

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 the Atrium Meeting Room on Wednesday, June 19th, 2019**

MINUTES

- Present:** W. Chong
K. Ross
N. Petrie
R. McGill
B. Jones
M. Messer
J. Ralph
B. Harrison
K. Bracewell, RCMP
- Staff:** D. Johnson, Development Planner
M. Friesen, Planner 1
T. Huckell, Committee Clerk
- Guests:** 2357 Western Avenue (Rezoning Application)
Thomas Grimwood, Grimwood Architecture
Julian Pattison, Considered Design Inc.
- Absent:** C. McLeod
Councillor A. Girard
-

A quorum being present, the meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m.

1. Minutes of Meetings of the Advisory Design Panel held May 15th, 2019

It was regularly moved and seconded

THAT the minutes of the meeting of the Advisory Design Panel held May 15th, 2019 be adopted.

Carried Unanimously

2. Business Arising

None.

3. Staff Update

D. Johnson reviewed the status of ongoing development projects. Council has directed staff to start an affordable housing study to support the delivery of new affordable housing initiatives. On May 27th, Council adopted a bylaw for 125 East 20th Street, which is a six storey residential building consisting of 85 market and non-market rental units, including 10 wheelchair accessible ready units.

Panel members inquired as to the Harry Jerome development. M. Friesen replied that Council has asked staff to prepare a holistic community needs assessment. A presentation to Council will likely occur in the fall.

4. 2357 Western Avenue (Rezoning Application)

The City has received a development application to rezone 2357 Western Avenue to support four townhouses with two additional lock-off units. Parking, bicycle parking, and garbage and recycling storage are located in the rear portion of the lot, accessed via a driveway from Western Avenue.

The site is located on Western Avenue, between West 23rd Street and Highway-1. The site is located within walking distance of public transit, commercial areas and amenities, as well as adjacent to planned City of North Vancouver active transportation routes.

- Site Design: orientation of the rear building; spacing between the buildings and possible territoriality concerns; effective unit identification; mitigating overlook concerns for adjacent properties; and potential CPTED concerns.
- Architecture: the proposed architectural style; the application of facade materials; and the proposed colour pallet.
- Landscape Architecture: the proposed planting schedule; the viability of the vegetated drive-aisle and turn-around area; lighting and territoriality; and proposed strategies or principles for the future conversion of the drive-aisle and turn-around area.

Thomas Grimwood, Grimwood Architecture, described the project to the Panel:

- This is a transitional street, with development to the east. There are single-family homes to the north of the site.
- Context photos show the development that has happened to the east, and the unopened lane to the west. One important point to be aware of in this development is that the opening of the lane may not happen; this would require the City purchasing land from private owners.
- Strategy with the lane was to take a drawback and turn it into an asset. The built form was pushed to the north of the site. Rear units were rotated to gain space on the south side. There would be public frontage on Western Avenue. Rear units would be accessed from the south; each would be offset to create a clearly individual home with a little more privacy.
- All entrances would be visible from Western Avenue, with the back units visible from the street.
- The project is terraced; units step down from north to south. Trying to position the building so the main levels open up to the existing grade. Below grade are the entrances to two lock-off units.

- Garbage is wheeled out to the front of the driveway. Idea is the driveway is planted; if the lane goes through in the future, the driveway can become outdoor space.
- The townhouse layouts are fairly standard; tried to allow good daylight penetration into the courtyard from the south. Building to the east is offset to allow more daylight.

Julian Pattison, Considered Design Inc., reviewed the landscape plan:

- We wanted to turn a purely functional driveway into an amenity for the people that will live here. Rather than typical asphalt, used this as an opportunity to do something different with “living streets”, by introducing materials into the ground plane, like a bumpy split face stone. As a driver you enter the space with the knowledge that it’s a living plane, to expect pedestrians, children (not unlike Granville Island).
- The actual driveway itself is a grass type surface. As you drive into the development, it acts like a rumble strip; there is a cognitive realization that you’re driving into a space that’s not a road (although it still functions as such).
- If the laneway opens up in the future, then this green surface could just become part of the garden space.
- Also suggesting a basketball hoop, a sports wall; trying to realize the plain functions but also allow it to be used in a variety of other capacities.

Questions from the Panel included but were not limited to:

- The driveway aisle plans show a strip down the middle; what would that be composed of? **A:** Grass would grow between the pavers. The middle portion, where you don’t drive, would be green lawn.
- What will be at the back property line? **A:** Envisioned a hedge.
- No fence at the back? **A:** It’s possible. If so, probably a chainlink hidden within hedge, to allow the security without the visual barrier.
- With the valleys on the rooflines you will have moisture running down, potentially into the units. What’s your moisture management plan? You also need such a plan for windows and doors. **A:** Haven’t really thought about that too much yet, point taken. What we’re showing around the windows is a metal frame, sheet metal product rather than actual steel. Haven’t detailed out that assembly yet. It will be a custom formed element, an important detail.
- In some of the units you’ll have some solar heat, May to September. Have you engaged an envelope engineer yet? **A:** No, nor an environmental consultant. Agree that that’s important.
- With regard to light wells in secondary suites, wonder if you have explored how much light will be coming in to the north units. **A:** Fairly generous glazing to the east; the windows are conventionally sized as they are now. There is an opportunity to increase the size, give some more daylight to the basement.
- How will you deal with stormwater management? **A:** We have only preliminary plans. There will be a storage tank on site; the grass on the permeable driveway; that’s what we have right now.
- Is the grass grid concrete? **A:** It could be. There are benefits to a plastic system, it doesn’t get as hot in summer as a concrete system. New concrete systems are better, the roots don’t get as hot. Plastic systems don’t have the same longevity as concrete.
- Do you think they will work with parking? **A:** Absolutely.
- What if someone leaves their car parked for a long period of time? **A:** Yes, grass could die in that situation, but it is easy to reseed; still better than asphalt.

- Will the green driveway be irrigated? Otherwise the grass won't survive. **A:** Could be done.
- Foresee privacy issues. Can you add a screen between the two main units? **A:** The rendering doesn't necessarily reflect the final design; could add some fencing.
- Identification from the street is important; how would someone know where to go towards the back, especially with the garbage bins there; will there be some signage that indicates numbers at back? **A:** Hadn't reached that step yet, but there absolutely could be. Tried to give the back units some presence; could rotate address signage towards the street, to identify those units.
- Will the parking at the back be covered? **A:** With vegetation. The whole idea is it's quite light.
- Question for staff: is there potential for the lane to open? And if so, does laneway access become a problem? **A:** There is potential over time, with redevelopment, but it depends on the speed of development. Can't predict. If so, the proposed stalls could still be accessed directly from the lane.
- Doesn't seem like the allowable building envelope for height has been maximized; why is the ground level not higher? **A:** The southwest corner is the low point. We are trying to take up the difference in grade gradually, to avoid having a large retaining wall on the southwest unit. So it gradually terraces down.
- Wouldn't a higher build solve some of the light issues mentioned earlier in the secondary suites? **A:** The step off patio is about two feet. If we were to lift it 12 inches, then we've really got a strong barrier between the patios there and the drive aisle. In the future, if the lane opens, ideally it becomes a more natural connection to the planted area.
- The requirement for parking is four stalls, with one accessible. This nice surface is taking up the lot; is there an opportunity to have more landscaping in the southwest corner? **A:** Probably a question for City policy on parking. Staff responded that there is a trade-off; there are four primary units but also essentially two lock-off suites. So we're managing five stalls as a trade-off. Also noted that parking often comes up as a sensitive issue at Public Hearings.
- Wondering about the maintenance of the pavers; do they heave? Slipping risk? How well do they clear when it snows? The grass itself will compact over time, and may become a tripping hazard. Do you think it's reasonable for the long-term? **A:** The technology is at a point now where it works. Ten years ago they may not have worked so well but now, they do. Lots of show grounds, etc. in the UK are using these systems.
- Will there be one street address? **A:** That comes up at the building code stage, rather than rezoning. There will likely be four.
- How will you identify to first responders? How will they know where to go? **A:** we have illuminated addresses. Each number would be clearly visible from the street; the idea is that each unit is legible from the street.
- What is the surveillance and visibility for the sunken units, with hidden doorways – can anyone see from the road? **A:** The entrances are shifted out to the north and south, below the bridge. Accessed from the single stair.
- If I'm on the street, can I see that doorway? **A:** Depends on how close you are. From the sidewalk, it will be apparent. From the other side of the street, less so.
- What is the lighting treatment for that sunken area? Are they lit independently from the units? **A:** A lighting plan, lit trellises. With respect to the independent lighting, haven't thought that far ahead.

- What sort of construction for storage and bikes – plastic from Canadian Tire, or something more substantial? **A:** It will be a secure, metal closure.

Comments from the Panel included but were not limited to:

- Like the package, the high road. Not convinced that the circulation is sustainable; think maintenance of the driveway could be a nightmare. Very well intentioned but not sure keeping the grass alive is feasible.
- Some issues around how you eventually do the envelope; outdoor living is squished, but it is where the density should be.
- The bollards are a great idea, but you'd better arrange it such that owners are aware that six or so are replaced per year. They will get driven into, guaranteed.
- Really creative proposal. Pay attention to privacy so neighbours aren't eye to eye.
- Consider getting the envelope engineer earlier rather than later.
- Consider bringing the front two units up a little, and bring a little more light into the secondary suites.
- Love the form and character, like the cars in back, but one thing to question: with orientation directly to someone else's backyard there are privacy issues. A fence on the south side of the property is important; think about the City bylaw on fence height. Take a look at that south fence and respecting the homeowner of 2345 Western.
- Love the terracing as a natural way of getting privacy; would encourage fence to mitigate privacy. Otherwise fantastic.
- Concern re: the use of the grass paving system and whether it will work long-term. Concerning for watering, cutting grass if someone is parked long-term, management of water use.
- Fencing, screening will be critical. Think the proximity of the two little townhouses is nice, will encourage positive relationships between neighbours. Also have to be looking at your light wells.
- In terms of massing, agree with others, it's a really attractive project; it's a street in transition. Have to speculate a little bit about how neighbouring lots might be assembled; although I like the massing, worry a little bit that it may be a little diminutive based on what the neighbourhood might become.
- Would like to see a little more softscaping.
- In terms of livability – the 3, 4 bedrooms townhouse units, see that each bedroom has its own bathroom. Quite a squeeze. There are washers and dryers, but no real proper laundry space, would suggest a single ensuite, one bathroom off the hall, and larger laundry facilities.
- The addressing for first responders is going to be critical. You've got four street addresses, they need to be visible from the road. You need something to draw the first responders into the back units.
- Chainlink fence will be essential. Need to ensure someone can't just squeeze through the fence. The sunken suites and the bridge are where you'd most likely be hit by vandals/thieves; places where you can't be seen.
- Think it's a good fit for the coming neighbourhood, possibly a little smaller scale than what's coming as single family houses phase out. Like how you've handled the laneway.
- An interesting mix of private and common space; be aware there may be some overlapping territories there, but think it's manageable.
- Suggest you have too many bollards; maybe make a wider walkway? Treat it more as one space (pedestrians, cars, and bikes). Don't try to separate it as much.

- Think the restrained, controlled planting is good; over time the homeowners would likely develop with pots and planters etc.
- Your bike storage should be important, in terms of guarding; make sure you have some good fence at the back, lighting, very secure bike area.
- Commend the design, perfect for this neighbourhood. The north elevation as shown is pretty inactive; could manipulate how you use the stairs, take advantage of the space.
- Don't think bollards are the best solution for the drive aisle; could go lower with mound bollards, or planters that are more robust.

Presenter's comments:

Thank you for all the comments, there are lots of good things to incorporate and consider. Are we being directed to lift the front two units?

Panel's response: suggest you do your own investigation; take this as direction to study it. Consider bringing up the below grade units to improve visibility. Work with the City's development planners.

The presenters also agreed that the drive aisle surface is definitely something to continue doing research on (maintenance, liabilities). Comments regarding the bollards are appreciated.

It was regularly moved and seconded

THAT the Advisory Design Panel has reviewed the rezoning application for 2357 Western Avenue and recommends approval subject to addressing the following issues to the satisfaction of the Development Planner:

- Further review of unit identification involving CPTED issues;
- Further review of main privacy screening, water management and detailing and other landscaping issues (as outlined in the minutes);
- Further review of the driveway function and sustainability, including maintenance;
- Consider the bollard lighting, possible in ground lighting and separating the driveway and walkway;
- Further review of overlook between the units as well as the neighbours to the south; and
- Consider internal livability issues with the floor plans.

AND THAT the Panel wishes to thank the applicant for their presentation.

Carried Unanimously

7. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:50 p.m.

The next regular meeting of the Advisory Design Panel will be held on Wednesday, July 17th, 2019.

Chair 