

## URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

**DATE:** February 3, 2021

**TIME:** 4:00 pm

**PLACE:** WebX

**PRESENT:** MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:

Alan Davies  
Marie-Odile Marceau  
Muneesh Sharma  
Walter Francl  
Karenn Krangle  
Jennifer Stamp  
Margot Long  
Michael Henderson  
Adrien Rahbar

**REGRETS:** Matt Younger  
Brittany Coughlin  
Angela Enman  
Sydney Schwartz

**RECORDING SECRETARY:** K. Cermeno

### ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING

1. 650 W 41<sup>st</sup> avenue (Oakridge Centre)

1. Address: 650 W 41<sup>st</sup> Avenue (Oakridge Centre)  
 Description: The proposal is to increase building heights above those approved in the Oakridge Design Guidelines (2018), ranging from increases of 1 m to 30 m to allow up to 9 additional storeys. The proposed changes include changing building form such as tower floor plate size; converting strata apartment floor area to rental floor area; and adding new office space. The zoning changes would amend the existing CD-1 (1) (Comprehensive Development) District. This proposal includes: • 775 new housing units, including 319 additional market rental units and 94 moderate income rental units • 377,260 sq. ft. of new office space • Increase in floor space ratio (FSR) from 3.71 to 4.10 • Residential floor area of 281,593 sq. m (3,031,042 sq. ft.) • Non-residential floor area of 187,345 sq. m (2,016,565 sq. ft.) • Increase maximum heights for Buildings 2, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and the northeast office building • Increase exclusions from floor area for balconies and amenity areas • Increase permitted height for mechanical appurtenances The application is being considered under the policy framework of the Issues Report on Intensification of Large Sites to include Moderate Income Rental Housing and the Cambie Corridor Plan.
- Application Status: Rezoning Application  
 Review: Ninth  
 Architect: Henriquez Partners Architects  
 Staff: Helen Chan & Kevin Spaans

### **EVALUATION: Support with Recommendations (7/1)**

- **Introduction:**

Rezoning Planner, Helen Chan, began by describing this is an application to rezone Oakridge Centre. Oakridge Centre is a 28-acre site located on the southwest corner of Cambie and 41<sup>st</sup> Avenue.

The rezoning application is being considered under the *Cambie Corridor Plan* and the *Issues Report on Intensification of Large Sites to include Moderate Income Rental Housing*. Oakridge Centre is within the Oakridge Municipal Town Centre neighborhood under the Cambie Corridor Plan, and it is designated as a Major Project site with its own planning process. The framework of the Intensification of Large Sites policy is to allow for up to a 10% increase in residential floor area for rental housing, where 25% of the increase is targeted for moderate-income households, and where FOD changes are appropriate for the context

A brief chronology of the project includes:

- The Oakridge Centre Policy Statement was adopted by Council in 2007. It envisioned a mixed-use, sustainable redevelopment of the site, with greater intensity of housing, retail and office uses.
- In 2014 Council approved amendments to the CD-1 (1) to enable a substantial redevelopment of the site in accordance with the Policy Statement.
- In 2018 the Development Permit Board approved a 'Preliminary Development Plan' or PDP. The PDP worked out details of the form of development in the different sub-areas of the site.

- The 2014 rezoning was then enacted in 2018. Public benefits delivered through this rezoning include a 9-acre City park and civic centre. These committed public benefits are not a part of this current rezoning application.
- Since that time, multiple Development Permits have been approved by the Development Permit Board and site preparation has begun.
- These past processes relate to the current application in that, for example, height is regulated by the CD-1 (1), whereas maximum floorplate size is set out in the Oakridge Design Guidelines, which was developed through the PDP.

The rezoning proposal includes the addition of 775 new housing units, of which 319 are market rental, 94 are moderate income rental and 362 are strata units. The proposal adds 270,000 sq. ft. new residential floor area and 377,000 sq. ft. of new office space. FSR is proposed to increase from 3.71 to 4.10. The new housing units and floor area will be achieved by increasing maximum building height and floorplate size, and by converting floor area uses

Major changes to the approved PDP form of development include:

- Building 5 will add nine storeys and increase floorplate by 700 sq. ft., for a 52-storey (477 ft.) building with a 9,950 sq. ft. floorplate.
- Building 14 will add nine storeys and increase floorplate by 1,000 sq. ft., for a 40-storey (410 ft.) building with a 9,000 sq. ft. floorplate.
- For Buildings 12 & 13, one storey will be added to Building 13 and 500 sq. ft. added to the floorplate for both buildings.
- Buildings 6 & 7 along Cambie, have an approved DP. The rezoning proposal adds two storeys office in the podium and four storeys of residential to Bldg 7.
- The NE Office building also has an approved DP. The rezoning application proposes a new building with two additional storeys.

Major changes in use include:

- Form of development changes largely affect residential strata buildings, except possibly for Building 5.
- Building 5 proposes to convert from strata to rental but have a Housing Agreement for an option to relocate the 587 secured market rental units to Buildings 8 and 11.
- Building 10 would change 94 units from market rental to moderate income rental.
- Building 11 would change from market rental to strata (192 units in this building).
- With the proposed Housing Agreement, in effect, Building 5 could stay strata, then Building 11 would stay market rental and Building 8 would convert some floor area from strata to rental.

Before addressing specifics related to Form of Development, Development Planner Kevin Spaans reinforced that the anticipated urban context provided for in the Cambie Corridor Plan is mid-to-high rise tower-form buildings of between ten and twenty-two storeys in height. The context image provided by the applicant, though not necessarily reflective of in-stream applications, approximates with some accuracy what this future build-out will look like.

Mr. Spaans focused the form of development summary to Buildings 5, 6, 7, 12, 13, and 14, all of which depart measurably from the previously approved rezoning applications in terms of architectural expression, mass, and height. Note, while changes are being proposed to the NE Office building as part of this application, staff are comfortable completing their reviews of this

particular building without the input of the Panel, in order to focus the Panel's attention on more significant design modifications.

Form of development modifications to each building, not including the NE Office building, were then reviewed with the Panel as follows:

### **Building 5**

With an increase in height from forty-three storeys to fifty-two storeys, Building 5 is the tallest building in the development site, and will be highly visible from multiple distant aspects; it will act as a prominent marker of the Oakridge site. Mr. Spaans therefore sought the Panel's input not just on the changes proposed to the form of the building (demonstrated as being a simpler vertical extrusion rather than the expanding and tapering form originally approved), but of the appropriateness of having a building of this significant height at this location as well.

To provide context, Mr. Spaans noted that, on completion, Building 5 would be the eighth tallest building in the city of Vancouver, and the only one of this list outside of the commercial core. It would be among the fifteen tallest buildings in the Metro region.

In order to assess the visibility of the tower, and its function as an urban-scale marker of the Oakridge site, staff asked that the applicant prepare a series of progressive views transiting north and south along Cambie St. The building will be visible from as far south as the intersection of SW Marine Dr and Cambie St. From the north, however, the tower should not appear until between W 33rd St and W 37th St.

### **Buildings 6 & 7**

This application proposed an increase in the overall height of the towers and the podium of Building 6 & 7, resulting in a more massive presence along Cambie St than had been previously approved. Whereas the podium had generally presented an average height of approximately four to five storeys, forming a coordinated street wall with the prospective developments across the street, this latest iteration brings that average height closer to seven or eight storeys.

Despite aforementioned increases in tower height, Buildings 6 & 7, and their common podium retain the curvilinear expression previously proposed and approved.

### **Buildings 12, 13, and 14**

Buildings 12, 13, and 14 present with increases in height, and with significant changes in architectural expression and massing. Whereas each had been designed as architectural coordinated but distinct, they now fall more uniformly into line with each other.

With a height increase of one storey, Building 12 presents as a vertical extrusion with a scalloped floorplate at the northeast and southwest façades. Whereas the original design flared out to an architecturally integral, stepped podium, the proposal now includes a more typical tower plinth.

Building 13, at twenty-four storeys, is two storeys shorter than had been approved previously. The building includes the formal changes as those proposed for Building 12, as does Building 14 which, at a height of forty storeys is nine storeys taller than the previous design.

## Park Shadows

Overshadowing remains a critical consideration of the building designs at Oakridge, and the applicant has been required to demonstrate that any prospective changes to the building forms must function as well or better in terms of overall shadowing of the internal park site. The applicants' shadow studies reveal that there is increased shadowing from Buildings 7 and 14 at 10:00 on the equinoxes, but that the more slender floorplates proposed for Buildings 12, 13, and 14 result in shadow conditions that are improved over the former massing at 12:00, 14:00, and 16:00.

### Advice from the Panel on this application is sought on the following:

#### Overall Modifications

1. Please provide general input on the full scope of the proposed modifications and how they relate to the anticipated concept of the site design.

#### Building 5

2. Understanding that Building 5 will be one of the tallest in the region, at a geodetic high point in the city, please provide feedback on the following:
  - a. The general supportability of a building of noteworthy and super-prominent height at a location outside of the downtown core;
  - b. The proposed massing and architectural expression of the tower as it relates both to the anticipated design concept, and its highly-visible nature;
  - c. The resultant additional shadowing within and outside the boundaries of the Oakridge site

#### Building 6 & 7 Podium

3. Does the Panel support the proposed increase of the podium height, and the resultant relationship with the approved massing across Cambie St?

#### Building 12, 13, 14

4. Please comment on the proposed modifications to building 12, 13, and 14, with particular consideration given the impact of significant increases in height and changes in building massing on the overall performance of the development site.

### Applicant's Introductory Comments:

The applicant noted the project is a response to current and emergent economic conditions, and keeps the promise of social and CAC expectations, suggesting that there is an increase in housing variety and affordability with the proposed changes. Overall, the changes would reduce the number of market strata units on the site, while increasing the number of market rental housing by double. Further, there would be a 33% increase in the number of affordable housing units.

Per the applicant, the site layout is as follows:

- There are nine towers that are all market strata, making up the center of this site;
- There are two social housing buildings;
- There are two secure market rental buildings;
- There is the civic center building, on top of which is the central park site.

Tower massing and height has changed, but their forms are remain responsive to overshadowing consideration of the central park. Some buildings have gone taller; some are shorter. Most buildings are reshaped and reoriented to minimize shadowing.

The applicant noted that retail space is decreased to provide more space for office use, resulting in 300,000 added square feet of office space in response to market demand. The Oakridge site will create over 30,000 construction jobs and over 6,000 fulltime jobs.

Parking layouts, accessibility considerations, and better integration of the park and buildings with the adjacent landscaped areas were highlighted as improvements by the applicant team. Further, the applicant noted that the civic center has been enlarged to include a performance space, an expanded library, and space for seniors. The 'summerhouse' building from the previous iteration has been removed to better open up the park's visibility between the 'commons' and the 'woodlands' areas of the site.

Although outside of the defined area of review for the Urban Design Panel, the applicant noted that the shifting of CACs to phase one represents a significant change.

### **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**

Having reviewed the project, it was moved by **MR. DAVIES** and seconded by **MR. FRANCL** and was the decision of the Urban Design Panel:

THAT the Panel **SUPPORTS** the project with the following recommendations to be reviewed by City Staff:

- That Buildings 12, 13 and 14 receive design development to further individuality between the buildings;
- That the applicant consider additional permeability from Cambie St and 41<sup>st</sup> Ave;
- That the architectural expression of Buildings 5, 6 and 7 be reviewed with the goal of better responding to the environmental factors.

### **Related Commentary:**

The majority of the panelists supported the proposed modifications to the previous proposal at the site, noting that the changes respond well to the changing City.

The support from the panel primarily stems from the program changes move towards rental housing.

The panel noted the enhancement of transit connections and the adding of office space is a positive development.

Most panel members supported the additional height on Building 5 and noted its contribution to the rental housing supply.

The Panel expressed little concern regarding the shadows of Building 5, especially considering the extra height.

The Panel recognized that Building 5 requires an exceptional architectural design response, considering its future landmark status. The Panel noted the architectural form at the time of the first Rezoning application presented a more interesting architecture and some of this reflected in the DP stage.

Regarding the architectural expression of Building 5, the panel noted moving forward more attention to the differentiation between different programs of the residential, offices, commercial and how the building responds to the other environmental factors.

Of Buildings 6 and 7, the panel noted the increase in height is perceivable yet supportable due to the nature of Cambie Street, the development across the street, and how the functional programs have developed and evolved.

A panelist noted the height is significant but recognized that the approach to public realm design makes it accessible.

Of Buildings 12, 13, and 14, the Panel expressed no major concerns, however many noted that the applicant should work to ensure that each building is expressed as an individual entity in the development site.

Along Cambie Street, at Buildings 6 and 7, Panel members noted a common desire for increased permeability from the street into the park, particularly around the 'moongate', and recommended further design development to achieve this.