



Higher density sought for Holdom 'village'

By David Weir
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The developer behind the first plan aimed at transforming the Holdom Street SkyTrain station area into an urban village is asking to increase the density of the project.

And in exchange, Embassy Development Corporation will build city hall a facility with 10,000 square feet of unfinished space for community use.

Monday, Burnaby council endorsed the proposal to swap higher density for community amenity bonuses.

"I think this is quite an exciting development and I don't think we've ever acquired something quite this outstanding in our community bonusing," said Coun. Celeste Redman.

Embassy Development Corporation, owned by Ryan Bosa, is proposing to redevelop the former Lumberland/Revy Home Centre property that is immediately south of the Holdom SkyTrain station.

The proposal is significant because it's the first one under the Holdom Station Area Plan adopted by council last December. City hall hopes to transform the area around the SkyTrain station from light industrial to an urban village that combines residential, commercial and business centres.

The proposal by Embassy includes a mix of ground-level commercial spaces and townhouses facing Holdom Avenue, live/work townhouse facing Goring Street and two slender high-rise apartment towers – both about 27 storeys – on the interior of the site.

Geotechnical reports revealed poor soil conditions, consisting largely of peat and compounded by a high water table and artesian action.

As a result, Embassy is asking to use Burnaby's density bonusing to allow for construction of more units than normal to offset some of the high anticipated development costs resulting from the poor soils.

In exchange for the density bonus, the developer proposes to build a two-storey pavilion building on the northern portion of the property next to the SkyTrain station.

The second floor would house recreational facilities for tenants in the development, while the ground floor would be given to city hall for community use.

Embassy is also asking to have input in the allocation of space in the pavilion, which did not sit well with Coun. Pietro Calendino.

"My belief is if it is a community space and if it is donated by them, then the city should maintain control over who it goes to and it should be going to community agencies that are in need and doing worthwhile community service," Calendino said.

"The developer is making their profit by gaining 71,000 more square feet of additional floor area for a mere 10,000 square feet of amenity space."

Coun. Dan Johnston said he understood Calendino's concern that the city alone have control of who uses the community space, but only to a point.

"This development is a comprehensive package with a bunch of residential and commercial space around it, so whatever we put there has to be somewhat consistent or amenable to various residential and commercial uses that are going to be co-habiting in that area," Johnston said.

Embassy's rezoning application is still in the preliminary stages. No public hearing date has been set.