



CITY OF VANCOUVER

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POLICY REPORT DEVELOPMENT AND BUILDING

P1

Report Date: July 3, 2008
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Meeting Date: July 22, 2008

TO: Vancouver City Council

FROM: Director of Planning

SUBJECT: Proposed Amendments to the Southeast False Creek Official Development Plan, Area 3C

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Director of Planning be instructed to make application to amend the Southeast False Creek Official Development Plan by adjusting the maximum and optimum building heights, and by increasing the allowed floor space in Area 3C, generally as set out in Appendix A, and that the application be referred to Public Hearing;

FURTHER THAT the Director of Legal Services be instructed to prepare the amending by-law generally as set out in Appendix A for consideration at the Public Hearing.

GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The General Manager of Community Services recommends approval of the Recommendation.

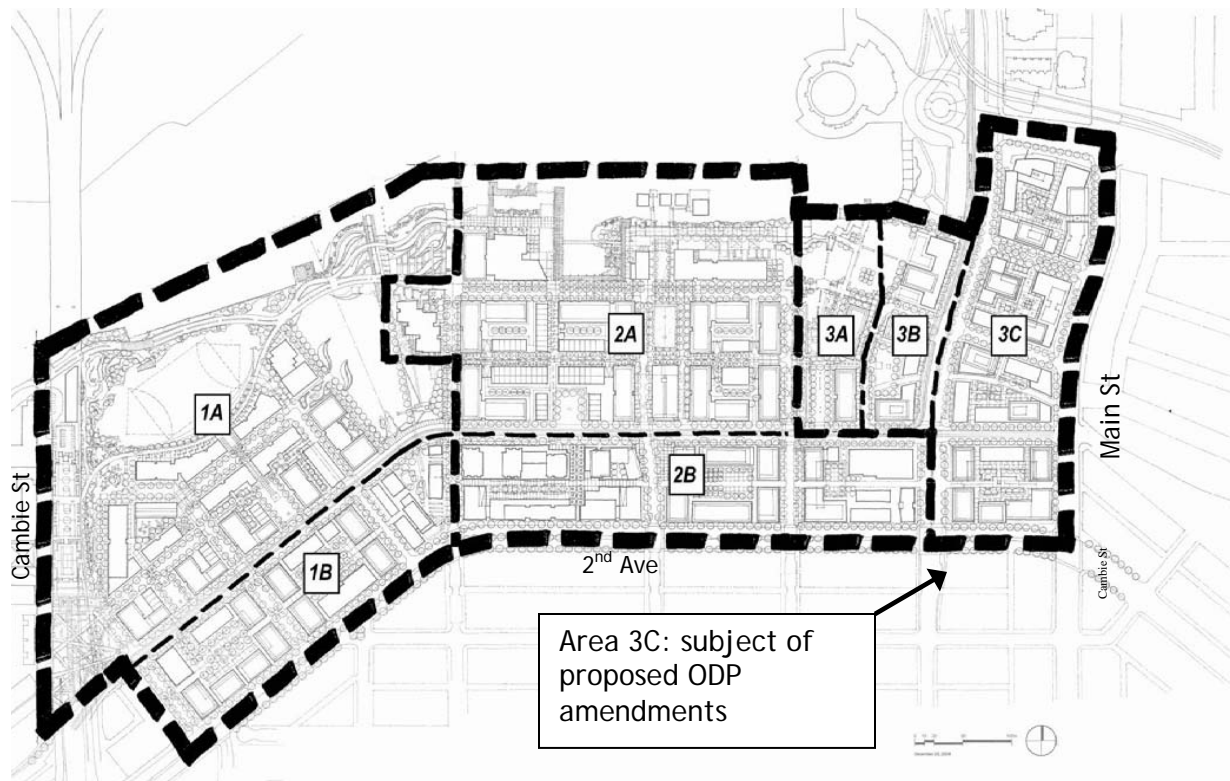
COUNCIL POLICY

- Southeast False Creek Official Development Plan (SEFC ODP) By-law, enacted July 19, 2005, amended March 21, 2006, April 17, 2007, September 18, 2007 and February 12, 2008.

SUMMARY

This report is about amendments to the Southeast False Creek Official Development Plan (the “SEFC ODP” or the “ODP”), which covers the area shown in Figure 1 below (“SEFC”). Staff have reviewed the urban design of Area 3C as set out in the SEFC ODP, and concluded that Area 3C would be improved by amendments to the ODP.

Figure 1: Southeast False Creek ODP Area



PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to bring forward proposed amendments to the SEFC ODP to increase the maximum allowed heights, adjust the optimum heights, and allow a modest density increase, all in Area 3C. This report also describes some proposed changes to street alignments in Area 3C for Council’s information (note: the street alignment changes do not require an ODP amendment).

BACKGROUND

The SEFC ODP (S. 5.4.3) provides the following direction for built form in Area 3C:

- Provide a transition between SEFC and the higher buildings (e.g. City Gate) north of Terminal, and generally stepping down from north to south
- Potentially a tower at Terminal and Quebec that provides landmark terminus to Terminal Avenue, and to frame Science World

To this end, the current ODP establishes maximums for building heights, and also sets out illustrative “optimum” heights (i.e., storeys). However, in the course of responding to several development inquiries and one rezoning application, staff identified the need to further resolve the City’s approach to urban design in Area 3C.

DISCUSSION

Staff have reviewed Area 3C based on principles for good urban design (i.e., views, street presence, residential character and opportunities to improve vistas along street axes). These are discussed in detail in Appendix B. Based on this review, staff recommend changes in Area 3C with respect to: a) streets, b) maximum building heights and c) maximum floor space.

Street Alignment Changes

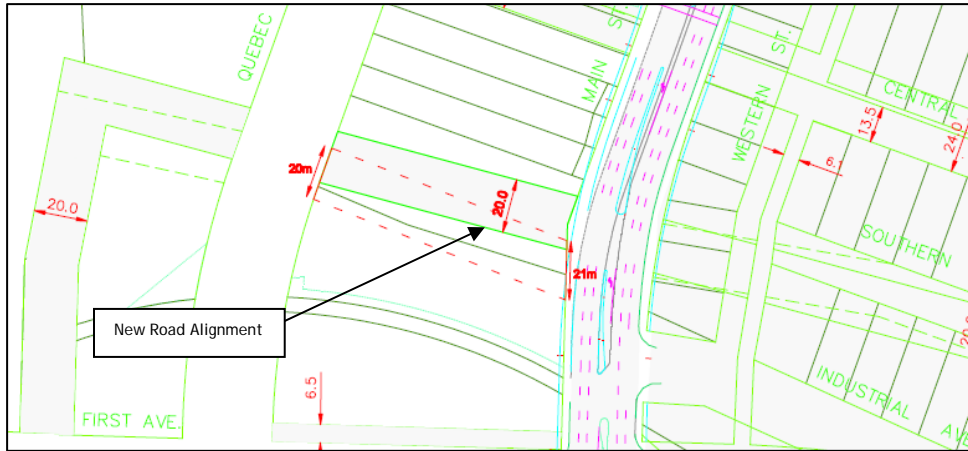
Although an ODP amendment is not required to amend the street alignments, this report provides an update on plans for new streets in Area 3C. The ODP incorporates two new east-west streets in the plan to connect Quebec and Main Streets in order to create a finer-grained block pattern, provide access to the emerging residential area, and eventually link to streets and greenways east of Main, including potentially the Central Valley Greenway. The land for the streets would be dedicated from the adjoining properties as a condition of rezoning.

The proposed refinements are related to the width and alignment of the two new streets, referred to here as the southern street and northern street.

a) Southern Street

As shown in Figure 2 (over), the alignment of the new southern street will be shifted slightly to the north to allow for a better block size between the alley and the new street, and angled in a more east-west orientation by a few degrees to allow better connectivity to the street grid to the east.

Figure 2: Alignment of New Southern Street

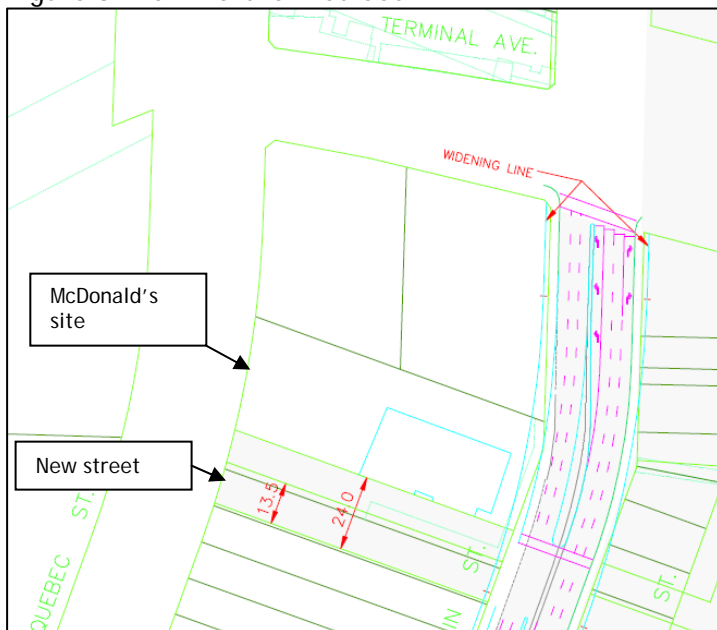


*Note: the dashed line on diagram shows the original street alignment.

b) Northern Street

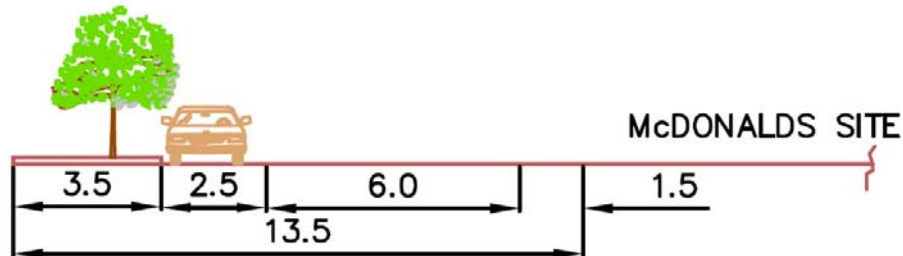
The new northern street (see Figure 3) will be located immediately south of the site occupied by McDonald's Restaurant. Given that the timeline for redevelopment of the McDonald's site could be lengthy, plans for the northern street include an interim, pre-redevelopment plan, and a plan for after redevelopment. The interim plan (see Figure 4 over) would include a sidewalk and parking lane along the south side of the street, and a 1.5 metre sidewalk along the north side (no street trees). Upon redevelopment of the McDonald's site, the City would seek another 6.5 meters from this site for a parking lane and sidewalk with boulevard to complete the street. If the Central Valley Greenway alignment uses this street, the City would seek 10.5 metres from the McDonald's site.

Figure 3: New Northern Street



The alignment for the Central Valley greenway, however, has yet to be determined and will depend on the False Creek Flats Study. In the interim, First Avenue will provide a bicycle connection to eastern destinations.

Figure 4: Northern street interim width (before redevelopment of McDonald's site)

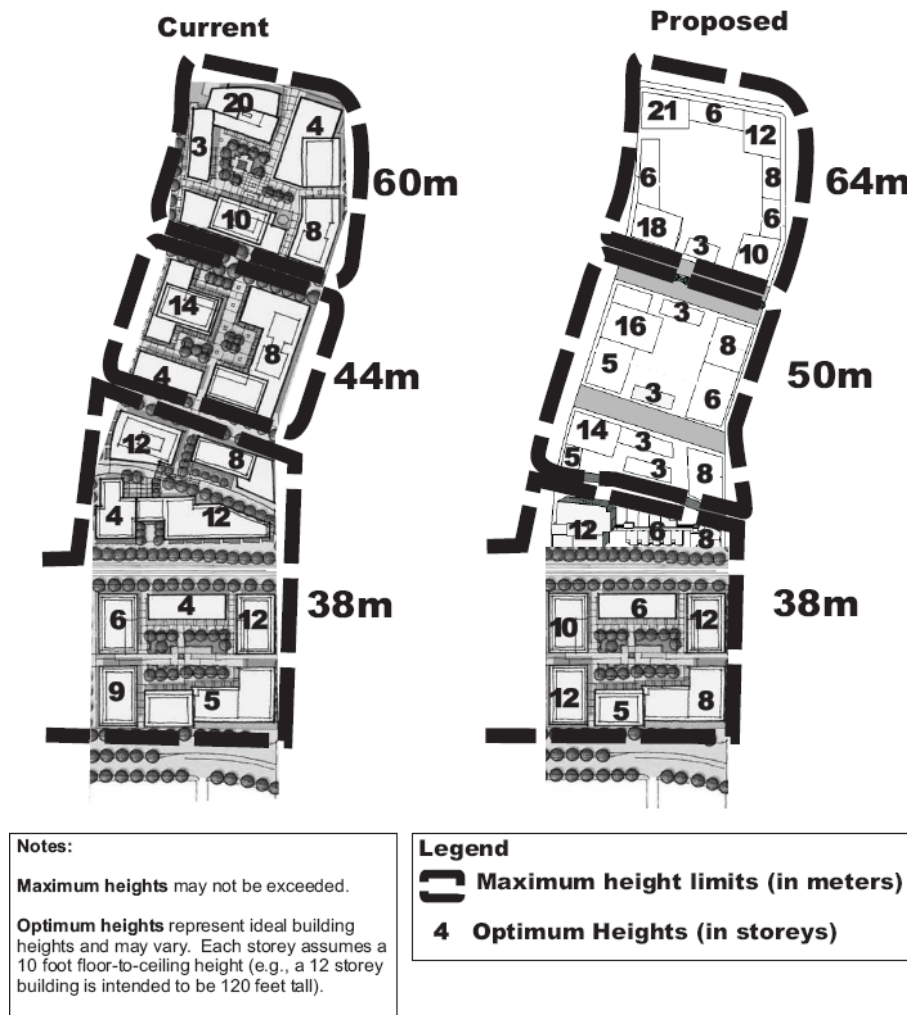


Community comment on the proposed streets emphasised a strong desire for better bicycling and pedestrian infrastructure, and concerns about the level of vehicle traffic in the area.

Heights

Staff recommend a refinement of massing in Area 3C into forms which are slightly taller and slimmer than, but still consistent with, the built forms characteristic of SEFC. The amended ODP would seek: a) additional height along Quebec Street to complete the “story” of descending building heights from north to south, echoing the forms of City Gate to the north of Terminal Avenue; b) a higher, generally-consistent street wall along Main Street; and c) lower heights of the mid-block buildings between Quebec and Main. To achieve this development pattern, an ODP amendment is required to the maximum and the optimum heights (see Figure 5 over).

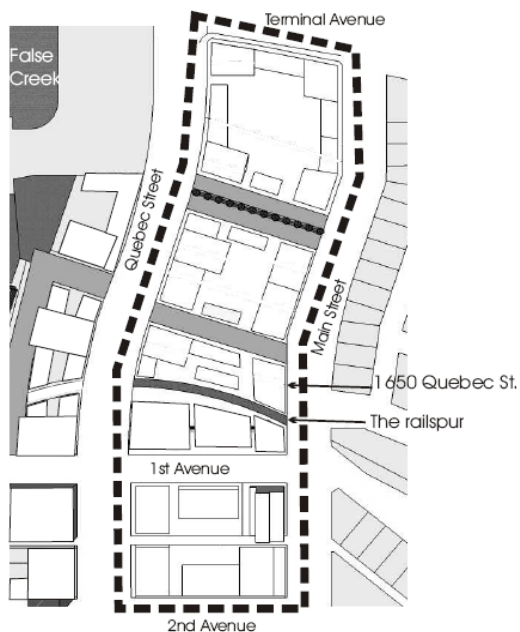
Figure 5: Proposed Height Amendments To Figures 9 and 10 in the SEFC ODP, Area 3C



Floor Space Maximum

The ODP assigns all sites a density of 3.5 FSR, and specifies a total amount of floor space by for each of its seven Areas, and for the overall ODP area. However, by error no floor space was included for the former rail spur site (see Figure 6 over) which is owned by the City. To correct this oversight, staff recommend increasing the ODP floor space maximum by 1 868 square metres (or 20,107 square feet), the buildable floor space of the rail spur site at 3.5 FSR. This would increase the overall floor space in Area 3C from 126 575 square metres to 128 443 square metres. Bosa Properties, the owner of the neighbouring site at 1650 Quebec Street, is proposing to purchase the rail spur site from the City and incorporate this additional density into their development site. If the sale is completed, the rail spur land plus an additional two feet of land will be dedicated back to the City as a laneway for pedestrian and vehicular access.

Figure 6: Rail Spur Site



The average floor space ratio for Area 3C would remain at 3.5 FSR.

Projects Underway

Most of the nine sites in Area 3C are presently at play. Four sites are in discussions with staff, two have applied for rezoning, and one has been approved at a public hearing. All of the proposed projects could comply with the proposed ODP height and density maximums.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Urban Design Panel (UDP)

On May 7, 2008, the UDP reviewed the proposal for revised height, massing and floor space in Area 3C. They unanimously supported the proposal noting that the amendments would improve livability (with a shallower floor plate and a lower scale between Quebec and Main); complete the framing of the end of False Creek; transition to the lower massing of Main Street and the rest of SEFC; allow better sun orientation; and, improve the corner of 2nd Avenue and Main with additional height.

The UDP also provided additional advice (included in Appendix C) to which staff can refer when processing individual applications for rezoning and development.

Community Comment

Staff held a public open house on May 22, 2008. In addition to several newspaper advertisements, neighbours within a two block radius of Area 3C were personally invited by

mail (about 800 residents and property owners), as were about 900 people on the SEFC e-mail list.

The open house was attended by about 30 people. Staff received three written submissions and 16 feedback forms. A copy of these is on file with the City Clerk. Overall there was limited interest.

Community feedback on the proposal was mixed. Some commented that the taller, thinner buildings would reduce the impact of shadowing, others that it would increase it. Some felt it would create a desirable urban form to emphasise the transition between the taller forms of Citygate and the lower forms of SEFC. Others expressed concerns that views may be obstructed, and that the resulting centre courtyard typology would be street-unfriendly. Some comments indicated frustration with the speed at which amenities are being provided to accompany additional density, despite the fact that amenities are being delivered in advance of occupation of the area by new residents.

Staff also invited all landowners within Area 3C to a meeting: representatives from Bosa, Beedie, Cressey and McDonald's attended. Landowners generally favoured the proposed ODP amendments, but suggested that the City consider even taller heights with smaller floor plates and improved livability, better building efficiency.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications.

CONCLUSION

Staff recommend the ODP amendments as they would improve the urban design quality of Area 3C by allowing building forms that are slightly taller and thinner; a continuous street wall; and, more open interior courtyards. Analysis indicates that the proposed changes would not have an undue negative effect with respect to views and shadowing. The changes would be in keeping with the intent of the original ODP.

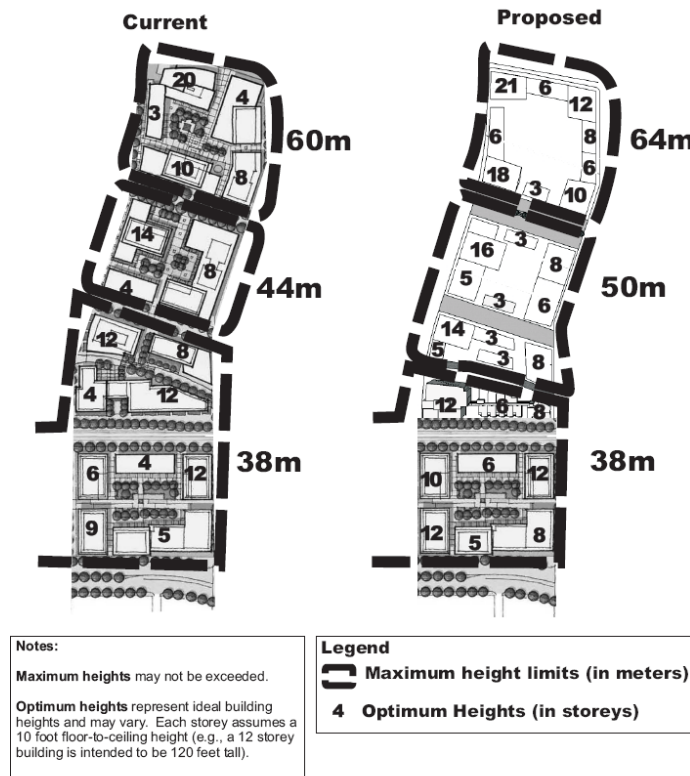
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APPENDIX "A"
PROPOSED MISCELLANEOUS TEXT AMENDMENTS
SEFC ODP

By-law amendments will be prepared generally in accordance with the provisions listed below and are subject to change and refinement prior to by-law posting.

Amend the Southeast False Creek Official Development Plan (by-law no. 9073) to:

- i) increase the total floor area in SEFC from 577 192 m² to 579 060 m², and the maximum residential floor area from 554 270 m² to 556 138 m² (S. 4.2, S. 4.3.1a and Figure 4);
- ii) in Area 3C, increase the total floor area from 126 575 m² to 128 443 m², and the residential floor area from 116 360 m² to 118 228 m² (Figure 4 and S. 4.3.1(f));
- iii) amend maximum heights (Figure 9) to allow taller building heights, and amend optimum heights (Figure 10) to indicate different building heights, as described in this report and in the figure below:



APPENDIX "B"
URBAN DESIGN PRINCIPLES

1. "End of Creek" View Building Forms

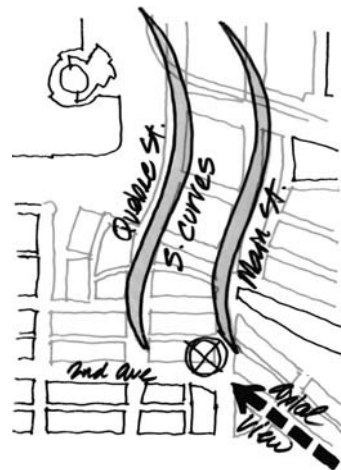
Create building forms which respond to the "end of Creek" public view, recognizing that Area 3C is visible from key vantage points such as Cambie Bridge, Coopers' Park and the seawall.

2. Main Street Building Forms

Create a continuation of medium height street enclosure that emphasises the character of other parts of Main Street. This "street wall" helps to enclose the public realm, encourage pedestrian life, and support the retail at grade. Maintain the mountain views from higher points along Main Street.

3. Quebec Street Building Forms

Reinforce the curve with consistent street enclosure along Quebec Street punctuated by higher building forms.



4. Heights on Quebec Street between 1st and 2nd Avenue

Cluster mid-rise and tower forms near the higher tower on the Opsal Steel site (2nd Avenue and Quebec Street). Emphasize Quebec Street as a gateway to SEFC with taller building forms.



5. Forms on new east-west streets

Create a low scale, domestic character along the two new streets, anchored by framing elements at each end (on Quebec and Main Streets). The new streets should allow movement, create a more residential character, and allow for the creation of interior courtyards. The lower building forms on the interior of the blocks will provide greater livability of units and light penetration to the open spaces.

6. Axial Form at Main Street and 2nd Avenue

Address axial views from Great Northern Way to the corner of Main Street and 2nd Avenue while keeping within the medium height street enclosure along Main Street.

APPENDIX "C"
SUMMARY OF URBAN DESIGN PANEL ADVICE

- The City should not entertain requests to reorient the towers along Quebec Street from an east-west alignment to a north-south alignment as this will be less sustainable and will block views and light to the east. Building orientation for massing along Quebec should be stipulated in the design principles.
- Quebec Street should have some more commercial at grade to animate the street (Staff note: the present ODP allows commercial at grade, but only requires it on Main and Terminal Streets).
- The City should seek to improve the public realm along Quebec Street, especially connectivity to the west.
- The City should encourage a varied ("sawtooth") urban form to pick up on the pattern already established in Chinatown. Flexibility should be applied in the interpretation of planning guidelines to encourage this variation in forms.
- The corner of 2nd Avenue and Main is prominent and will benefit from the additional height and/or a more profound design statement. (Staff note: staff are working with Shell Canada to develop a more urban, street-friendly gas station typology for mixed use at this location.)
- As Area 3C has good proximity to a SkyTrain station, commercial uses (e.g., office) should be considered for the towers nearby.