

Date: Monday, January 14, 2013
Time: 3:00 p.m.
Place: Town Hall Meeting Room, City Hall

PRESENT:**Board**

V. Potter Director of Development Services (Chair)
S. Johnston Deputy City Manager
B. Jackson General Manager of Planning and Development
P. Judd General Manager of Engineering Services

Advisory Panel

G. Borowski Representative of the Design Professions (Urban Design Panel)
F. Rafii Representative of the Design Professions
J. Stovell Representative of the Development Industry
K. Busby Representative of the General Public
K. Chen Representative of the General Public
D. Wlodarczak Representative of the General Public
K. Maust Representative of the Vancouver Heritage Commission

Regrets

S. Chandler Representative of the Development Industry
J. Miletic-Prelovac Representative of the General Public

ALSO PRESENT:**City Staff:**

J. Greer Assistant Director of Processing Centre - Development
R. The Engineering Services - Projects Branch
D. Morgan Development Planner
C. Lau Project Facilitator

725 GRANVILLE STREET - DE416152 - ZONE CD-1

J. Cheng James KM Cheng Architects
J. Thompson Cadillac Fairview
C. Phillips Phillips Farevaag Smallenberg

Recording Secretary: L. Harvey

1. MINUTES

It was moved by Mr. Jackson, seconded by Mr. Judd, and was the decision of the Board to approve the minutes of the meeting on December 17, 2012.

2. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

None.

**3. 725 GRANVILLE STREET - DE416152 - ZONE CD-1
(COMPLETE APPLICATION)**

Applicant: James KM Cheng Architects

Request: Interior and exterior alterations and to add approximately 2,515.0 sq. ft. to this existing seven-storey retail building (formerly Sears Department store) with two levels of underground parking, including the re-cladding of the exterior, retention of the Retail Store use from the ground through third floor levels and one underground level (mall), change the use of the fourth through seventh floors from Retail Store to General Office and a reduction of underground parking by 37 spaces to provide elevator lobbies and pits.

Development Planner's Opening Comments

Dale Morgan, Development Planner, introduced the proposal for a conditional application involving a major retrofit of the existing 7-storey department store at 725 Granville Street as well as a change of use from retail to office use for the top four floors. The site is located in the Pacific Centre Mall in downtown Vancouver. The site is zoned CD-1, which includes all of the Pacific Centre Mall which was rezoned in 2007 principally to permit the co-location of the Canada Line City Centre Station. Mr. Morgan noted that the design conditions at the rezoning stressed exemplary architecture and public realm amenities.

Mr. Morgan described the site stating that it occupies an entire city block bounded by Granville, Georgia, Howe and Robson Streets. The site is shared with the TD Tower located on the northwest corner of the site as well as the Canada Line City Centre Station at the north end of the site. There are three parking ramps; an in and out ramp along Howe Street and a second means of access from Robson Street. Also, there is an emergency exit stair from the Canada Line Station located in the middle of the Granville Street sidewalk adjacent to the subject site.

Mr. Morgan described the context for the site noting it is located within the Downtown District Area "A" and in the heart of the city's Entertainment District. There is significant adjacent development including the Vancouver Art Gallery, Robson Square and the Law Courts across the street and the Hotel Georgia and Hotel Vancouver within a few blocks.

Mr. Morgan mentioned that at the enquiry stage, staff advised the applicant to reduce the monolithic massing and blankness of the expression with something far more varied and richer in appearance and of a finer scale that was more appropriate to the Granville Street context. As well, the existing public realm is largely dysfunctional and in need of improvement and so the applicant was asked to provide a greater transparency from the street into the building and to relocate the transit emergency exit stair from the middle of the Granville Street sidewalk to inside the building. Staff also asked the applicant to close the Robson Street layby and parking

ramp to restore the public realm in that area and to make a better resolution of the grade condition at the northeast plaza.

Mr. Morgan noted that retail uses at and near grade level with office uses above at the higher floor levels are considered optimum for this part of the Downtown District. As well the change of use from retail to four floors of office use on the top floors represent a significant intensification of use approval which approval is at the discretion of the Development Permit Board. He also noted that the application is within the allowable density with an increase in floor area of approximately 2,500 square feet which is less than the maximum allowable of 5,000 square feet. Mr. Morgan mentioned that the extensive retrofitting of the building was an opportunity to achieve significant urban repair to an entire city block in the downtown core. He added that this will be achieved through well resolved architecture using high quality materials; an excellent retail frontage providing substantial transparency at grade and pedestrian interest; substantial repair and enhancement to the public realm, including resolution of grades in the northeast plaza; and the achievement of LEED™ Gold.

Mr. Morgan reviewed the recommendations contained in the Staff Committee Report dated November 21, 2012. The recommendation was for support of the proposal, subject to the conditions contained in the Staff Committee Report.

Questions/Discussion

In response to questions raised by the Board and Panel, the following clarifications were provided by Mr. Morgan:

- A condition for the change of use was to supply bike parking for the office component.
- The plaza area has been identified for a bike sharing station.
- There are three entrances into the underground parking; one on Robson Street plus two other entrances along Howe Street.
- The proposed art features is a private installation and not part of the Public Art Program and is planned for the northeast plaza.
- The vestibule roofscape on the roof between the TD Tower and the Sears building will not be improved.
- Portions of the entrance ramp along Robson Street are leased to the site from the City.
- A further review of the closure of the ramp on Robson Street and other opportunities to maintain the ramp are being investigated by the applicant and staff.
- Signage has not been approved for the building at this time.
- There is no feature or decorative lighting proposed on the building.
- The Robson Street parking entrance receives less than 18% of the traffic going into the parkade while Howe Street takes the majority of traffic; based on 2,000 cars per day that would be 360 cars.
- Café use is compatible with the retail use on the ground plane suggested for the project.

Applicant's Comments

James Cheng, Architect, stated that in renovating the existing building they can reduce the mass of the existing structure and give it a new life. He added that all the uses being proposed are in the Bylaw. The building was built in 1962 under the building code of that time. He said that he would love to add a green roof and that their engineer has to check the loads to make sure they can do it and asked the Board to give them some leeway to conduct the study.

Mr. Cheng said they agreed with all the conditions under Condition 1.0 in the Staff Committee Report however he had some concerns with Condition 1.3 as they require TransLink's approval in order to meet these conditions. He asked the Board to consider rewriting the condition as a

request to work with TransLink to achieve the goal. As for Condition 1.3.3 regarding the closing of the Robson Street parking ramp, Mr. Cheng asked the Board to allow them to investigate keeping the ramp and finding additional alternatives. Mr. Cheng passed around a drawing that showed how they would normalize the pedestrian crossing at Howe and Robson Streets and asked to have the opportunity for further investigation with staff. Mr. Cheng also asked the Board to reconsider the wording in Condition 1.4 to allow them to investigation to see if the roof can take the addition of a green roof.

Mr. Cheng said that they agree to open up the Howe Street face with more glass as much as possible except where they are exist stairs and exhaust vents. Regarding Condition A.1.4, Mr. Cheng asked that the wording be not so prescriptive as there is very little soil on Howe Street to accommodate much greenery. As well, he wanted Condition A.2.2 to be reworded regarding getting written permission from TransLink. Regarding Condition A.2.7, Mr. Cheng asked if the Board could let them extend the size of public bike share area from the transit box to Granville Street as they would like to adjust the configuration.

Regarding signage, Mr. Cheng noted that the drawings show what is proposed and that there are three signage concepts in the area. Granville Street has mostly neon signs while both Robson and Howe Streets have different concepts.

Questions/Discussion

In response to questions raised by the Board and Panel, the following clarification was provided by the applicant team:

- There will be a minimum of 61 bike parking spaces for the retail space.
- The applicant is investigating the best location for a bike centre and thought that Dunsmuir and Howe Streets across from the Canada Trust building was a likely place.
- The building has a double wall of glass on the corner as a way to offer natural ventilation. The outer skin is single glazed and open at the bottom to bring fresh air into the building to reduce the cooling. It is a very expensive technology so it is only planned for one corner. The applicant still has some work to do with Engineering and will need the Board of Variance's approval.
- This is a major renovation including a seismic upgrade and reinforcement in the parking level.
- A café is proposed on the Robson Street side and a lot of transparent glass will be provided at the ground level.
- There are no antennas currently being proposed for the top of the building.
- The art being proposed is voluntary on the part of the owner.
- Uplighting is planned on the trees in the plaza but not on the building.

Comments from other Speakers

None.

Panel Opinion

Mr. Borowski noted that the Urban Design Panel reviewed the application in November 2012 and supported it. The Panel felt it was a very important project and supported the notion of retaining and revitalizing the building. As well they supported the applicant's approach maintaining the structure and redoing the shell and envelope. They believe it will greatly enrich the building. They also felt that Howe Street would be improved particularly the degree of transparency. As well they thought the plaza area was going to be greatly improved and that there was an opportunity for public art and a lighting strategy. He provided a brief overview of other comments including removing the Canada Line emergency exist stair from the sidewalk

and incorporating it into the building. Mr. Borowski recommended approval for the application as well as the applicant providing a bike share station.

Mr. Rafii said he was excited to see that the building is going to be renovated and that the applicant is working with staff on all the major design issues. He said he was confident that they could come up with a design that will be satisfactory to everyone. He agreed with Condition 1.3.1 to move the exit stair into the building. He also thought Condition 1.3.3 could be modified to allow the applicant some flexibility for improving the ramp rather than removing it.

Mr. Stovell said he welcomed the renewal of the building and thought the design responded well to the conditions already present on the site. He said he would like to see the congestion resolved in the plaza with less street trees to improve the pedestrian realm and sight lines. As well he said he would like to see architectural night lighting on the building particularly from Howe Street and the plaza. He said he was sympathetic to the applicant's request to modify some of the conditions in the report. Mr. Stovell added that he recommended approval for the application.

Ms. Maust said that while the statement of significance that was presented to the Heritage Commission was approved, the Nordstrom application was not. Normally the Commission would comment on both. Had the application been presented to the Commission she would have noted some of the Granville Street urban planning objectives and the Heritage Commission's preservation objectives would have been at odds. In reviewing the application in conjunction with the statement of significance, she noted that a number of cultural and landmark character defining elements will be maintained. She also noted that adding the building to the Heritage Registry has remained a condition of approval. None the less she said she must acknowledge many of the architectural character defining elements will be lost. Ms. Maust added that Mr. Morgan had made a convincing argument of a need to bring a finer grain detail to the design, greater permeability, animation and perhaps "sparkle". Ms. Maust said she liked the proposed design including the effort to respect the strength of the prominent featured corner of the original design. Ms. Maust added that while some of her fellow Commission members may disagree with her, she recommended support for the application.

Ms. Busby recommended approval for the application.

Mr. Wlodarczak said he thought it was a great project. He said he would like to see some alternative language to the bike share to give flexibility to the applicant. Also he would like to see the exit stair removed from the sidewalk and included inside the building. As well he thought a café on the ground floor was a great idea in this busy area of the city and he would like to see the Robson Street ramp removed. He noted that more pedestrians are using the corner and there is often a conflict between pedestrians and cars. Mr. Wlodarczak recommended approval for the application.

Mr. Chen said he thought it was a great project and recommended approval for the application.

Board Discussion

Mr. Jackson proposed alternative wording to several of the conditions in the Staff Committee Report and made a motion for approval of the application. Mr. Judd seconded the motion.

Mr. Johnson thanked staff, the applicant and his client for their good work on the application.

Motion

It was moved by Mr. Jackson and seconded by Mr. Judd, and was the decision of the Board:

THAT the Board APPROVE Development Application No. DE416152, in accordance with the Staff Committee Report dated November 21, 2012, with the following amendments:

Amend Condition 1.3.1, Note to applicant to read as follows:

Note to Applicant: *See also Landscape Conditions.* Consider how to further activate this plaza into a people oriented outdoor amenity. The triangular addition diminishes the size of the plaza and impedes pedestrian movement.

Amend Condition 1.3.2 to read as follows:

arrangements to the satisfaction of the Director of Planning and General Manager of Engineering Services to improve the pedestrian realm on the west side of Granville Street relocating the transit station emergency stair exit, to inside of the building;

Amend Condition 1.3.3 to read as follows:

arrangements to the satisfaction of the Director of Planning, the General Manager of Engineering Services and the Director of Legal Services for the removal of the parking entry access and drive aisle entering the site from Robson Street, including the construction of new public realm treatment *or for an alternative treatment that achieves an equivalent improvement to the pedestrian environment on Robson Street;*

Note to Applicant: The closure of the ramp *or the provision of an acceptable alternative to the closure* is required prior to occupancy.

Add a new Condition 1.5 to read as follows:

Submission of an energy efficient night lighting drawing.

Amend Condition A.1.7 to read as follows:

provision of bicycle parking in accordance with Section 6 of the Parking By-law, noting the following:

- i. a minimum of a minimum of one hundred and eighteen (118) Class A bicycle spaces is required;

Amend Condition A.2.6 to read as follows:

provision *prior to occupancy* of an updated Bike Centre (Bikeade) Study to clearly identify a preferred location that provides street-level frontage and access, potential operational model and plan and high-level functional design for a future bike centre to the satisfaction of the General Manager of Engineering Services;

Amend Condition A.2.7 to read as follows:

make arrangements to the satisfaction of the General Manager of Engineering Services and the Director of Legal Services for the provision a Public Bike Share (PBS) Station dimensioned 15m x 7.5m *or alternative dimensions that provides the same functional design* on this site immediately adjacent to the east side of the Canada Line Station on Granville Street. Arrangements are to include rights of way to allow public access and provision of an electrical service to the PBS location;

4. OTHER BUSINESS

None.

5. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at

L. Harvey
Assistant to the Board

V. Potter
Chair