



POLICY REPORT
DEVELOPMENT AND BUILDING

Report Date: November 30, 2015
Contact: Anita Molaro
Contact No.: 604.871.6851
RTS No.: 11172
VanRIMS No.: 08-2000-20
Meeting Date: December 16, 2015

TO: Standing Committee on City Finance and Services
FROM: Acting General Manager of Planning and Development Services
SUBJECT: Issues Report - 1445 - 1455 West Georgia Street - Rezoning Inquiry

RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT Council direct staff to accept a rezoning application for the site at 1445-1455 West Georgia Street (PID: 009-916-415, Lot A, Except The North 7 Feet Now Road of Lots 14 and 15 Block 42, District Lot 185 Plan 731, PID: 009-916-491, Lot B of Lots 14 and 15 Block 42 District Lot 185 Plan 731, PID: 009-916-521, Lot E of Lots 14 and 15 Block 42 District Lot 185 Plan 731, PID: 009-916-555, Lot F of Lots 14 and 15 Block 42 District Lot 185 Plan 731, PID: 009-916-563, The East Part of Lot 13 Block 42 District Lot 185 Plan 92, PID: 015-843-068, Lot A (Reference Plan 3477) of Lot 12 Block 42 District Lot 185 Plan 92, PID: 015-843-084, Lot B (Reference Plan 3477) of Lot 12 Block 42 District Lot 185 Plan 92, PID: 015-843-106, The West Part of Lot 13 Block 42 District Lot 185 Plan 92) which may include a proposed building which exceeds the height permitted by the current zoning for the site, provided that the application meets the requirements of the General Policy for Higher Buildings.
- B. THAT if the Director of Planning recommends to Council that a rezoning application for the site be referred to public hearing, then such referral report should also recommend that the General Policy for Higher Buildings be amended to include 1445 - 1455 West Georgia Street as a location for the consideration of a 'Gateway Landmark' building.
- C. THAT passage of the above resolutions will in no way fetter Council's discretion in considering any rezoning application for the subject site and does not create any legal rights for the applicant or any other person, or obligation on the part of the City; and expenditure of funds or incurred costs are at the risk of the person making the expenditure or incurring the cost.

REPORT SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to:

- Advise Council that a rezoning inquiry has been received for the development of a 515 foot high residential tower at 1445- 1455 West Georgia Street (see Map One).
- Provide background information on the development site and its context;
- Provide a rationale for considering a higher building at 1445 - 1455 West Georgia Street within the policy framework of an amended General Policy for Higher Buildings.
- Explain why staff are supportive of working with the inquirer on the preparation a rezoning application because it will provide the tools for addressing City objectives including urban design considerations (built form, view corridors, shadowing and ground plane/open space), heritage retention, public benefits, sustainability, neighbourhood energy, architectural excellence, public consultation and an urban design review within the provisions of the General Policy for Higher Buildings;
- Advise the applicant that the preparation of the rezoning application should consider options for retaining one or both of the buildings on the site which are on the Recent Landmarks list of buildings (i.e. they are recognized as having heritage merit) and incorporating them into the new development.

COUNCIL AUTHORITY/PREVIOUS DECISIONS

Downtown Official Development Plan (1975)
Heritage Policies and Guidelines (1986)
General Policy for Higher Buildings (1997 and 2014)
Metro Core Jobs and Economy Land Use Plan (2008)
Green Buildings Policy for Rezoning (2010)
Housing and Homelessness Strategy (2011)
Neighbourhood Energy Strategy (2012)
Heritage Action Plan (2013)
Heritage Density Bank (2009 and 2013)

CITY MANAGER'S/GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The Acting General Manager of Planning and Development Services RECOMMENDS approval of the recommendations of this report.

REPORT

Background/Context

The site at 1445 - 1455 West Georgia Street is located west of the Central Business District, south of the Coal Harbour neighbourhood and north of the West End. It is a unique and prominent site due to its triangular shape and its location at the intersection of West Georgia, West Pender and Nicola Streets. (See Figure One)

Since the late 80's the area adjacent to the site, has primarily been developed with residential towers up to a height of 37 storeys (107 m or 330 feet).

In 2013, Council approved the West End Plan and a rezoning policy for the blocks across the street from the site on the south side of West Georgia Street that allows for the consideration of developments up to 152.4 m (500 ft) or approximately 50 - 55 storeys.

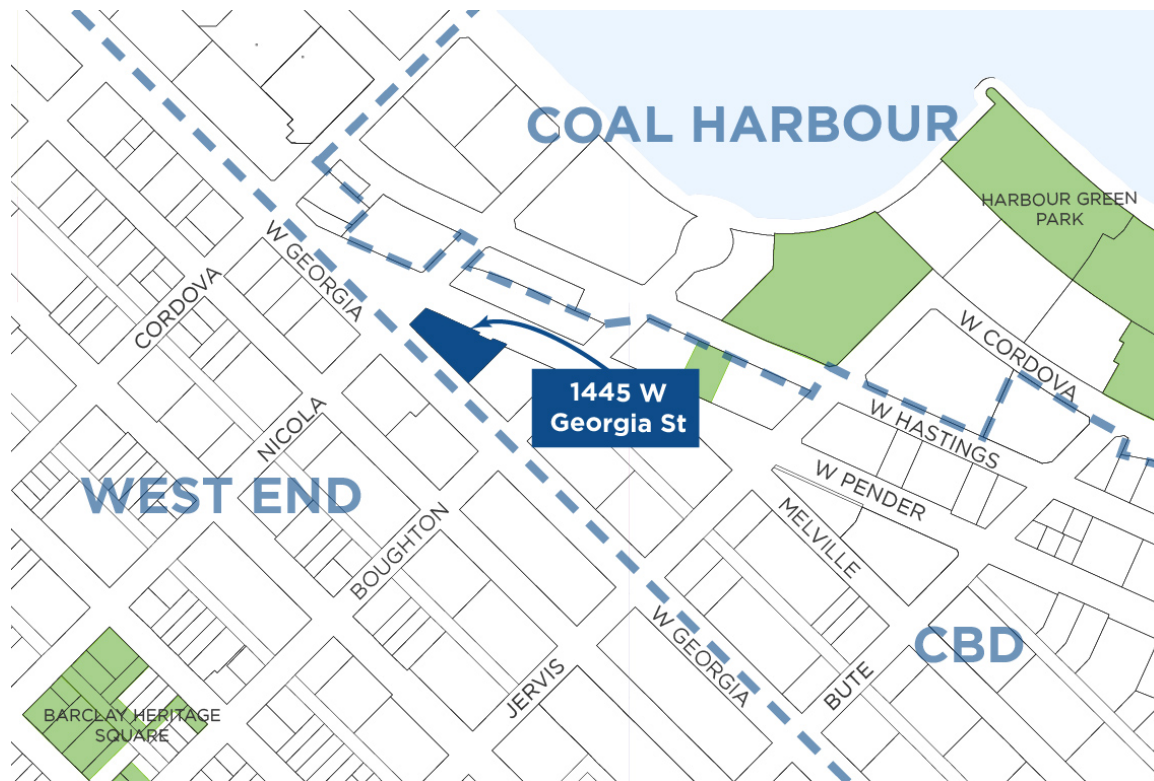


Figure One - Location Map

There are two modest sized office buildings (a total of approximately 62,000 sq. ft. of floor space) on the site (see Figure Two) which are both listed on the City's list of Recent Landmarks buildings - the IBM Building built in 1963 (listed as a 'B') and the Lea Building built in 1967 (listed as a 'C'). The buildings are not on the City's Heritage Register.

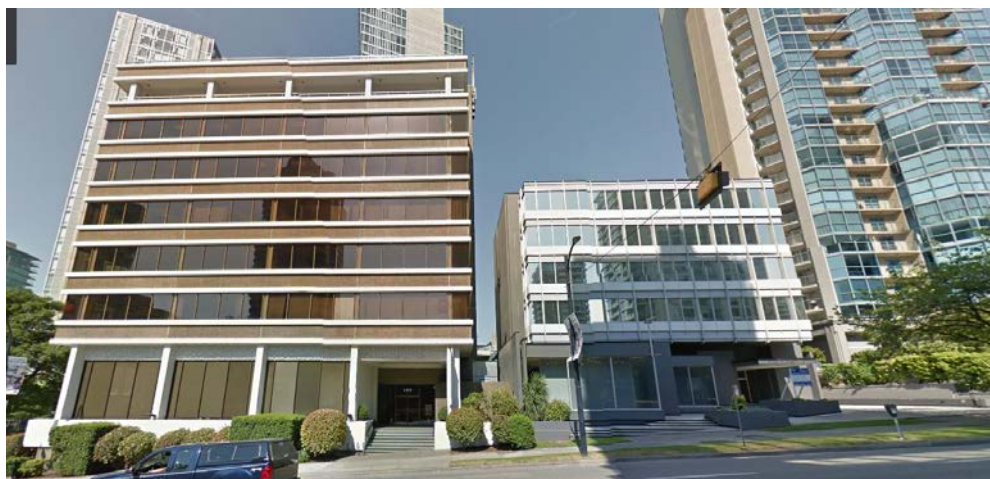


Figure Two - 1445 - 1455 West Georgia Street (1445 is the 5 storey building on the right)

Use and Density: The site's zoning is Downtown District Official Development Plan (DD ODP). The zoning offers a 'choice of use' allowing for buildings that are mixed use or completely residential or commercial. The maximum floor space ratio in the current zoning is 6.6 (which includes a 10% heritage density transfer).

Height: Building height for this site is governed by:

- (1) The zoning which allows up to 91.4 m (300 ft.) in height. However, the Development Permit Board can consider the approval of heights up to 137.2 m (450 ft.) or 40 - 50 storeys, after the consideration of Council policies and guidelines;
- (2) The height limits imposed by the Council-approved view cones addressing views from public places of the downtown and the north shore mountains; and
- (3) Council's General Policy for Higher Buildings.

View Corridors: There are two Council-approved public View Cones crossing the site. The Queen Elizabeth View Cone (a public view from the top of Little Mountain) at an elevation of approximately 440 ft. (134.7 m) and Granville Bridge View Cone at an elevation of approximately 515 ft. (166 m).

General Policy for Higher Buildings

Since 1997 this policy (see Appendix "A") has allowed for the consideration of buildings exceeding the downtown's zoning height limits of 91.4 m - 137.2 m (300' - 450') to add landmark buildings to the City's skyline and shape the skyline so that the highest point of the skyline is in the City's Central Business District. The buildings that are considered under the policy must be on the City's widest streets and/or in the Central Business District. Unique sites creating gateways to the downtown or landmark locations can also be considered. The unique sites and areas of the city where the policy applies are identified in the map below (Figure Three).

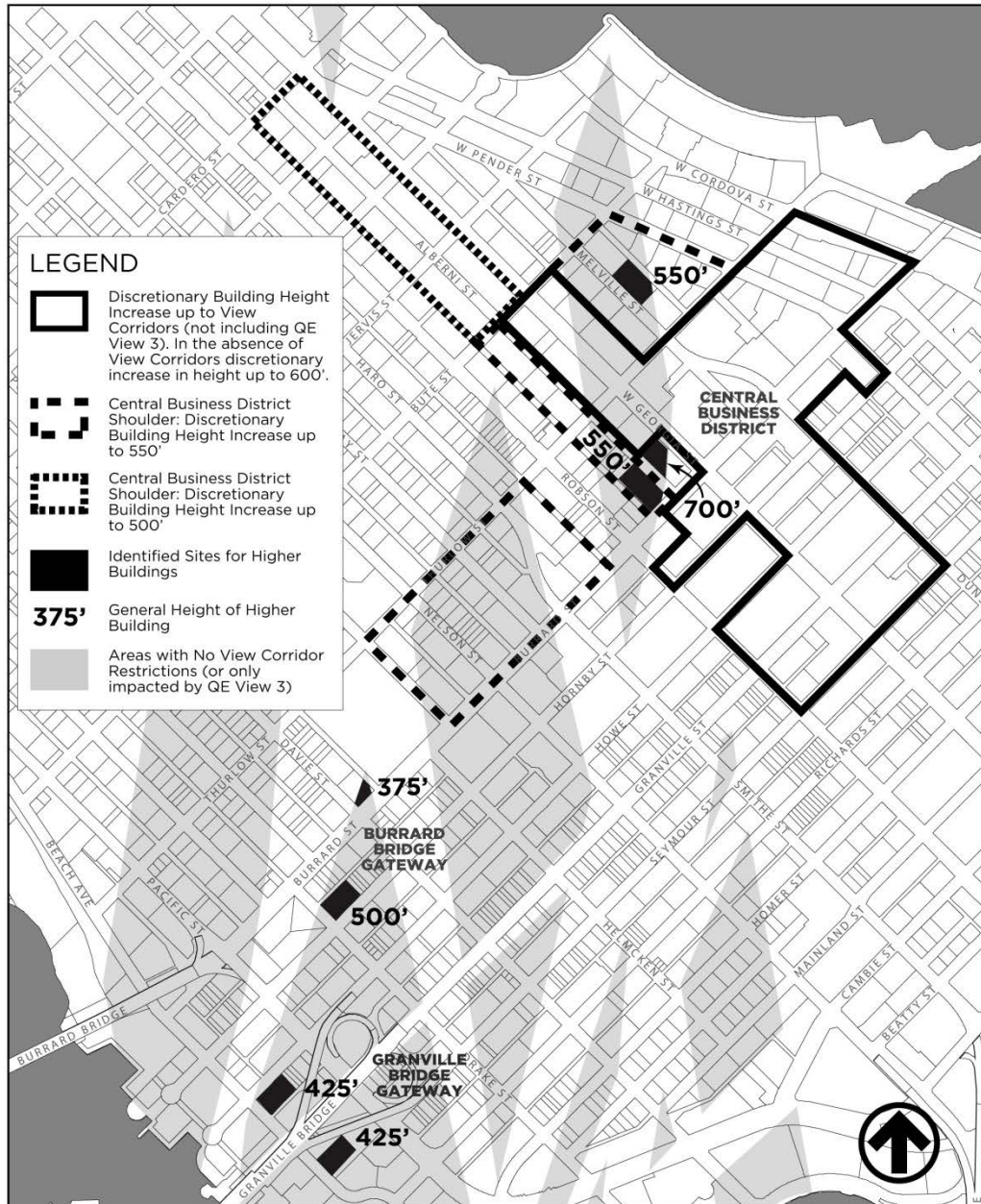


Figure Three - Higher Building Sites - General Policy for Higher Buildings

This policy allows for buildings to exceed the height limits related to the Queen Elizabeth View Cone. It also requires that the buildings achieve a high standard of architectural excellence, sustainable design and community benefits, such as publicly accessible on-site open spaces.



Figure Four - Site Context - located at the intersection Pender and West Georgia Streets

The Rezoning Inquiry

A rezoning inquiry was received proposing a 44 storey (approximately 515 ft. or 166 m) residential tower with approximately 250,000 square feet of residential floor area. Staff see merit for this site as a prominent gateway site with a unique built form that could achieve a number of urban design and public benefit objectives.

Strategic Analysis

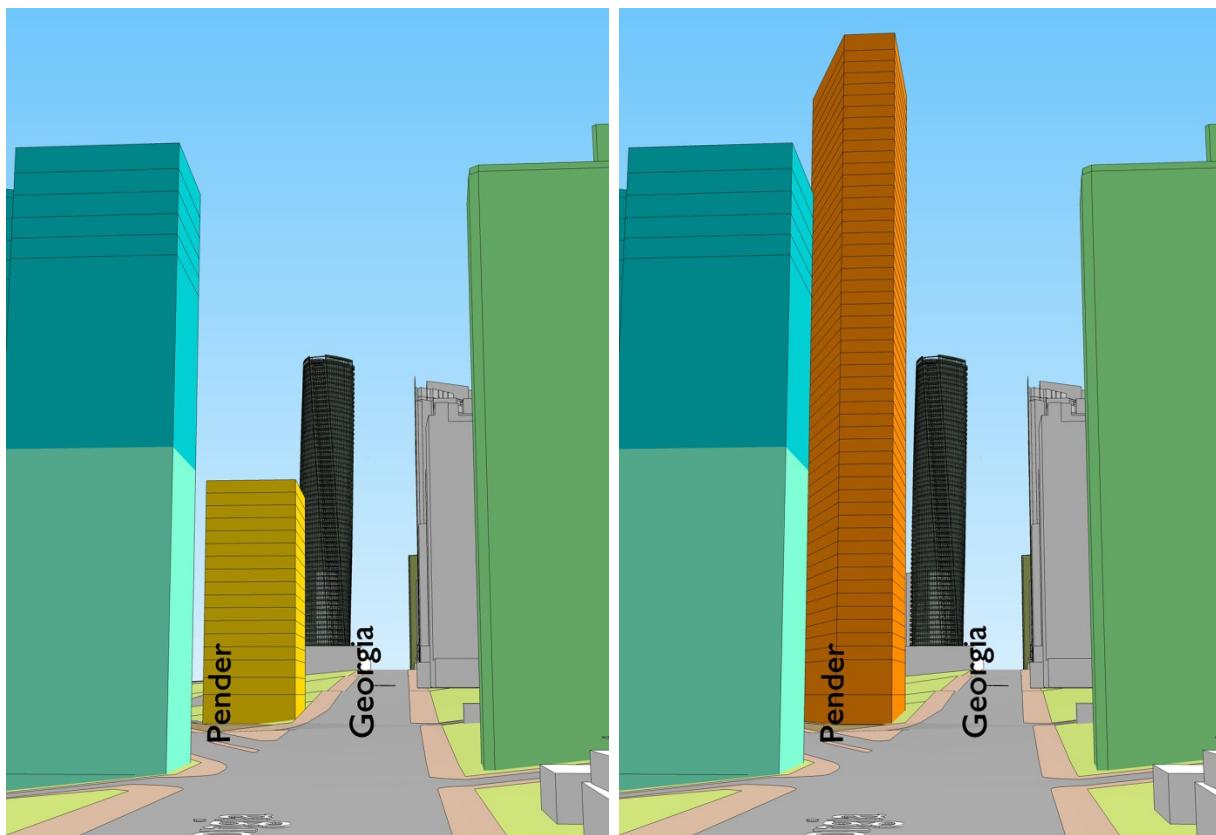
This Issues Report is seeking Council direction on a rezoning inquiry for this site which may include a proposed building which exceeds the height permitted by the current zoning. Staff feel that a rezoning application for this site should be considered and, if approved at public hearing, that the General Policy for Higher Buildings be amended to permit a higher building on this site for the following reasons:

- (1) The development site is unique and prominent and, from an urban design perspective, is worthy of consideration as a landmark building in the downtown; and
- (2) If the site is not rezoned, staff anticipate that it will be developed under the existing zoning that could involve the demolition of two 'post 40's' landmark buildings and a lost opportunity to achieve the higher standard of architectural excellence and sustainability required by the General Policy for Higher Buildings (see Appendix "A.")

Form of Development

As illustrated in Figure Four, the site is in a prominent location adjacent to two major streets which lead to the city's central business district. After examination of the proposal, staff have concluded that this site is appropriate for a taller landmark building than could be achieved under the current zoning.

Illustrated below in Figure Five, is a comparison of the form of development that likely would be built under the current zoning with that being proposed in the rezoning inquiry. Under the current zoning, we could anticipate a residential building of about 20 storeys would be built on the site. The inquiry is proposing a building that is 515 feet (166 m) (approximately 44 storeys).



Building Height Under Current Zoning - 171' Building Height Under Proposed Zoning - 515'

Figure Five - Comparison of Development Under Current Zoning and the Proposed Form of Development in the Rezoning Inquiry from James Cheng Architects

Heritage: As part of the preparation of the rezoning inquiry, staff will request an analysis of whether it is viable to retain the buildings of heritage merit on the site. If it is determined that retaining the buildings is not viable as part of the development proposal, then heritage could be addressed by the transfer of heritage density from the heritage density bank to this site.

Sustainability: Other Council-approved policies relating to the City's sustainability goals will also apply to new developments, such as the *Green Buildings Policy for Rezoning*s and the provisions related to Sustainability in the General Policy for Higher Buildings. A minor amendment of the General Policy for Higher Buildings is recommended so that it reflects Council's 2012 Neighbourhood Energy Strategy.

Public Benefits: Further study is recommended to determine the mix of public benefits appropriate for the subject site, considering its strategic location (west of the Central Business District, south of the Coal Harbour and north of the West End), any existing and planned public amenities in the nearby community plan areas, Council priorities, urban design considerations, and project viability.

Implications/Related Issues/Risk (if applicable)

Financial

Subject to Council direction, staff will report back as part of any rezoning referral report on applicable developer contributions (e.g. DCLs, CACs, and Public Art), as well as proposals for onsite and/or offsite amenities and an appropriate funding strategy.

CONCLUSION

The site at 1445 - 1455 West Georgia Street is a unique and prominent site. Council direction is sought on accepting a rezoning application which may include a proposed building height that exceeds the heights permitted by the current zoning for the site. It is also recommended that the preparation of the rezoning application should adhere to Council's General Policy for Higher Buildings. If the Director of Planning recommends the referral of a rezoning application for a higher building at this site, then it will also be recommended that Council adopt amendments of the General Policy for Higher Buildings, supporting the consideration of a Landmark Gateway building at 1445- 1455 West Georgia Street.

* * * * *



City of Vancouver *Land Use and Development Policies and Guidelines*
Planning and Development Services, 453 W. 12th Ave Vancouver, BC V5Y 1V4 tel 604.873.7000 fax 604.873.7060
planning@vancouver.ca

GENERAL POLICY FOR HIGHER BUILDINGS

Adopted by City Council on May 6, 1997

Amended February 1, 2011, November 20, 2013 and June 25, 2014

Application and Intent

These guidelines are to be used in conjunction with all applicable Official Development Plans for buildings seeking approval for significant additional height above current zoning and policy, or for those entering into the Queen Elizabeth View Corridor. The intent of these guidelines is to mark the prominence of the Central Business District in our downtown skyline, while also providing opportunities for strategically placed height at two prominent bridge “gateways” to mark the entry into downtown from the Burrard and Granville Bridges.

General Policy for Higher Buildings

The following should be considered when reviewing proposals for Higher Buildings (i.e. those which significantly exceed current height limits and/or enter into the Queen Elizabeth View Corridor):

- Higher Buildings will only be permitted within the areas identified below in Figure 1;
- The tallest buildings (i.e. ~ 550-700’) should be located within the Central Business District with the tallest buildings (i.e. ~ 700’) located on one of Vancouver’s three primary streets: Georgia, Burrard and Granville;
- Secondary heights may be considered for buildings at the Granville and Burrard Bridgeheads with a single prominent tower (~ 500’) in axial alignment with the Burrard Bridge, and two towers framing the Granville Bridge Gateway (~ 425’);
- All other application for additional height at these two bridgehead locations should be analyzed to ensure that the experiential intent of these gateways is maintained;
- All Higher Buildings must establish a significant and recognizable new benchmark for architectural creativity and excellence, while making a significant contribution to the beauty and visual power of the city’s skyline;
- Higher buildings should demonstrate leadership and advances in sustainable design and energy consumption and as a result must be subjected, not only to current review requirements, but also to review by a Council appointed panel including respected community leaders, notable local design experts, and leaders in sustainable design;
- All Higher Buildings must significantly demonstrate and advance the city’s objective for carbon neutrality for new buildings with a stated objective to achieve a 45% reduction in energy consumption as compared to the 2014 Vancouver Building By-law. However, if the development is connecting to a neighbourhood energy system approved by the City that has a defined path to a low carbon outcome, in order to ensure consistency between minimum performance requirements for building envelopes in DE versus non-DE areas, building designs must comply with the methodology described in the “**City of Vancouver Neighbourhood Energy Interpretation Guide for Rezoning**”;
- An enhanced review for buildings with a proposed height of 550’ or more as well as for the Granville Bridge Gateway buildings (~ 425’) and the land mark building in axial alignment with the Burrard Bridge (~ 500’) will include two international design experts joining the panel in addition to the two local experts. There will be special public engagement, such as a public forum or guest lecture, should be held featuring the guest panel members and experts to expand public discussion and education around architectural excellence and green design in Vancouver.

In addition, all Higher Buildings should be considered with careful effort to provide a lasting and meaningful public legacy to Vancouver and should include careful consideration of the following:

- The buildings should achieve community benefits (i.e. as a recipient site for density transfers; retention of important heritage components; provision of significant cultural or social facilities; or provision of low cost housing);
- The development should not involve the demolition of a Class 'A' heritage building;
- The building should include activities and uses of community significance such as public observation decks or other public amenity;
- The development should provide on-site open space that represents a significant contribution to the downtown network of green and plaza space;
- The building should not contribute to adverse microclimate effects;
- Careful consideration should be given to minimize adverse shadowing and view impacts on public realm including key streets, parks and plazas, as well as neighbouring buildings;
- Signage on the buildings should not be located at a height which exceeds the building's current height limit.

Figure 1: Areas and sites where Higher Buildings are permitted.

