

**Date:** Monday, June 30, 2008  
**Time:** 3:00 p.m.  
**Place:** Committee Room No. 1, City Hall

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**PRESENT:**

**Board**

J. Andrews Deputy City Manager (Chair)  
B. Toderian Director of Planning  
P. Judd Deputy City Engineer

**Advisory Panel**

D. Watts Representative of the Design Professions (Urban Design Panel)  
S. Tatomir Representative of the Design Professions  
M. Braun Representative of the General Public  
H. Hung Representative of the General Public  
C. Nystedt Representative of the General Public  
K. Maust Representative of the Vancouver Heritage Commission

**Regrets**

D. Chung Representative of the General Public  
J. Stovell Representative of the Development Industry  
N. Shearing Representative of the Development Industry

**ALSO PRESENT:**

**City Staff:**

B. Boons Assistant Director of Processing Centre - Development  
C. Edwards Parking Management Engineer  
A. Molaro Development Planner  
J. Greer Project Facilitator  
R. Whitlock Senior Housing Officer

**1237 HOWE STREET - DE412037 - ZONE DD**

S. Lyon GBL Architects  
A. Emmerson GBL Architects  
R. Kwong BC Housing  
J. Tinny McLaren Housing Society  
R. Campbell McLaren Housing Society

**Recording Secretary:** L. Harvey

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## 1. MINUTES

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

THAT the Minutes of the Development Permit Board and Advisory Panel Meeting of June 16, 2008 be approved with the following amendments:

On page 3, amend the last sentence under Development Planner's Opening Comments by adding "**future**" before "**sidewalk**";

On page 3, amend the third bullet by adding "**future**" before "**sidewalk**";

On page 4, amend the first bullet by adding "**widen**" before "*the narrow sidewalk*" and by adding "**remove**" before "*any landscape encroachments*";

On page 6, amend the paragraph beginning Mr. Timm to read:

*Mr. Timm said the block of heritage houses was a tremendous asset to the downtown as there aren't many of these types of houses left. Mr. Timm thought the frontage on Helmcken Street needed to be addressed with respect to the landscaping that encroaches on City property. Mr. Timm said he didn't think it was a good idea to have the large mature cedar tree retained in the middle of the future sidewalk. He thought the site struggled to contain the 5 FSR with the large floor plate and was glad more FSR wasn't being added. Mr. Timm said he was concerned with the process regarding the issue of how the density was being accepted under the hardship clause for the two heritage houses. He added that it was a minor point in terms of the overall issue but he thought it should be dealt with through the HRA process rather than a hardship relaxation by the Board. The benefit of this heritage retention is very significant and worthy. Mr. Timm moved approval with several amendments.*

On page 6, amend the last sentence in the second paragraph beginning Mr. Toderian by adding "**and the Director of Planning**" at the end of the sentence;

On page 6, amend the beginning of the third paragraph to read:

Mr. Toderian said he didn't disagree with Mr. Timm's comments regarding the hardship clause. He said he was not opposed to its use *in this case* but wanted to make sure that the Board understood when *such consideration of hardship* could be dealt with by the Board and when it would go to Council. He also agreed that there was a challenge in assembling the 5 FSR density on the site. He said the site actually shows that there are contexts where 5 FSR is enough and *where* 5 FSR was pushing the comfort level. Mr. Toderian said that in this case he thought the comfort level was being pushed relative to appropriate density on the site because of the interfaces between the heritage houses. He said he thought the site could not *reasonably* accommodate more density. He added that staff and the applicant had done a good job of getting as much density onto the site as the site *should appropriately* accommodate relative to some of the limitations.

(The remainder of the paragraph is unchanged.)

On page 7, amend A.1.10 to A.2.10;

On page 7, amend A.1.11 to A.2.11;

On page 7, amend A.2.11 to read:

remove the landscape encroachments shown on Helmcken Street fronting the two heritage houses, *to the satisfaction of the General Manager of Engineering Services in consultation with the Director of Planning.*

## 2. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

None.

## 3. 1237 HOWE STREET - DE412037 - ZONE DD (COMPLETE APPLICATION)

Applicant: GBL Architects

Request: To construct a 12-storey multiple dwelling with 3 townhouses at grade (total of 110 dwelling units), and associated amenity areas all over one level of parking.

### Development Planner's Opening Comments

Anita Molaro, Development Planner, introduced the application for a social housing development which is one of 12 sites identified by Council. The proposal is for 110 units, 3 of which are two storey townhouses along the Howe Street frontage. Ms. Molaro described the surrounding developments, the zoning guidelines for the area including height requirements, site setbacks and view cone restrictions. Ms. Molaro noted that an outdoor amenity space will be located on the 2<sup>nd</sup> level at the back of the building with another amenity space on the 8<sup>th</sup> level. The applicant will be seeking LEED™ Gold and will include a number of sustainable measures including the addition of solar tubes on the upper roof that will also act as louvers to mitigate solar gain.

Ms. Molaro noted that the units within the building have been oriented to the street and the lane. However, on the north side, the relationship with the Alto is challenging. While staff support the massing, the views of several suites in the Alto will be impacted because the 40 ft setback between the two buildings will not be achieved. As a result, staff are recommending in Condition 1.1 that in order to improve the interface and neighbourliness, the applicant reduce the number of units by 4 (2 on level 8 and 2 on level 9).

Ms. Molaro reviewed the recommendation contained in the Staff Committee Report dated June 4, 2008. The recommendation was for support of the proposal, subject to the conditions contained in the Staff Committee Report.

Rob Whitlock, Senior Housing Officer noted that the application was the second of the 12 social housing projects that will come before Council and the Development Permit over the next few months. They are intended to respond to the desperate need of the homeless and those at risk of homelessness. Council endorsed the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to use City-owned sites for social and supportive housing on December 19, 2007.

As with all the societies that were chosen to manage the projects, McLaren Housing Society is an experienced provider, specializing in the provision of housing and support for individuals with HIV and AIDS.

McLaren Housing Society has provided an operations plan outlining the program and support services that will be offered to the 100+ residents of the building. The residents will be drawn from BC Housing, with a priority given to residents in the Downtown South SROs and shelters. Staff support the recommendations put forward as they relate to the further refinement of the submitted operations plan into an Operational Management Plan, and will pursue establishment of the concurrent Community Advisory Committee. In doing so, staff would like to monitor the need for the accompanying Community Advisory Committee as it relates to community interest in participating in such an activity. Where there is interest, staff will establish the Committee accordingly.

From the perspective of a Housing Advocate, Mr. Whitlock expressed concerns about the potential loss of four units represented in Condition 1.1. He said he understood the desire to ensure that the most neighbourly relationship was established between the two buildings; however, the consequence of the changes that were being sought would likely eliminate four units. He said he acknowledged the changes would improve the outlook of the adjoining building's residents to a minor degree; however, in return four fewer low income people would have a home. Mr. Whitlock suggested that before units are lost, some exploration of improving the outlook should occur. He suggested that Condition 1.1 be made a consideration item with direction from the Board.

Mr. Whitlock noted that the Director of the Housing Centre, Cameron Gray, wished to highlight that the 40 foot separation from the property line, while a technically correct requirement, is not practically feasible on a 100 foot wide "smaller site", as evidenced by the two figures on pages 8 and 9 of the Staff Committee Report. These two figures show that the building could be reduced to 20 feet in width if rigidly applied.

Mr. Whitlock noted that an issue had been raised previously regarding the question of over-concentration of social services and social housing projects in the area. No social service centre component is proposed as part of the development; however support services will be provided for residents at a level consistent with their needs.

Mr. Whitlock also noted that Council's policy of 1-to-1 replacement had been just maintained, with a starting point of approximately 1,571 units in 1991 and about the same now. The supply of affordable housing has been a blend of Single Room Occupancy (SRO) units and replacement social housing units. As redevelopment of areas in and around the core has proceeded at a rapid rate, this accommodation has been demolished (1,341 units in 1991, 563 today, with at least 50 of these at risk). The ratio has been maintained through the development of over 650 new social housing units.

In the meantime, the population of the Downtown South has increased by over 5,500 people between 1991 and 2001, with probably over 10,000 presently, and is projected for 15,000 people when the area is "built out".

**Questions/Discussion**

In response to questions raised by the Board and Panel, the following clarification was provided by Ms. Molaro:

- The operator will not be offering a meal program to the residents and therefore there is only a small kitchen in the amenity area.
- Adding the ground oriented townhouse is a positive move as it offers different types of units to the residents.
- Funding from the Province is targeted towards singles and not families.
- Condition 1.1 was recommended to improve the spaciousness between the two buildings.
- Density can be increased if Council provides a relaxation or under a hardship clause.
- The Downtown ODP recommends residential use at grade.
- Future sites along Drake Street will have townhouses at grade.

**Applicant's Comments**

Andrew Emmerson, Architect further described the application. On the southerly end of the building will be a double height lobby space and main entry. The 2<sup>nd</sup> level will primarily be amenity space and administration as well as a caretaker's suite. A single level of parking will be provided as well as service rooms and bicycle parking which will be accessed from the lane. The units will be approximately 320 square feet with four of the units being wheelchair accessible.

Stuart Lyon, Architect responded to the prior-to conditions in the Staff Committee Report. Mr. Lyon was concerned with a number of the Conditions. With regards to Condition 1.1 and the potential of losing four units, Mr. Lyon stated that it was important that all the social housing projects achieve the maximum number of units. He added that if the units were eliminated then an important part of the program would be lost which is accommodating people with difficulties. Mr. Lyon noted that there were a lot of limitations working on a mid block site but would work to accommodate the neighbour's concerns regarding impacts on the north side of the project. Mr. Lyon added that they would like to retain the four units. Mr. Lyon noted that there was an error on the model in that the stair well on the roof level of the Alto property line was missing. Regarding Condition 1.2, Mr. Lyon noted that they will be achieving LEED™ Gold and asked that they not provide a green roof on the upper floor. BC Housing has had some experience with inaccessible roofs and would rather not have a green roof in that area. Also, there are a number of breaks in the roof which could lead to maintenance problems over time. He said they would like to provide an interesting roof plane with other devices other than a green roof. Regarding Condition 1.3, Mr. Lyon said they had deliberately configured the building based on adjacency and respect for the neighbours and any change would interrupt the patterns that have been set up to the program in the building. Mr. Lyon asked the Board to consider deleting Condition 1.5 regarding internal access between the townhouses and the main building because of potential security issues. Regarding Condition A.1.2 and providing loading space, Mr. Lyon noted that since the units are small he didn't feel there was a need to have a loading bay and asked to have the Condition made a consideration item.

Jonathan Tinny, McLaren Housing Society, said they were happy to provide an Operational Management Plan. He noted that one of their commitments was to work with the community but felt they would need additional staff time for a Community Advisory Committee.

**Questions/Discussion**

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

- The glass vacuum tubes will have an element running through the tubes to generate hot water. They will also act as a screen for reducing solar gain.
- BC Housing has had some negative experiences with inaccessible green roofs and would prefer not to have them on the project. There are long term maintenance concerns as well as home warranty issues.
- The outdoor amenity on the 8<sup>th</sup> level will have a green perimeter with hard landscaping and some urban agriculture while the second level outdoor amenity will include a small water feature.
- There is no internal access from the townhouses to the building. Residents will have to come out of their units and then go back into the building through the main entrance.
- There has been no discussion regarding thermal energy storage.
- The size of families residing in the townhouses will be left up to the society to decide. They would look at the applicant's family situation and would need to pass an interview process. The society is dealing with the changing face of HIV Aids patients.
- BC Housing would be interested in maximizing the number of units on the site. The cost of addition units would have to be taken into consideration.
- Consideration would have to be given to the neighbourliness between the two buildings if there were additional FSR added to the site.
- When the water leaves the solar tubes it is transferred to an insulated hot water system.
- There is not access to the roof because of security considerations.
- No meal service will be provided to the residents as the society is providing independent housing. There will be a small kitchen in the 2<sup>nd</sup> level amenity space for some targeted programming but not for ongoing meals.
- There are no elevators in the townhouses.
- The units will not be furnished by the society.
- It would be difficult to provide a connection between the townhouses and the building.

**Comments from other Speakers**

Eric Carlson of Anthem Properties said he felt awkward speaking against such a worthy project. He liked the project and thought it was well designed. His concern was the way the project interacts with their project (1205 Howe Street). Mr. Carlson said they were told that there would be an 80 foot separation between the two projects. The current application does not respect the setbacks and there are a number of units that are directly impacted as they face the north wall. Also, their outdoor amenity will have a blank wall looming over it. They had anticipated a certain amount of daylight in the amenity space and now there will be a significant impact on liveability, natural light and shadowing. Mr. Carlson requested the applicant be asked to adhere to the guidelines and suggested the Board postpone the project.

John Bingham of Howard Bingham Hill Architects said the south light will be significantly impacted on the building at 1205 Howe Street because of the architectural resolution on the new building. He added that the landscaping plans will have to be changed and the usability of the outdoor amenity space will be affected.

Sylvia Young, purchaser of Unit 807, The Alto, said she will directly be affected by the big blank wall which is only 40 feet away from her unit. She also spoke for Mr. Lee who purchased Unit 708. They feel that they will lose a lot of light and air. Ms. Young also questioned the loss of the green roof that was anticipated.

Robin Campbell, Executive Director, McLaren Society, said that BC Housing was anxious to have some family units in the development. The rest of the building will provide units for singles from SROs or who are homeless. Ms. Campbell said she was concerned about having an internal access between the townhouses and the main building as there is the potential for children to interact with the other residents. The reason for not having an internal access was to reduce the risk for the organization and BC Housing.

Harris Massop was concerned about the building having a green roof as he felt there would be problems and the potential for leaks. He was also against the site being used for low income housing.

#### Questions/Discussion

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

- The applicant for the Alto anticipated that the site would have 80 foot setbacks and a building height to 60 feet.
- Flipping the building layout would improve the impact to the Alto.
- The north wall of the site should be more permeable, or with some additional texture to make an interesting feature wall. An art feature could also be added.
- There was a typical notification process once the application was made. The applicant team held an Open House which Anthem Properties staff attended. Anthem Properties notified their buyers of the Open House.

*The meeting adjourned briefly for Board and Panel members to review the model and posted materials.*

#### Panel Opinion

Mr. Tatomir thanked the public for their comments. Mr. Tatomir said he was in support of the application. He thought the neighbourliness between the two buildings could be improved with the use of thermatic glass which changes colour at different temperatures. Regarding shadowing, Mr. Tatomir noted that there wouldn't be any impact in terms of loss of light on the north-west corner if the four units were removed. Mr. Tatomir added that he thought the architect would be able to find a solution.

Mr. Watts noted that the Urban Design Panel had no substantial concerns regarding the project. In fact, Mr. Watts added that the Panel spoke highly about the project and was impressed with the quality. The Panel thought there were some lessons that market housing could use in their designs. They were impressed with the quality of the project and the goals BC Housing had for sustainability and long term durability. The Panel suggested that the building could go to the full height but realized this would have an impact on the adjoining site. Mr. Watts said he appreciated the concern of the future residents of the Alto but noted that the architect had made moves to minimize the impact. Mr. Watts thought there was a strong argument in reducing the massing and losing the four suites but felt it would be a bigger impact on the amount of social housing provided. Mr. Watts said he appreciated BC Housing's position regarding green roofs. Mr. Watts suggested the architect look at the articulation on the north wall to mitigate the impact on the residents in the Alto. He thought it should be up to the operator to decide if there should be an internal access from the townhouses into the main part of the building. Mr. Watts added that he thought the loading bay wasn't necessary as most of the time people bring the truck to the front door of their buildings.

Ms. Maust said the Heritage Commission recognized that the house currently located on the site could be added to the Heritage Registry but supported its removal to build the social housing project. Ms. Maust didn't think the design of the building needed to be changed for the applicant to comply with Consideration 1.1. Regarding the roof, Ms. Maust thought there were other ways to enhance the roof other than providing a green roof. She also recommended deleting Condition 1.5.

Mr. Hung was in support of the application. He thought providing social housing in the downtown core was needed. Regarding Condition 1.1, he agreed that the design should not be changed, in order to get the maximum number of units. Mr. Hung suggested using better quality materials or adding a mural on the concrete wall to make it more interesting for the neighbours. Mr. Hung agreed that the roof didn't have to be green as there are other roof treatments that could be used. He also recommended deleting Condition 1.5. Mr. Hung added that he thought an Operational Management Plan and an Advisory Committee with the community was important. Mr. Hung suggested staff look at the procedure to see that proper consultation with the neighbour had taken place and to see if any improvements could be implemented in upcoming projects.

Mr. Braun recommended approval of the application. He thought this was one of the most attractive projects he had seen in a long time. Mr. Braun was concerned with the blank wall and recommended design development to make the sure it is not just a painted concrete wall and that higher quality materials are used. Regarding the roof, Mr. Braun thought there were other solutions other than a green roof and noted that a hotel on Pender Street was incorporating a Japanese motive on their roof. Mr. Braun recommended having access from the townhouses to the main building as he thought it was easier to include the access at the building stage than adding the access later. Mr. Braun recommended not eliminating the condition regarding the Community Advisory Panel as he felt it was important for building a good relationship with the neighbours. Mr. Braun also supported including a loading bay in the project.

#### **Board Discussion**

Mr. Toderian thanked the members of the public for their comments. He noted that Mr. Carlson was a positive developer in the City and thought it had been difficult for him to come to the Board and ask that the Guidelines be adhered to regarding the setbacks. He also thanked the Alto purchaser for putting a human face to the concerns. Mr. Toderian noted that the Board often has to put a face to people who don't have homes and it was depressing to think about the sites that are needed to address the number of homeless in the city. Mr. Toderian commended BC Housing for providing an exemplary building and that market housing developers in the city needed to take note. Mr. Toderian said that the social housing projects seen by the Board are by far the best architecture they had ever seen and that the private sector had a new bar. Mr. Toderian said he looked forward to seeing how they meet that new bar and would like to see more of this architectural expression in the city. Mr. Toderian complemented Mr. Lyon and his staff for designing the building. Mr. Toderian noted that sustainability is often added on and this project shows how sustainability and the architectural expression of the building can work together.

Mr. Toderian made a motion to approve the application with a number of amendments. He thought there were a number of things the applicant could do to address the black box massing and not lose the units but improve the interface. He noted that a 10% impact on private views is a reasonable trade off against providing social housing.



Mr. Toderian thanked Ms. Maust and the Heritage Commission for agreeing to the loss of the house in order to provide for social housing. He added that he takes the preservation of these houses seriously but felt they had made the right call in this context. Mr. Toderian thought having the townhouses on the Howe Street frontage would provide a tremendous opportunity to humanize the street.

Mr. Judd supported the motion and the amendments. Mr. Judd said he could not see his way to change A.1.2 as he thought using the street for loading would cause problems and that having a loading bay would also be used for maintenance of the units. Mr. Judd said he agreed with the remarks regarding the quality of the building and commended the architect for the design. He added that this type of housing was sorely needed in the city. Mr. Judd supported the addition of the new Condition 1.7 as he felt a lot could be done to soften the façade and make it more appealing to the adjacent building.

### Motion

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

THAT the Board APPROVE Development Application No. DE412037, in accordance with the Staff Committee Report dated June 4, 2008, with the following amendments:

Amend Condition 1.1 by adding “*consideration of*” at the beginning of the Condition:

Delete the Note to Applicant in Condition 1.1 and replace with the following:

**Note to applicant:** *Opportunities could include softening of materials, colours, greening, shaping, etc.*

Amend Condition 1.3 by adding “*ideally*” before “with no exposed party walls”;

Amend the Note to applicant in Condition 1.3 to read:

**Note to applicant:** Design development *options may include consideration of* increasing the end townhouse and the end units of level 3 and 4 to reduce the exposed podium party wall of 1205 Howe Street.

Delete Condition 1.5;

Re-number Condition 1.6 to Condition 1.5;

Add a Note to applicant to Condition 1.7 to read:

**Note to applicant:** *The medium to long term need of a Community Advisory Committee should be observed and considered once the building is operational.*

Re-number Condition 1.7 to Condition 1.6;

Add a new Condition 1.7 to read:

**design development on the architectural and materials treatment of the northern elevation overlooking the adjacent project amenity area;**

**Note to applicant:** *Options might include increased non-transparent glazing, softer materials or colours, green walls or art features.*

**4. OTHER BUSINESS**

None.

**5. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:45 PM

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L. Harvey  
Assistant to the Board

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J. Andrews  
Chair