

From PentictonHerald.ca

City OKs highrises

By John Moorhouse

Wednesday, February 8, 2006,
12:01 AM

The skyline in the south end of Penticton is about to reach higher, but not before some ground-level traffic concerns are addressed first. Following a two-hour public hearing Monday night, city council voted unanimously in favour of rezoning the Cherry RV Park property at Skaha Lake Road and Guelph Avenue, where Vancouver-based Pilot Pacific Developments plans to construct three high-rise luxury apartment buildings in a project dubbed Alysen Place.

The revised project calls for 192 units, down from the 204 units originally proposed. The two westernmost towers along Hemlock Street to be reduced to seven storeys in height, while the third tower closer to Skaha Lake Road will remain eight storeys.

While most residents of the adjacent Figueiras mobile home park voiced their objections to the height of the complex, council supported the move to higher density in the area. Mayor Jake Kimberley noted the four-storey maximum zoning for the area introduced in the early 1990s is now outdated. Higher density is needed to prevent Penticton from falling victim to urban sprawl.

"For the next 20 years we're going to be addressing constantly the issue of density in this community," Kimberley said. "You cannot protect farmland and protect the agriculture industry without addressing the need to go up. We just do not have the space."

Final reading of the rezoning and community plan amendments is on hold, pending approval from the Ministry of Transportation and the developer meeting a number of city conditions. Council hopes this will also allow time for city staff to look into traffic concerns raised during the hearing.

Nearby resident Robert Cartwright questioned the city's plan to create a centre median along Skaha Lake Road, preventing left turns into and out of Guelph Avenue. The city proposes widening Hemlock Avenue along the west side of the property and redirecting traffic south to Yorkton Avenue and Skaha Lake Road where a traffic signal is in place. Cartwright said that plan just doesn't make sense.

"From a reasonable perspective, it's not reasonable," he said. "The city proposal is to redesignate residential streets to collector streets and this will create more problems than



Mike Yunker of McElhanney Associates land surveyors was busy Tuesday on the site of the proposed Alysen Place development at Skaha Lake Road and Guelph Avenue. Penticton city council has tentatively approved rezoning the property for three high-rise towers but also wants to review traffic concerns in the area.

it resolves."

Cartwright said the city plan would encourage more people to turn north through the nearby Whitewater mobile home park to link up with Paris Street and continue on towards Green Avenue. Instead, he suggested a traffic signal be installed at Guelph and Skaha Lake Road. This would also eliminate the need for the city to acquire additional property from Figueiras mobile home park to widen Hemlock.

Council agreed to have city staff further review the traffic situation prior to voting on final approval. City administrator Leo den Boer noted deleting the road designation portion of the community plan amendments would require another public hearing to be held.

The Alysén Place project gained support from many of those attending the hearing, including Judy Poole, president of the Penticton and Wine Country Chamber of Commerce.

Coun. John Vassilaki said the project will also help upgrade the south end of the city, where he suggested some of the older motels had become drug houses, creating a problem for the city and the RCMP.

© Copyright by PentictonHerald.ca