

## New Houses and Blockbusting

Have you noticed that small houses are being bulldozed and replaced by huge houses, and that to do so the mature gardens and trees of the small house are also being bulldozed?

Are you putting up with endless construction on your street, as huge houses are built?

Are you fearful that your neighbour may sell their small house and it will be replaced by a huge house?

**Then read the answers to the following questions.**

**1. Why is this happening?**

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**1. Why is this happening?**

The densification and re-development of established suburban neighbourhoods is happening all over Southern BC, because there is so much **profit to be made from the densification of single family neighbourhoods** into multifamily. The neighbourhoods most at risk of being bulldozed are those with normal sized lots where the houses are surrounded by lawns, gardens, and trees. The gardens exist

because the existing houses were **Right-Sized** for their lots. The **Densification Industry ( DI )** views the lawns, gardens, and trees as expendable to the profits that they make from building **Over-Large** buildings on those same lots.

## 2. Why isn't anybody stopping it?

Any neighbour who gathers his courage up to speak out against this densification is labeled a **Nimby**, or a raging granny, or an obstructionist, and thereafter no weight is given to their voice even if they are speaking on behalf of a group of neighbours.

## 3. What is a Nimby?

Nimby stands for **Not-In-My-Back-Yard**, a term coined by the American Nuclear Industry in the 1980's to silence dissent against placing nuclear power plants near to communities. Even then it was misused, for the nuclear Nimbys did not want them in anybody's back yards, not just their own. Those so-called Nimbys were thinking globally, while acting locally, and have since been proven right by the horrific events at Chernobyl and Fukushima.

## 4. Are you "just" a Nimby?

The Densification Industry is also **misusing the label Nimby** to justify the ignoring of **dissent**. A resident who speaks out against replacing single family houses with over-large buildings is usually not a Nimby at all, but someone who is thinking globally, while acting locally. They would be better described as **conservative electors**, or perhaps green electors, since what they hope to conserve is the ambiance of gardens and trees ... **the suburban forest**. The developer or architect who lives in an exclusive neighbourhood but only builds their over-large buildings in middle class neighbourhoods, is a truer example of a Nimby.

## 5. Why are they calling you a Nimby?

Those pushing densification are part of a well funded industry with much sway over town councils. When any of them resort to calling you a Nimby, or a Scaremonger, then that is a sure sign that your **dissent is becoming successful and therefore is a threat to their future profits**. Wear the Nimby label with pride and be assured that our wonderful single family suburban neighbourhoods are worth preserving from the bulldozers. Far too many of them have already been bulldozed.

## 6. Who are "they"?

There are nation wide organizations such as the "Urban Development Institute" which push for densification. The local Densification Industry ( DI ) will include architects, developers, estate agents, mortgage brokers, professional town planners, construction suppliers, tradesmen, and their employees. That there are still some right-sized houses being built that spared the existing gardens and trees, means that not all of these professionals are believers in densification. Unfortunately such professions have a vested interest and a financial motive leading them towards densification.

## 7. Has my neighbourhood been targeted for bulldozing?

If you live in a wonderful neighbourhood where single family houses are surrounded by mature gardens and trees on valuable lots (for instance if the **assessments of the lots are over twice those of the buildings**) then the profiteers will already have your block marked for "densification". This is because developers maximize their profits by building as large a building as possible on the cheapest lot in a desirable location.

## 8. Why is it so hard to stop the bulldozing?

In order to allow much larger buildings, the Densification Industry ( DI ) must first convince city hall of the merits of "densification" and then get them to **"renew" the Official Community Plan and the zoning bylaws** so that single family neighbourhoods are **no longer conserved and protected** by law.

The DI may be represented by local developers but it is a well funded international industry, so there are many **"How To" manuals** available to guide local developers through the steps of how to gain control of the city hall agenda, and how to silence Nimbys.

An example is **"A Municipal Guide For Responding To NIMBY"** which promotes all of the **time-tested false arguments** such as "good for the seniors" and "provides more housing choices" and "increases the tax base" and "allows for better transit", as well as giving pointers on **how to silence the dissent of the DI's main foe ... the long-time residents**.

## 9. Why is there so much blasting going on?

Hearing blasting every day is a good indication that the Densification Industry has already discovered your community. To replace a right-sized house with a much, much **larger building often requires blasting**. If they were building the same sized, or smaller house on the same lot, they wouldn't need blasting, now would they? The

builders need to blast and bulldoze to lower the general grade and get rid of rock ledges so that they can fit as large a house as possible on the lot.

### 10. What if the blasters are next door?

If you are a retired person living a quiet peaceful life in a quiet peaceful neighbourhood, then a blaster arriving next door is your worst nightmare come true. A month of blasting and the six months (or even two years) of the kind of construction that usually follows blasting, will ruin your quiet, ruin your peace, and ruin your overall well being. Unknown to you, blasting may even ruin your physical and mental health because of the **amount of toxic carbon-monoxide produced by each blast.**

### 11. The small house next door just sold ... what should I expect?

Municipal bylaws set out the mathematical formulas for restricting height, size, square footage, and setbacks according to lot size. If a house on a small lot in a desirable neighbourhood is **bought and then demolished**, then there are telling clues that show it is to be replaced by an over-large house. Not just over-large compared to the house it replaces, but larger than the surrounding houses. So large (in comparison) that it will change the green space, the views, the look, and the feel of the block.

### 12. How can I tell that an Over-Large house is to be built?

=> Council is passing a **spot rezoning** bylaw to allow it to be built.

=> Even though it is a brand new building starting from scratch, the builder has **applied for variances.**

=> The lot is to be **blasted**. This infers that the new house will be far larger than the house it replaces.

=> The lot is to be **bulldozed** from lot line to lot line before building begins, leaving no plant alive. This infers that the footprint of the new house will be larger than the old one, and will encroach on existing gardens and trees.

=> The house is to look like a **box with a flat** or almost-flat roof. This is done to maximize the interior square footage, complete with designer nine/ten foot ceilings, yet still fit within the height restrictions of bylaws.

=> The house is to be **multi-story**, even though it is replacing a bungalow. There are to be high, wide, featureless expanses of boring walls facing the neighbours on each side.

=> The house will **look more like an apartment block** or a pump house rather than fit in with the style of the other houses on the block.

=> The house is to include **more than one kitchen**. This means it will be used by more than one family (whether conforming to bylaws or not) and thus it will be a source of ongoing parking and traffic headaches.

=> A large garage it being built, but **no garage doors are installed**. After the occupancy permit is approved this will be turned into a suite and thus multi-family.

### 13. How will I be effected if an Over-Large house is built next door?

The construction of an over-large house invades and destroys the wellbeing of neighbours:

=> the very real **dangers** of blasting to life and property

=> the **noise** of blasting and drilling

=> the continuous movement and parking of **industrial sized vehicles**, such as dump trucks, cement trucks, machine carriers, bulldozers, drills, backhoes, refuse trucks, cranes, and pumper trucks.

=> the continuous movement and parking of **trades vehicles** which fill the street with vans and pickup trucks.

=> the continuous noise of **power tools and hammers** starting early in the morning.

=> the voices and actions of workers, including foul language, **careless driving**, and lack of concern for the neighbours.

=> **the mess**, the mud everywhere, the spilled nails and screws that get into tires, and the garbage.

=> the **inability** of the neighbours **to sell** their property at full value while there is such noise and mess.

=> the loss of peace of mind, anger at being **victimized, and frustration** that your wellbeing is ignored (after all, there is no profit in your wellbeing).

### 14. Why is the building site next door being so nasty to me?

It may be that the developer is a **Block Buster** who wants to force you to sell.

=> A "Block Buster" is an unscrupulous developer who takes advantage of the destruction of the wellbeing of neighbours. He uses the difficulty of selling a house that is next to a messy construction project, to create future projects and profits for himself. This well known **tactic** is known as blockbusting.

=> Blockbusting is often **synonymous with "Spot Rezoning"**.

=> A block buster **targets** a desirable block, especially a block with many **elderly, retired**, or nearly retired residents, and then buys the cheapest lot on the block. He then purposefully turns the house into a mess that worries the neighbours.

=> He may first rent the house out to **destructive tenants** like biker gangs until there is no question that the house will have to be replaced rather than renovated.

=> He begins the "**construction project from hell**", including blasting and bulldozing and the stripping of every living thing, and seeks permission to build an over-sized house.

=> The building **project runs slowly** in order to maximize the discomfort of the neighbours. Keep in mind that his goal is the big profits from **many future projects** on this block, rather than just the immediate profit from the first project.

=> He encourages his workers to be as careless, noisy, foul mouthed, and destructive as possible, and encourages them to **threaten any neighbours** who complain.

=> When a neighbour gives up and decides to move, he buys the house at a **distressed price**. This gives him his next building lot on the same block.

=> With two building sites in close proximity, he reaps the **benefits of economies of scale and tight scheduling**.

=> Once a neighbour sells out, the first project can be finished up, while the "construction project from hell" continues on down the block to pressure more neighbours. One by one the neighbours give up and **sell out at a loss**.

=> The profits from this tactic can be enormous and go on for years.