

Supports Item No. 3
P&E Committee Agenda
January 22, 2010



POLICY REPORT
URBAN STRUCTURE

Report Date: January 5, 2010
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Meeting Date: January 19, 2010

TO: Vancouver City Council
FROM: Director of Planning
SUBJECT: Vancouver Views: Downtown View Corridors and Capacity Study

RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT Council affirm the View Protection Guidelines and the critical role that they have played for the past 20 years in protecting public views that enhance Vancouver's world-renowned image of a vibrant city in a unique mountain and ocean setting.
- B. THAT in order to strengthen and improve existing protected public views Council approve the *View Strengthening* for existing View Corridors from Granville Bridge to Grouse Mountain (views 12.1, 12.2, 12.3), Charleson Park to the Lions (view B1), and Alder Terrace to Mount Seymour (view A), generally as described in Appendix A.
- C. THAT in order to protect additional important views as the city grows Council approve in principle the *New Views*, generally as described in Appendix A, and direct staff to report back on implementation following further technical analysis and Council's decision on the Heritage Area Height Review.
- D. THAT in order to provide an opportunity for a maximum of four taller buildings in the downtown skyline that exhibit exceptional architectural excellence and superior environmental performance while still maintaining important views to the mountains, Council approve in principle a *Limited Expansion of the Higher Building Policy*, generally as described in Appendix A, and direct staff to report back with a revised "General Policy for Higher Buildings".

CONSIDERATION

- E. THAT Council affirm the current, rigorous application of Cambie Street and Cambie Bridge view corridors (views 9.1, 9.2, E.1) and allow “build out” to occur up to the existing, flat plimsoil line, generally as described in Appendix A - Varied Building Line - MAINTAIN CURRENT POLICY.

OR

- F. THAT Council approve in principle a carefully and strategically applied *Varied Building Line* for the Cambie Street and Cambie Bridge view corridors (views 9.1, 9.2, E.1) by seeking opportunities through discretionary design review to allow limited and strategic increases in height above the existing plimsoil line (and/or increases and decreases where site size permits), generally as described in Appendix A - Varied Building Line - OPTION ONE;

AND THAT, Council direct staff to report back on implementation of this approach following additional analysis and considerations.

GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The General Manager of Community Services recommends APPROVAL of Recommendations A through D.

The General Manager of Community Services puts forth items E and F for Council's CONSIDERATION.

CITY MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The City Manager recommends APPROVAL of Recommendations A through D.

The City Manager puts forth items E and F for Council's CONSIDERATION.

COUNCIL POLICY

Downtown Official Development Plan (1975)
View Protection Guidelines (1989)
Downtown Vancouver Skyline Study recommendations (1997)
General Policy for Higher Buildings (1997)
Metro Core Jobs and Economy Land Use Plan (2007)
North East False Creek High Level Review (2007)
Historic Area Height Review (2008)

Terms of Reference, Downtown Capacity and View Corridors Study (2008): City Council requested that staff “review the Council-adopted height limits and view corridors affecting the study area and recommend changes, if appropriate, to achieve additional development capacity.” The intention of this direction was to “identify possible modifications while still achieving the objectives underlying the current height and view corridor policies”.

Council Priorities: In creating additional opportunities for strategic increases in development capacity in the transit-rich downtown to support public benefits, the recommendations in this

support are supportive of Council priorities around: *Homelessness and Affordable Housing; Building Strong, Safe and Inclusive Communities; and Environment and Sustainability.*

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to present the findings of the Downtown View Corridors and Capacity Study ("Vancouver Views") following extensive technical and urban design analysis, and significant public consultation. The report seeks Council direction on a number of proposed policy changes relating to heights and protected public views in the Downtown prior to further implementation.

SUMMARY

In October 2008, Council approved the Terms of Reference for the Downtown View Corridors and Capacity Study ("Vancouver Views") in order to review heights and existing protected public views ("view corridors") in the Downtown. The purpose of the review as initially directed by Council was to examine opportunities for creating additional development capacity to support public benefits ("benefit capacity"), including consideration of modifications to view corridors, if appropriate.

Since then, staff have completed comprehensive technical and urban design analysis of various approaches and alternative future scenarios, including advice from four local and international urban planning and architectural professionals with extensive skills in urban design, view protection and city-building. At the same time, the study has engaged several thousand residents in the issue through two rounds of public consultation (consisting of eight open houses and online surveys), and by commissioning two statistically-valid polls to garner the opinions of Vancouverites.

The recommendations contained in this report are the culmination of the extensive analysis and consultation and seek to weigh and consider strong urban design principles, the values and opinions of the public, and the objective of exploring alternative ways to deliver potential "benefit capacity". The recommendations also affirm the significance of mountain and ocean views to residents, support Vancouver's emergence as a "vibrant city in a mountain context", and ensure that the careful balance between skyline and mountains at the core of Vancouver's image remains intact for the future.

Recommendation A seeks Council affirmation of the existing View Protection Guidelines and their importance as an integral component of the future of Vancouver's approach to city-building.

Recommendation B seeks Council direction to make some minor refinements and improvements to strengthen several existing view corridors by making them more publicly accessible or by better achieving their original intent.

Recommendation C recognizes the strong urban design objective and the desire of the public to protect additional public views from emerging public spaces (such as the new Olympic Plaza) as the city continues to grow, and seeks Council's approval in principle of these new views pending further technical refinement and Council's decision on the Heritage Area Height Review.

Recommendation D asks Council to approve in principle a limited and strategic expansion of the Council-approved Higher Building Policy. Staff would report back to Council following further technical refinement with an amended policy that would allow a maximum of four taller buildings to protrude into protected view corridors in strategic areas of the downtown while minimizing view impacts. The final heights and exact locations of the buildings would be determined through urban design analysis, and would generally cascade in height from the central downtown to the water to remain consistent with the “domed skyline” policy objective. These buildings would also have to exhibit exceptional architectural excellence and green-building performance.

The remaining Consideration Items E & F seek Council direction on amending three Cambie Street/Bridge view corridors (views 9.1, 9.2, E.1) to further pursue the application of a “varied building line approach” to these views rather than allowing build-out under the existing guidelines, which could potentially result in a “flat top” skyline in the eastern portion of downtown. The varied building line could be achieved by allowing development limited increases in height above the existing flat, “plimsoll” line, and decreases below the “plimsoll” line where tower siting on larger sites creates opportunities to retain significant mountain views.

Staff note that while the varied building line is a compelling concept, the approach is difficult to implement in a predictable manner, creates greater uncertainty in rezoning and development permit decisions, and that other existing policies and development conditions can also achieve a varied building line.

On the other hand, it is noted that guidelines such as the existing View Protection Guidelines are usually intended to have some level of strategically applied discretion. Achieving a “varied building line” for the Cambie Street/Bridge view corridors would require a careful and strategic approach using the discretionary design review mechanisms permitted in the existing Downtown Official Development Plan (DODP).

As such, Staff are providing Council with a consideration to either affirm the existing, rigorous application of the View Protection Guidelines to the three Cambie Street/Bridge view corridors (Consideration E), or to endorse careful and strategic discretion (Consideration F). All other Council-approved view corridors within this study area would continue to be approached with the same rigorous application of the guidelines, as staff feel the protected views are so vulnerable to small exception, that discretion would be inappropriate. Staff note that the issue of discretion for a varied building line also relates to view corridors outside of the scope of this study. Staff will take direction from Council’s decision on this report in our practices for views outside of this study area as well.

The adoption of the recommended changes and refinements to the View Protection Guidelines could result in approximately 1,000,000 additional square feet of potential “benefit capacity” beyond existing opportunities beneath the view corridors. The majority of this new, potential “benefit capacity” would result from the adoption of the *Limited Expansion of the Higher Building Policy*.

BACKGROUND

Vancouver has a spectacular natural setting. The location of the downtown on a peninsula with a mountain backdrop and an ocean setting creates signature views that define the image of Vancouver and are composed of three prominent horizontal features: the shoreline, the downtown skyline and the North Shore Mountains.

To this end, Vancouverites have long supported the beauty of this dynamic mixture of water, architecture and mountain scenery. Citizens identified the preservation of public views as amongst their top priorities for the city in the Goals for Vancouver surveys of 1978-1979. In the late 1980's development was anticipated in the Downtown South and along the north of False Creek. Without a structured approach to building location and height limits it was conceivable that public views of the downtown, the mountains and the waters of False Creek could be lost as these lands were developed.

As a response the City initiated a views study in 1988 which sought to understand how the public valued a variety of public views. The outcomes of this study resulted in a proposed view protection policy featuring a number of protected view corridors.

In 1989 the City of Vancouver approved the View Protection Guidelines containing 26 protected view corridors. The policy protects views of the North Shore Mountains, the downtown skyline and the waters of False Creek from a number of public view points located along the south shore of False Creek, arterial roadways, and from the Granville and Cambie bridges.

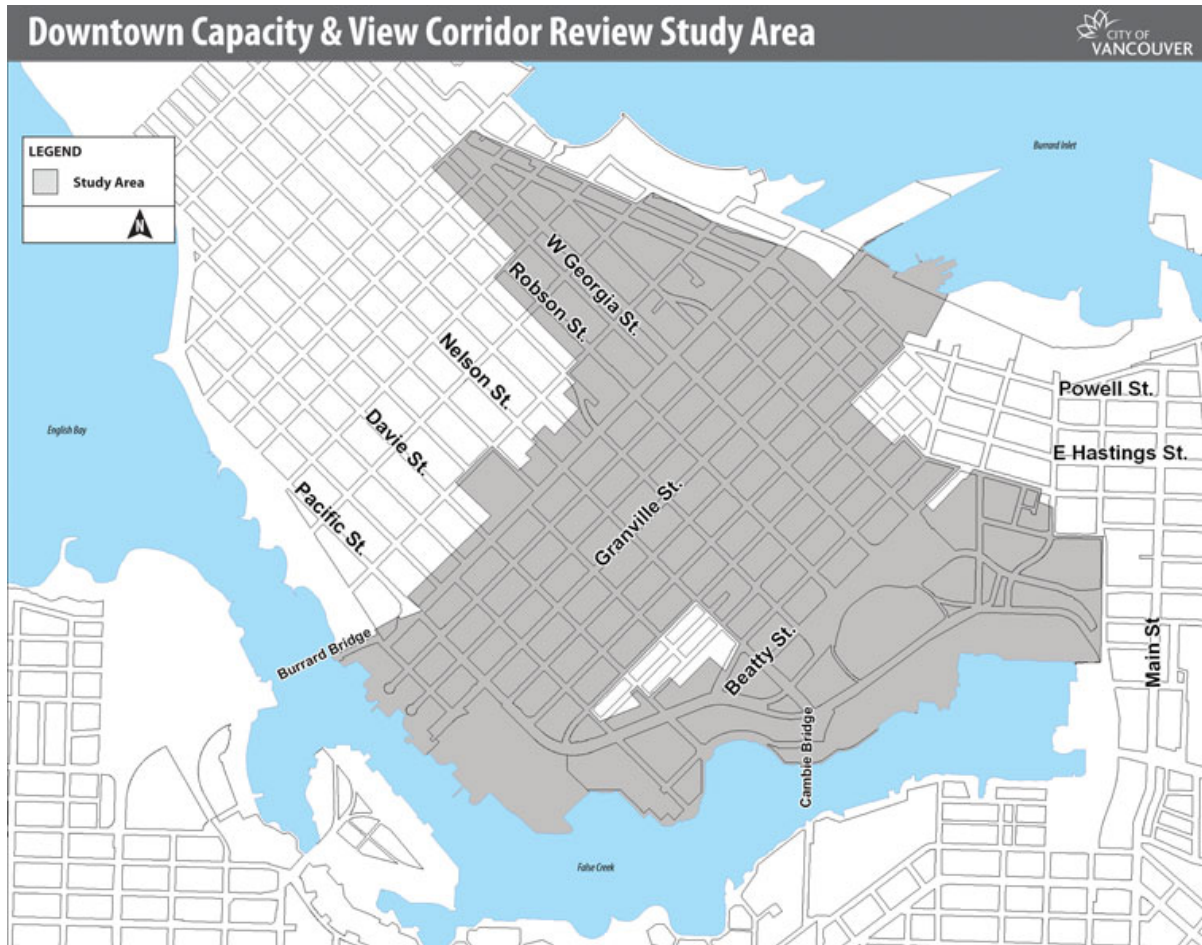
The View Protection Guidelines have been instrumental in identifying and retaining protected public views for the last 20 years. The 27 identified view corridors have effectively settled the debate about which views would be lost and those that would be protected. The Guidelines provided the public and the development industry with certainty about which views could be impacted by development and those that were to be left for public enjoyment.

In the intervening 20 years a significant number of new buildings have been added to the downtown skyline. The view corridors have had a visible effect on the site location and design of buildings, resulting in the retention of panoramic and narrow views in and around the downtown area.

In July 2007, Council received the *Metro Core Jobs & Economy Study* and the *Heritage Building Rehabilitation Program and Transfer of Density Bank* reports. The Metro Core report confirmed the need to use the potential capacity in the core Central Business District (CBD) for "job space", ie non-residential uses. The Heritage Building Rehabilitation Program and Transfer of Density Report highlighted the growing amount of bonus density in the heritage "bank", and the need for places to accommodate it. Both Council reports accentuated the need to assess current "benefit capacity" —i.e. the ability to accommodate additional residential floor space on the available development sites in the downtown area to allow for bonuses, rezonings, and transfers of density.

In October 2008, Council received a report addressing the "benefit capacity" issue entitled *Potential "Benefit" Capacity in the Downtown*. The report recommended that the City begin to consider site-specific rezonings up to the view corridor height limits in the Downtown South to immediately increase the amount of potential "benefit capacity". The report also

contained a Terms of Reference and a recommendation to launch the Downtown View Corridors and Capacity Study to review heights and potential view corridor modifications, in appropriate, for the area outlined in Map 1 below. Both recommendations were adopted by Council.



Map 1: Study area for the Downtown View Corridors and Capacity Study (“Vancouver Views”). The study area includes the entire Downtown Official Development Plan area, with the exception of the Victory Square area which is not considered for additional height due to its heritage scale. The Yaletown HA-3 area is also excluded from the study area for heritage reasons.

Development Sites and Potential Development Capacity

At any given time, there are a number of potential redevelopment sites in the downtown. Each of these sites has an amount of potential development capacity as directed by the use, height, and density stipulated in the zoning, as well as any additional applicable policy such as View Protection Guidelines. This available development capacity is available under “current policy” and additional development capacity may be also made available through rezoning, with potential additional densities and heights determined by urban design considerations and view corridors.

Staff have reviewed the likely developable sites in the Downtown Official Development Plan (DODP) and estimate that there are approximately 70 potential redevelopment sites, each with potential capacity under current zoning and through rezoning. These sites were identified with consideration for building age, tenure, existing building density versus potential density, site assembly considerations, onsite heritage resources and other criteria that help to determine redevelopment potential. Some of these sites are short term sites that could be development immediately, while others are likely to redevelop in the medium or longer term. In effect, at any given time site availability may be limited if owners choose to hold land or future development opportunities, but overall development capacity remains. In the end the benefit potential is only fully realised when market conditions are right for redevelopment.

The ability of development to support public benefits through bonussing and rezoning also needs to have consideration of use. Residential use has consistently maintained a higher value per square foot than non-residential use in the downtown. To some degree additional non-residential space can support public benefits, but it is not as helpful in this respect as residential. Therefore, it is particularly the DODP outside of the commercial Central Business District, that can provide potential benefit capacity. (The Broadway C3-A district is also a receiver of heritage density but is outside the study area.)

In terms of the available “benefit capacity” in the downtown, there is a supply of potential “benefit capacity” on the identified development sites in the Downtown ODP area. If these were all built up to the existing view corridor height limits, there would be approximately 2.8 million sq. ft. of “benefit capacity”. This potential “benefit capacity” exists currently as a result of Council adopting the recommendation for site-specific rezonings to the view corridor heights in Downtown South in October 2008. In addition, the recent approval of the North East False Creek High Level Review (*North East False Creek: Directions for the Future*, RTS 08338) also created opportunity for up to an additional 4,000,000 sqft of residential capacity to help support public benefits in the downtown. This information is summarized in Table 1:

Area	Zone	Potential Additional Residential sq.ft.
CBD	DODP, Areas A,B,C Central, F	400,000
“CBD Shoulder”	DODP Areas C South, H	693,000
Downtown South	DODP Areas L1, L2, M, N	1,707,000
Northeast False Creek	False Creek North ODP	4,000,000
TOTAL		6,800,000

Table 1: Estimated Available Benefit Capacity in the downtown, beyond current zoning (as of December 2009).

Accommodating Downtown Population and Employment Growth

A number of questions have been raised about whether the development potential of the downtown needs to be increased to support future population and job growth.

As noted above, staff have reviewed potential redevelopment sites in the downtown and note that under current zoning there is enough development potential to accommodate another 30,000 residents in the downtown, with more residential potential available through rezoning. Council’s recent adoption of the zoning and policy changes resulting from the Metro Core Jobs and Economy Land Use Plan also ensure that we have sufficient job space capacity to meet

our job and economic growth needs in the downtown for the next 30 years. As such, the existing View Protection Guidelines do not inhibit our ability to accommodate population and job growth in the downtown for the foreseeable future.

DISCUSSION

From the launch of the Vancouver Views Study the objective was to review downtown heights and view corridors in consideration of: 1) strong urban design principles; 2) the values and opinions of the public and other interests; and 3) potential increases in “benefit capacity”. The following section examines these criteria before discussing the recommendations of this report and the implications for other affected planning programs.

Summary of Urban Design Analysis

One of the key considerations relating to potential changes to heights and view corridors in the downtown is urban design. The development of the downtown over the past decades has been carefully planned in accordance with strong urban design principles and guidelines with great success. Any changes to heights or protected views need to be consistent with the urban design principles not only in the View Protection Guidelines but also in other Council-approved policies including: the “domed skyline” from the Skyline Study; the General Policy for Higher Buildings; the False Creek Policy Broadsheets; and area urban design principles arising from the Heritage Area Height Review and the North East False Creek High Level Review.

Some of the key urban design principles considered in the analysis include:

- Creating a generally “dome-shaped” skyline with highest towers in the centre of the downtown and heights cascading downward to the water’s edge.
- Striving for a “legible skyline” that orients residents within the city by marking key areas such as the Central Business District and major, ceremonial streets (for example, Georgia and Burrard) with additional height.
- Maintaining the quality and integrity of protected public view, including views to key peaks (e.g. the Lions) and ridges.
- Marking a clear transition between the downtown and the heritage areas with a decrease in height at the “neck” of the downtown peninsula.
- Seeking opportunities for new views in areas where the city will grow and from areas of emerging public significance (e.g. the new Olympic Plaza in South East False Creek).

The City also commissioned four urban planning and architecture professionals with extensive skills in urban design, view protection and city-building to provide peer advice on future directions for the view protection guidelines in Vancouver. These advisors included: Ken Greenberg (Toronto); Norm Hotson (Vancouver); Joe Hruda (Vancouver); and Karios Shen (Boston).

The advisors convened for a two day workshop with staff to review emerging concepts and provide advice. In general, their advice was supportive of the general staff direction to enhance Vancouver’s image by strengthening the presence of the mountains (e.g. protecting existing views; discovering new views; and protecting views to defining ridges, peaks and areas that define the height of the mountains) and enhancing the city skyline (e.g.

augmenting the serrated profile; creating a more legible skyline; and allowing a very limited number of higher towers for legibility and punctuation).

Staff also convened a non-voting workshop with the City's Urban Design Panel to discuss the analysis and recommendations of the study. The Urban Design Panel expressed strong support for the principles and approach taken by the study and gave general endorsement to the recommendations in this report. The minutes from the Urban Design Panel are contained in Appendix C.

Summary of Public Consultation

The View Protection Guidelines were implemented through an extensive public process in 1989, and this study also placed a high priority on engaging the public in view protection issues. The detailed results from the public consultation and polling are contained in Appendix B.

Public input consisted of two rounds of consultation (in the spring and fall of 2009) including:

- Eight open houses, in June and October 2009, which attracted over 2000 residents;
- New media techniques such as Facebook, Twitter, downloadable walking tours of the view corridors, e-newsletters and listserves to engage as many citizens as possible;
- A random, statistically-valid poll and opt-in web survey as an additional measure of the opinions of Vancouverites of diverse ages, genders, ethnicities, and locations across the city during each round of consultation; and
- Individual meetings with interest groups (e.g. UDI, Board of Trade, BIAs), resident groups, and City Advisory Committees.

In the First Round of consultation in June 2009, citizens were consulted on the relative importance and priority of each of the view corridors, the reason that they are important and how they are generally experienced, the acceptability of modification to the view corridors, and the importance of new view protection. In general, the First Round of consultation revealed that:

- The public strongly values maintaining a framework for view preservation;
- Just over half (53%) of respondents regard the mountains as the most important component of the view;
- Over three-quarters of respondents agree that downtown development is contributing to the loss of some important views and that stronger action needs to be taken to protect them;
- 74% of respondents felt view loss should be replaced with new view protection;
- "Panoramic views" were ranked most important of all individual views;
- For seven of the ten "Framed views", between 66% and 80% of residents are not willing to consider any modification to the existing protected areas; and
- Respondents were more willing to modify "Panoramic views" with 32 to 48% willing to consider some form of modification, with the most commonly preferred modification method being the allowance of a limited number of towers into the view.

The First Round of public consultation revealed that citizens strongly value maintaining a strong framework for view preservation, have some tolerance for limited opportunities to consider changes to specific views, and strongly support the introduction of new protected views as the city grows. Staff carefully considered this advice while conducting extensive technical and urban design analysis that led to the emergence of the four possible view

concepts contained in this report, which were then brought back out to the public for review and comment in the Second Round of public consultation. (These four concepts are explained briefly below, and more fully in Appendix A.)

In the Second Round of consultation, held in October 2009, the objective was to gather additional feedback from citizens on the four concepts that resulted from staff analysis in consideration of the results from the First Round of consultation. In general, the Second Round of consultation revealed that:

- 70% of respondents found the “flat top” skyline resulting from the current View Protection Guidelines to be acceptable with 55% rating this outcome as highly acceptable;
- Almost two-thirds (63%) of the public were accepting of the Varied Building Line with half (49%) of all respondents finding it highly acceptable;
- Approximately half of the respondents (53%) found the inclusion of 3-4 higher buildings into existing view corridors to be acceptable, with greater acceptance for the impact on the overall skyline (59%) than on the individual views (40-48%);
- There was clear support for the addition of the three New Views, with three-quarters or more of the respondents in strong support; and
- The three modifications put forward for *View Strengthening* were all highly supported by six in ten residents.

In general, the Second Round of public consultation reveals cautious support for the recommendations contained in this report. As garnered through discussions with various Open House participants, the support seems to be tempered by some concern around the details of implementation and the impacts on mountain views.

Proposed Policy Changes

Staff analysis sought to weigh and consider strong urban design principles, the values and opinions of the public, and the objective of exploring alternative ways to deliver potential capacity. Throughout the analysis staff explored ways to maintain and protect the views that have come to define our city, while also realizing that these views provide constraints on potential growth and benefit. Analysis revealed that the narrow views were too small to alter in anyway without compromising the intent of the original policy. As a result more consideration was focused in exploring scenarios within the larger panorama views, which offered the greatest opportunity for additional benefit without compromising the intent of the original policy.

The four concepts that staff explored to achieve these objectives and that of the study are:

1. View strengthening
2. New Views
3. Limited Expansion of the Higher Building Policy
4. Varied Building Line

Concept One: View Strengthening

Three proposed actions to strengthen the applicable views and to eliminate some of the perceived weaknesses of the View Protection Guidelines are included within the concept of View Strengthening. For detailed illustrations, rationale and outcomes of these alterations please refer to Appendix A - View Strengthening.

In completing the proposed refinements to the identified views, the framework as a whole is improved by making view points more accessible, by centring the key elements of the mountain views and by combining exceptionally narrow views into a wider more dynamic view. The views included in the View Strengthening Recommendation are 12.1.1, 12.1.2, 12.1.3, B1 and A.

Staff recommend the immediate implementation of *View Strengthening* (Recommendation B).

Concept Two: New Views

As Vancouver continues to grow, there is a need to review both opportunities for building and development, as well as opportunities protect new public views for future generations. The eastward expansion of the downtown over the past 20 years has created additional development opportunity and staff recommend a concurrent consideration of new protected public views. This approach was also strongly supported in the public consultation process.

The views recommended for inclusion in the View Protection Guidelines are described fully in Appendix A - New Views, and include:

- Choklit Park to Grouse and Mt. Fromme;
- Olympic Village Plaza to Mt. Fromme and Lyne Range; and
- Creekside Park to the Lions.

These three vantage points respond to the desire to see new views from emerging public locations including the new Olympic Plaza and an expanded Creekside Park, as well as from the south shore of False Creek. All three new views originate in public locations that have emerged since the inception of the original View Protection Guidelines.

Staff recommend that Council approve these new views in principle and direct staff to report back on implementation following further technical analysis and Council's decision on the Heritage Area Height Review (Recommendation C), noting that changes to the recommendations for heights in the Heritage Areas may impact new views from Olympic Plaza and Creekside Park.

Concept Three: Limited Expansion of the Higher Building Policy

The *Limited Expansion of the Higher Building Policy* is a concept that attempts to build off of the successes of current policy while exploring appropriate means of providing additional capacity in alignment the larger image of the City. This concept is presented in greater detail in *Appendix A - Limited Expansion of the Higher Building Policy*.

By expanding the bounds of the higher building policy east down Georgia Street and south down Burrard Street there is an opportunity to mark Vancouver's historic ceremonial streets with landmark towers while also providing additional capacity to support public benefits. These new taller buildings will be required to establish a significant and recognizable new benchmark for architectural creativity and excellence, while at the same time making a significant contribution to the beauty and visual power of the skyline. This creative architecture will also need to demonstrate cutting-edge green design performance (in particular energy performance) that significantly improves local knowledge and demonstrated results in green design beyond the prevailing policy in place at the time. This is a higher standard than previously expected for existing higher buildings. In addition, the current benchmarks required of higher buildings will be retained on these new sites.

Staff recommend that Council approve the *Limited Expansion of the Higher Building Policy* in principle to allow a maximum of four additional higher buildings in the downtown, and direct staff to report back with a revised “General Policy for Higher Buildings” (Recommendation D).

Staff note that the urban design analysis conducted as part of this study, and the urban design advice received from external advisors, conclude that any more than four carefully-considered, strategically-sited higher buildings could overwhelm the delicate balance between the city and its mountain setting. As such, the intention of this recommendation is to create a one-time opportunity to “complete the skyline”. The intention is not to signal that future opportunities for additional higher buildings in the downtown will arise.

Concept Four: Varied Building Line

Since the inception of the View Protection Guidelines there have been concerns raised at various times that the strict adherence to the “flat plimsoll line” in the guidelines would result in a potentially undesirable urban design outcome of “flat top” skyline, particularly in the eastern portion of the downtown (see Figure 1). There were also a number of questions raised as to whether the guidelines should be followed strictly, or whether they should have a more discretionary application as is common to other guidelines.



Figure 1: Exploring the concept of a *Varied Building Line*.

To bring clarity to these issues, staff put forward Consideration items E and F to determine whether a “*Varied Building Line*” approach is appropriate on the Cambie Street/Cambie Bridge view corridors (9.1, 9.2, and E.1). The concepts are illustrated in greater detail in *Appendix A - Varied Building Line*.

There are compelling urban design reasons to prevent the emergence of a “flat-top” skyline in the eastern downtown. A broad, flat skyline may be detrimental to the delicate balance between the city and its mountain backdrop, with a more varied building line better reflecting the undulating ridgeline of the mountains. A “varied building line” approach would also provide some discretion to site towers and density on larger building sites in a manner that achieves optimal urban design at the street level, potential for greater open space and plazas, and opportunities to site buildings in a manner that may preserve existing mountain views below the current “plimsoll line”.

Staff note, however, that it is unlikely that current development policy would result in a broad, flat-top in the eastern downtown for a number of reasons:

- A large number of sites in Downtown South are already built up to the existing 300 foot limit. Council’s recent decision to allow buildings in Downtown South to rezone up to view corridor heights would provide additional variation in building height in this area;

- The City's urban design policies typically seek lower buildings at the water's edge, which would provide an additional lower building line in the foreground of the view; and
- Should Council endorse Recommendation D for a Limited Expansion of the Higher Building Policy, these additional taller towers would further enhance variation within the skyline.

Staff also note that that a "varied building line" approach may be difficult to implement in a predictable manner, which could create greater uncertainty in rezoning and development permit applications.

In light of the challenges and opportunities inherent to the *Varied Building Line* approach, staff put forward Consideration items E and F for Council deliberation, noting that a discretionary approach would only be applied to the broad Cambie Street/Cambie Bridge view corridors (9.1, 9.2, and E.1) that cross the eastern downtown. All of the other view corridors within this study area would continue to be adhered to in the current rigorous manner with the exception by the existing, Council-approved *Higher Building Policy* or by the *Limited Expansion of the Higher Building Policy* (Recommendation D). Staff would consider Council's direction in the context of other broad, panoramic views outside the study area.

Implications for "Benefit Capacity" in the Downtown

The recommendations contained in this report could create opportunities for approximately 1,000,000 sq ft of additional "benefit capacity" in the downtown beyond opportunities beneath existing view corridors. The primary source of this additional "benefit capacity" is the *Limited Expansion of the Higher Building Policy* (Recommendation D). Staff note that this is just an estimate as the exact height and density of the four potential towers will need to be determined through extensive urban design analysis.

Implications for North East False Creek

The recommendation that impacts the North East False Creek area is related to a *Limited Expansion in the Higher Building Policy* (Recommendation D). If Council chooses to pursue a varied building line for the Cambie Street/Cambie Bridge view corridors (Consideration Item F) then this would also impact the North East False Creek Area.

The *Limited Expansion of the Higher Building Policy* suggests that a potential higher tower could be located in NEFC to "mark" the foot of Georgia Street. The preferred location for a taller tower in Northeast False Creek will need to consider important urban design criteria as well as the public benefits (ie additional at-grade open space, which was seen as a high priority in Council and the public's comments during the Northeast False Creek High Level Review) that can be achieved. Urban design criteria would include the relative visual strength of each possible tall tower location in terms of the framing of the Georgia Street end view, its overall effect on the skyline, its potential to contribute to the public realm, shadowing of the civic plaza and livability considerations. Opportunities for additional city benefits and amenities would need to be explored as part of the site selection process. Staff plan to undertake this evaluation in the coming months and will provide a recommendation to Council on the preferred location for a taller tower in Northeast False Creek in the spring of 2010.

Implications for the Historic Area Height Review

The recommendations put forward in this report are supportive of and consistent with the conclusions and recommendations of the Historic Area Height Review, which is presented concurrently for Council's consideration. While two of the proposed new views put forth in

Recommendation C will provide view corridor protection over the historic area, neither of these will reduce the proposed heights as determined through detailed urban design analysis conducted within that study.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The staff and resources required for implementation of the recommendations are included in the 2010 Operating Budget. There are no further financial implications for City budgets.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Upon Council adoption of the recommendations contained in this report, Staff will immediately begin to implement the policy amendments and technical changes to the View Protection Guidelines, as well as any other consequential amendments that arise. Staff will also report back to Council with new policy for adoption as outlined in the recommendations in this report. Implementation is anticipated to be completed by fall 2010.

Staff do not anticipate the need for any additional public consultation as the key messages and issues derived from the extensive consultation and statistically-valid polling thus far are very clear and have been carefully considered while formulating the recommendations before Council.

Staff will remain in contact throughout implementation with affected property owners and the development community through liaison with the Urban Development Institute, and through the North East False Creek High Level Review. If Council chooses to adopt Consideration item F, staff will consult directly with affected property owners to further pursue a *Varied Building Line* for the Cambie Street and Cambie Bridge view corridors.

CONCLUSION

For many years Vancouver was described as a “setting in search of a city”. The recent period of rapid growth and artful city-building have transformed Vancouver into a vibrant metropolis that is worthy of its wonderful coastal and mountain context. For the past 20 years the View Protection Guidelines have proven to be an insightful and progressive approach to maintaining a careful balance between the shoreline, skyline and mountain ridgeline that define our image around the world. The recommendations contained in this report affirm and strengthen this approach so that residents can maintain the visual and emotional connections to our incredible setting for decades to come.

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