

THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF NORTH VANCOUVER

Meeting of the Advisory Planning Commission  
Held at City Hall, 141 West 14th Street, North Vancouver, B.C.  
in Conference Room A on Wednesday, September 14, 2011

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**MINUTES**

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Present: B. Curtis (Chair)  
H. Goodland  
J. Jensen  
P. McCann  
B. Phillips  
M. Rahbar  
M. Tasi  
Councillor Heywood

Staff: G. Penway, Deputy Director, Community Development  
S. Smith, Community Development  
S. Kimm-Jones, Committee Clerk

Guests: Foad Rafii, Rafii Architects Inc.  
Bruce Howden, Rafii Architects Inc.  
Stephanie Martell, Red Lion Management  
Sherry O'Brien, Red Lion Management

Absent: D. Olson  
J. Plato  
M. Robinson

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A quorum being present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 6: 05 p.m.

1. Minutes of Meeting of the Advisory Planning Commission held August 10<sup>th</sup>, 2011

It was regularly moved and seconded

**THAT** the minutes of the meeting of the Advisory Planning Commission held August 10th, 2011 be adopted.

**Carried Unanimously**

## 2. Business Arising

S. Smith and M. Tasi have connected on identifying a school district contact for CityShaping. M. Tasi confirmed that she sent CityShaping information to the School Superintendent.

## 3. Staff Update

Harbourside OCP Amendment: At the September 12<sup>th</sup> Council meeting the decision to establish a task force to review material produced to date with respect to the proposed OCP amendment was deferred to January 2012.

140-150 West 15th: The Zoning Bylaw was amended and adopted at the September 12<sup>th</sup> Council Meeting. The applicant reduced parking by 10 stalls and added one more VRS unit.

Community Plan for a Public System of Integrated Early Care and Learning: The plan proposed by the Coalition of Child Advocates of BC and the Early Childhood Educators of BC was endorsed and the "Provincial and Federal Investment in Early Care and Learning" which was put forward to the Union of BC Municipalities by the City of Vancouver was supported.

340 Brooksbank Text Amendment: First Reading was passed at the September 12<sup>th</sup> Council meeting.

137 St. David's Avenue: First Reading was passed at the September 12<sup>th</sup> Council meeting and the project was referred to Public Hearing. Concern was expressed about overlook and privacy from the roof top deck on the garage.

Anthem Property (Local): The building permit is now in process.

S. Smith gave a brief update on the CityShaping process; staff are trying get a broad diversity of groups to tie into the process and "stay connected". The first discussion forum is concluding. It will not be open during the municipal election. The issues survey is concluding at the end of September. 750 surveys have been completed to-date which is more than in the whole of previous OCP's update process. A summary report will be available at the end of October/early November.

A member asked if there were any updates on The Low Level Road work. Staff: The City is waiting for the detail design work to come back in February/March 2012.

A member noted that the Port Authority sent a summary report to those on their contact list.

The Chair mentioned that the Commission had expressed a desire to have a forum on the issue of public amenities; the potential rezoning of the Harbourside property is a good example. How does the Commission define what an appropriate public amenity would be for a particular project? Is enough being done for the City? Some developers seem to try to tell the City what to do. Staff: There are amenities not connected to a specific location e.g. the museum. Amenities are chosen by Council e.g. The Community Enhancement Fund.

Staff: The role of APC focuses more on deciding whether the amount of density bonus is appropriate rather than deciding on specific amenities.

A member felt that there should be a list of priorities for different areas, thematic priorities, so that developers have a reference point e.g. the priority list for Central Lonsdale is Harry Jerome. The current system seems hodgepodge and ad hoc and sometimes does not seem to make sense.

G. Penway noted that community amenities are a complicated area of law involving public policy and private development, and is a significant discussion point for all municipalities. It is an evolving area where there is no clear law or policy; rights are not explicitly stated but Council has a lot of discretion. Staff tries to think about amenities in a particular area e.g. The School Board and Artists for Kids building. Staff tries to have a discussion with developer near the beginning of the application and get Council involved early in the process. Examples of amenities for density bonussing include the developer rebuilding the whole intersection at 16<sup>th</sup> Street and Lonsdale Avenue, the Silva building paying for the restoration of the Aberdeen Block. Council does have a list with priorities e.g. the museum.

The Chair: Is there any value in having a workshop for the Commission? G. Penway: Council has now created a Community Amenity Fund so there will be more of a policy discussion. Section 5 of the Official Community Plan lists some amenities. The discussion will happen during the OCP process; it may be one of the issues to discuss at APC as part of the OCP update process as the Commission does not want to get ahead of the process.

A member of APC wanted to know how the process will be handled when experienced staff retire; will it be documented? G. Penway: People want the numbers scrutinized; is it a fair return to the developer and to the public? Pro formas are not pure science. Are we getting the kind of community we want to see built with good public benefits?

An APC member asked whether the process scared developers? Staff: They feel they are treated with respect and fairness by the City.

#### **4. 211-217 West 1<sup>st</sup> Street (Rezoning Application )**

S. Smith reviewed the project with APC. It is an OCP amendment and rezoning for a mixed use building with 60 rental units above a commercial ground floor. The net FSR will be approximately 4.27 FSR including additional density for the provision of rental housing. Staff would like APC's comments on the overall liveability of the residential units, especially those oriented east, west and south. There is the use issue and height variance to consider. According to the staff memo, the bicycle parking is deficient seven residential bike stalls, five commercial bike stalls and one wash basin and one shower.

The property to the east has a similar design (it has the same designer) and was granted its height in keeping with the OCP limit for the property.

Foad Rafii, Rafii Architects Inc., introduced the delegation and presented the project:

- The property is zoned Industrial; the intention with the rezoning is to put as many rental suites as possible on the site.
- It is a U-shaped building with an internal courtyard which will serve both this development and the one to the east currently under construction.
- The site to the west is 25 feet wide but the owner is not willing to be part of the development.
- The main floor will be commercial with CRU's on the front and an office at the back. There will be four residential floors above.
- There are two levels of underground parking with separate access points.
- There is a modest increase over the OCP height to match the neighbouring project.
- The initial drawings showed some setbacks from the street but staff comments led them to remove them.
- 80% of the units are Level 2 Adaptable. There is a good variety of suites: studios, one and two bedrooms, plus one bedroom and den. The floor plans are the same for each level.
- The biggest challenge was to match the building being built to the east.

**Questions from the APC included, but were not limited to:**

- Is there a rooftop deck or community space within the building? A: No amenity room although there could be one, perhaps on the main floor. The patios on the second floor are private. As it is a wood frame building, it is very difficult to put landscaping on the roof, decks are problematic, it can be very loud, and access would go over the height requested. Also the hope is to get people out of their homes e.g. connecting with the community through John Braithwaite Community Centre and the parks in the neighbourhood.
- What are the market conditions for rental housing? A: There is a low vacancy rate. This is a legacy building so it will not be cash-positive until the sixth or seventh year.
- Question for staff: the building next door came back for additional funding; will this building have the same kind of problems? Mr. Foad answered: They did not get it. Their project had three sides and two streets, which left them open to more off-street works. This project has two sides and one street.
- The density bonus for this site is comparable to the previous one? Staff: I believe so; this is 4.27 FSR compared to 3.18 FSR. Applicant: We wanted to have enough critical mass to support a resident manager for long-term maintenance.
- What measures are being taken to mitigate noise from the lane and theatre? A: The units are facing blank walls with no windows or doors.
- Describe the streetscape. A: It is an urban streetscape repeating the patterns in the paving from the previous block; pavers will allow water to permeate. We will be working with the City on street trees. The entryway is paved in concrete with planters against the wall. There is landscaping on the second level to provide a buffer to the neighbouring courtyard.
- I have a problem with the common areas not provided for the tenants and with the units facing the courtyards; how many are there? A: There are eight units facing east and 12 facing west.

- The low ones will be heavily compromised for light? A: The distance across the two courtyards is 55 feet. The lowest level units have very large patios heavily landscaped.
- There should be some three bedroom units. A: Some of the two-bedroom units are over 1,000 sq .ft. When you do the load calculation for a two-bedroom unit you calculate for four people. We are trying to provide a good quality product for seniors, commuters and small families; the two-bedroom units have two full bathrooms and a washer and dryer.
- What is your energy plan; are you connecting to LEC? A: Yes and we are aiming for ASHRAE 90.5; our intention is to go above LEED Silver through energy efficient glazing, insulation etc. It is to the owners benefit to save as much energy as possible.
- In assessing the financial rationale what is the opportunity cost and how much is created by the City's policy on parking? A: It does not make sense to build rental buildings. 60 units make the financial numbers workable; the clients will not see a profit for over five years. Parking is an issue as we need two floors. Staff: DCC's are reduced for affordable units and by 50% for rental units to encourage their development.
- The larger patios connected to the larger suites would make more sense. A: older people have more time to look after the gardens we do not want the courtyard to become a place for bicycles.

**Comments from the APC included, but were not limited to:**

- I like the project. The height is acceptable. It is a challenging site. The building fits the street.
- I think an extra floor with extra setbacks would work to allow more sunlight into the units that need it. I would like to see some kind of amenity room.
- I am happy any time someone wants to build rental housing. I wonder if the size of the garbage and recycling facilities will be adequate.
- The Inner courtyard should be accessed by the residents and have landscaping to make it more interesting for the upper floors.
- I like the retail.
- I am not a big fan of communal amenities in rental buildings due to the cost of upkeep.
- It would be good to get a variance for roof top amenities.

**Comments from the Presenter:**

There are two reasons for not going higher. Firstly, Council approved this height for the adjacent building and not a higher building. Secondly, the pro forma works for a wood frame building but not for a higher concrete building.

It was regularly moved and seconded

**THAT** the Advisory Planning Commission has reviewed the Rezoning Application for 211-217 West 1<sup>st</sup> Street and recommends approval of the project subject to the following comments:

**THAT** the Commission is in support of the requested density, setback and height relaxations;

**THAT** the applicant work with City staff to ensure that the recycling facilities are sufficient for future needs;

**THAT** consideration be given to the inclusion of at least one three-bedroom unit;

**THAT** the possibility of adding a modest amenity room or common courtyard to the building be investigated; and,

The Commission thanks the applicant for a thorough presentation.

**Carried Unanimously**

#### **5. Advisory Body Reorganization Update**

G. Penway updated the group on the status of the proposed advisory body reorganization.

Attendees at the June workshop supported the changes including the Sense of Place Committee although there was some opposition about Heritage not being singled out as a committee. Council voted on the report on September 19<sup>th</sup> with a resolution to carry on and review the terms of reference. The Joint Bicycle Advisory Committee has been working on the Terms of Reference for the Transportation Committee. A challenge will be how to inject the environmental issues into each group without having too much overlap e.g. transportation and building energy issues. The hope is that draft Terms of Reference will come to APC's October meeting for review. Groups need to see all the Terms of Reference and how they fit together. It is hoped that 2012 appointments will reflect the reorganization, otherwise it will be delayed.

A new name is being sought for the Sense of Place Committee; the name makes sense to people with design backgrounds but most people do not like it.

#### **6. OCP 2021 Discussion**

S. Smith led a discussion on CityShaping. The survey on the website invites participants to pick their top five issues. Are there any key issues that are missing from the list of 10?

**The following comments were made by APC members:**

All 10 are important; I would not like council to ignore the issue ranked #10. The top two ranked issues are probably due to the economic environment.

It is interesting that Public Safety is ranked so high

I am surprised that energy and emission are ranked so low. The name is not very exciting; many of the names are not helpful.

There is a difference between deductive and inductive questionnaires. The City controls everything about streets and spaces but not affordable housing for instance. An inductive question would be "Here are the City's values shown in the way we spend our money, what are yours? Deductive questions are the big issues. This is a mix of both e.g. Economic growth versus the importance of jobs. Some of the topics may be too broad.

According to one Commission member, the Squamish Nation members recently answered a questionnaire and have the same top three issues: housing, economic and health; they would probably be the top issues on most surveys

How are you tracking demographics? A: There will be an age breakdown but there is no control over how many people in a particular age group answer the questionnaire. We have tried to get a better balance by going to different groups and events. The second phase is targeted and deep.

Staff question: From the list of issues do you feel it covers off the key high level issues?

There is nothing that covers overall social cohesion, governance, transparency and accessibility.

I do not like the term "cultural diversity" perhaps "social inclusion"?

Feeling like I have a voice in my community and local government., due process.

Land use is not addressed separately as an issue.

There is a perception that Council is in developers pockets. People need to be educated.

Sense of character, North Vancouver style. What distinguishes the City from other places?

Maybe some of the titles could be rephrased to be more personal e.g. I want to live in a community where...

Perhaps people could be asked to choose between positive values e.g. would you rather have this or that?

Staff: We are trying to make it personal but also high level enough.

A different support system is needed for people working out of their homes.

Things that we take for granted should be left out e.g. sewer system, clean water etc. You should include issues Council struggles with e.g. secondary suites.

People could be asked to make choices such as "I would like to ...walk my dog off leash etc.", "I would be willing to ...volunteer etc."

Cluster analysis would be interesting.

When does the consultant involvement stop? Staff: Technically to the end of 2012 but there is more involvement at the front end.

S. Smith told the group that a summary of Phase 1 will be brought to APC for review and given to Council.

S. Smith suggested that APC discuss land use at their October meeting. A member suggested that the discussion could be framed in terms of the 100 year vision.

## **7. Other Business**

S. Smith drew the group's attention to the Civic Amenity Report which was sent to them for their information.

A member asked if a walking tour was planned. The answer was not at the moment but perhaps one could be organized for October/November.

The Chair invited members to attend the Lower Lonsdale Fall Festival on September 18<sup>th</sup>.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

The next regular meeting of the Advisory Planning Commission will be held on Wednesday, October 12<sup>th</sup>, 2011.

Chair

