

## Langara Gardens Town Hall Meeting

June 26, 2016

A Town Hall meeting was held on June 26, 2016 at the Langara Gardens Social Lounge. The meeting was attended by existing tenants and local residents, Council members, representatives from the developer and design team and City of Vancouver Planning staff. The following minutes provide a summary of information presented, topics discussed and a record of the Q&A session.

### **Councillors present:**

Councillor Andrea Reimer  
Councillor Geoff Meggs  
Councillor Adrienne Carr  
Councillor George Affleck  
Councillor Elizabeth Ball  
Councillor Melissa DeGenova (in the audience)

### **Panel:**

1. Dr. Nazerelli, Tenant for 8 years at Langara Gardens
2. Tracey Moir, Oakridge Langara Area Residents (OLAR)
3. Dan Garrison, Senior Planner, Housing Policy and Projects, City of Vancouver
4. Lon LaClaire, Director of Transportation, City of Vancouver
5. Brian McCauley, President Chief Operating Officer, Concert Properties
6. James Cheng, Architect, James K.M. Architects
7. Ben Johnson, Senior Planner, Planning and Development Services, City of Vancouver

**Introduction:** Raymond Penner (facilitator) welcomed and thanked everyone for attending. He outlined the objective of the evening to engage in a facilitated discussion with the community on emerging directions for Langara Gardens. Raymond noted that the Councillors' role at this meeting was to listen and observe, and that their involvement in decision making would come later in the process.

**Planning process:** Ben Johnson (City of Vancouver, Planner) recapped on the planning process and community engagement to date, which included three rounds of Open Houses attended by over 200 people in most instances. In June 2013, Council directed staff to hold a Town Hall meeting. The purpose of this meeting to give residents and the community the opportunity to learn more about the project and provide input directly to staff and members of Council at the policy creation stage. Ben outlined the planning process, highlighting key steps in the process and the opportunities for the public to provide further input. In particular noting if the Policy Statement is approved by Council there would be further opportunity for the community to input at the rezoning stage and subsequent development permits. Added together, the very earliest construction could start would be 3-5 years.

**Project overview:** James Cheng (project architect) gave an overview of the site context and masterplan proposal. He noted that Langara Gardens (designed in the 1960's and built 1970) was a rare example at the time of mixed-use community urban design. Defining features included the mature trees, landscaping and open space, swimming pools and cafes. These features were being carried through to the concept

design, in addition to creating a north-south open space connecting Pearson Dogwood and Cambie Park, and an east-west open space.

**Approach to existing tenants:** Brian McCauley (Concert Properties) commented on the approach to rental housing. Brian noted that the 21-acre site currently provides 605 rental units. The proposal is to retain 335 of these units, by retaining all four of the existing towers. In addition to replacing 270 low-rise ground oriented units, Concert and Peterson aspire to provide additional rental units and in total would like to create over 1,000 rental units on the site. Brian noted that the City has clear policy on tenant relocation and protection, and that adequate notice and assistance would be built into the tenant relocation plan. In terms of phasing, they anticipated at a minimum development over a 10 to 12 year period. He explained that Concert would work with tenants and the management team, to ensure those that wanted to stay long-term were given the opportunity to relocate into replacement units. Concert have an obligation to deliver a certain number of units on an affordable basis, and are committed to this.

*Comment: Tracey Moir (panel) - I would like to see as sensitive transitions as possible into the surrounding neighbourhood. The side that really matters is the one to the north, which is single-family homes, identified in Cambie Corridor Phase 3 planning program for potential townhomes. Right now 6-storeys with upper two-floors set back are being proposed along the northern edge. People in the audience would like to hear more about Phase 3 and the City's thoughts on that.*

Response: Ben Johnson

The Cambie Phase 3 planning process is underway and additional information is available at the sign in desk. The properties immediately north of the site are being considered for ground-oriented housing (e.g. townhomes). This is in recognition of transitions through this site and into the neighbourhood. Decisions are still being assessed as part of a long-term planning process for Cambie Phase 3. We'd like to invite all to become engaged in that process as we move forward.

#### Questions from the Audience:

*Question: Change is good and a lot of high quality work was done. I'm questioning the logic of some of it. Firstly questioning how representative the sample was for the entire population and how this has been extrapolated. Secondly, questioning whether urban planning decisions have been based on the right planning logic.*

Response: James Cheng

The concept is completely based in Vancouver. It is based on what made Langara Gardens successful and how this can be maintained. We did not use a theory to generate the scheme.

*Question: I live in tower four and I'm noticing there's a 28-storey apartment block proposed outside my beautiful view. Could you make some planning amends to this?*

Response: James Cheng

We are here to listen to you about the concerns you have, and things you want to change. I'm hearing that you are concerned about preservation of views. The City has policy of tower separation of a minimum of 80 ft. We have created 100 ft. separations in order to make sure your view is not just a building. We also have created variety of staggered building heights and orientations to maintain views. We are also working to preserve open spaces on the ground. We can't ensure 100% of the existing views are maintained, but we are very aware and considerate of the desire.

***Question: You mention the term affordable housing. How do you define affordable housing? Secondly, will there be an equivalent amount of townhomes in the plan as there are today?***

Response: James Cheng

In answer to the second question, yes, there are townhomes proposed, which will be ground-oriented and family-oriented.

Response: Dan Garrison

The concept of affordability is difficult. I can talk about the policies that apply and the types of housing that will result from that. The foremost principle is that any rental housing lost needs to be built back and the same unit mix needs to be maintained. Approximately two-thirds of units to be redeveloped are currently family oriented (two or more bedrooms) and we will see that unit mix built back. The other policy that applies is what the City calls the 20% policy. This requires that 20% of the new units be set aside for affordable housing. The policy says this is for low to moderate incomes. The level of affordability will be dependent on funds available at the time of rezoning. Generally speaking, in social housing units a portion of the units are deeply subsidized (30-60%) and rent below the Provincial Housing Income Limits. The remaining portion will rent at the low end of market rents, usually at a 20% discount of market rents. The idea is to create mixed-income affordable housing for the social as well as economic sustainability of the new community.

***Comment: Tracey Moir (panel) - I think everyone can agree the affordability of housing in the city is a huge problem. I would dearly like to see the affordable housing be truly affordable. My ask of the City is not to allow any market rental new housing here to be included in the target of 20%.***

***Question: I currently live in a ground level suite and we have two young children. How many existing ground level apartments are there currently and how many are proposed?***

Response: Ben Johnson

There are 270 townhouse or two-storey units currently. It is a City requirement that they will be replaced one for one as unit type (i.e. two-bedroom for two-bedroom).

***Question: You pointed out the wonderful benefit of the shrubbery and trees. You showed a slide showing the removal of the trees. Are they going to be commercially removed, wrapped and stored so we don't have to wait 10-20 years for new growth?***

Response: James Cheng

Whatever trees we can preserve in-situ we will. We work with an arborist who studies the trees and advises which are healthy, which can be moved and which should be replaced. A project like this takes 10-12 years to develop, so we can work with nurseries that will keep and maintain trees for years so that when it comes to planting they are 15-20 ft. tall.

*Question: I live in one of the garden suites on 57th. Cars are parked on either side of the parkade and visibility is very dangerous. I would love to have you look at this issue. Second issue is parking. I suspect in time this will be residents only parking and where are Langara residents and visitors going to park?*

Response: Lon LaClaire

With respect to the City's policy on managing on-street parking, we do try to make street parking work for residents and visitors. If parking demand is high the City will do an investigation and if there are challenges finding parking spaces we can come in with regulation to address this.

Response: James Cheng

The City has parking standards and By-laws. For additional residents we are required to provide a certain amount of parking to satisfy the City's parking requirement. Part of this is visitor parking and for every parking garage we will have visitor parking. In addition we observe there are currently some convenient spaces on Ash Crescent which create an opportunity for short-term parking, and the redesigned street will include on-street parking. We do also have a commercial component and after hours those spaces can be used for visitor parking.

Response: Lon LaClaire

City policy related to new development requires that new parking demand be managed on-site. Not relying on the space available on the streets for residents.

*Councillor Reimer asked by show of hands how many people in the audience are currently tenants at Langara Garden.*

By a show of hands, approximately 70-80% are either residents or nearby neighbours within walking distance.

*Question: I have a question for Mr LaClaire. We had this discussion on Pearson Dogwood. I wonder what your thoughts are on transportation in and out of the area with Pearson Dogwood and Langara Gardens. There is no transit line on 57th. Cambie and Canada line are at capacity during rush hour and there are three schools along Heather Street.*

Response: Lon LaCLaire

We were involved in Marpole Area Plan which helped us discover a lot about the neighbourhood. We have identified a lot of locations for new signals and we expect developments like this will generate demand for new infrastructure. There will be more detail on this during the rezoning phase when we get full statistics and a detailed transportation analysis. There is lots of investment to come. A bus route on 57th Avenue is a high contender. Recently introduced new bus routes on 16th and 33rd

have been very popular. Transit take up in our City is excellent and we expect this to be successful once launched.

*Question: Tracey Moir (panel) - Transit is a challenge in the City. My understanding is that it's not just about buying more train cars or extending platforms. It's about the holes in the ground that get you in and out of the station. Although a bus at 57th sounds like a great idea, how many more people can we accommodate on the Canada Line with all the new residential towers? Richmond is growing, Marine Drive, Pearson Dogwood, Oakridge Mall and Bus Barns, RCMP lands and Little Mountain. The main reason for this densification is Canada Line, and we need to get those people on the Canada Line to free up space on the streets. We have a huge challenge here.*

Response: Lon LaCLaire

With projects like the Canada Line it's a regional service in addition to local-serving, so we have to look at regional population growth. Translink is about to launch a rich data-set this spring so we'll get numbers on station-by-station loading. Right now at the busiest point on the Canada Line we move about 6,000 people an hour in peak direction. What this project will add will be very small relative to that number. That said, we expect significant new demand on the Canada Line. The region has assessed demand for 20 new trains in the next 10-years which would mean trains every 2 minutes instead of every 3 minutes. Current capacity on each train is 370 people. Further transportation analysis will take place in the next phase.

*Question: On the subject of tenant relocation and the 270 units being replaced, if someone lives in a garden apartment and is offered a like-for-like replacement, will there be harmonization of existing and new rents to ensure they can afford their new place?*

Response: Brian McCauley

The City has policy on tenant relocation. There is an obligation on us as the developer to offer units on site at reduced rates for tenants coming back.

Response: Dan Garrison

We have a relocation and protection policy that you can find on our website for more information. What it says about returning tenants is there is a requirement for right-of-first-refusal to move back into the new units with 20% discount off starting market rents. We also have policies for tenants who are more vulnerable. There will be social housing built back on site. So we have a number of ways to ensure tenants have the opportunity to keep living in the community.

*Question: When does the Tenant Relocation Plan apply?*

Response: Dan Garrison

Typically the Tenant Relocation Plan is submitted with a rezoning application, which is the next phase. However this is a bit of a special case, so even at the Policy Statement phase we want to be looking at how the tenants are accommodated and have policies around it. Details will be worked out at rezoning.

Response: Brian McCauley

Not only do we have an obligation under City policy to replace all of the rental housing. Also as this is a long-term phased development, our intention is to build most, if not all, the rental replacement units in the first phase. This is a unique site, this is one of the only projects in the city where we're retaining 335 of 605 rental residential units. The towers are 45 years old and we hope to invest in them to retain them for another 20-25 years of life span.

***Question: At the last meeting we were told that of 1,900 additional units planned for Langara Gardens, 1,000 new units would be rental. What I'm hearing tonight is different.***

Response: Brian McCauley

I think the proposal right now is 2,400 new units and we've committed over 1,000 as rental. The unit count will be determined by the size of units.

Response: Ben Johnson

To clarify the total number of units including existing units would be approximately 2,400. 1,900 refers to just the anticipated number of *additional* units (on top of the 605 currently here). The figure of 1,000 rental units proposed includes social housing, retained and replacement rental housing.

***Comment: I have had the privilege of being a tenant here for 42 years. I love Langara Gardens. I will now be looking at a 30-storey tower instead of trees and mountains. As I understand it, the proposal will end up with a 414% increase in density, call it 4,000 more people living here. I find the notion that this is going to work staggering, let alone parking issues, transport and so on. From a person who wants to live here for the rest of my life, I would desperately ask, please do something more reasonable. A 100% or 200% increase should surely be enough.***

***Question: Langara Gardens isn't extremely accessible for people in a wheelchair. As it is now, pathways have steps and existing ramps are very steep. I am hoping you have accessibility in mind when you're making your plan?***

Response: James Cheng

Accessibility will be improved substantially. We did not have accessibility standards in the 60s and 70s but now all new buildings must comply with today's standards.

***Question: Is the height of the two new towers behind tower 4 set in stone?***

Response: James Cheng

Nothing is set in stone that's why we are here today.

***Question: How many people are moving into Vancouver each year? What is the population growth.***

Response: Lon LaClaire

Across our region we are growing by about 3,500 people per year. In terms of the transportation system this is the number we need to keep in mind. When people move about the region people rarely consider themselves bound by City boundaries. We are planning for that type of growth.

Councillar Carr added that approximately 5,000 to 8,000 people are moving into the City each year.

***Question: Who is serviced by the Tenant Relocation Plan and how does this differ for long-term vs. short-term tenants?***

Response: Dan Garrison

The Policy considers both. We want to reflect and respect that tenants who have been in their homes a long time may need more assistance. Financial compensation is part of what is required. For example, if you've been in a tenancy up to 4 years, two months free rent is provided. If you've been in a tenancy for 5-9 years, 3 months is provided, and anything up to 6 months free rent is provided for tenancies more than 20 years. There are also provisions for moving assistance and discounted rents.

***Comment: I'm not here as a tenant, I'm here because I love the neighbourhood. My big concern is affordability. Developers are going to develop based on guidelines the City puts in place. We can talk about replacing rental unit with a rental unit. But we need to talk about replacing affordable rental units with affordable rental units. That is the big concern. 2 months' rent or 6 months' rent is not solving affordability. This process is super important and I appreciate we're doing it far ahead of the public hearing process, which is great. However I would say Council work with yourselves and come to affordability solutions first, and then let that guide development issues.***

***Question: In the new development have you allowed for wheelchair accessibility in the apartments themselves?***

Response: James Cheng

That is a requirement under the By-law and a number of the units will be convertible as well.

***Question: I live in tower 1 and I have a spectacular view. The model shows that my view will go away. Would Concert consider if we would get first choice to get a unit with a view like we currently have in a new building?***

Response: Brian McCauley

Certainly we would work with you to try and accommodate you.

***Comment: I would like the tall buildings to be shortened and I would like them to be more down slope of the existing towers, for instance along 57th or Neal Street so they would not obstruct the views of residents that have been here quite a while.***

***Question: Are we to expect a rental decrease because you are impinging on our quality of life? Also, on the buildings that you do build, can you put rooftop gardens / parks on each one so that it would add to the green aspect?***

Response: James Cheng

There will be green roofs on many of the buildings to create a green aspect.

*Question: There hasn't been much said about the linear park. I'm wondering who's going to develop it, who's going to maintain it and what will we be able to do there? There are many seniors here, maybe there could be benches, tables, games etc.*

Response: Brian McCauley

The City will engage in a consultation process around the linear park, the intention is for it to be quite actively programmed and perhaps items that take advantage of the slope for children and families to play. The needs and interests of seniors' will also be considered.

*Question: I'm concerned about which trees are significant. It looks like the trees that will be kept are just on the fringes.*

Response: James Cheng

Significant trees are scattered all over the site. The darker coloured trees on the concepts show the most mature and healthier trees, which are good candidates for retention.

*Question: Tower 4 does not have enough parking underneath to accommodate everyone that lives there. While you are redeveloping is there a possibility for extending parking for tower 4? Also I have a suggestion to put storage lockers adjacent to parking spots.*

*Question: I live at Marine Gardens and am currently moving out because it is being demolished. Langara Gardens has always been near and dear to my heart and my kids go to Churchill. I wanted to move here until I learned that it is also being redeveloped. A number of issues sound the alarm for me. Many of the things we were told for Marine Gardens are being voiced again this evening. It's true our townhouses have been replaced with two and three-bedroom apartments but they are not affordable even with the 20% reduction. In our case, no one is returning because the units aren't similar, for us a townhouse and an apartment are not one in the same. I'm really concerned about what I'm seeing happening all along Cambie Corridor. MC2 opened behind us April 1, the townhouses and most of the apartments are still empty. A bachelor rents for \$1750, a tiny two bed apartment rents around \$2250 and townhouses are \$2500 a month and tiny compared to what we currently have. Everyone from Marine Gardens has left the neighbourhood and in many cases Vancouver as well. It's not an issue of supply, it's an issue of affordability. I do not understand why we keep hearing that the answer to affordability is supply. We are building the supply but at such a price that regular Vancouverites can't afford it. It's devastating. We are losing all our family-oriented affordable housing and that's why we have schools closing.*

Response: Dan Garrison

This is not going to be an easy process and I understand at Marine Gardens it hasn't been an easy process. Marine Gardens is one of the reasons why we now have much more solid tenant relocation and protection policies. We also have a much larger site with an opportunity to provide new accommodation on site and phase in a way that



minimizes dislocation and displacement. We intend to implement learnings going forward. I'm surprised to hear that there is vacant rental as we have a vacancy rate at historic lows. I'm interested in knowing more about it.

Response: Brian McCauley

To reiterate, this site is unique. 335 existing rental housing units will remain, and will remain as is and affordable going forward. Appreciate there is still the replacement of the 270 ground-oriented units. I've heard loud and clear regarding size and pricing today and will take that away.

*Question: I understand nothing is set in stone but there have been some unanswered questions. And just wondering at what point they get answered, e.g. square footage, parking etc.*

Response: Ben Johnson

A lot of the questions around parking, unit sizes and tenant relocation plan get worked out at rezoning phase so you should get more clarification then. A Policy Statement is relatively high level, it does set some expectations around height and density, land use and transportation and so on, but things really get confirmed through the rezoning process.

*Question: I'm assuming those questions get answered before it actually gets passed and implemented?*

Response: Ben Johnson

Absolutely, after the policy statement stage there will be a 12-18 month rezoning process leading up to a public hearing. The application will be public and there will be opportunities for questions and answers and to provide comments.

*Question: Is there a forum in place to submit comments on line?*

Response: Ben Johnson

Yes, through our website you can contact us and provide any comments or questions. We will collate feedback from this event and the open houses, and provide a summary to Council.

*Comment: There's clearly a fair bit of concern and still a lot of questions around tenant relocation, particularly logistical questions.*

*Comment: I've been a tenant for 41 years. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the panel and Council members. I hope you are not just listening but hearing, hearing there is a lot of anxiety and concern. People need your support. Whatever you decide we ask you to be wise and considerate. Please keep communicating with us and hear our concerns.*

*Question: Family housing is sometimes considered to be two-bedrooms. If you have small children of the same sex they can maybe grow up with that, but if children are the opposite sex it can get crowded. It also doesn't include the possibility of Grandma being part of family unit. What is the percentage of three-bedroom units? Will any fall into the affordable category?*

Response: Dan Garrison

Replacement rental units will be same unit mix as is here now, so two-thirds will be two and three bedrooms. For the affordable housing that is part of the 20% requirement, we require at least 50% family units and 20% are three or more bedroom units. There is a policy for new market housing as well that requires at least 35% be suitable for families and there we'd like to see at least 10% three-bedroom units. Trying to deliver three- and more bedroom units in the affordable housing category is a priority for us.

*Comment: I'm a neighbour on Ash Street. I think redevelopment is important but the amount seems extreme. Could it be scaled back so the towers aren't quite as tall and it could blend better into the neighbourhood. It feels like a walled community inside Vancouver ringed by towers. We will lose any view to the South.*

*Question: I'm a single senior. I love living here. I am concerned with the new units on Marine and Cambie, which are little bigger than a rabbit hutch, asking \$1500 - \$1700 for a single-bedroom. I have almost 900 sq. ft. here and a beautiful ground floor patio, I look out and see the bushes and trees. I pay \$1360. You say you're going to replace them but what have I got to look forward to, will it be half the size? Please help me.*

Response: Brian McCauley

We'll definitely take into consideration what we've heard tonight in terms of unit sizes. It's certainly not set in stone. There's also a lot of new emerging policy at the City suggesting requirements for new family-oriented units. I don't have an answer today in terms of the size of unit that might replace yours, but I'm certainly hearing what you've said.

### Councillor observations:

Councillor Affleck - Appreciate everyone's input tonight. It's obviously a sensitive issue, especially for those renting. The reason I wanted to point out the growth of the City is because our role as Councillors is to find ways to accommodate growth sensitively. This process is about engaging with you early on and to hear your concerns to hopefully make adjustments so that we have a project that as many people as possible like.

Councillor Carr - Thank you to the staff and panel for being here. I am keen to know how you felt about this Town Hall meeting? Let us know if this works for you. I heard every issue tonight from the landscaping, to height and density, parking, transit, accessibility and size of units. These are all things to me that get summed up as - you have a place you love here and are loathed to give up - and who can blame you. The key issues for me were around affordability, (i.e. will the new units be affordable and will they be comparable) and around density and transit. I've taken down your questions and I really appreciate the very detailed and clear input you've provided.

Councillor Meggs - Yes, thanks very much for the feedback. To James Cheng's comment, when Langara Gardens was designed in the 60's, the design anticipated a lot of what happened in the city subsequently. Secondly, the city already has the most aggressive tenant protection rules of any municipality in the region and Concert has some experience in rental, which is encouraging. We will be looking to find ways to make sure everyone can stay living here. Look forward to seeing what happens in the next phases of this consultation.

Councillor Reimer - We really appreciate all of you being here tonight. I am one of only two renters on Council, I just got evicted for the tenth time in 19 years for redevelopment, so I appreciate very much the anxiety expressed and desire for certainty around the next steps. The devil is in the detail, and it is important to continue to push on the details. From my part as a Councillor it's important that we're clear around what happens at each process and who can be involved in those discussions.

Councillor Ball - Thank you very much for all your questions. The thing that I heard loud and clear was anxiety about what will happen. I think the most important thing about these processes is to let us know early the things that are critical to you, like we have tonight. It's critical you keep talking and keep telling us, because the only way anything will get changed is if we hear from you.

#### **Panelist observations:**

Dr. Nazerelli - I feel personally the developers have tried to give us the better trade-offs. I must say the thing I love most about Langara Gardens is the gardens. If we can preserve those, even in a slightly modified form, that would be something I'd love to see. I would say the process has been fair, with opportunities to feedback, I hope this will continue and the process will remain very transparent. I love the idea of being able to submit questions on-line. I have a feeling we are going to be listened to and I hope the dialogue can continue in both directions.

Tracey Moir - I have two questions of Council. For years OLAR has been asking for the City to look at the cumulative effects of density in the Cambie Corridor, regarding physical and social infrastructure. Second, will our two Vision Councillors here today recommend this form of meeting be incorporated in future community engagement?

Dan Garrison - We know questions about tenancies are very important. What has been really valuable tonight is hearing the specific concerns, e.g. the pricing of rental units and what the units will look like. While we have City policy, this is a special site and we will be working together with Concert to address this.

Lon LaClaire - This is a great location from a transportation perspective, that's not to say there isn't room for improvement. Accessibility around the site is of top importance. The high level goals around transportation are related to safety, health and environment, to prioritize growth in walking, biking and transit.

Brian McCauley - Thoughts and opinions shared tonight mean a lot to us at this stage. I've heard loud and clear the concerns and we are very committed to finding a

solution that works for all of you, over and above the City policy. We will continue to hold these events and are always available to have conversations about any concerns you may have.

James Cheng - This is the 7th meeting I've been to now and every time we come I hear something new. What I heard tonight was the sense of community and the sense of place. We will work hard for the next round to ensure the human aspect is built into the plan.

Ben Johnson - We are taking in comment forms until July 9, 2016. Comment forms are also available online at [Vancouver.ca/Langaragardens](http://Vancouver.ca/Langaragardens). The next big milestone is Council consideration of the Policy Statement. Before the draft Policy Statement is presented to Council it will be available online for the public to view. If you're on a notification list you'll receive updates in advance. Thank you for coming out tonight it's been really valuable.

**Meeting close:** Raymond Penner thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.