

## URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

**DATE:** March 2, 2022

**TIME:** 3:00 pm

**PLACE:** Webex

**PRESENT:** MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:

|                   |                |
|-------------------|----------------|
| Brian Wakelin     |                |
| Alan Boniface     | Excused item 1 |
| Meeta Lele        |                |
| Jennifer Stamp    |                |
| Margot Long       |                |
| Adrian Rahbar     |                |
| Brittany Coughlin |                |
| Amina Yasin       | Excused item 2 |
| Jesse Gregson     |                |

### RECORDING

**SECRETARY:** K. Cermeno

### ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING

1. East Fraser Lands Area 1
2. 5455 Balsam St

Chair Brian Wakelin called the meeting to order at 3:05pm and noted the presence of a quorum. The panel then considered applications as scheduled for presentation.

1. Address: East Fraser Lands – Area 1  
Permit No. N/A  
Description: The approved amendments will allow for revisions to the CD-1 to align with current City policies and directions, including an additional floor area of 39,246 square metre (422,422 square feet) in Area 1 to increase housing options and an increased package of amenities, including 20 childcare spaces and 2 acres of park. Additional building height maximum from 24 to 28 storeys is proposed in the Waterfront Precinct.  
Zoning: CD-1  
Application Status: Rezoning Application (Text Amendment to CD-1 (567))  
Architect: Boniface Oleksiuk Politano Architects  
Staff: Kevin Spaans, Desiree Drewitt and Kirsten Robinson

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## EVALUATION: SUPPORT 9/0

### Planners' Introductions:

Rezoning Planner Desiree Drewitt introduced the project, provided the site's context and masterplan development, and presented the rezoning proposal as follows:

#### Overview

- The project site area is about 147,035 SF and is located in the south east corner of Vancouver, within East Fraser Lands (EFL).
- This rezoning proposal consists of three development parcels: Parcel 30, 33/34, and 35/36.
- EFL (aka River District) is a 128-acre site located in the southeast corner of the city, bound by Marine Way, Boundary Road, the Fraser River and Kerr Street.
- Planning for EFL has been underway since 2002 shortly after closure of the Canadian White Pines sawmill.
- Key milestones are the *Policy Statement* (2004), and the *Official Development Plan (ODP)* (2006).
- Areas 1 and 2 were originally rezoned in 2008 and 2010, respectively.

#### Masterplan

- The EFL Plan Area is intended to be a new complete community with a population of approximately 15,000 people.
- The plan includes a commercial heart and high street connecting the town square to the waterfront anchored by a new community centre and public plaza.
- The plan includes 28 acres of parks and open space, 4 childcare facilities, a school site, and approximately 20% of the units as social housing.
- Since development started in early 2010s, approximately 4,000 residents have moved into the new neighborhood.

### 10-year Update to the Masterplan

- In 2017, the City and the Developer embarked on a review of the *ODP* which was 10-years old at the time.
- The key objectives of the study were to increase housing diversity, better respond to changing environmental conditions, and to improve the delivery of the public benefits package.
- One of the big moves coming from that work was to create a stand-alone, waterfront site for the community centre, which was approved as an interim step in 2018.
- The work to update the *ODP* also included a redesign of the eastern neighbourhood (Area 3) and an evaluation of the potential of unbuilt sites in Areas 1 and 2 to increase housing opportunities.
- These *ODP* amendments were approved by Council in 2021, including additional floor area of 422,442 SF.
- This rezoning consideration, outlined in red, is the final step in the process to make adjustments in Area 1.

### Proposal

- The rezoning application considers a total of 422,442 SF of additional residential floor area on Parcels 30, 33/34 and 35/36 including:
  - 100,000 SF of secured rental housing
  - 55,000 SF of social housing
  - 267,442 SF of market housing
- Additional height to achieve the increased density is proposed:
  - On Parcel 30, adding an 18-storey tower
  - On Parcel 33/34, a height increase from 14 to 22 storeys is proposed
  - On Parcel 35/36, a height increase from 9 to 16 storeys is proposed
- The rezoning proposal also includes design refinements to the Waterfront Shoreline in Area 1 and consideration of amendments to the *Utilities Development Cost Levies (UDCL)* by-law in exchange for neighbourhood amenities and drainage works.

Senior Development Planner, Kevin Spaans, then presented the overall changes in building massing from the original *ODP*, through proceeding amendments, to the current proposal, as follows:

### Urban Design Concept

- Through changes to the *ODP* the overall concept of building form scaling down toward the shores of the Fraser River has remained.
- The most prominent changes relate to the shifting of height and density away from the shoreline to allow the community centre to stand alone surrounded by substantial public realm to be under the control of the Vancouver Park Board.
- The site design prepared by BOP Architects and Wesgroup is intended to be a diagrammatic representation of how this area may work. A final design will come in future;

however, comments on this preliminary approach will assist staff in their future work with the Park Board.

### Urban Design 'Roles'

- Each of the parcels in East Fraser Lands is assigned an urban design “role”, such as being a gateway site or framing an important public space in the *East Fraser Lands Design Guidelines*.
- These “roles” provide clear objectives to staff and applicants when preparing applications.
- BOP Architects and Wesgroup have prepared updates to these “roles” with generally minimal divergences from the original.

### Building Massing and Comments Pursuant to Future DP Applications

- The indicative massing prepared at the time of the original *ODP* presents with a higher level of detail than is being proposed in this rezoning. The Panel’s input on overall massing is limited following Council approval of the rezoning application.
- Further articulation and expression will be added through the Development Permit (DP) process, and each of the parcels will return to the Panel for consideration at that time.
- The Panel was welcomed to provide DP-level considerations to guide future applications, such as suggested materiality, architectural expression, etc.

### Solar Access

- Shadow analyses diagrams presented demonstrate an increase in shading overall, commensurate to the increase in height and density; however, these do not materially change the performance of the public realm.
- The reallocation of massing away from the community centre site results in improved solar access at and around this future public amenity.

Advice from the Panel on this application is sought on:

1. With consideration given to the City's objectives to provide a community centre, adjacent waterfront outdoor amenities and a dedicated park, please comment on the reallocated density, height, and massing proposed.
2. Please provide comments related to architectural expression, materiality, and site design intended to inform staff’s review of future development permit applications.
3. Please provide comments on the waterfront conceptual design to inform future staff review.

### **Applicant’s Introductory Comments:**

Property developer, Dean Johnson (Wesgroup), provided a brief overview of the history of the project and the objectives of the proposal, as follows:

- This rezoning formally captures by-law amendments reflected in the approved updates to the *ODP*, a 3-5 year undertaking including the applicant teams and the City.

- Reorienting massing and reallocating density allows for delivery of a discrete Vancouver Affordable Housing Authority (VAHA) development parcel. This allows for operational improvements and increases the supply of affordable rental housing.
- Additional market rental housing, new retail opportunities closer to the waterfront, and a better performing community plaza are also enabled by the proposed rezoning.

Project architect, Alan Boniface (BOP Architects), provided a summary of the applicant team's approach to the changes in massing and urban design concept, as follows:

- Established design principles in EFL formed the basis for the revised urban design approach so that the new massing continued to reflect the objectives for the community.
- Reorientation of massing was strategically done to maximize tower separation.
- Loading and parking accesses are reconsidered to reflect the changes in the street network that have occurred over time.
- Different uses are dispersed throughout the community but they are woven together in a way that is intended to provide for an interesting, active neighbourhood.
- Heritage elements are incorporated into the design approach for the waterfront public area, celebrating the history of the site, the riverfront, and the river walk.

The applicant team then took questions from the panel.

#### **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**

Having reviewed the project it was moved by **MS. STAMP** and **MS. RAHBAR** and was the decision of the Urban Design Panel:

THAT the Panel Recommend **SUPPORT** the project and recommends the applicant team to carefully review and consider the comments made by Panel, as reflected in the Meeting Minutes.

#### **Related Commentary:**

Strong support for the increases in height and amount of density proposed.

General support from the Panel for the approach to arrangement of massing, particularly the forming of courtyards.

General support from the Panel for the approach to public connectivity between and through courtyards.

A Panel member noted the modifications continue to allow for physical permeability while allowing for a more open and well-lit plaza.

Panel felt it was too early to comment on materiality and architectural expression.

Panel members noted that variety of architectural expressions should continue to reflect the legacy of the area.

A Panel member noted that the suggested material pallets in the *East Fraser Lands Design Guidelines* do good job of reflecting the industrial heritage of the site, future phases of development could include different approaches to materiality for contrast and visual interest.

Concern amongst some Panel members that the increase in density did not appear to include a commensurate increase in green space.

Strong support for the increased supply of affordable housing.

A Panel member expressed concern that 6-storey podiums (versus 4-storeys) may act as a barrier. The open spaces which should feel inviting.

Another Panel member expressed that 6-storeys wasn't enough considering the widths of some of the rights-of-way, noting that higher podiums may give more residents proximity to street and connectivity to the ground.

Panel members recommended setting towers back from the outside edges of podiums to better define the two massing elements.

Panel members generally supported the waterfront conceptual design; however, Panel members noted that more information is needed in future as the current proposal is more of a diagram.

Regarding landscaping, comments were made regarding provisions for double rows of street trees to reinforce a human scale, and that more native infill trees be provided in open spaces.

A Panel member suggested that there are opportunities for animation of back-of-house areas that should be considered, recommending that landscaping and furniture be used as tools to improve the performance of these areas.

A Panel member noted that the expression of landscapes, setbacks, public plazas, interstitial areas and park areas will be fundamental to the project.

A Panel member noted that all of the courtyard spaces at the development parcels are multiuse use, adding to activity and interest.

General support for sustainability elements.

**Applicant's Response:** The applicant team thanked the panel for their comments.

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|----|---------------------|--|
| 2. | Address:            | 5455 Balsam St   |
|    | Permit No.          | RZ-2021-00063  |
|    | Description:        | To develop an infill 14-storey rental residential building with 145 secured rental residential units; all over 3 levels of underground parking, consisting of 142 vehicle parking spaces and 312 bicycle parking spaces. The floor space ratio (FSR) is 3.63, the gross floor area is 8,537.2 sq. m (91,894 sq. ft.), and the building height is 39.62 m (130 ft.). The application includes retention of the existing 14-storey rental residential building, and is being considered under the Secured Rental Policy. |
|    | Zoning:             | RM-3 to CD-1   |
|    | Application Status: | Rezoning Application   |
|    | Architect:          | RH Architects Inc.   |
|    | Staff:              | Grace Jiang and Robert White   |

## **EVALUATION: Support with Recommendations 7/0**

### • **Introduction:**

Rezoning Planner, Robert White, began by noting this site is located in Kerrisdale at the northwest corner of Balsam Street and West 39th Avenue in close proximity to the Midtown/Ridgeway Greenway along West 37th Avenue, the Arbutus Greenway, and the R4 RapidBus route along West 41st Avenue. The site is currently zoned RM-3, and is developed with a 14-storey residential building containing 88 rental residential units, along with a pool and generous landscaping. Properties to the south and east are zoned RM-3 for apartment forms of up to 120 ft. Properties to the west across the lane are zoned CD-1 (375) for ground-oriented multi family housing and RS-5 zoning further south and west. Properties to the north across the lane are zoned CD-1 (188) and developed with a heritage-designated church and ground-oriented multi-family housing, and RS-5 zoning further north.

### Secured Rental Policy

Consideration of this rezoning application is enabled by the Secured Rental Policy. Specifically, the Policy allows for consideration of rezoning applications for sites zoned RM-3 where existing rental units do not currently exist, and infill development where appropriate on sites where existing tenants are not displaced. In this case the latter criteria for infill development applies. The Policy notes redevelopment is to adhere to existing height limits and generally to guidelines. The RM-3 district schedule anticipates building forms of up to 120 ft.

### Proposal

This application to rezone 5455 Balsam Street proposes a 14-storey infill residential building, with retention of the existing 14-storey residential building, and includes 145 new secured rental residential units, a height of 39.62 m (130 ft.), a density of 3.63 FSR for the portion of the site proposed to be developed, and a total of 142 underground vehicle parking spaces and 312 bicycle parking spaces shared between the existing building and the new proposed building.

Development Planner, Grace Jiang presented the project's form of development,

### **Context:**

This subject site is located at the northwest end of the RM-3 zone in Kerrisdale. RM-3 is one of the old medium-density residential zones. Many buildings were built in the 1960s to '80s. The

building form in this area is characterized by a mix of low to mid-rise apartment buildings and high-rise buildings with heights ranging from 3 to 14 storeys. Due to the density incentives regulation, the towers in this area were mainly developed in the form of a “tower in the park” surrounded by generous landscaped open spaces. The tower floorplates are varied from 3,000 s.f. to 8,000 s.f. depending on the site areas that the towers are located.

As for the immediate context, there are 3 to 6- storey apartment buildings across Balsam St, a church and a 3-storey senior housing across the north lane, and a courtyard townhouse development across the west lane.

**Site Condition:**

The site area is exceptionally large. It stretches almost the entire block with a frontage of 460 ft on Balsam St. The site slopes down to the south and west by approx. 24 ft. Balsam Street is about 10 ft higher than the rear lane. There is an existing large rectangular 14-storey building located on the southern half of the site. The northern end of the site is a natural green area with quite a few mature trees, but currently, it is not accessible by residents and the public.

**Form of Development under Policy:**

As the Secured Rental Policy specified, in the RM-3 zoning area, infill development can be considered where appropriate on sites. The development is required to adhere to existing height limits and generally to guidelines. RM-3 zoning has a 120 ft outright height limit, and there are no design guidelines associated with the zoning. This infill development will be assessed relative to the intent of the RM-3 schedule. The intent of this schedule emphasizes the provision of high-quality parking, open space, and daylight access while permitting medium-density residential development, including high-rise apartment buildings.

**The proposal:**

This rezoning application proposes an infill high-rise building on the northern half of the site. The city considers this infill development because the site area is extremely large and meets the criteria to consider two towers on site.

The new building includes a 14-storey tower and a 4-storey podium. The proposed building height is 130 ft, 10 ft higher than the RM-3 height limit. This increased height is a trade-off for reduced podium and tower footprints, which helps achieve a larger open space and greater daylight access to the surrounding public areas. An amenity room is proposed on the rooftop and is counted as the 15th floor. This concept is generally encouraged in other city policies, and Zoning Bylaws, provided the amenity room is modest in size and barely visible.

The proposed tower has a 6,000 s.f. floorplate, and is 80 ft apart from the existing building. The northern natural green area and the mature trees are intact. The overall site coverage is approx. 30%. The application generally aligns with RM-3 parameters, including setbacks, tower separation, site coverage threshold for density incentive. Regarding the vertical angle of daylight (VAD) regulation, staff provided a comparative analysis of daylight angles between the rezoning application and development under zoning, to help the Panel to evaluate the overall performance of this infill rezoning application. Staff also acknowledge that the RM-3 VAD is a form-based zoning regulation and is more stringent than many other medium-density residential areas in the city.

With regard to the public realm and amenity spaces, ground-oriented units are proposed on both street and the lane; the building communal entrance is on Balsam St with a two-storey gate



expression; the significant trees around the perimeter of the site will be retained. Outdoor and Indoor amenity spaces are co-located at multiple locations. Staff also presented the shadow studies and pointed out that the site is north-south oriented, and the new tower is located in the central area of the site, so the shadows are largely contained on-site at equinoxes and summer solstice.

Advice from the Panel on this application is sought on:

1. Given the policy objectives and intent of base zoning, staff are considering this proposal for a 130 ft tower instead of a 120 ft tower envisioned under the Policy. Please comment on the overall height and density, in particular assessing the impact of the additional height varied from the Policy.
  2. Comment on the contextual fit of the new building as it relates to massing, building form, public realm, and impact to the adjacent properties.
  3. Comment on whether the proposal successfully secures a high quality of open space and daylight access, with particular considerations given to:
    - Spacing of the buildings and level of openness to the sky;
    - Performance of open spaces and quality of landscape design.
  4. Advice on the architectural expression to inform a future DP application review, in particular the vertical expression up to the rooftop amenity room.
- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:**

The site is an anomaly, it's all under one ownership.  
The building is a little bit to the south, this allowed for development to the North.  
At the north, side to the site there is an open space that is very much utilized.  
Across the lane are 3/3.5 storey townhouses.  
There are townhouses placed on the lane side.

They applicant noted they spent a year with the planning department regarding the shape and form.

The applicant decided to place the building where it is so that a major of cluster of trees on the north could be maintained

In order to keep the existing grove of trees the building floorplate shrunk, this resulted in a one storey additional storey of height.

Saw an opportunity to open up the lane and make it more pedestrian friendly, there are patios on the lane to activate the lane.

The parkade is all to the north of the existing building, its being done in a way to minimize impact of the existing building.

There are a variety of amenity areas around the building.

There is an outdoor and indoor amenity area on the ground level.

At the north end there is a grove of trees that is about 800 square of feet.

There is a variety of places and opportunities for gathering and socializing.

Tried to provide a contemporary architecture that is appropriate to the Kerrisdale setting.

Tried to extenuate the vertical and horizontal aspects of the building

The project is following the green building policy and standards will meet all the sustainability requirements from the city.

#### LANDSCAPE

Landscape includes plants that are pollinators and created potential habitats for bees and birds.

At the roof tops there are areas of green roofs and urban agriculture.

There is a big harvest table, lots of seating and a trellis for a sense of canopy and evening lighting.

Working to make the lane a lot more attractive and animated.

The trees to the north will have more a natural character.

Worked closely with architecture team and arborist to protect root zones.

The space between existing building and new building there is an amenity that will be a shared space between the two areas along with a kid's area.

The applicant team then took questions from the panel.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**

Having reviewed the project it was moved by **MS. LONG** and **MR. BONIFACE** and was the decision of the Urban Design Panel:

THAT the Panel **SUPPORT** the project with the following recommendations to be reviewed by City Staff:

- Review differentiation of facades to respond to adjacency;
- Review differentiation at base, continue to develop the design of exterior spaces for livability;
- Design development of the indoor and outdoor relationship of amenity spaces and relationship to outdoor amenity space;
- Reduce vertical expression and reduce thermal bridging;
- Consider the thermal bridging of balconies.

#### **Related Commentary:**

There was strong support for the height and massing.

The additional height does not affect shadowing.

The panel supported the placement of the building; the positioning allows of penetration of light.

The majority of the panel noted the architectural fit feels generally okay for the density of the area.

There was a number of comments regarding the envelope difference on various faces.

There were a number of comments regarding the relationship of the building to the base and to the ground.

Work on the interface of the street level, presently feels the building is brought to the ground and balconies are close to the grade.

Consider a greater massing of the base so the building connects better to the ground.

A panelist noted there is great opportunity to break down the building form and massing and knit it back into the strong landscape.

There were multiple comments recommending reducing the vertical expression and recommending reducing the thermal bridging from vertical and horizontal elements. A panelist strongly supported taking the unit out on the second floor and having a more gracious entry as it is presently tight could be double height. A panelist noted support of the relationship of the entries with the vertical white column; however, the other white columns are not necessary.

There was strong support for the quality of the open spaces. Regarding the amenity spaces, many panelists noted considering the amount on units consider making the interior spaces bigger and ensure the exterior amenity spaces are well programmed and livable. A panelist recommended repositioning the interior amenity space on the ground floor from the corner location to facing the existing building, this would allow the space to benefit from cross ventilation and improve livability.

A panelist noted there is opportunity for the landscape to be a fundamental offering. Many panelists noted their appreciation for the protection of the trees and root zones by moving the parking underground.

There were multiple comments regarding the quality of the expression of the alley and the livability of the alley. A panelist noted livening the alley is a good opportunity to inform how the neighborhood will develop. Consider some focus on underground servicing so it is a better urban experience at the alley. Consider changing the surfacing of the alley so it is less hostile.

In regards to sustainability, there is quite a lot of thermal bridging that requires further consideration with more detailing. Review the vertical columns are not a concrete penetration. Consider triple glazed windows. Look closely at the enclosure performance especially with the small units.

**Applicant's Response:** The applicant team thanked to recognize the challenges and for their comments.