

PUBLIC CONSULTATION SUMMARY

Public Notification

A rezoning information sign was installed on the site on November 4, 2009. Two public information open houses were held: the first was on November 24, 2009, and the second one, in response to revised drawings, on April 20, 2010. Notification and application information, as well as an on-line comment form, was provided on the City of Vancouver Rezoning Centre webpage (www.vancouver.ca/rezapps).

November 2009 Rezoning Application – A notification letter, dated November 3, 2009, was mailed to 1433 surrounding property owners. In addition, notices were dropped off at the 40 rental buildings within the notification area. The open house was held on November 24, 2009, at the Coast Hotel with staff and the applicant team in attendance. A total of approximately 308 people attended.

April 2010 Revised Application – A second notification letter and invitation to a public information open house, dated April 6, 2010, was mailed to 1445 surrounding property owners, and notices were dropped off at rental buildings within the notification area. The public open house was held on April 20, 2010 at the Coast Hotel with staff and the applicant team in attendance. Approximately 354 people attended.

Public Response

Public responses to this proposal have been submitted to the city as follows, noting that staff have not cross-referenced names to check for duplicate responses:

- In response to the November 2009 open house, 238 comment sheets were submitted (approximately 60% opposed/40% in favour).
- In response to the April 2010 open house 236 comment sheets were submitted (approximately 78% opposed/22% in favour).
- A total of 536 letters and emails from individual households providing comments (approximately 71% opposed/19% in favour).

Comments from those opposing the application cited the following concerns:

West End Community Plan: There was a significant desire for more consultation and an updated West End community plan prior to further development and under which to consider development proposals. It was felt that no changes should be considered to the existing zoning without such a plan. The neighbourhood wishes to be engaged in discussion about any proposed changes in the West End

Height: Many felt that the proposed tower is of an inappropriate height and scale in the context of an area of mostly low-rise buildings. There were many suggestions about appropriate height that ranged from 4 to 19 storeys. It was commented that a 22-storey building should be built on a high traffic street, in other areas of the city such as Yaletown or Coal Harbour, or close to transit sites, not in a quiet area of the West End.

Density: Many indicated that they thought the West End is already dense enough and does not need higher density. There were also concerns that the building is too bulky and that the tower should be more slender. It was suggested that increasing the floor

space five-fold is too much for this small site, resulting in impacts such as shading, over-view, “loss of sky” and lack of green space.

Setbacks: There were significant concerns about the lack of setback from Broughton Street, and the negative impact this would have on the streetscape. It was felt that a greater transition between the building and the street was required. Also, that having the building built so tightly to its site restricts its architectural expression. Many felt that the building is inconsistent with the traditional development patterns of the West End, noting that other high-rise buildings in the West End are built on significantly larger parcels of land, feature a considerable street front setback and include either a large green space or are adjacent to busy thoroughfares. It was also suggested that the tower is too close to other tall buildings.

Shadowing: There were concerns that the building would result in the loss of sunlight for neighbouring buildings, including adjacent rooftop terraces, thereby impacting the quality of life of those residents and effecting property values. Concerns were also expressed about shadowing of the Broughton Street mini-park during the afternoon,

Views/Privacy: Concerns were expressed that the tower would have a negative impact on views from adjacent buildings, and that the tower would create over-look issues, for both indoor and outdoor spaces, resulting in a loss of privacy for surrounding residents.

Parking/Traffic: Some felt that inadequate parking was being provided by the development and that this would create critical parking problems. It was noted that parking is very tight in the area as there are many older buildings without parking and that those residents park on the streets, leaving little parking for visitors and trades people. There were also concerns about the amount of vehicles such a development would bring into the area and the resultant impacts on pedestrians, increased traffic noise levels, and traffic congestion on Broughton Street (which is not a through street).

Character: It was generally felt that the proposed building represents a radical change in density that would dramatically change the look, feel and character of the community. It was felt that a tower is unsuitable on a street with mostly three and four-storey buildings and that it doesn't fit the style of the neighbourhood, noting that existing tower buildings in the West End are surrounded by green space and have significant setbacks. It was also negatively referred to as typical of Yaletown or Coal Harbour developments.

Green Space: There were concerns about the loss of the existing green space of the church site and that more open space should be provided as part of this development. There was a suggestion to close Broughton Street from between Comox and Gordon Neighbourhood House to add green space.

Public Benefits: It was thought that the increase in population represented an impact on already limited public facilities and infrastructure, and that contributions towards community resources should be pursued. Suggestions included provision of social housing units, a day-care facility, or community gathering/meeting spaces, upgrading of existing community services, or an increase in park space. A few people expressed

uncertainty of whether this is the best location for Qmunity. There were also concerns about the five-year term of the SAFER housing.

STIR Program: Some residents thought that STIR is a waste of tax money and a cost to the City in terms of revenues and amenities. There was concern that the program does not address affordability adequately and that it should include a greater proportion of low-income housing units. There was also concern that the units will be converted to condos in the future. It was felt by some that the West End already has a high proportion of rental buildings as compared to any other part of the City.

Rental Housing: Some residents felt that there is not a lack of rental housing, only lack of affordable rental housing, and that this project does not contribute affordability. There were concerns that the units are too small and that the project lacks family housing. Others felt that more condos rather than rental were needed. Some felt that adding more rental units would increase the transient nature of the area, thereby increasing security concerns and loss of neighbourhood quality.

Other comments cited in opposition were:

- that this project would set a precedent for future development in the West End;
- that construction impacts (noise, dirt, road closures, traffic) will disrupt the neighbourhood for years;
- that the mature trees along western border should be preserved; and
- that the existing church and its park-like grounds should be retained, noting that it could be used as an adjunct to the WE Community Centre or low-rise affordable housing for low-income families or seniors.

Comments from those in support of the application included the following:

Height – Some residents felt that the tower will fit well within the context of the neighbourhood, that it is comparable to other towers in the area, and that more well-placed towers would not diminish the feel or look of the community. Some indicated a preference for new towers, indicating that the West End has too many squat 3-storey 50's-type walk-ups.

Density – Some respondents felt that the West End can comfortably accommodate this scale, that the height and density proposed are reasonable, and that the increased density would not have a negative impact on the community. Increased density was supported on the basis of being a more sustainable approach, and it was noted that it is more efficient to increase density in areas like the West End where the infrastructure, including shops and services, already exists. It was also acknowledged that increased density is required to achieve rental housing in the city and that dense environmentally efficient developments make sense especially if the increased density secures the provision of rental housing.

Parking/Traffic – Some residents felt that things shouldn't be made more attractive for cars, that reduced parking levels, well below normal City required minimums, should be implemented, and that constructing a building with very little parking will help ensure that only those who are willing to be car free will move there, noting that the West End is one of the most liveable, walkable communities in North America. It

was also suggested that parking should be reduced in exchange for the provision of some affordable housing.

Character — It was noted that the West End is a blend of low and high rises and this tower would fit in well. There was support for the architecture of the building. Some residents felt that many of the existing West End buildings reflect the architectural style of the 70s and 80s and are outdated, and that the proposed project would modernize and bring a new look and architecture to the neighbourhood.

Public Benefits — Some residents felt that the revised application, with the addition of community amenity space and SAFER units, better takes into account the needs of the community, and that the provision of activity/program space for use by Qmunity, Gordon Neighbourhood House and other community groups, adds great value to the project. There was support for the SAFER units to help meet the needs of older people.

STIR Program — It was acknowledged that the City needs purpose-built rental buildings, that STIR is helping achieve that objective, and that incentives are needed to encourage developers to reinvest in the West End. There was support for achieving rental housing on an abandoned church lot with no existing housing.

Rental Housing — There was significant support for the provision of new purpose-built quality rental housing. It is acknowledged that there is a shortage of rentals in the West End, that more rental housing is required close to where so many people work, and that such projects are needed to meet future housing needs in Vancouver. It was also felt that much of the rental housing stock is aged, outdated and in poor repair, and that there is a lack of modern newer quality market rental housing. It was felt that the provision of two and three bedroom units addresses the need both for larger units and family units. It was thought that this project will give potential renters increased options—both those who cannot afford to purchase a condo and those who prefer to rent. It was felt that increasing the inventory of rental space will help drive rents down, helping ensure affordability and choice of housing tenure in the area, and that competition from new construction, may force landlords to improve their units or adjust rates to reflect the quality of the unit for rent.

Other comments in support were:

- that increased development will be good for the local businesses of the area;
- that the existing church on the site is not a heritage building and is unusable, and should therefore not be retained; and
- support for incorporating elements of the existing church architecture into the lobby of the building.