



September 20, 2023

City of New Westminster

**Development Variance Permit Application Revisited for 311 Ash Street**

Council Chamber, City Hall

Monday September 25, 2023 at 6:00 PM

The proposed Development Permit Application (DVP) under discussion again proposes altering significantly the south side of the building facing 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue to build five units below-grade that would be rented out at market rates prevalent at that time. This DVP would entail destroying tall mature trees gracing the skyline of 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue that also protect tenants on the south side of the building facing 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue from extreme heat and sunlight during summer months. If approved, it would have a detrimental impact on street parking for residents in the neighbourhood. If approved, this DVP would also destroy a vibrant ecosystem of wildlife that includes many different species of birds that frequent these trees on a regular basis.

I am a senior that lives on the <sup>Personal Information</sup> of a rental unit situated in the <sup>Personal Information</sup> the trees in question slated for destruction; I would be exposed to direct sunlight (as my neighbours would) that are now shielded by these trees.

During the intense summer heat wave a few summers ago that resulted in deaths in British Columbia, my apartment reached 'extreme' heat temperatures and that was with the shade from these trees protecting the south side of the building from the glaring and penetrating sun. The sun strikes early in the morning. Relocating these trees elsewhere on the property as entertained by City Council in February is not viable given the lack of space elsewhere on the property and because of the established size of roots inherent with these mature trees.

The air conditioning issue is a significant, important and critical discussion. All tenants in rental buildings in New Westminster 'should' have the right to air conditioning in their units, if so, desired. However, air conditioning also increases hydro costs and this becomes another financial burden for tenants who are on low or fixed income. Already, tenants are saddled with expensive rents: the annual

rent increase for 2024 will now be at 3.5% for British Columbians (even higher than Ontario's rent increase that is capped at 2.5%).

Furthermore, not all tenants want air conditioners. Effective fans can alleviate and dissipate the flow of heat. Coupled with the trees, rental units in this building would benefit from having ceiling fans installed in the rental units. This would apply for those (like myself) who do not want air conditioners because of respiratory issues. Whenever you have a forced air system running, allergens can build up inside the unit and be released into the air a person breathes. The trees have acted as a natural barrier for this south side of the building against the sun for 44 years since this building was constructed in 1979.

For the DVP hearing in February, Council was provided with a documented list (as of February 20, 2023) of 24 parked cars complete with photographs, stall numbers, vehicle and registered plate numbers. Contrary to what was provided by the landlord, there were only 11 vacant stalls recorded at the time of the inventory.

An updated underground parking inventory was done this week on September 19, 2023 at 09:58 PM. These include the stall number, the vehicle kind and colour parked in a designated parking stall. There are 25 parked cars and 10 vacant stalls. (See copy of current underground parking enclosure).

The present DVP states: *'excluding the proposed five units, for which additional parking spaces are not required'*: this is troubling and alarming.

Single occupants will not be able to afford to rent these 5 new units on their own (which is customary now in the Lower Mainland with rentals so expensive). More likely than not, prospective tenants will need to cohabitate. One can only surmise that there will be more than one occupant per unit, each with a car. These additional cars are not accounted for in this DVP, so these new tenants will be parking their cars on the street when they rent these units (along with any other parking spaces that may be eliminated from the current underground parking), thus, adding to already congested street parking in the neighbourhood. This building will no longer be able to offer off street parking within the building for future tenants, should they so wish, if this DVP is approved.

The City's seven bold steps in endorsing a 2020 action plan to combat climate emergency included a robust urban forest and a car light community. This DVP is in complete opposition with this plan by removing the only mature trees in this sector, and by encouraging more parked cars onto the streets.

The City of New Westminster should be finding ways to get cars parked off the streets to make navigating through public streets easier for cars in general and for emergency and service vehicles to transit easily especially during winter months and snowstorms. This initiative will accomplish the opposite.

The five units with terraces will **NOT** be affordable housing but will be at exorbitant market rentals when completed. I support a capitalistic and business attitude but where does one draw the line between what is best for a landlord and what is best for other tenants and residents. I suspect that is at the basis for the landlord's non-transparency in choosing to not discuss this initiative openly with tenants before submitting this DVP to the City for approval earlier this year.

The tenants in this building have had their storage lockers expropriated in 2019 to build 2 new rental units. They no longer have storage lockers. Out of 29 residential units, only 10 rental units remain in the building as affordable units. The other units have been permanently depleted from the City's inventory of affordable rental units: gone forever.

Vacancy control, a form of rent control that correlates allowable rent increases to a housing unit rather than an individual tenancy agreement does not exist in British Columbia. Landlords become incentivized to renovate apartments as soon as they can by doubling and/or increasing rents when tenants move out. Similarly, landlords are motivated now to remove existing building space to build even more apartments, thus maximizing even further more profits whenever possible and permitted. This is a business endeavour. I understand. (The tenant next door to my unit moved out of his renovated 2-bedroom apartment a few weeks ago. I asked him on moving day where he was moving to and he stated he was moving to Fort McMurray, Alberta with his family.) Is there a slow exodus out of the Lower Mainland of low- and middle-class renters who can no longer afford to live here?

Finally, the noise, construction activity, interruptions of service like water service on an ongoing basis that will occur for a prolonged period of time for tenants living in the building must seriously be taken into consideration when considering this permit. There will probably be without much advance notice water and electricity interruptions. Inconveniences, denial of services and amenities all at the expense of the tenant. The stress and mental health ramifications borne AGAIN by the tenants, especially the seniors, must be considered.

Should this DVP be approved, tenants in this building will once again have been successfully targeted by now having their underground parking compromised, their trees removed, their living styles impacted in the midst of global warming.

There is no need to do this for a miniscule 5 residential units that will have no affect at all in alleviating the housing shortage.

The neighbourhood will be severely impacted with crowded streets and the skyline will be changed. Replacement trees will be small and will add little benefit in providing shade from the sun for decades.

A petition with 35 signatures from tenants and residents in the neighbourhood opposing this DVP was submitted to City Council on February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023 (see copy of this petition as enclosure).

Tenants are often viewed as commodities and sometimes become collateral damage for a few landlords who choose to pursue profits with unprecedented zeal in their capitalistic driven endeavours that often extend beyond reason at the expense of others. The disadvantages far outweigh the benefits with this DVP. There was strong opposition to this DVP with tenants in the building and in the neighbourhood back in February. Nothing has changed. This community does not want this.

Respectfully,

J. Rethmetakis

## Personal Information

Cc - Petition;

Cc - Underground parking list: September 19, 2023

## Petition Against Development Variance Permit for 311 Ash Street

|                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Petition summary and background | The applicant is requesting the elimination of 14 existing off-street underground secured parking at 311 Ash Street to build five new residential units at the south side of the building facing Third Avenue.   |
| Action petitioned for           | We, the undersigned, are concerned citizens who reside in the building and/or in close proximity of the building and urge New Westminster City Council to reject the applicant's proposal. We, the undersigned do not want to increase additional on-street parking by eliminating already existing off-street parking in the building as well subjecting the neighborhood, especially in the 3 <sup>rd</sup> Avenue and Ash Street area, with unnecessary noise pollution, traffic congestion and parking problems. |

35 names and addresses collected

Basement Parkade- Cedarvale Building  
311 Ash Street , New Westminster BC V3M 5X7

**LIST OF CARS PARKED IN PARKING STALLS**

As of September 19, 2023 AT 09:58PM

| STALL# | VEHICLE         | COLOR      |
|--------|-----------------|------------|
| 1      | Jeep            | Silver     |
| 2      | BMW             | Black      |
| 3      | Subaru          | Blue       |
| 4      | Sedan           | White      |
| 6      | Nissan          | Blue       |
| 7      | Honda           | Blue Green |
| 10     | GMC Truck       | Black      |
| 12     | Cherokee Van    | Black      |
| 13     | Chevrolet       | Red        |
| 14     | Chevrolet       | Purple     |
| 16     | GMC Truck       | White      |
| 17     | Honda Fit       | Bluegreen  |
| 19     | Mercedez Benz   | White      |
| 20     | Hyundai         | Black      |
| 21     | BMW             | Skyblue    |
| 24     | Mazda           | Red        |
| 25     | Hyundai Elantra | Silver     |
| 26     | Toyota          | Silver     |
| 28     | Jeep            | Black      |
| 27     | Hyundai         | Black      |
| 29     | Chevrolet       | Black      |
| 31     | Nissan Kicks    | White      |
| 32     | Chevrolet       | Red        |
| 33     | BMW             | White      |
| 35     | Toyota          | Silver     |

**SUMMARY:**

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>TOTAL CARS PARKED/ OCCUPIED STALLS</b>           | <b>25</b> |
| <b>TOTAL VACANT STALLS AT THE TIME OF RECORDING</b> | <b>10</b> |