

From: S 22
To: [External-Clerks](#)
Cc: S 22
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Development Variance Permit for 311 Ash Street - Request for Public Comment
Date: Thursday, September 21, 2023 10:31:11 PM

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the City of New Westminster's network. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

I am writing with regard to the application for zoning variance for 311 Ash Street, New Westminster to take away what the landlord has told you is unused parking spaces and turn them into five rental units which will be market rentals. In order to do so, Landlord would need to remove trees. Here are my concerns as well as contextual information I want to share to help you to come to conclusion that allowing this project would be detrimental to the neighbourhood and the City and to the sitting tenants at 311 Ash Street.

PARKING

The Landlord has taken something that was free, monetized it, made it unaffordable, vacant, and then, calling it 'vacant' opened up an opportunity for himself to make, by today's 'market' value, a cash cow. Renters are now charged as much as \$60 /month for parking on top of their rent and being cash-strapped because of rents of \$2,500 /mo for 1 bedroom unit, they choose not to take underground parking and instead park on the street. These spaces have opened up in the underground whereby Landlord can build these five units, or apply to, because he's monetized something that was traditionally FREE to most residential building tenants in New Westminster. Something that helped tenants was taken away. There was free storage lockers and Landlord took THEM away too, as people moved out or by persuading tenants to sign away right of having storage locker on their leases. By allowing this variance you are encouraging landlords all over New Westminster to take stuff away from tenants, not enhancing their lives. Remember when tenancy included heat, hot water, free TV cable, a free parking space? Bit by bit these things have been taken away from tenants and now it is just the accepted thing that tenants pay for parking in their building. I don't think this Landlord should be building suites in the underground, I think he should be giving sitting tenants a more reasonable monthly parking rate to encourage them to park OFF the street, their right to a free storage locker, as they used to have and create a common area in the underground where tenants can 'cool off' during such as a Summer heatdome. Summers are going to get hotter. No two ways about it. Tenants need somewhere to just get cool. It would be nice and cool down there!

The other thing about taking away parking spots in the building because 'nobody drives

anymore, people take transit' (which is false) is that you end up with so many more cars on the street and no one can find free parking on the street as more and more tenants are parking there. Emergency vehicles, HandyDart, taxicabs, Uber drivers, EVO car share, couriers and product & services delivery vans, Canada Post, City of New Westminster vehicles, homecare aides, medical delivery/pickup, movers' trucks -- all of these vehicles need **somewhere** to park and if they cannot find a parking spot they will park in the MIDDLE of the street, leaving only one lane open, impeding garbage trucks and firetrucks. I have seen it happen a few times in Uptown New West, with growing frequency as fewer and fewer parking spaces are available on the streets. Once everyone comes home from work of an evening, weekday or weekends, it becomes 'dog-eat-dog' trying to find a parking spot. I have a birdseye view of street parking from **S 22** . Landlord here has also taken away underground parking spaces, and the fewer that remain are crowded in and difficult to maneuver in/out of if you have an SUV or pickup truck. **S 22** has two parking spots marked out in the garbage area but neither of those are realistically useable because one is occupied by dumpsters. Then you have to have somewhere to slide dumpsters out to be emptied. So second spot is not useable. **S 22** the City, when **S 22** applied for permit to put in five new studios in the underground that the studios would be built where 'storage and laundry facilities' existed but in actual fact **S 22** has built them where the garbage dumpster and recycling bins were, and where storage lockers were and, more importantly, where a total of 5 parking spots were. Those parking spots previously occupied in that space. **S 22** , the City, on the permit application for those 5 underground studios. I urge you to check carefully the information you have on just how many parking spots are occupied by sitting tenants at 311 Ash St because from surveys from some of the people who live there whom I am acquainted with it seems Landlord is pulling the wool over your eyes, just like Landlord at **S 22** has done to get **S 22** five studios. Landlords are highly motivated to stretch the truth in this present rental market climate, when they can get \$2500 + parking for a one bedroom unit in New West that has been 'newly renovated' or is 'brand new' it's a big carrot if you are a greedy person with a cavalier attitude towards the tenants you have. And it always comes down to the sitting tenants, and future ones, having to pay the price via loss of what was once the norm.

Furthermore, as more and more tenants park on the street, the curbsides cannot be swept of debris by City of New Westminster roadsweeping truck because so many vehicles are parked on the streets, the debris sits there for years and years, like an ecological experiment, weeds grow, blocks flow of water. Debris also gets washed in the rain to the storm drains and catch basins, ending up blocking them and then it causes flooding on the roads and screws up the whole drainage system and City has to come out and unblock them, drawing on City resources. During the construction of this five unit market rentals project AT 311 Ash St there will be many many many different vehicles of skilled and unskilled tradesmen, contractors, excavators parking on the street, - so where are tenants who park on the street supposed to park then? Where are the vehicle that service them supposed to park?

HOW WILL CURRENT TENANTS BE ACCOMMODATED WHILE CONSTRUCTION IS TAKING PLACE?

It is the modus operandi of the landlords doing these underground suite-building projects to just get what permits are needed and go full steam ahead with no consideration of one of the main principles of being a landlord in this Province: to ensure the peaceful, quiet enjoyment of the rental unit [for the tenant]. By the way: tenant is also required to not disrupt the peaceful and quiet enjoyment of the building for other tenants, or he/she will be evicted. So I want you to ask the question that you SHOULD ask the Landlord of 311 Ash St, I believe his name is

S 22 "HOW WILL CURRENT TENANTS BE ACCOMMODATED WHILE CONSTRUCTION IS TAKING PLACE?" Here is a testimonial from a tenant at my building who lived right above the five studios being constructed here. I have left his/her name off as he/she doesn't want to be targeted by the Landlord:

"In the spring/summer of 2022, my husband and I lived in suite **S 22** in New Westminster **S 22**. During this summer, our building owners constructed five basement units. The construction of these units was directly under our suite, lasted several months and was very disruptive, particularly to me as I work from home. The construction would begin very early in the morning (by 8am) and last until early evening.

Firstly, the construction was extremely loud, as it involved a lot of drilling directly into concrete. At times we could feel our floors shaking. As someone who works **S 22** and makes many calls for work this was very frustrating as I often had to pause my speaking until some of the noise subsided in order to speak, or I could not hear my colleagues. General work was difficult as the noise made it difficult to focus. Other tenants felt the same way too and expressed this to me. Bear in mind that, at the time, people were mostly working from home due to the pandemic. The construction also gave my husband and I headaches several times and would wake us up on weekends. It also stressed out our dog and I had to take him out of our unit on multiple occasions. When I spoke to my family on the phone, they would comment on how difficult it was to hear me given the noise.

Importantly, while we were given notification that the construction would take place, we were not told just how loud and disruptive it would actually be. We were not offered compensation and nobody from building management ever checked in to see how the construction was impacting us. I would not recommend approving this type of construction in another building. It was very frustrating for my family and I, but if tenants had a disability, an illness, or a small child and could not leave the house so easily, this could seriously impact their quality of life."

Landlord at **S 22**, part way through construction of the five studios project, nailed into the outside of the building's stucco 2" x 4" wood boards and used them to drape thick plastic over the balconies to stop dust and dirt-filled air from floating up to the balconies above the construction of the five studios in the underground. This was in the height of summer. I can only imagine how stifling those suites became when you could not get a flow of fresh air through the apartment via the patio door. **S 22**

, but still, throughout the project I would be able to hear boring, grinding, drilling, power tools, every week day, and sometimes on weekends. Water was shut off, electricity shut off, heat shut off - for varying periods and with little notice and sometimes we would get notices

shut-offs were going to happen and they didn't happen. So I don't need to imagine what tenant whose testimonial I have included here was going through who was unfortunate to live right above the construction project. Are the tenants at 311 Ash St going to have to go through the same thing? Have you asked Landlord **S 22** how the sitting tenants are going to be accommodated? This is one way you as a City can actually use your teeth and make sure tenants are properly compensated for what they will be giving up. A substantial reduction of rent **MUST** be offered, for the sacrifice of their 'peaceful and quiet enjoyment of their rental unit'. It is not good enough for you to hide behind another jurisdiction, the Residential Tenancy Act, Residential Tenancy Branch, or tell tenants to 'take it up with your landlord' and to speak one to one with **S 22**, to negotiate, I don't know how I can stress this enough but this current rental climate is a **LANDLORDS PARADISE**, they doesn't need to 'negotiate' with any tenant. Tenants are disposable, collateral damage, 'too bad, so sad'. Tenants dare not stick their necks out for fear of being targeted and booted out. Landlords find a way to 'no fault' evict -via recent UBC HART study, B.C. has the highest % of 'no fault evictions' across Canada at 85%. 85% of all evictions in B.C. are through **NO FAULT** on the part of the tenants. This is why you, the City, needs to step up, use what teeth you have and ask that question of this 311 Ash St Landlord **S 22** - **how will the tenants in the building be accommodated during the construction project?**

I have enclosed pictures of a current project at 520 Eighth Street (CEDAR GROVE) currently ongoing also an underground suites construction project:

Pictures are from the from the day the ground was broken by excavators to the week of Sept 17th. I asked one of the tenants there, who lives above the construction project **S 22**

had been offered any compensation at all by **S 22** landlord for the noise and the dust and the dirt and the overall disturbance and **S 22** said "no". None of the tenants have. How can you, The City, let this happen? Sitting tenants have **NO IDEA** the impact the work is going to have until they are feeling the impact of it and then it is too late and they daren't stick their necks out. You have liveability coordinators, why aren't they ensuring these tenants can live where they live, free of this kind of disturbance, unliveable conditions?

MARKET RENTALS ARE NOT AFFORDABLE RENTALS:

Who among us wants to have to adapt to living underground in a shoebox like a hobbit for around \$2500 a month? Because this is what this housing represents. I don't think City of New Westminster should be aiding and abetting landlords to put people in properties like this. It is sheer greed on part of landlords to build these five studios, squeezing every last dime out of every last inch of their properties to the detriment of sitting tenants, future renters. Lowering the standards. **OF COURSE** the units will rent out for \$2500 /month because the rental vacancy rate is **SO** low, but bear in mind this landlord, **S 22** will make upwards of \$1.5M in 10 years out of just five units, at current market rent. And that is without any rent

increases, and we all know landlords will get a rent increase of *at least* 2% every year for the next 10 years. You should be insisting on **AFFORDABLE** rentals, not '**MARKET**' rentals. 'Oh, but we need housing SO badly' is the common mantra these days, but before you feel, or Landlord tries to persuade you you should feel, righteous because you have accommodated *new housing* to be built, remember you have not helped anyone. Not current tenants, not future tenants, and certainly not the AFFORDABLE rental market, which is so dreadfully shrinking every single day and is on life support.

TREES

I have not mentioned the chopping down of the trees, which the Landlord will have to do to accommodate these five units. I also think is very detrimental to the sitting tenants. Once again, what they have is being taken away. Air conditioners in every unit would be good, but who is going to pay the extra electricity usage?

SUMMARY

I think instead of spending^{S 22} money on building these five units the Landlord **S 22** should be spending the money on: security cameras for outside the front of the building, the entrance to the underground parking, inside the underground parking, and at all side exits/entrances; a brand new intercom system so tenants can have their names properly programmed into the system and displayed within the intercom directory. Nowadays there are intercom systems that can be programmed into tenant's cell phone and that can be used in cases where tenant accidentally locks themselves out of the building and hasn't got keys with them. Current intercom system at front door at 311 Ash St was installed when the building was first built over 50 years ago. This tells me that this landlord has money to build five units that he can make +\$1.5M in 10 years from but no money to replace an aged intercom system or install cameras to make building safer for sitting tenants. And this apartment building is on a quite dark stretch of Ash St with insufficient street lighting, I might add. As a City Council with vision, and esteemed for being brave, I would ask that you not accommodate the building of any more **MARKET** rentals but only **AFFORDABLE** rental units, wherever possible, throughout the City.

I am curious to know if the Landlord at 311 Ash St will benefit in any way whatsoever from the new proposed federal legislation recently announced by Minister Sean Fraser whereby the GST is waived on the building of new rental units? I would be curious to know and I think you should ask this question of the applicant for this variance, Landlord **S 22**. I would ask if^{S 22} has received any grants or funding from any other government or public source. I think it is important to know this and put it on record as there may be certain guidelines that go along with such funding/grants.

Please take into account what I have said here and absolutely 'look out for' the current sitting tenants. Do not be complicit in lowering their living standards, accommodating reduced facilities and services, making their lives more tenuous or uncomfortable. Use what teeth you do have to hold landlords' feet to the fire where you can to protect tenants during this awful climate, the low vacancy rate, high rents (and increasing exponentially), and the widespread modus operandi of landlords to take away as much as possible from tenants in order to make more money, more profit for themselves. This is the housing crisis writ large. Tenants really ARE sitting ducks.

Yours sincerely,

S. ^{S 22}S 22

S 22

New Westminster









