



POLICY REPORT
DEVELOPMENT AND BUILDING

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Report Date: September 23, 2010
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Meeting Date: October 7, 2010

TO: Standing Committee on Planning and Environment
FROM: Director of Planning
SUBJECT: Issues Report: Redevelopment of 1075 West Hastings Street and View Corridors

RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT Council provide advice to the Development Permit Board in its consideration of a development permit for 1075 W Hastings that Council is supportive of a slight intrusion into the Cambie Street view corridors 9.1 and 9.2.2, as the building is effectively within the “view shadow” of existing developments; as well as a slight intrusion into the Queen Elizabeth Park view corridor 3.2.3, which is consistent with Council’s *General Policy for Higher Buildings*.
- B. THAT Council support a general approach where the Director of Planning may consider future development to enter into the “view shadows” of existing buildings if they do not create an additional, significant impact on protected public views of the mountains, and that these be consistent with Council policy, including the *General Policy for Higher Buildings*.

GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The General Manager of Community Services recommends APPROVAL of the foregoing.

CITY MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The City Manager recommends APPROVAL of the foregoing.

COUNCIL POLICY

Downtown Official Development Plan (1975)
View Protection Guidelines (1989)
Central Business District Policies (1991)
Downtown Vancouver Skyline Recommendations (1997)
General Policy for Higher Buildings (1997)
Metro Core Jobs and Economy Plan (2007)

SUMMARY

The owner (Oxford Properties) of 1075 West Hastings (formerly 1021 West Hastings) has applied for a development permit to construct a 36 storey office tower, including the retention and restoration of the heritage facade and designation of the University Club (listed on the Vancouver Heritage Register as a “B”).

The redevelopment of the site at 1075 W Hastings as an office building would be consistent with existing Council policies for the employment intensification of the Central Business District (CBD) that emerged from the Metro Core Jobs and Economy Land Use Plan. The proposed development would not only provide additional job space within the CBD, but would also support heritage objectives onsite, contribute a unique visual element to the city’s skyline, and would result in an office building with superior environmental performance, particularly in terms of energy conservation.

The height of the building is supportable from an urban design perspective. However, the proposal would slightly intrude into three view corridors (9.1, 9.2.2 & 3.2.3); two of these would be within the “view shadow” of existing developments and would therefore have no perceived impact (Cambie Street views 9.1 & 9.2.2), while the other minor view intrusion would be consistent with Council policy of allowing penetration into the Queen Elizabeth View Corridor (3.2.3) through the *General Policy for Higher Buildings*. Appendix A illustrates this minor impact on views.

The purpose of this report is seek Council advice to the Development Permit Board on the specific matter of the acceptability of penetrating protected public views in a manner that is not perceivable to the eye due to “view shadow” conditions, noting that the overall development permit application will be considered within the context of all Council-adopted policy by the Development Permit Board.

The report also seeks Council direction on how to address future requests for development permits or rezonings that arise with similar “view shadow” conditions.

The recommended approach is in keeping with Council’s direction in January 2010, to reaffirm and strengthen View Corridors Policy, and specifically to not support more significant protrusions into view corridors. Consideration of very minor intrusions is consistent with the ongoing careful and successful approach to implementing View Corridor Policy.

BACKGROUND

The View Protection Guidelines, adopted by Council in 1989, protect 26 public view corridors through downtown to the North Shore Mountains. These guidelines were created to respond to development pressures in the late 1980s and reflect the long held public priority of preserving views and maintaining a visual connection to our natural setting. These corridors

have helped shape our city's skyline and have improved our sense of place by influencing site location and building design to ensure the retention of panoramic and framed views in and around the downtown.

In 1997 the City undertook the Downtown Vancouver Skyline Study to explore potential options for higher buildings in the city to complement the view preservation already in place. The goal of that study was to recommend a preferred prototype for the city's skyline to help determine the high points in our city. Through this process a *General Policy for Higher Buildings* was developed which laid out location and evaluation criteria for significantly higher buildings which was adopted by Council in May 1997. At the same time Council passed a resolution that allows buildings that proceed through this policy to penetrate the Queen Elizabeth Park view corridor (view corridor 3), subject to meeting the criteria outlined in the policy.

In the twenty years following the adoption of the View Protection Guidelines, there are essentially two types of buildings that have entered into the protected public views:

- 1) First are those buildings which were intentionally permitted by Council after considering competing interests. These include the buildings considered through the *General Policy for Higher Buildings* (for example, Shangri-la and Hotel Georgia) as well as those that were specifically considered by Council through area planning and urban design considerations (for example, Shaw Tower and Fairmont Pacific Rim, as part of the Council-approved *Burrard Landing CD-1 Guidelines*).
- 2) Second are those buildings that were permitted to enter the view corridor due to a technical implementation error which predated the introduction of more sophisticated GIS mapping tools (for example, 1033 Marinaside Crescent). Through the advancement and accessibility of these technological tools, this type of intrusion is less likely to occur today.

Even with these minor intrusions into the original view corridors, the overall integrity of the views has been maintained and the view approved corridors continue to retain their importance to the public.

The term "view shadow" refers to where a building penetrates a Council-approved view corridor and continues to block a portion of that view across an area extending from the view point origin to the mountains (Figure 1).

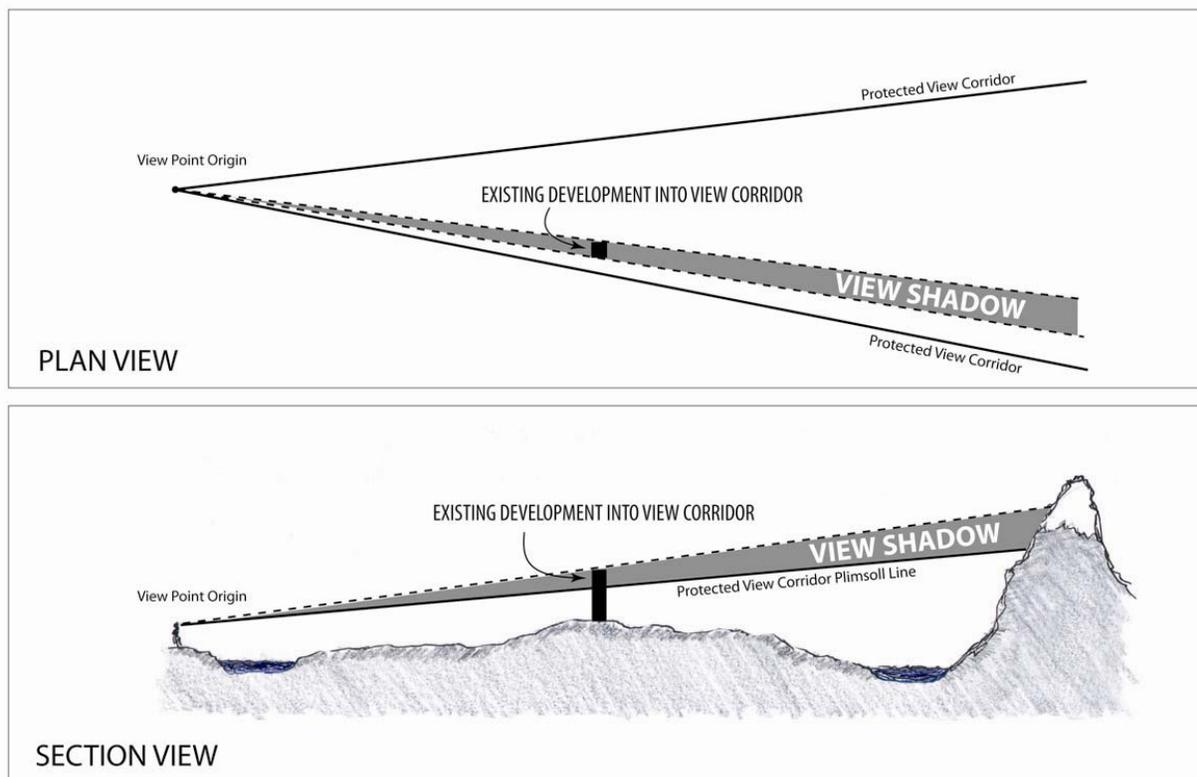


Figure 1: Conceptual Illustration of a View Shadow

A building completely within an existing building's view shadow would have no perceived reduction of mountain view from the view point origin, noting that confirming this requires careful analysis. While a specific view point origin is designated to identify the view corridors and to measure their height implications for buildings beneath them, the views are experienced in more of a dynamic fashion. For example, there are two precise measurement points on the Cambie Street view corridors (Cambie at 12th Avenue, view 9.2; and Cambie south of 10th Avenue, view 9.1) but the view is experienced in a dynamic way as one walks or drives down Cambie Street from approximately 13th Avenue to West Broadway. This dynamism also needs to be considered when assessing "view shadow" to ensure that any new proposals do not block any additional view.

In January 2010, Council considered the recommendations of Downtown Capacity and View Corridor Study ("Vancouver Views") and adopted resolutions to: 1) Affirm the View Protection Guidelines; 2) Strengthen various protected views; 3) Create three new protected public views; and 4) amend the General Policy for Higher Buildings to increase the standards for architectural excellence and green building performance, particularly in terms of energy performance. City Staff will be reporting back on the implementation of these decisions later this year.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this report is to provide Council advice to the Development Permit Board on the acceptability of a minor intrusion of a proposed development at 1075 West Hastings into protected public views in a manner that is unperceivable to the eye due to existing "view

shadow” conditions, and to provide guidance on how to address similar “view shadow” development inquiries in the future.

The proposed development at 1075 W Hastings for a 36 storey office tower is located on a site between the Guinness Tower (a modernist office building listed in the City’s “Recent Landmarks Inventory”) and one of the city’s most important heritage assets, the designated Marine Building at 355 Burrard Street (See Figure 2). This development represents an opportunity to create additional job space in a transit rich location in the CBD, while retaining the façade of the University Club. From an urban design perspective, the development embraces an interesting opportunity to create a contemporary architectural statement between two existing heritage buildings from different eras, and to create an interesting and respectful backdrop to the street-end view of the Marine Building from the east down Hastings Street.

These respective land use, heritage and urban design issues will be explored within the context of existing Council policy when the development permit application is considered by the Development Permit Board, with guidance from the Vancouver Heritage Commission and an augmented Urban Design Panel (see section “Adherence to the General Policy for Higher Buildings” below).

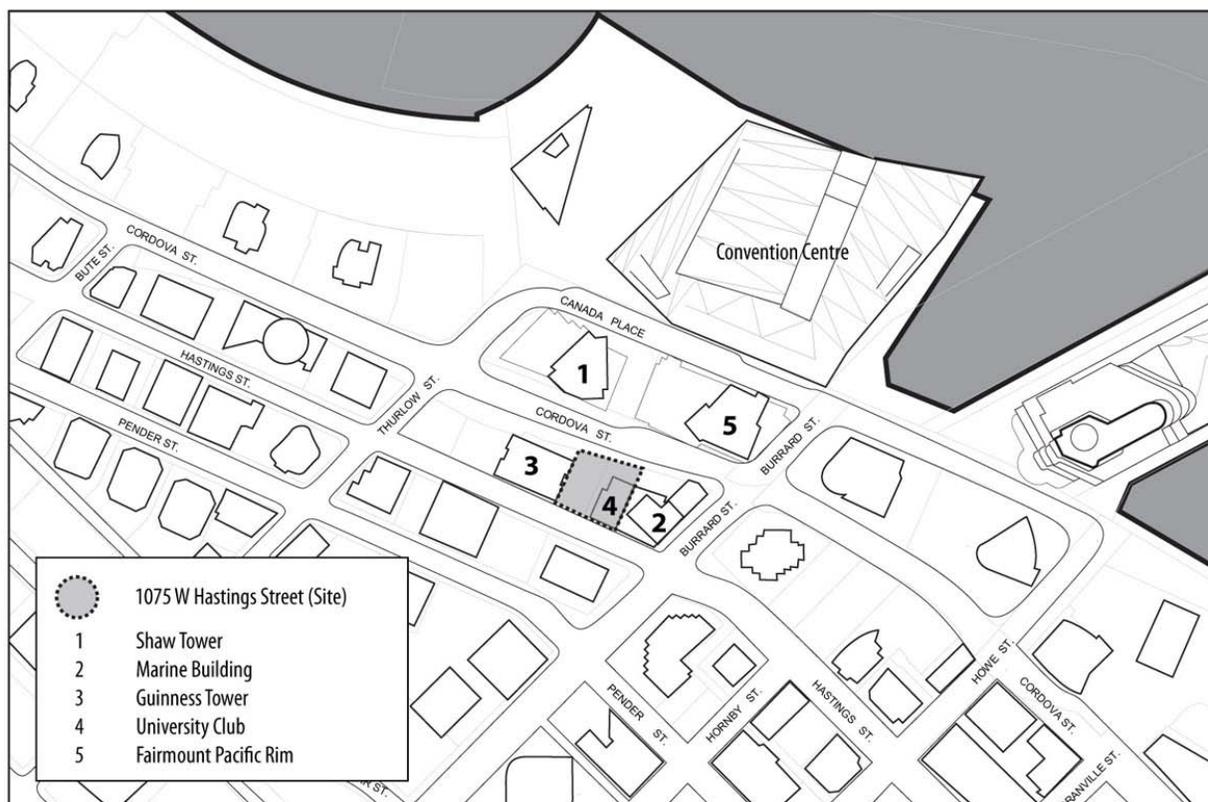


Figure 2: Location and context of the proposed 36 storey office development at 1075 West Hastings.

Assessing the ‘View Shadow’

The development permit application for 1075 West Hastings is for an approximately 460 foot tall, 36 storey office tower. This building would intrude into view corridors 9.1 and 9.2.2. In the case of this development site however, the building would be located almost entirely

within the ‘view shadow’ of existing developments at 1033 Marinaside Crescent and the Shaw Tower at 1077 W Cordova (refer to the Background section of this report for more information on previous view intrusions).

The impact of the proposed tower on the protected views and the massing that is contained within and outside of the “view shadow” is presented visually in Appendix A, and presented numerically in Figure 3 below:

View Corridor	Proposed Building Height	Maximum Permitted Height Under View Cone	Incursion Into View Corridor	Additional Incursion Beyond “View Shadow”
9.2.2 - 12 th /Cambie to the North Shore	460 feet / 140 metres	418 feet / 127 metres (most limiting)	42 feet / 13 metres	64 sq.ft. / 6 sq. m.
9.1 - 10 th /Cambie to the North Shore		434 feet / 130 metres	30 feet / 10 metres	300 sq.ft. / 28 sq. m.
3.2.2 - Queen Elizabeth Park to the North Shore		365 feet / 111 metres	95 feet / 29 metres (can be penetrated through Higher Building Policy)	3,336 sq. ft. / 310 sq. m. (can be penetrated through Higher Building Policy)

Figure 3: Summary of height limitations from each relevant view corridor and the approximate incursion into the view. View Corridor 9.2.2 is the most limiting and would normally define the height, noting that View Corridor 3.2.2 is lower but can be penetrated through the General Policy for Higher Buildings. The column on the right summarizes the additional incursion beyond the existing “view shadow” from 1033 Marinaside Crescent and the Shaw Tower. (Please refer to Appendix A for visual representation of this material)

Staff have reviewed the potential impacts of this development and conclude that the proposed tower is almost entirely within the “view shadow” and the minor amount of additional view intrusion would not be perceivable to the eye (Appendix A).

Staff have also examined this proposal in a dynamic manner by observing the proposed tower from various points moving from 12th/Cambie down to Broadway/Cambie (from protected view 9.2 to 9.1). The building is not perceivable from 12th/Cambie, appears in a minor way for a moment near 10th Avenue, and then once again disappears behind 1033 Marinaside Crescent by the time one reaches Broadway/Cambie Street.

Staff are satisfied that the applicant has revised the design sufficiently so as to minimize any additional perceivable view impact and recommend that Council direct the Development Permit Board to consider the application as proposed (Recommendation A).

Adherence to the General Policy for Higher Buildings

Although the proposal is not as tall as some of the highest buildings in the city (such as Shangri-La at 640 feet), it does intrude, to a minor extent, (as illustrated in Appendix A, page 3) into the Queen Elizabeth Park View Corridor which is permitted only for buildings that

proceed under the Council-approved *General Policy for Higher Buildings*. This policy ensures that the buildings are evaluated with a high-level of architectural and urban design rigour with a general philosophy that they should earn their height as part of the spectacular skyline/mountain view from Queen Elizabeth Park.

In January 2010, Council also requested as part of the “Vancouver Views” study that the policy be amended to include a higher level of architectural excellence, and superior green building performance, particularly in terms of energy (This matter will reported back to Council later this year).

Although the proposal for 1075 West Hastings is not a significantly higher building in the overall context of downtown, staff have pursued meeting the objectives of the *General Policy for Higher Buildings* to achieve Council’s direction for architectural excellence and green building performance by:

- 1) An augmented Urban Design Panel. The proposal will be reviewed by an expanded Urban Design Panel with two additional architects with experience in office building design and green building practises; and
- 2) Superior green building performance, particularly in terms of energy conservation. The architects have provided information on the building’s anticipated green building performance. The architects have provided a preliminary LEED™ scorecard for the building and estimate that it would score 70 points (including all 10 possible “optimize energy performance points), making it LEED™ Platinum. As such, the building further advances the City’s sustainability goals in the realm of office development.

Although this approach is a “lighter” version of the City’s previous application of the *General Policy for Higher Buildings*, Staff feel that the approach does meet Council’s objectives and is appropriate for the scale and context of the proposed development.

Implications for Future Development Inquiries in “View Shadows”

There are a number of sites in the downtown that could pursue redevelopment in the future in a similar “view shadow” context. Recommendation B seeks Council approval to direct staff to consider these proposals with the same degree of technical rigour as presented in this report (including analysis from both static view points and “dynamic” moving perspectives of the views). Consistent with existing Council policy, any development that protrudes into the Queen Elizabeth Park view corridor (view corridor 3) would be considered within the *General Policy for Higher Buildings*.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications of this report to the City’s operating budget.

CONCLUSION

A Higher Building proposed at 1075 W Hastings would have minimal additional impact on protected, public views. The proposed development is not signalling an acceptance in the loss of important public views to the mountains, but rather responds to existing conditions that have made a minor relaxation of the guidelines a logical option with no perceivable impact from the public view point. The proposal also provides an opportunity for directing staff on how to proceed with similar “view shadow” applications in the future. The recommended approval is consistent with Council’s recent directions (January 2010) to reaffirm and strengthen view corridors.

Analysis of Proposed Development at 1075 West Hastings and “View Shadow”



Figure A: Impact of 1075 West Hastings on view corridor 9.2, from 12th Avenue/Cambie to the North Shore Mountains. The tower is almost entirely within the “view shadow” of 1033 Marinaside Crescent, except for a small portion that would for all intents and purposes be unperceivable to the viewer.



Figure B: Impact of 1075 West Hastings on view corridor 9.1, from 10th Avenue/Cambie to the North Shore Mountains. The tower is almost entirely within the “view shadow” of 1033 Marinaside Crescent, except for a small portion that would for all intents and purposes be unperceivable to the viewer.



Figure C: Impact of 1075 West Hastings on view corridor 3, from Queen Elizabeth Park to the North Shore Mountains. The tower is visible in the view corridor and as such would be considered through the Council-approved *General Policy for Higher Buildings*.