

May 15, 2025

To Mayor McEwen and Council members of the District of Ucluelet

Re: Hyphocus Island proposed rezoning and changes to Ucluelet's Official Community Plan

Dear Mayor and Council,

I am deeply concerned about this proposed change. From the initial open house held by Maywind up to the present time, the developers appear to be operating from a lack of understanding about the nature of this community. At the very first meeting, they appeared to believe they were doing us a favour by proposing this major development.

Their present proposal would potentially mean 195 residences on this small, treed island, accessible by one residential road. When, at the very first open house, I asked about traffic increases on Helen Rd., their representative said (with a straight face) "The increase will be minimal." Should the present number of residences increase from a handful to close to several hundred, the traffic increase would be catastrophic, not minimal.

Hyphocus Island sits at the end of a narrow road, with one way in, and one way out. The proposed density is ludicrous in terms of tsunami and wildfire evacuation, and emergency response times.

Some interesting terminology has been thrown around at some of the "information" meetings. At one point, someone involved with the proposal made a condescending comment about "old Ucluelet" as opposed to "new Ucluelet." We would do well to remember that many residents choose to live here because of Ucluelet's small town, rustic nature. "New Ucluelet" does not mean that the residents must dismiss the previous history and rural character of "old Ucluelet" and embrace urban density. It is also clear that Ucluelet's rural nature is a strong draw for the tourists who visit here and rave about our community.

Of course the community will grow, and of course affordable housing is needed. The proposed development on Hyphocus does not appear to fit the bill of affordable housing.

Another comment made at one of these meetings was that “every community has a Helen Rd.” The point, made with condescending vibes, was that the residents of Helen Rd. were critical of the proposed development. As a resident of Helen Rd. my response is that we are indeed critical, as we live in a close neighbourhood with a unique character that would be forever changed should this rezoning go through.

Another condescending comment was that disagreeing made us “NIMBYS” – I had to look that one up, to find out it means “not in my backyard!” So, it is true that I live close to the causeway on Helen Rd., so you could say Hyphocus Island is in my backyard. However, given the size of Ucluelet, residents should be aware that this lovely, treed island is a treasure that is in all of our backyards.

This development will not just affect our little corner of town. It will affect us all. That is a significant increase in population, for a town that is currently dealing with many challenges, including aging and failing infrastructure issues and limited health care. There are already other residential developments around town that will create demands on limited services. And the saying “Once bitten, twice shy” also comes to mind; Ucluelet has had more than our share of abandoned development projects.

I have lived here for the better part of seventy-five years, so some might call me part of “old Ucluelet” (or they might just call me old, and they would be right about that). I do not buy into this labelling of “old” and “new” Ucluelet. We all live in Ucluelet; I know many people who have moved here recently, drawn by that same small-town lifestyle and west coast magic that we all appreciate so much. I encourage you to reflect on why you moved to Ucluelet, what you love about it, and why you remain here. Does urban density and over development fit with that experience?

When the buyers purchased Hyphocus, they did so with full knowledge of the zoning. We do not owe them the right to rezone, develop, and make a huge profit. We owe our community the right to preserve what makes Ucluelet so unique and special. A huge part of that is Hyphocus, that gem of an island. Please leave the zoning as Rural Residential.

Thank you for your devotion to this community, and your representation of the wishes of Ucluelet’s residents.

Sincerely,

Shirley Martin

