

THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF NORTH VANCOUVER

**Meeting of the Advisory Design Panel
Held at City Hall, 141 West 14th Street, North Vancouver, B.C.
In Conference Room A on Wednesday, March 18th, 2015**

MINUTES

- Present:** B. Allen
J. Boyce
K. Bracewell, R.C.M.P
K. England
A. Epp
J. Geluch
A. Larigakis
M. Tasi
- Staff:** D. Johnson, Development Planner
Colleen Perry, Supervisor, Development Servicing
S. Kimm-Jones, Committee Clerk
T. Forrest. Planning Analyst
C. Wilkinson, Planner
- Guests:** **340-344 East Keith Road (Rezoning Application)**
Kent Halex, Halex Architecture
Harry Lee Haggard, Landscape Architect
Craig Henderson, Owner
- Absent:** S. Gushe
P. Maltby
-

A quorum being present, the meeting was called to order at 5:35 p.m.

1. Minutes of Meeting of the Advisory Design Panel held February 18th, 2015

It was regularly moved and seconded

THAT the minutes of the meeting of the Advisory Design Panel held February 18th, 2015 be adopted

Carried Unanimously

2. Business Arising

Staff confirmed the attendance of members booked on the Eli Mina workshops.

3. Staff Update

D. Johnson reviewed the status of ongoing development projects. The draft 2014 Official Community Plan was given Third Reading and is scheduled for Final Adoption on March 23rd. If the OCP has Final Adoption, staff will prepare an implementation report for Council's approval.

The 2015 Design Awards ceremony went well on March 2nd.

4. Draft Sustainability Checklist

T. Forrest, Planning Analyst, presented the draft Sustainability Checklist to the Panel and asked for feedback. The Checklist has been developed to challenge applicants to help advance the sustainability objectives of the City, and will function to implement the sustainable city framework in the 2014 OCP.

At the current time, applicants have the choice of completing the current Sustainability Checklist or writing a statement; most elect to write statements that are usually quite broad.

The new sustainability checklist is intended to be easy to use. It builds on existing guidelines using the 2014 OCP framework as a guide for organizing the content. The option to write a statement has been eliminated. Applicants will be required to provide more clear evidence of sustainable measures.

Comments and Questions from the Panel included but were not limited to:

- It will be part of the application process? **A:** The checklist will replace the current Sustainability Checklist which is in the application package.
- I think it is positive; sustainable write-ups are usually a bunch of fluff to get through the process.
- Any thought to density bonuses for sustainable construction? **A:** The updates to the OCP and the Zoning Bylaw address this and are a more effective way to reach every project without the incentive of additional density.
- Will there be some form of verification at the end of the project to confirm implementation? **A:** The intent is not to create more work for the applicant or staff but to have a functional, usable tool; perhaps at the Building Permit stage.
- What pushback do you expect? **A:** We do not expect any project to tick yes in all categories; they will choose what they do. We will be paying attention to the yeses.
- Will specific targets be set e.g. percentage of bird friendly landscape? **A:** We are trying to encourage people to include features without been prohibitive. It might be helpful to include increments.
- I almost think there should have to be justification for saying "no" to key points; maybe a n/a column and comments to be provided in all cases.
- One challenge is that it gives equal weight to everything; I do not know how you get around that some comments are really important. There are no specific targets; what does "innovative storm water management strategies" mean? **Staff:** There are detailed handouts for storm water management.
- With regard to urban agriculture; do we need power outlets and lights? Would be more energy efficient not to have them.
- In the Green Building section, architects would tick everything off because the criteria are so vague e.g. "building durability"; in LEED that is one of the most onerous

components to achieve. Some items are very difficult to measure and quantify e.g. How much “recycled materials” to obtain a yes? All buildings have some. There is no quantification of low-emitting materials so it is not meaningful.

- The air tightness category perhaps should have a number higher than Code or specify air changes per hour.
- I would take out “drain water heat recovery”; copper is very expensive and the system is not effective.
- What does “Commercial exceeds the minimum” mean? **A:** It would be the minimum as required under the zoning designation.
- Re “Economic Benefits”, all construction projects have economic benefits. These elements are vague.
- “Local materials used” is not very meaningful; you just need one locally-made 2 x4 to meet this requirement.
- Re “Human potential”, “daylighting and views” is vague. Does one window suffice? There is the question of what is affordable; can it be defined?
- Maybe key items should be at the front to give them greater weight. **A:** These could differ as there will be a level of interpretation by committees and Council on different projects.
- Rather than putting the onus on staff and applicants, just say all projects have to meet a certain level of LEED. **A:** The City of Vancouver requires projects of a certain size to meet LEED. It is very costly and does not make every project more sustainable.
- If the completed checklist is attached to the package we will be able to question the applicants.
- “Landscaping” should be called “Landscape”; a vegetated roof is not landscaping.
- You should not use a mercury filled CFL bulb as a graphic; it is not sustainable. LED lighting would be preferable.
- Many people are visual; it is possible to put together images of things that work well e.g. storm water management, spaces for people to rest, permeable surfaces, solar lighting. **A:** We could put them on the website so they could be updated. It would be a good place to highlight technologies and successes.
- Re your references to third party labelling parties; you should put them all in or take them out. “High performance construction” is being used instead of “green building”. Energy Star labelling will implemented soon.
- It would be great to have the recycling guidelines and checklist in one sustainable green building package. Is there any way to tie the checklist into the bonding?
- Is there a way to mandate requirements?
- It would be useful to require a minimum performance from the Blower Door Test.
- Is there a way to take deposits to guarantee execution of sustainability commitments?

5. 340-344 East Keith (Rezoning Application)

Staff introduced the project that is an application to rezone two existing lots from Two-Unit Residential to a Comprehensive Development Zone to permit the subdivision of the two existing lots into four lots.

Staff asked for the Panel’s input on the detached low density single family form, repeated building massing and material, setbacks considering neighbouring buildings, adjoining coach houses and their design, modification of the ground plane and proposed finished grades relative to the City boulevard and neighbouring lots, and the storm water management plan.

Kent Halex, Halex Architecture, outlined the project to the Panel:

- Each proposed lot is just over 5,000 sq. ft.; minimum lot size is 6,000 sq. ft. so a variance for the 1,000 sq. ft. difference is being sought.
- The two sets of attached coach houses are a practical solution to the awkwardly-shaped lots.
- Opted to design four single family houses rather than duplexes because the aspect from the street is what we wanted to achieve. The project is on a bend in Keith Road which adds to the perspective of the units.
- Each building is at a different elevation and the roofs are at different heights. The flat roofs help to preserve neighbours' views. The facades vary in an "a b a b" rhythm.
- The landscape design resurrects the form of the original river bed on the site. The bioswale adds interest to the landscape.
- There is a progression from public to private space by going up steps and over a bridge.

Harry Lee Haggard, Landscape Architect, described the landscape plan:

- Generally native, low maintenance planting.
- There are lighting bollards and uplighting throughout the site

Questions from the Panel included but were not limited to:

- Is there an area for vegetable gardens? **A:** Lawn areas could be converted.
- What are you proposing for the rainwater recovery system? **A:** Rainwater will be funneled to underground cisterns in the front yards of each unit and used to irrigate the landscape. They are connected to a sump that channels overflow to the rain gardens.
- The landscape drawings do not show a lot of the grading; the walkways are quite organic, is it because of the grade? **A:** It is to add interest.
- It will be faster for the people living in the middle two houses coming from their cars to walk straight across the lawn? **A:** Yes.
- What is the slope in the front yard from the building to the sidewalk? The neighbouring houses have retaining walls? There is a big drop? **A:** It is steeper at the east end of the site so there are stairs up to the gazebo and a bridge over the bioswale. There will be a soft barrier from the sidewalk to the lawn area.
- What is the rationale for the sunken patio as it has no access? **A:** It is to get light into the basement space; it has more glass than window wells would.
- The only level outdoor space is the lawn area at the back? **A:** Yes, the coach houses will not have access to the lawns.
- You have a gate fencing off the back yard? **A:** Yes, it is public space up to the gate.
- How will people find the coach houses? **A:** They will be lit from the street.
- **To staff:** With two attached coach houses what is to prevent someone from ripping the middle wall out and making a larger dwelling? **A:** It is the first time that an application has presented a zero lot line condition. We are anticipating separate owners.
- Will there be a heat pump for the houses? **A:** Our goal is EnerGuide 84. It will probably be in-floor heating.
- Have you thought about the choice of material for the streetscape facing Keith Road? **A:** On the Keith Road façade there is a rich palette of materials including stone veneer which alternates to create more interest and enrich the façade.
- Why are you using SIPS panels? **A:** They fit the design. The buildings will be sprinklered so the number of unprotected openings can be increased to allow more natural light.
- What is the depth of the creek bed at the front? **A:** About three inches.

- Are there shading issues with the neighbour to the west? **A:** We do not think so. The neighbour has quite good exposure; the house has a different orientation.
- The coach house will shadow their outdoor space. **A:** There will be some shadowing as the property to the west is lower.
- Have you looked at giving all four units access to the south west? The two facing south east will lose daylight. **A:** The important thing is that the main living areas are on the south side of the buildings. We are confident that there will be significant light.
- Why do the front entrances face each other? **A:** To draw the front yard into the space between the buildings, into the interstitial space. The buildings are splayed so the space between them is significant. The entrances are very visible from the street. It celebrates the notion of entrance and human connectedness; it differs from a typical urban layout.
- Did you size the rain garden; do you know how much rainwater you are expecting to handle? **A:** It is a very wet site with an underground stream; it has water issues now so the design intercepts as much water as possible and deal with it. Water runs diagonally across the site from 8th Street.
- Sequoia giganteum is a massive tree for an urban garden. **A:** We can change the species to sequoia pendula, the weeping version.
- Do the drains have to be in the middle of the lawn at the back? It will not be good for children playing. **A:** We are trying to stop the water crossing the pathway.
- What kind of outdoor lighting will you be using? **A:** Light sensitive activation.
- Can you explain the sunken patio to the south of the coach houses? **A:** We have opted to put 100 sq. ft. of mechanical space in the basement that is accessed from the south.

Comments of the Panel included but were not limited to:

- Coach houses and residences must be clearly identified for first responders, especially at night; they will need to know the access routes.
- The character of the landscape does not reflect the modern character of the homes. It should be more integrated.
- The landscape rendering should be updated to show the amount and size of tree species, and to show them at their 10 year size.
- I wish the landscape included more usable outdoor space. It is a tight site; there is an opportunity to have a smaller rain garden and more usable space at the front. Re-jig the drains at the back so they do not interfere with usable space. Patios should be accessible from outside to be more usable.
- I like the variation and change to the form. The metal seems out of context with the other materials. The design seems busy with four materials; eliminate the metal.
- Glass railings with aluminium posts on the front elevations look like an apartment-type building. The glass shows clutter behind and may take away from the design; mitigate this by using horizontal guard railings to conceal clutter.
- I commend you for the package and sustainable initiatives.
- The four front units are identical in their appeal from the street and do not feel warm because of the amount of glass; consider warming the appearance to conform more to the existing streetscape. The elevation at the back alley is very inviting.
- It is a really nice package and presentation. I like the project and choice of flat roofs over pitched roofs to minimize view blockage.
- I like the detached form and character; it is nice to have a change from duplexes.
- Attached coach houses are good; tiny gaps between garages can become dumping grounds. Energy efficiency will be improved with the attached party wall. I like the

bioswale and storm water management plan; it will capture most of the water. I like the bridges.

- SIPS Panel construction will eliminate construction waste; it is a good choice and suits the design. It will decrease construction time and disruption to neighbours. I would like to see solar panels on the roof.
- I am very supportive of the rainwater cisterns; it is rare to see. In the future the water could be treated as an emergency initiative.
- There is a lack of south facing outdoor space for the tenants; the sunken patio gives the houses the appearance of the back of a house. There should be access to the patios from other outdoor space.
- Coach houses should give inhabitants a different feel from living in a condo with a small semi-private area for the tenants. There is no connection for the coach houses with any of the landscape; add some opportunity for the tenants to have some part of the landscape that they could occupy. If the design was more in keeping with the modern architecture, with more right angles, it would be possible without significant impact.
- I am impressed by the storm water treatment and the bioswales.
- I like the organic landscape because it is a contrast to the modern architecture.
- Thank you for your submission. The concept of four houses is in keeping with the neighbourhood. Sustainability very well done.
- I do not think the sunken patio is a good idea; it is cut off from the outdoor space.
- I like the simplicity of the buildings but think you could eliminate the metal siding. Success will depend a lot on the details. The craft and care of how it is put together will make or break it; how you deal with the balconies, the kinds of windows, composition of elements. The south elevation has a fight between the verticality and some of the horizontal elements e.g. the windows over the fireplaces. Perhaps move the fireplace and create a better connection between the dining room and exterior space.
- I do not like arbitrary changes to a design to make it look different. You have four different sites; the houses are quite narrow. You are fighting the narrowness e.g. with the stairs. You could loosen up on the wider sites; that would give you some differentiation.

Presenter's comments:

- Thank you for your comments. We appreciate the feedback from the Panel. Projects are always better for it.
- Should the landscaping be rectilinear or organic? Does it enhance the modernity? These are not rectangular lots. There are little gestures to suggest different forms.
- Comments re the usability of outdoor space are interesting. To a certain extent we are fighting with the planting and different elements in the landscape. The points are well taken. We will give some consideration and more thought to it.
- Point well taken about the palette of materials. The stone was added as a result of discussions with Planning Department; it does enrich the buildings. Was it necessary? We will take it seriously and will give a lot of thought to it. There are issues to differentiate; the houses do not line up, do not share a lot line so there are different colours in the wood and stone which is subtle but effective to add spice and interest to the streetscape. We are optimistic that, because of the fact that the street bends with splayed lots and different lot lines, they will look different not just mirrored buildings.

It was regularly moved and seconded

THAT the Advisory Design Panel has reviewed the Rezoning Application for 340-344 East Keith Road and recommends approval subject to addressing the following issues to the satisfaction of the Development Planner:

- Better integration of the landscape design with the architecture;
- The addition of more useable outdoor space, specifically on the south side of the coach houses, and to the south of the principal houses;
- A reduction in the number of the materials in the material palette by eliminating the metal component;
- Careful attention to details to avoid an apartment-like expression of the principal buildings along the street front;
- Further investigation of the storm water management plan, particularly with regard to the capacity of the bioswale; and
- Clarification of the site grading.

The Panel commends the applicant for a thorough presentation.

Carried Unanimously

6. Other Business

There was a brief discussion on meeting procedures.

7. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

The next regular meeting of the Advisory Design Panel will be held on Wednesday, April 15th, 2015.

Chair



