

Date: Tuesday, November 13, 2018
Time: 3:09 p.m.
Place: Council Chamber, City Hall

PRESENT:

Board

A. Law Director, Development Services, (Chair)
J. Dobrovolny General Manager of Engineering
P. Mochrie Deputy City Manager
G. Kelley General Manager of Planning, Urban Design & Sustainability

Advisory Panel

A. Brudar Representative of the Design Professionals (Urban Design Panel)
D. Pretto Representative of the General Public
R. Chaster Representative of the General Public
B. Jarvis Representative of the Development Industry
R. Wittstock Representative of the Design Professions
A. Norfolk Representative of the Vancouver Heritage Commission
S. Allen Representative of the General Public

Regrets

R. Rohani Representative of the General Public

ALSO PRESENT:

City Staff:

P. Chan Development Planner
J. Greer Assistant Director of Development Services
J. Borsa Project Facilitator
C. Yee Senior Development Engineering
T. Wanklin Senior Planner, Downtown East
A. Dunnet Senior Planner, Affordable Housing

58 W. Hastings - DP-2017-01183-RM-5D

Wing Leung WT Leung Architects

Recording Secretary: D.Fung

1. MINUTES

It was moved by Mr. Kelly and seconded by Mr. Dobrovlny and was the decision of the Board to approve the minutes of the meeting on October 15 and October 29, 2018.

2. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

None

**3. 58 W. Hastings - DP-2018-00630 - CD-1
(COMPLETE APPLICATION)**

Applicant: WT Leung Architects

Request: To develop a 10-storey mixed-use building containing Retail, Integrated Health Services and, and 230 units of Social Housing, all over one level of underground parking having vehicular access from the lane. This application is being processed through the Social Housing or Rental Tenure (SHORT) Program.

Development Planner's Opening Comments

Mr. Chan, Development Planner, presented the proposal and summarized the recommendations contained in the Staff Committee Report. The recommendation was for support of the application, subject to the conditions noted.

Mr. Chan took questions from the Board and Panel members.

Applicant's Comments

The Applicant thanked Staff for the Staff Committee Report. The Applicant is in general agreement with the report and is comfortable that they are able to meet the requirements.

The Applicant would like to request the following consideration to the report conditions:

To have some flexibility and discretion for the height of the floors in the units in order to achieve 230 units as well as fulfill clinic requirements.

Regarding condition 1.6:

To take 1 micro units and 1 studio unit and consider as 1 unit count which will allow for a reduced number of recycling bins as well as a reduced number of bicycle parking stalls

required. The urban agriculture lots requirements could also be reduced to allow for more open programming of outdoor amenities spaces.

Regarding condition A2.4 viii:

- a. To relax the required number of loading bays from 5 to 4 since City policy is requiring a transformer to be placed on the Southeast corner of our site.*
- c. To relax the condition to have an internal corridor from the loading bay to the office and retail space. We can provide loading access on the East side of the property to Hasting St. frontage and walk along the setback.*

Regarding A2.9:

To understand rationale of placing two benches in front of CRU 1 and 2. The applicant feels that this would increase the challenges in leasing the retail unit due to obstruction of the show window by the benches.

The Applicant took questions from the Board and panel members.

Comments from other Speakers

Speaker one, Ms. Fiona York is the coordinator and administrator of the Carnegie Community Action Project (CCAP). CCAP is part of the Our Homes Can't Wait Coalition (OHCW) which advocates for low income residents being driven out of the community. Ms. York asked for clarification regarding condition 1.1. and how today's Development Permit Board decision will affect the motion going to City Council?

Mr. Kelley replied that the Board's decision does not affect Council's decision because the Board is deciding on the minimum requirement of units only. Council can stipulate above that number.

Ms. York shared her experience with working in the Downtown Eastside for the past seven years and the impact of safe and affordable on the vulnerable residents. Ms. York witnessed that housing and shelter is the most impactful and crucial criteria of well-being, safety, and health of the low income residents of the community. Ms. York referred to a report that was presented in Council which highlights the need for safe and secured housing as part of the strategy to combat the opioid crisis.

Ms. York is speaking in support of 100 % welfare and shelter rates of 58 W. Hastings and urges the Board to put forward recommendations for 100% welfare rates for this site. The call for shelter rates at 58 W. Hastings started in 2008 and it's been a 10 year campaign for low income tenants fighting displacement.

Ms. York commented that the Woodward's development accelerated displacement of low income residents in 2010 when the community lost 450 social housing units while only gaining 125 social housing units. Ms. York stated that it is proven that social mix does not work and contributes to gentrification and mass displacement of poor people as seen with the Woodward's development.

Ms. York referred to a 2012 CCAP report about the gentrifying of business in the community and how it displaces and pushes out people who can't afford some of the businesses. The social mix is a euphemism for diluting the low income community with higher income people.

Ms. York stated that there are 1200 homeless people as of the last homeless count and 3000 SRO residents in the DTES without decent affordable housing. Over 500 units of low income housing were lost in 2017 and included the Balmoral Hotel, Quality Inn, and Rode Inn Lodge and Jubilee Rooms. And the DTES desperately needs developments to counteract the gentrification brought on by the Woodward's development. 100 % low income development would help to address that.

Ms. York highlighted the discrepancy between the focus groups done earlier in the year by the Applicant which had 23 members while the OHCW Coalition represents over 900 members. As well, the focus groups did not include discussion on the shelter rates.

Ms. York emphasized that the proposed project could provide as few as 70 units of shelter rate housing instead of 300 when the city is at a record high rate of homelessness which continues to increase.

Speaker two, Mr. Vincent Tao, asked the Board to consider increasing the minimum requirement of social housing to this project.

Mr. Tao presented that there are over 1200 people dying on the streets. With the cold weather coming, people need a place to sleep and 76 units aren't enough to support this. Mr. Tao argues that the policy of social mix doesn't work. Woodward's is a failure of a development which changes the neighbourhood and it is social cleansing.

Mr. Tao questioned if we don't have the political will to make sure the retail units are going to serve the community, what do you think is going to happen to the neighbourhood when 76 units are at shelter rates and the rest are rented at \$1200? It changes the neighbourhood and kicks people out. It displaces them, puts them out on the streets, deepening the opioid crisis and the homelessness crisis. Mr. Tao expressed that people are dying and implored the Board to consider these fatal statistics and lived experiences.

Mr. Tao reiterated that at this development they have been fighting for shelter rates for 10 years. That's 10 years of people risking their lives, spending every day when they can be working, to push the government to make sure that they care for those who need it most.

Mr. Tao expressed that they were very confident that Councillor Jean Swanson could push the motion through the new City Council. But they are hearing reports and rumours that BC Housing and the Chinatown foundation is threatening to pull the money if the motion passes through.

Mr. Tao feels there's a deadly logic to how the city thinks it should be building social housing. In 2015, it changed the definition of social housing from number of units to percentage of the building. This mandates and makes permanent the idea of social mix, that every new social housing building must be 2/3 at least market rates.

Mr. Tao stressed that 100% social housing is needed because it allows families to stay together. Poor folks need to stay together, build community. Splitting people up, pushing them around in different buildings, have poor doors in certain buildings is not a dignified way to treat people.

Mr. Dobrovolny reiterated that the social mix of 30% is not what this Board is here to decide today. Council will discuss that but the decision of the Board isn't to decide that.

Speaker three, Ms. Laural Gaudette, asked if funding for this project from BC Housing and the Chinatown Foundation would be pulled if the motion proposed to Council is approved.

Speaker four, Ms. Carol Lee, Chair of the Chinatown Foundation, spoke to question regarding funding. Ms. Lee explained that her role is to raise the money and the Foundation is run by an advisory Board chaired by Joy McPhail. The Board decides what to do with the money. The Board has not met to discuss this motion.

Ms. Lee expressed that there is a financial requirement that the project has to be self-sustaining. This project has ballooned from a \$60 million project to a \$103 million project. There have been delays, and the interest rate has gone up from 3 to 4.5 percent. While there is a wish to have 100 % welfare rate, there's got to be a way to cover the short fall between the welfare rate being \$375 and the \$500 cost of operating the room.

Ms. Lee points out that while BC housing has made a generous investment of \$30 million, it is still a very challenging project. They are a small foundation trying to make it work and to raise the money with no government funding. They exceeded the requirement of the 33% of the welfare and pension rate and instead are at 50%. Ms. Lee expressed gratitude that the land has been donated by the City but points out that construction costs continue to increase 1% per month.

Ms. Lee assures that the Chinatown Foundation has not made the statement that they would pull the funding. But the Foundation does have to make it financially viable to support the project.

Panel Opinion

Ms. Brudar commented that while this is a very complicated project, it was very well handled and put together in a respectful manner and was generally well received at Urban Design Panel.

Ms. Brudar explained that there was quite extensive discussion about the project with certain aspect being better than others. One in particular is that the street elevation along Hastings St. was more successful than in the lane elevation.

Ms. Brudar commented that the lane elevation seems to be very simple boxy and everything is summed up in the same roofline elevation. It's a very monotonous expression.

Ms. Brudar acknowledged that the first 3 floors at the lane is particularly challenged. With the VCH office space, there is no apparent articulation on the lane for the levels. Ms. Brudar suggested to consider controlled murals or graphic concrete which allow for different textures and images to be put on the concrete while being relatively inexpensive.

Ms. Brudar commented that ceiling height of the ground floor at 13.6 ft. is quite low and significantly below standards and asks if Staff would consider lowering the requirement of floors 4-6 to have 8.6ft floor to ceiling height which is still very livable. This would allow 2.6 ft to be added to the ground floor.

Ms. Brudar suggested in the floorplan of the 2BR units to place the bedroom behind the kitchen with a large opening sliding doors and the living room was pushed to the front of the unit, this would create much more access to natural lighting and increase livability to the areas where people will spend most time.

Ms. Brudar's understanding is that the city is entertaining the possibility of bedrooms which are mechanically ventilated.

Ms. Brudar commented that by introducing another colour to the current colour scheme of burgundy and yellow, it could give it a different texture.

Ms. Brudar noted that while there is discussion to reduce urban agriculture, the Urban Design Panel expressed an opposite opinion requiring the Applicant to expand urban agriculture since the operating society can use that as part of programming. Ms. Brudar cautioned against making a decision without further discussion.

Ms. Chaster thanked the speakers for their comments and acknowledges that it enriches the discussion to hear from members of the community.

Ms. Chaster agreed that the lane elevation is a very abrupt three storey expression and would like to see further design development.

Ms. Chaster commented that it is important to be careful about reducing the floor to ceiling heights of the smaller, 286 sq ft. micro units to maintain livability in a small floor plan.

Ms. Chaster thanked the Staff for commentary around the limited legal purvey of the City to control who goes into retail frontages.

Ms. Chaster appreciated the comments from the operating society around the budget increases and construction costs and expressed support for the project given that it would provide an additional 76 units of social housing which previously would not exist.

Mr. Jarvis thanked the speakers for their courage for sharing their opinions.

Mr. Jarvis agreed that the exterior design of the lane is monotonous and that having murals is a great idea.

Mr. Jarvis commented that height in the retail units would need to come up for long term viability and reducing the non-market units to 8.6 ft. would be a good solution.

Mr. Jarvis noted that these types of projects which provide additional social housing units should have some flexibility and recommended to support these initiatives.

Ms. Allen acknowledged that it is very challenging to make these types of projects viable and commended the Applicant for a strong proposal. Social housing has to meet all the same standards that the private sector does but without the profit and the cushion. Ms. Allen is supportive of a project which delivers what it can.

Ms. Allen noted that the Applicant has done a good job in making sure that the layouts are appealing and designing unit sizes which meets the BC Housing design guidelines.

Ms. Allen agreed that murals are a great way to engage local artists in the community and it would also reduce graffiti.

Ms. Allen commented that it is not the purview of this panel and Board to decide on policies on mixed income buildings and acknowledged it is a very challenging topic with feelings across all sides.

Mr. Norfolk commented that Victory Square does not have an advisory group and Staff has essentially put together an adhoc advisory group for this historic district to make sure there is recognition of the importance of the area's heritage aspects and buildings.

Mr. Norfolk observed that this project is approximately 6 city lots and shows 6 facades and noted there was attention paid to the design and attempts to deal with the sore tooth issues.

Mr. Norfolk queried if there would be historic photos given the feedback from the focus group and noted that history should be reflected to the new building.

Mr. Norfolk commented that blank concrete is not attractive and some programs would be an improved contribution. Mr. Norfolk referred to the murals in Mount Pleasant as examples.

Ms. Pretto commended Staff noting that there has been an increase speed in putting much needed units out to the public quicker than before.

Ms. Pretto acknowledges that there shouldn't be concern about setting precedence as this type of development is not something that industry people would leverage.

Ms. Pretto noted that this may be a great case study for the current regulation redesign process.

Ms. Pretto commented that the Applicant's comments to the report should have been in writing and noted that the holiday could mess up timeline and it should be something to be addressed.

Board Discussion

Mr. Dobrovolny appreciated work of Staff and Applicant and enthusiastically supports the 76 units and possibility to do more. Mr. Dobrovolny understands fully the concerns from the speakers in terms of crisis in housing and is prepared to support this project fully to keep it moving.

Mr. Mochrie acknowledged the timing of the delivery of the reports and the short response time available.

Mr. Mochrie expressed his support of this project, agreeing that there is a desperate need for shelter/pension rate housing and acknowledges the importance of this project and the unique make up and recognized Ms. Lee and the Chinatown Foundation for the a significant philanthropic contribution. Although the city has put up the land, this doesn't give us a building. Want to keep this project moving forward so that it gets built.

Mr. Kelley echoes the need for social housing and the gap that this project would fill and agree that there is need to keep the project moving forward. Given the constraints of the zoning of the height and bulk, the refinement of this design has been quite successful.

Mr. Kelly commented that lowering the ceiling to 8.6 ft. on floors 4 -7 was a good option in order to increase the floor to ceiling height for the first floor retail units. Mr. Kelley expressed reluctance to reduce floor to ceiling height but in this case, because there is such a hard limit,

there should be discretion to waive that. Mr. Kelly noted that the height of the retail is going to be significantly compromised otherwise.

Motion

It was moved by Mr. Dobrovolny and seconded by Mr. Mochrie, and was the decision of the Board:

THAT the Board **APPROVE** the Development Application No. DP-2018-00630 in accordance with the Staff Committee Report dated October 17, 2018.

4. OTHER BUSINESS

None.

5. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:17 pm.