

URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: Wednesday, July 29, 2020

TIME: 4:00 pm

PLACE: WebX

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:

Angela Enman
Alan Davies
Brittany Coughlin
Walter Francl
Adrien Rahbar
Sydney Schwartz
Jennifer Stamp
Karenn Krangle

REGRETS: Matt Younger
Michael Henderson
Margot Long
Marie-Odile Marceau
Muneesh Sharma

RECORDING SECRETARY: K. Cermeno

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING

1. 349 E 6th Ave
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1. Address: 349 E 6th Ave
Permit No. RZ-2020-00018
Description: To develop a 12-storey residential building comprised of 82 social housing units with 20 vehicle spaces and 106 bicycle spaces. The maximum building height is 38.7 m (127 ft.), the total floor area is 5,462 sq. m (58,791 sq. ft.), and the floor space ratio (FSR) 4.87. This application is being considered under the Mount Pleasant Community Plan.
- Application Status: Rezoning Application (SHORT)
Review: First
Architect: IBI Group, Martin Bruckner
Landscape Architect: PWL Partnership, Grant Brumpton
Staff: Marcel Gelein & Patrick Chan
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EVALUATION: Support with Recommendations (8/0)

- **Introduction:**

Rezoning Planner, Marcel Gelein, began by noting, this is a rezoning application from IBI Group on behalf of Wall Financial who is working in partnership with BC Housing and Brightside Community Homes Foundation, a non-profit social housing provider in Vancouver. The proposal is for one lot at 349 E.6th Ave located on the northwest corner of East 6th Ave and Brunswick Street. The site is in the Mount Pleasant Community Plan Area.

The site is 2 blocks east of Main St and will be less than 450 m away from 2 future sky train stations (Great Northern Way and Main and Broadway). This area has a good access to amenities: commercial shopping, secondary institutions, public and private elementary, park, community centre/library, all of which are less than 500 m away

The site is developed with a 3 storey building that was constructed in 1975 and is currently vacant. The site has a frontage of 30 m (98 ft.) along E.6th Ave and 37 m (122 ft.) along Brunswick Street. The total site area is approximately 1,118 sm. (12,040 sf.) There is a slight slope that runs from south to north of approximately 2m. The site is heavily treed; there are approximately 14 on-site and city trees on and adjacent to the site.

The site and surrounding area is currently zoned RM-4, which permits medium density residential development up to 10.7m in height. The western edge of the block is zoned IC-3 which permits a mix of light industrial, live arts and theatre, residential and related uses that are generally compatible with adjoining residential and commercial districts. A maximum height of 18.3 m is permitted under this zoning.

This project is being considered under the Mount Pleasant Community Plan. The enabling policy for this project can be found under Section 4.0 of the Plan:

- Section 4.1 Housing: Provide more housing and more affordable housing in Mount Pleasant for low to middle income households, especially for families, seniors, new immigrants, and aboriginal people.
- Section 4.1 (ii) Non-market Housing: Support the distribution of non-market housing throughout the community and the City to retain neighbourhood diversity of population and services

Further, the site is included under the Broadway Planning area. As such, the Broadway Plan Interim Rezoning Policy is also applicable, wherein rezoning applications may be only considered under limited situations. Specifically, Policy 2 is applicable, wherein rezoning applications will be considered for projects involving 100% social and supportive housing, or community care facilities or group residences.

This proposal is to rezone the existing RM-4 to permit one 12 storey building for a total of 82 social housing units targeted for seniors, families and people with disabilities. It proposes a density of 4.87 FSR and a height of 38.7 m (127 ft.). The proposal includes one level of underground parking, with access from the lane and rooftop amenity space. Proposal includes the retention of 10 trees with the majority of the trees along East 6th Ave being retained. It should be noted the adjacent site to the west of the proposed development at 325 E. 6th Ave. is currently owned by Brightside Homes and all existing tenants will move from that building to the new building once complete minimizing relocation impacts on tenants.

Development Planner, Patrick Chan, noted this project is situated within the Mount Pleasant Community Plan area, and is currently zoned RM-4 (with particular to the RM-4 Mount Pleasant Guidelines). The site has an approximate 10 ft. slope toward the north lane, and a series of city-trees along E 6th and Brunswick Street. It is three blocks south of East Broadway. There are buildings in its vicinity that are taller than the allowed zoned height of 35 ft.

In lieu of specific form-based rezoning policies, the base zone can act as an evaluative framework. This is not to stymie the project, but to outline certain design and social objectives that the project can respond to. RM-4 By-Laws and Mount Pleasant Guidelines have a height up to 35 ft. and a density of 1.45 FSR, and aims for medium density residential developments.

- Minimise shadow impacts: The top floors of a building's north end are typically terraced.
- Attentiveness to Topography, Northbound Views and Sense of Openness: New developments should factor the neighbourhood's sloping topography, which promotes northbound views. Wider yards can be seen as extensions of the public realm. Landscape treatment should aim for a large contiguous space rather than a series of smaller ones.
- Finer Grain Articulation: Buildings on larger and wider sites should mitigate appearance of bulk and excessive horizontality by introducing more vertical volumes, and use recesses and landscape features to help break lengthy frontages.

Staff acknowledge that while the proposed building's height and density exceeds the RM-4 allowances, aspects of this building remains attentive to the RM-4 urban design objectives. For example:

- Massing: Although the height is 12-storey, the floorplate has average 5,500 sq-ft floorplate. The tower is also north-south oriented to mitigate the width of the shadows cast. The relatively slim frontage along East 6th, Ave, despite its height, responded to the RM-4 recommendations for slimmer vertical expressions to lessen a building's horizontally.
- Siting: Its west interior setback is 35 ft. (as opposed to the typical 7 ft. setback for RM-4 sites) maintains a degree of openness. It is also a large contiguous usable open space with opportunities for more robust planting. The wider interior sideyard may help maintain some northward views.

- Public Realm and Landscape Treatment: A tree-lined streetscape with patios helps to soften the transition from the sidewalk to the building face.

Staff does note the higher height will cast a longer shadow. However, one should also acknowledge the proposed building involves meeting social housing requirements and other programming such as a usable amenity space (indoors and outdoors) for its lower income residents. From the lens of providing shelter for vulnerable population, a degree of flexibility should be exercised in how to differently interpret the spatial objectives in the RM-4 Guidelines and Mount Pleasant Community Plan areas. To provide a usable courtyard, a taller slimmer building is proposed, rather than a lower one that follows a wider RM-4 footprint, albeit still taller than the RM-4's 35 ft. height. A sensitive rethinking of how the social can transform the spatial should be exercised. (Staff also notes preliminary tests have been conducted that shows it is possible for another tower of a comparable floorplate to be developed to the west, while maintaining approximately 80 ft. distance from this proposed tower.)

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

Massing, Height and Siting

- Massing, height, and siting attentiveness to its surrounding context.
- Interpretation of the RM-4 urban design objectives, particularly the sense of openness, northbound views, access to sunlight, and privacy.

Public Realm + Landscape:

- Tree Retention Strategies and Landscape Treatment's contribution to the pedestrian experience.

Livability:

- Relation between the indoor and outdoor amenity spaces with regards to terms of usability while still providing privacy, particularly at the western side yard.

Applicant's Introductory Comments:

The applicant noted they are working with two streets with a fair amount of slope, and there is an existing tree on 6th and Brunswick.

The applicant worked with staff to land an appropriate building form which increased the amounts of units. There will be more family units in this building.

The smaller footprint allows keeping trees and establishing a strong underground.

There is a soft frontage on the lane, activated the lane to be service oriented.

The applicant noted space was allowed for a place of play.

The patio is related clearly and directly to the interior amenity space.

Solar shading devices are provided.

The project is proposing an arbor structure to help define the scale and make it cozier.

The building is meeting all the green emissions and rezoning policy, it is quite an efficient building by its design.

The staff and applicant team then took questions from the panel.

Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:

Having reviewed the project it was moved by **MR. FRANCL** and seconded by **MS. KRANGLE** 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:

- Design Development to the roof top mechanical screening;
- Design Development to the west façade to take advantage of the views and further develop a residential character and expression;
- Design Development to the materiality and expression of the base of the building and the more public uses.

Related Commentary:

There was general support from the panel.

There was a great amount of support for the overall massing, and height and that the siting works well with the context, character and height.

The panel felt that the massing was oriented eastward with corner cut balconies, but that the west side of the tower reads differently. The panel felt that the east side of the building needs to explore a more residential language and take advantage of the views.

The interpretation of the RM-4 is successful, particularly the west setback/sideyard amenity area.

The small floor plate and slim tower was well received.

The panel felt that the units are well laid out and generous in size. They also have access to an exterior space and access to light.

The building provides a successful varied program.

The panel noted that overall the landscape is well handled. public realm and tree retention strategy are successful and the shared spaces are well zoned.

The panel noted that the relationship between the indoor and outdoor amenity at the west and southwest are successful.

The roof deck is a successful space. The panel suggested further consideration of the mechanical location and screening is needed.

There was some concern regarding the base of the building landing abruptly on the bottom two floors. The panel also had concerns with the top of the building, especially on the west top residential floor. The panel suggested further refinement of the base, middle and top.

The panel suggested considering punch windows on certain areas of the façade to diminish the height of the building.

The panel was supportive of brick at the base of the building and felt that it is an appropriate material. The panel suggested considering red brick which is used on historic buildings in the neighbourhood, rather than the proposed brown brick.

The panel noted that the units along the lane do not have direct access out, consider providing this.

The panel suggested considering a softer transition to Brunswick Street, as the proposed design feels fortified. The panel suggested pulling back the stairs and the gate

Further design development is needed to the screening of the mechanical units at the top of the building.

The panel was supportive of the cooling proposed for the building, especially for seniors.

The panel asked the applicant to consider thermally breaking the balconies and providing triple glazed windows.

Applicant's Response: The applicant team thanked the panel for their comments.