

B.C. Court Clears Way for Squamish Townhouse Project

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The British Columbia Supreme Court has recently ruled in favor of a townhouse development project in Squamish, allowing the construction of four new units in a neighborhood that has traditionally consisted of single-family homes. This decision comes after local residents raised concerns about how the project might change the character of their community.

Dennis and Andrea Smith, who live next door to the proposed development site, had challenged the project, arguing that a “building scheme” from 1959 restricts the property to

single-family homes only. They feared that allowing multiple townhouses on the lot would negatively impact privacy, increase traffic, and reduce pedestrian safety. These concerns are common in many communities facing rapid growth, as residents worry about how new developments might affect their daily lives and the familiar feel of their neighborhoods.

However, the court's ruling described the residents' concerns as "overblown" and sided with Clearwater Park GP Inc., the developer behind the project. The company had applied to cancel or modify the old building scheme to permit the construction of the four-unit townhouse. According to the court, this change is necessary and appropriate to meet the growing housing demand in Squamish, one of Canada's fastest-growing communities.

This decision highlights a broader challenge many communities face today: balancing growth and development with the desire to preserve neighborhood character. As urban areas expand, the demand for housing, especially higher-density housing like townhouses and condos, increases significantly. Local governments and courts often have to weigh the benefits of new housing options against the concerns of existing residents.

In Squamish, the ruling suggests that accommodating growth is a priority. The court recognizes that while residents' worries about privacy and safety are understandable, these concerns must be carefully balanced against the need to provide more housing options for a growing population. The project aims to offer more affordable and accessible homes in an area where space is limited, helping to address housing shortages that affect many British Columbians.

For Dennis and Andrea Smith, the ruling may be disappointing, but it reflects a legal perspective that prioritizes community-wide benefits over individual preferences. Meanwhile, Clearwater Park GP Inc. can move forward with its plan, contributing to the housing supply in Squamish and supporting the community's continued development.

This case is a reminder of how urban growth inevitably brings change, and how courts play a crucial role in navigating these complex issues. As cities and towns across Canada continue to grow, similar debates about housing density, neighborhood character, and community safety are likely to remain at the forefront.

Ultimately, the Squamish townhouse project offers a glimpse into the future of urban living, where development and preservation must find a workable balance to meet the needs of all residents.

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