



Refers Item 2.
Public Hearing of September 15, 2005

MEMORANDUM

September 15, 2005

TO: Mayor Campbell and Councillors

CC: J. Rogers, City Manager
B. MacGregor, Deputy City Manager
S. Baxter, City Clerk
J. Forbes-Roberts, General Manager, Community Services
A. McAfee, Director of City Plans
L. Beasley, Director of Current Planning
F. Connell, Director of Legal Services

FROM: P. Mondor, Rezoning Planner

SUBJECT: 1120 West Georgia Street: CD-1 Text Amendment (Height and Density)
1. URBAN DESIGN REVIEW
2. PUBLIC VIEWING AREA

ADDITIONAL STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

- C. THAT design development, as anticipated in Recommendations A.(a) and (b), be additionally undertaken to seek to maintain the appearance of the approved rooftop form, including consideration of an increase in the height of the building's curtain wall to match the increase in height of the mechanical room.
- D. THAT staff and applicant continue to explore low-cost opportunities at the development application stage to provide resident and limited public access to a rooftop viewing area, including the possibility of a live rooftop web-cam with a display in the development's public space.

1. URBAN DESIGN REVIEW

The highest order of architectural excellence and urban design for this tall building was previously demonstrated in an enhanced Urban Design Panel review. These were further refined and supported in a second UDP review during development application processing. Because of considerable interest in the proposed roof form at all stages of the approval process, staff recommended, and Council approved on July 19, 2005,

- B. THAT the application by James KM Cheng Architects Ltd. to amend the CD-1 By-law for the site at 1120 West Georgia Street be referred to the Urban Design Panel for further advice prior to Public Hearing regarding proposed alterations to the roof form and proposed tower lighting and signage.

The approved building for the site has a height of 183 m (600 ft.) to the top of habitable space, plus an additional 12.2 m (40 ft.) for the rooftop mechanical room and architectural appurtenance.

The application requests an increase in height of habitable space to 191.7 m (629 ft.), through the insertion of an additional floor, and the conversion of some floor area in the rooftop mechanical room to habitable space. Through an increase in the height of the elevator core (mechanical room), it is also requested that the total building height be increased from 195 m (640 ft.) to 196.9 m (646 ft.).

These changes would have the effect of reducing the height of the rooftop form (architectural / mechanical appurtenances) from 12.2 m (40 ft.) to 5.2 m (17 ft.). Staff analysis concluded that this change could be supported, with a design development condition "to ensure the intended and approved architectural excellence, elegance, quality and character is achieved," and subject to UDP support.

As was recommended, the application was sent to the Urban Design Panel for review (see minutes on file in the Planning Department). On August 31, 2005, the UDP supported the application, both the additional floor of live-work units, and the increase in height. However, the Panel had concerns about the "truncated" top, which affects the proportion of the current approved design and advised that the proportions of the top need work.

In view of this advice, staff recommend that further design development be undertaken at the development application stage to seek to maintain the appearance of the approved 12.2 m (40 ft.) rooftop form. To assist with this, staff recommend that the building's uppermost glass screen (curtain wall), which provides a 'foil' at the rooftop perimeter and which the applicant has not proposed to increase in height, be increased 1.8 m (6 ft.) so that the mechanical room continues to be matched in height by the perimeter foil.

In a related matter, staff note that it is proposed to amend the Sign By-law (to address previous oversight) to not allow a fascia sign above the 137 m (450 ft.), as set out in the City's General Policy for Higher Buildings. The applicant has been refining a proposal for a hotel logo at the rooftop, which is described to be 'more art than commerce'. As Planning staff have proposed to review the higher building policy next year, including incorporating City Council expectations regarding sustainability, it is proposed that signage for higher buildings be reviewed in that context.

2. PUBLIC VIEWING AREA

At the meeting of City Council on July 19th, when this application was referred to Public Hearing, an additional Recommendation was approved:

- C. THAT staff, in consultation with James KM Cheng Architects Ltd., bring to the Public Hearing several alternatives for providing public access to a viewing area on the roof and alternatives for similar access to the roof for those who live in the building.

In response to this request, the applicant has considered the possibility of a rooftop viewing area for building residents and escorted members of the public. In a recent submission, the applicant offers the provision of a live 'web cam' feed to be available to the City website and possibly to be displayed on a monitor in the public area of the development. It is noted that all of the implications, including costs, have not yet been fully explored. (See applicant's submission attached)

Staff support further consideration of these two opportunities, during development application processing, to provide resident and limited public access to a rooftop viewing area. To this end, staff put forward RECOMMENDATION D.

P. Mondor, Rezoning Planner

phil.mondor@vancouver.ca

Phone: 604.873.7727

Fax: 604.873.7060

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Attachments

On August 15, 2005, the applicant submitted the following:

“Further to Council’s request on a review of the possibility of a public observation deck, we must reiterate the rationale behind the public benefits package which staff and the developer negotiated quite extensively. After much discussion on the issue, staff concluded that the public benefits included in this rezoning package (i.e., Heritage Designation/Restoration of the Coastal Church, the Vancouver Public Art Site, the Galleria and Podium Roof Garden Area, the Affordable Housing Benefit etc.) would be more accessible to the general public than a fee oriented elevator service to the roof. Furthermore, the addition of public access elevators cannot be accommodated in the design or budget of this project. It has been widely reported that the public amenity package that was extracted from this project was more than any other development in the city, and we maintain that this project has certainly exceeded its requirement of public benefit.

In addition, as you may be aware, the majority of the units at 1120 West Georgia have been sold based on the disclosure statement. This disclosure statement does not contemplate public access to the residential units nor the common area. The addition of such a material concept would almost certainly nullify our sale agreements or expose the developer to claims from the purchasers.

However we are prepared to consider the following alternative: the provision of a live feed from the top of the tower at a location designated by the developer which would be available to broadcast on the City Website. In addition, we may be able to provide a monitor in the public area of the project (i.e., the Galleria or Podium Roof Garden) whereby the public can see what the view from the top of the building.

In addition, the developer would be prepared to grant limited access to VIPs (limited to a maximum of 3 people per visit) with at least 48 hours notice, escorted access to the mechanical roof level. This level is one floor above the Roof Garden and is accessible via the uppermost exit stair. Two view locations are possible on this level. One looking south from the mechanical roof area and the second looking north, through our Georgia St. “foils” from a vantage point outside the elevator machine room. The latter requires a window into the core wall, not currently shown on the DP drawings. [Plans on this proposal are on file]

We must still review the cost and equipment associated with these alternatives, the long term viability of these suggestions, however we feel that these are viable solutions to the request put forward by council. The live feed option would be able to provide views to a larger segment of the population, provide views on a 24 hour basis, and depending on the equipment available, the views may include wider vistas than what may be available to someone viewing from the rooftop. The limited access option provides access to only a small segment of the population, but it does afford the experience to the individuals that a live feed cannot.”

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