

VOICES *Column***Still not seeing the public's interest****EVE EDMONDS***Editor*

EDITOR@RICHMOND-NEWS.COM

I keep looking for what I would consider a rational explanation as to why Richmond councillors are loath to curtail the size of homes in this city.

I'm not finding it.

I appreciate Coun. Chak Au's letter in Wednesday's paper, attempting to explain why he voted along side the majority of councillors (apart from Couns. Harold Steves and Carol Day) against the size limits recommended by city staff.

I still don't get it.

He says he has listened to many people in the community. I'm sure he has. And I accept that builders and mega home buyers may be less inclined to write letters to the editor, but his stance certainly doesn't reflect a balance among our readers.

He says the current proposal, which has passed through council and is now on to a public hearing, is an improvement over what is. Maybe, but given that what "is" is what Au describes as the exploitation of a loophole, that's not saying much.

He also says it would be unfair to owners of homes who are "almost built up" as they will be prevented from matching up with the

bigger houses next door.

Well, let's talk about not "matching up." What about the homes that have been radically dwarfed as a result of a mega home going up along side them?

I agree with Au's point that when it comes to housing, one size doesn't fit all and we need to attend to Richmond's diversity.

But it seems to me that diversity is exactly what we are losing with these mega homes.

When I first moved to Richmond, I rented part of a duplex that had been turned into a fourplex. It wasn't the prettiest thing, but it had a huge, shared backyard, and the cul de sac in front was action central for the kids. That duplex provided affordable housing for anywhere between 12-16 people. It's still standing, but I imagine not for long. The duplex next door has been knocked down and replaced with two mega homes, which house a total of six people between them.

And speaking of affordable housing, just last week, Coun. Bill McNulty also wrote a letter to the paper about the need to provide more of it. It was a commendable letter, yet he, too, voted in favour of this latest bylaw to allow Richmond to become home to the tallest homes in all of Metro Vancouver.

I realize these issues are complex and there are many stake-holders, but the word that comes to mind is excess.

I accept that developers want to earn a good living. I accept that people with the means want live in big homes, but we look to our civic leaders to balance that with the interests of all. Call me blind, but I'm not seeing it.