

Date: Monday, September 21, 1998
Time: N/A
Place: N/A

PRESENT:
27 West Pender Street - DE403381 - Minutes
Motion

Board

F.A. Scobie, Director of Development Services (Chair)
J. Rogers, Deputy City Manager
B. MacGregor, Deputy City Engineer

Advisory Panel

J. Drohan, Representative of the Design Professions (Urban Design Panel)
A. Gjernes, Representative of Development Industry
P. Kavanagh, Representative of Development Industry
D. Chung, Representative of General Public
S. Kellington-Catliff, Representative of General Public
B. Parton, Representative of General Public

Regrets

A. Waisman, Representative of the Design Professions

ALSO PRESENT:

City Staff:

M. Kemble, Development Planner
N. Peters, City Surveyor
J. Jessup, Housing Centre

Item 3 - 27 West Pender Street - DE403381

J. Wai, Joe Wai Architectg Inc.
I. Leman, Vancouver Native Housing Society
S. Thomas, Terra Housing Society

CLERK TO THE BOARD: Carol Hubbard

1. MINUTES

It was moved by Ms. Rogers, seconded by Mr. MacGregor, and was the decision of the Board:

THAT the Minutes of the Development Permit Board and Advisory Panel Meeting of July 13, 1998 be approved.

2. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

None.

**3. 27 West Pender Street - DE403381 - Zone DD
(PRELIMINARY APPLICATION)**

Applicant: Joe Wai Architect Inc.

Request: To construct a new 7 storey non-market multiple dwelling containing 98 units with grade level retail use on Pender Street. One level of underground parking with 19 stalls is provided.

To relax the studio dwelling unit size from 400 sq.ft. to 301 sq.ft. (average 308 sq.ft.).

Development Planner's Opening Comments

The Development Planner, Mike Kemble, presented this application. He briefly reviewed the site context and the proposed development. The proposed 7-storey building, which steps down to 5 storeys along the Pender Street frontage, will contain 98 non-market dwelling units. A small amount of retail space is proposed at ground level on Pender Street. Proposed density is 3.7 FSR, height 68 ft. The building is set back from a right-of-way along its easterly side adjacent to the lane, and the main residential entrance is located about half way along the easterly façade. Vehicular access is off the lane. There is a courtyard at the second floor level that also provides a setback for the 4-storey Pender Hotel which is immediately adjacent to the west. 82 of the units have an average size of 308 sq.ft., below the 320 sq.ft. minimum specified in the Zoning and Development By-law. The principal issues raised by staff relate to the size of the units and the treatment and use of the open space.

Mr. Kemble noted that the unit size regulation may be relaxed by the Board under Section 3.2.4 ("where literal enforcement would result in unnecessary hardship"), and the Board has done so on two previous occasions. As well, the draft housing plan for the Downtown Eastside, Gastown and Chinatown is recommending a new minimum standard of 275 sq.ft., with the possibility of some demonstration projects as small as about 180 sq.ft. Staff support the unit sizes as proposed, based on the project's good response to livability criteria (location, unit design, privacy, amount of common open space, amenities and management of the project).

With respect to the use of the open space and the right-of-way, the City's long term goal for the former CPR right-of-way is to achieve a public corridor linking Victory Square/False Creek to Gastown and the Burrard waterfront. To date, this has only been realised with the Van Horne project at Cordova and Carrall Streets where the right-of-way space is fenced in the short term but with the ultimate aim of reopening it to the public once conditions in the area improve. A similar arrangement is proposed for this site, whereby the right-of-way space initially will be fenced and used only by the building residents as an entry courtyard and private open space. Condition A.1.1 requires that legal arrangements be made to provide for public access to be realised in the future. An alternative would be to open up the space immediately, given the increase in local pedestrian activity anticipated from International Village. Staff have raised a concern about the consistency of materials and the character of the entire right-of-way, noting the difference in treatment proposed for this project compared to that at the Van Horne. Condition 1.5 calls for the development of some consistent guidelines and standards for the right-of-way.

One letter of support was received in response to the notification. As well, a letter dated September 21, 1998 from Mr. Rod Chow, 8 West Pender Street, objected to the proposal due to

inadequate parking. Copies of Mr. Chow's letter were distributed to Board and Panel members at the beginning of the meeting.

In summary, staff believe the proposal is a well designed project that will meet the needs of the residents. The recommendation is for approval in principle, subject to the conditions contained in the Staff Committee Report dated September 9, 1998.

Housing Centre Comments

John Jessup, Community Liaison, explained that the Housing Centre believes the proposed unit size is a good compromise between a unit that is large enough to be livable but not so large that it cannot be adequately maintained by the tenant. As well, on this particular site, the smaller units have enabled the creation of more units than would be achieved otherwise. While no formal post-occupancy assessment has been made of small units elsewhere in the city, Mr. Jessup said they are comfortable that the proposed unit size represents a good compromise.

Discussion

With respect to the right-of-way, Ms. Drohan questioned whether consideration had been given to extending the right-of-way treatment to the south side of Pender Street. Regarding the proposed interim fencing of the public open space, Ms. Drohan noted that the Urban Design Panel was not satisfied with what had been achieved in the Van Horne project because it has unfortunately created a space that is uncomfortable both for the occupants of the building and for the public. She questioned whether some "middle ground" solution had been discussed whereby a portion of the open space is fenced and a portion left open. Mr. Gjernes agreed that the situation at the Van Horne is not satisfactory. He suggested it might be preferable to have some of the space more enclosed and with a greater sense of privacy for the residents, at least in the interim until such time as it can be opened up to the public.

In response to a question from Mr. Gjernes about the possibility of introducing more glazing on the lane side, Mr. Joe Wai, Architect, explained they have provided greater articulation on the lane façade in response to concerns expressed by the Urban Design Panel, but they are constrained by the high voltage wires in the lane which preclude the provision of openings except at the top storey.

Responding to a question from Mr. Chung regarding parking, Mr. Kemble explained that the spaces lost from this development will likely be made up from the approximately 800 parking stalls provided in International Village. He noted also that the Chinatown parking garage is not being fully utilized currently.

Applicant's Comments

Mr. Wai noted there are a number of constraints associated with this site as well as the regulations that must be met with respect to the building program. He briefly reviewed the ongoing discussion taking place with various agencies and interested parties regarding minimum unit size, noting they arrived at the proposed size to be able to provide enough space to allow for more than one arrangement of furniture within the unit. With respect to the treatment of the right-of-way, Mr. Wai noted that conditions in this part of the city have deteriorated in recent years, and the housing society's primary interest is the safety of its residents as well as consideration for the neighbourhood. When the City indicates it is safe to open the space as a public thoroughfare the space will be adjusted accordingly. With respect to the character of the space, Mr. Wai said he saw no difficulty with working with staff to achieve some consistency in vocabulary from one portion of the right-of-way to the next.

Mr. Ian Leman, Vancouver Native Housing Society, stressed that the fenced landscaped space is not intended to create an area that could be used for unlawful activities. When the situation in the local area improves the fencing can be removed, but it would be very dangerous to have it open at the present time. Mr. Jessup added that this is a City-owned site and there will be provision in the lease to ensure that the right-of-way is opened to the public at the appropriate time.

Mr. Wai said they have already gone some way to addressing the prior-to conditions outlined in the Staff Committee Report and they believe they can be satisfactorily met.

Comments from Other Speakers

None.

Panel Opinion

Ms. Drohan reported that the Urban Design Panel supported this project unanimously. The Panel found the exterior treatment appropriate to the context, especially in its sympathy to the neighbouring Heritage 'B' hotel. The Panel also found it commendable that the main entrance for the building was pulled off the Pender Street façade. Security of the front entrance was an area of concern for the Panel. Given the Panel's comments concerning the right-of-way, Ms. Drohan said she strongly supported condition 1.5, to establish some common elements in approaches to the treatment of the right-of-way, particularly in the areas of surface treatment, landscape material and fencing. With respect to the lane treatment, Ms. Drohan said she appreciated the applicant's efforts at making it a more appealing façade. Commenting on the issue of unit size, Ms. Drohan noted the Panel acknowledged that this is a very difficult site and found the units had particular clarity and provide the tenants with a degree of flexibility not normally found in units of this type. The layout of the units within the building plan is very good and offers the occupants a high degree of livability. Overall, the Panel felt this project would make a valuable contribution to the neighbourhood, not only reinforcing the character of the neighbourhood but addressing this challenging housing type in a very reasonable manner.

Mr. Kavanagh recommended approval in principle subject to the conditions recommended by the Staff Committee. He supported a relaxation of the minimum unit size, the interim use of the fenced plaza, and for the complete application to be dealt with by the Director of Planning.

Mr. Gjernes also recommended approval. He said he had no concern about the proposed unit size, noting the success of the VLC project on Drake Street which has small units. One area of concern related to the roof deck at the second storey level where he recommended some additional landscaping or fencing to address the privacy issues with the adjacent hotel. With respect to the treatment of the right-of-way, Mr. Gjernes said while he would have preferred to see it more public closer to Pender Street, he would defer to the experts, given there are larger issues involved.

Ms. Parton commended Mr. Wai on a very good design and for BC Housing's involvement in the project. She supported the requested relaxations. With respect to the treatment of the right-of-way, she questioned whether the fence could be solid to a certain height with fencing above. She stressed that close attention should be given to the safety and security of the parking area.

Ms. Kellington-Catliff supported the application, the recommended conditions and proposed relaxation. Given its importance and contribution to the revitalization of the Victory Square

area, this proposal is the best use of this very difficult and irregular site. Unless otherwise resolved, Ms. Kellington said she concurred with the Urban Design Panel suggestion to use the large roof area as an open space. She agreed that every effort should be made to ensure the retail space is occupied by a use that creates some animation for as many hours as possible. She questioned whether unit C could be reconfigured to move the washroom access/egress away from the kitchen area. If there is any further concern about the secured gated access to the building after hours or for visitor use, etc., she recommended that a gate management plan be submitted at the complete development application stage. She urged the Board to endorse condition 1.1 to ensure a safe and secure entrance for the building tenants, and she encouraged the exploration of further ways of making the area private and secure. She questioned whether condition A.1.5 included the provision of bicycle racks at the front entrance. Finally, she complimented the developer on both the building form and the use of good building materials.

Mr. Chung recommended approval with the conditions. He complimented the architect on a very efficient design on an awkward lot. He said he hoped all the security issues will be fully addressed before construction, given the nature of the area. With respect to the right-of-way, he said he also hoped the gates ultimately will be removed, but in the meantime he agreed with Ms. Parton that consideration might be given to a solid base for the fencing.

Board Discussion

In response to a request for clarification from Mr. MacGregor, Mr. Wai explained the proposed FSR of 3.68 does not require a relaxation since the maximum allowable for non market housing on this site is 5.0 FSR. With respect to the small unit size, the challenge has been to propose a size that is acceptable. Mr. Wai said they concluded it is a matter of livability and they determined that a minimum of about 300 sq.ft. is required for an acceptable unit. A major issue is also to maximize the number of units that can be built on the site in terms of maximum unit price.

With respect to parking as raised in the submission from Mr. Chow, Mr. MacGregor stated that staff believe there is no parking shortage in this area. The main parking facility in Chinatown is underutilised and the parking being provided in International Village will be more than sufficient. City Council has already addressed this issue and concluded there is no deficiency in the area, nor will there be in the short term future.

With respect to the treatment of the open space, Mr. MacGregor said he was concerned that this project not be delayed by the requirement of condition 1.5 to deal with design criteria for the rail right-of-way to the north. In discussion, the Board agreed that this condition relates to this site and that the project should not be delayed by consideration of off-site portions of the right-of-way. A minor amendment to the condition was agreed upon to address the concern. Mr. MacGregor said he supported the entrance being pulled back on the building because it will reinforce the eventual treatment of the right-of-way.

Motion

It was moved by Ms. Rogers and seconded by Mr. MacGregor, and was the decision of the Board:

THAT the Board APPROVE IN PRINCIPLE Development Application No. 403381, in accordance with the Development Permit Staff Committee Report dated September 9, 1998 with the following amendments:

Amend 1.5 to delete "to improve the overall consistency of treatment of this future public open space amenity";

Add 1.6: design development to the second floor roof deck to improve privacy and security with respect to the adjacency of the Pender Hotel;

Mr. Scobie offered his best wishes to the applicant on a very good project, noting it is more fully developed than is normally required for a preliminary application.

4. OTHER BUSINESS

None.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:30 pm.