

Terms of Reference for
"Downtown Capacity and View Corridor Study"
previously known as: "Downtown Capacity Options Study"

1.0 Intent

The purpose of the Study is to review the adopted heights limits and view corridors affecting the study area (see below) and recommend changes, if appropriate, to achieve additional potential development capacity.

The intent is to identify possible modifications while still achieving the public objectives underlying the current height and view corridor policies (see Section 3.0).

The additional capacity, which would likely be achieved through future rezonings, would be intended to support public objectives such as heritage, affordable housing, social/community/cultural facilities, or parks and recreation. (Note that it is not within the scope of the Study to address allocation of space to these different benefits.)

The scope of the study will be adjusted based on the time, staff and resources available (see sections 6.0 and 7.0), and may be geographically narrowed if necessary. (see section 2.0).

2.0 Study Area

The Study area will generally include the following areas:

- Downtown Official Development Plan area, except area C2;
- Granville Slopes;
- Central Waterfront Hub Area; and
- False Creek North

The Study area does not include the Historic Precinct--area C2 (Victory Square and Hastings Street, Gastown, and Chinatown) --because a separate height study is underway for that area, and due for completion in early 2009. The geographical focus of the study will be further guided by the location of sites that are developable, most of which have been identified by staff.

3.0 Policy Background

Basic building heights in the study area are regulated by plans and zonings adopted at various dates over the past 30 or more years: the Downtown Official Development Plan (ODP), False Creek North ODP, Granville Slopes Policies, Central Waterfront ODP, and Central Waterfront Port Lands Policies.

View Protection Guidelines were approved in December 1989 and establish a number of view corridors (aka view cones) over the downtown peninsula to protect views of the north shore mountains from a variety of locations south of the downtown peninsula.

In February 1997 Council endorsed policies resulting from the Downtown Vancouver Skyline Study intended to result in a "dome-like" skyline shape incorporating certain key principles.

In line with this decision, in May 1997 Council adopted the General Policies for Higher Buildings which outline where and under what conditions buildings higher than current maximums—up to 600 ft.—could be considered.

4.0 Products

The ultimate product will be a report proposing revisions to the adopted view corridors, skyline policy and higher building policy, for Council consideration.

Other products will be the technical documentation and consultant reports completed during the course of the Study.

5.0 Public Consultation

Consultation will occur with the broad public, property owners, and key groups such as residents' and business associations, and Council advisory committees. In particular, public input will be sought in the evaluation of options. Various mechanisms will be employed such as web-based information/newsletters; an advisory group (if appropriate); open houses; surveys; and attendance at key groups' meetings.

6.0 Work Program and Schedule

The Study is to take about 12 months from the time the staff team is in place.

The staff team will create a detailed work program. The scope of work will be adjusted to fit the 12 month time span. This may involve reviewing some view cones and not others (e.g. those which have most effect on development capacity); limiting the number of options considered; or other approaches.

6.0 Staffing and Resources

Two temporary 12 month staff positions have already been approved by Council to undertake this work. They will work under the supervision of an existing Senior Planner.

It is anticipated that consultant work will play a major part in the Study, as was the case with earlier studies on view corridors and skyline. The staff team will be responsible for generating terms of reference, consultant selection and management. Funding for consultant work and public consultation costs is available from operating budgets.