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1 note

## What is Fort Langley?

In the 90's I lived in what is technically considered Glen Valley, a rural area with the Fraser River on its Northern border. But our "home" was the quaint little village of Fort Langley, a minor neighbourhood in the Township of Langley that claims itself as the true birthplace of the province.

Growing up, I remember river tubing & "fishing" on the Salmon River off of 96th Avenue, surrounded by nothing as we made our long walk back along River Road. Now you would be cutting through the backyards of the acclaimed Bedford Landing development. I remember the cute little ma & pa video store on Church street - now long closed down. Antique shopping on Mavis was a regular family outing, as was the ice cream shoppe further up on Glover. Waiting for ferry traffic was part of life - sort of like growing up in Cloverdale beside train tracks. We went skiing on the Fraser on what seemed likely a weekly outing.

I remember trying to show off how many jugs of milk I could carry when taking groceries to the car from the IGA... before one slipped. Yes, the milk all over the parking lot was me. I remember actually being "cool" at a new school for at least a week for the first time upon my transfer to Fort Langley Elementary. But then the other kids found out I wasn't.

I also remember transition. My family was involved in the development of The Bluff in Glen Valley, building several of those homes, including ours. I remember when Redwoods Golf Course opened. I remember how excited I was when Wendel's Bookstore & Cafe was built. Fort Langley was changing. There were new buildings being built - such as the Village Square Courtyard, complete with outdoor atrium, bringing in new life to old corners.

Today the birthplace of BC is experiencing another transition, as it has over its almost 200-year-old history. The Albion Ferry shut down in 2009 after 52 years of service due the opening of the Golden Ears Bridge, providing a radical impetus of change, but Parklane was already changing the face of the quaint little village.

Parklane's Bedford Landing development radically altered the makeup of the tiny Fort Langley population, and also set off the start of the Fort's modern day controversies. While some public officials have made the "upper-crust" neighbourhood their home, many long-time residents resent the perceived uppity nature that has come to claim the village for their own.

Obviously Bedford Landing was just the start. A local resident/developer upgraded many of the facades of storefront throughout the Glover Road main drag, changing the downtown core from a tired, ghost-town feel to an almost Disney-esque Frontierland. But it wasn't until that developer's Coulter Berry building on the corner of Mavis and Glover that he started to draw the

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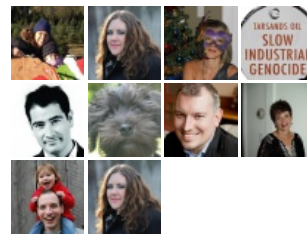
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ire of Fort Langley's "heritage conservatives". If my memory serves me correctly, a petition of over 700 signatories was presented at Public Hearing. But Council passed the needed heritage alterations and variances, more than ruffling a few feathers. At the same time, the same developer also pushed forward with plans to clean up Fort Langley's above-ground powerlines.

Later, another local resident was forced to take two shots to get another new large building passed, but with little controversy from the public. Then, just recently, a three-story building similar to the Coulter Berry building was brought forward. Yet for some reason, there was no response from the public. No petitions, no line up of submissions at Public Hearing, no irate op-ed pieces.

Frankly, I was scratching my head. Not that it was a poor design, but just that we were looking at something so similar to the previous application that was so hated by so many, but now we saw no opposition. Councillor Charlie Fox came to this sense of wonderment as well. Councillor David Davis opposed the permit and mused as to whether "we've scared them off". Whether I agree or not with Councillor Davis' opposition is besides the point, but his call to possibly revisit the Fort Langley Community Plan heritage guidelines if they continue to be regularly dismissed is apt. There appears to be a trend that the Community Plan guidelines are really only there to be broken, so why not at least figure out whether they are worth having or not.

Another proposal was put forward on the same night, presenting a 52-townhouse development on McBride Street with some smartly-designed homes that fit the character of the surrounding area. Just as with Bedford Landing, the hope by the developer is to capitalize on the high desirability of Fort Langley living.

Fort Langley is changing. It has always changed. Controversies will eb and flow. People will come and go. Businesses will open and close. Buildings will be raised and razed. But perhaps it is time for not only just Council, but also the public, and not just those in Fort Langley, to ask themselves, "What is this birthplace of BC?" Is it a retirement home for middle-upper class suburbanites? Is it a chic Yaletown for the Fraser Valley? Is it a theme-park Frontierland? What is the vision for Fort Langley and how is it to be implemented?

What is Fort Langley to you?



By bradrichert

Filed under Langley, Fort Langley, Charlie Fox, David Davis, development, Township of Langley



Kristina answered: Ruined! It's a modern outdoor shopping mall with no real charm anymore.



theredtie posted this