—not just local residents and people from Halfmoon Bay, Roberts Creek and Madeira Park. (Davis Bay people come here because their waterfront is too noisy.) Resorts and B&Bs send their guests here. Why? This is the only waterfront walking park on the entire Coast. Most of these visitors spend money here—they have a meal, do

some shopping Sechelt should be enhancing the waterfront as a tourist attraction, without ruining it for residents and tourists. It would be better to start small, evaluate and build on successes—where are the day floats? Why not try licensing a snack kiosk on the wharf? See what works and what doesn't.....

The *worst* thing to do would be to approve an urban fortress that would provide significantly more benefit to the developer than to the community. In the long term, attracting more visitors would create more employment and more tax revenue.

4. Densification and Urban Containment Boundaries

Aside from tax revenue, the rationale for approval of this proposal is often related to densification.

We do not believe that extreme densification in the Village actually counts as true densification in the District when, simultaneously, the sewer system is being extended to the District's western border and farther up the west side of the Inlet—to facilitate yet more suburban sprawl.

The planning concept of “urban containment boundaries” was no doubt created to address this phenomenon. UCBs call for infill densification in existing urbanized areas—throughout the built area—before expanding outward. Extreme densification in the Village will not achieve densification of the District while suburban sprawl continues. It will merely change the character of the Village.

5. Downtown Revitalization

It is suggested that the proposal will contribute to downtown revitalization by inclusion of 6 commercial units near the corner of Inlet and Teredo and a bistro unit on the Boulevard side. The developers had planned only a residential building. The commercial space was added at the Planning Department's suggestion—but it is not enough to create the critical mass necessary to attract pedestrian traffic. Their reluctance is seen in the proportion of the ground floor wall on the Teredo side that is a blank wall. The north side of the building faces commercial buildings across Teredo. One would think that the developer would want to create commercial space all across the north side. But only 40% of the north wall is commercial frontage. The rest is residential lobbies, the very wide staircase and blank wall. The staircase is about 40 feet wide at ground level—much wider than necessary, probably to relieve the appearance of the blank wall. Assuming a normal staircase, the blank wall is actually 55.5% of the wall facing Teredo.

Can this half-hearted gesture be expected to contribute to downtown revitalization? We doubt it. Is this important? The downtown commercial area is expanding northward toward the future highway bypass. A mixed residential-commercial 4-storey building is under construction at the top of Inlet and another multi-unit residential building is planned across the street from it. A carwash

recently opened in the same area. Commercial and retail businesses tend to cluster together. Sechelt's downtown was originally built where it is for a valid reason—there was a bog between Teredo and the water and the only viable building sites close to the waterfront were along the narrow Boulevard. Now the downtown is migrating north for different valid reasons—land is less expensive away from the water and the bypass highway is expected to be built on the Hydro right-of-way some day.

6. Decisions Create Precedents

Your decisions create precedents. Developers naturally seek what has been granted to others. The first high-rise building on the Trail Bay waterfront won't be the last. Because this proposal is located in the Village, there seems to be the belief that it will spark downtown revitalization—other high-rise buildings in the Village away from the water. There are indeed some sites in the Village that are potential locations for taller buildings. But the precedent will be *waterfront* high-rise buildings. There are many sites along the water large enough for buildings such as this proposal. I can think of two in Davis Bay alone. Wakefield Beach could have been high-rise instead of the attractive development being built now. Developers will seek approval to build tall buildings and the end result will almost inevitably be a wall of tall buildings along the waterfront, not just on Trail Bay but up both sides of the Inlet as well. Once the cat is out of the bag, it is difficult to stop it.

This is in a Development Permit Area. In a sense, Council has a blank slate. There is no reason why Council cannot insist on a development of much lower density that is consistent with the OCP *and* enhances the attraction of the Boulevard to both resident and tourists. This is in the best interests of Sechelt. Approving this urban fortress would not be in the best interest of Sechelt overall.

Conclusion

We recognize that development of this site is desirable. We do not see this kind of development as desirable. This is the last gem on the Trail Bay waterfront and we should give it the respect it deserves.

We urge Council to return this proposal again until such time as a proposal that conforms to the Village Plan is put forward. Better yet, we urge Council to hold out for a much better development.