

**From:** [Correspondence Group, City Clerk's Office](#)  
**To:** [Norm Drew](#)  
**Subject:** RE: Beach Towers Rezoning Application. From: Beach Towers (40 Years') Tenant, Norman G. Drew  
**Date:** Friday, February 15, 2013 4:09:16 PM

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Thank you for your comments.

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Thank you.

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**From:** Norm Drew s. 22(1) Personal and Confidential  
**Sent:** Friday, February 15, 2013 4:03 PM  
**To:** Correspondence Group, City Clerk's Office  
**Subject:** Re: Beach Towers Rezoning Application. From: Beach Towers (40 Years') Tenant, Norman G. Drew

Dear Mayor Robertson and Council Members,

**Re: Beach Towers Rezoning Application and Development Proposal.**

As a resident of Beach Towers for the past 40 years, (since 1973), I would appeal to all parties involved to reach a common sense agreement as to the future of Beach Towers, one of the prime jewels in the crown of Vancouver's beautiful English Bay shoreline.

At the outset, I wish to state I am in favour of progress and improvement in all things, so long as existing good things are not destroyed by new additions.

I wish to offer some constructive suggestions for an even more profitable and publicly redeeming approach to maximizing Beach Towers full potential.

#### The Vast, Spacious, Outdoor, Public , Scenic Lookout Plaza:

The architect diminishes the great significance of this immense public space by referring to it as simply a 'podium'. A podium suggests a small platform for one or two speakers to stand upon. The existing public plaza is a city block-long public space half the size of a football field. This already public area could be greened with a garden, pathways, fountains and statuary rather than being left as a flat, 'empty' terra cotta tiled plaza. The plaza space serves to counterbalance the overwhelming mass of three towers on one small footprint - which it does brilliantly, but it is also the main conduit of light and sea air throughout the complex and Harwood/Cardero streets behind. The plaza space serves *physically* as the complex's lungs and eyes - vectoring cooling summer breezes and providing unobstructed views of English Bay and beyond, to all tenants at every height level.

With so many public events constantly taking place on Beach Avenue from Marathons to special events parades, Beach Towers raised public viewing plaza is a unique and useful public 'amphitheatre' facility, year round. To infill it with a private apartment building would restrict that unique scenic viewing point for private use by the wealthy only.

Is this what Vancouver is all about now: selling off all scenic view spots around the city to the wealthy for their private use only? The disease seems to be spreading rapidly. The first example we Beach Towers tenants noted was the fencing in of the small plaza above the English Bay bathhouses, and installation of bleachers, in order to sell tickets to the wealthier members of society to ensure they have a private, clear and comfortable view of the event, displacing all others to sitting on the ground with whatever view they can find. The City is now poised to approve similar but *permanent* use of Beach Towers public plaza. Please stop this urban virus from infecting our residence and spreading everywhere in Vancouver. If this high profile public space can be so easily rezoned and expropriated for the rich, then no publicly accessible property is safe anywhere in this city.

#### Tower Bases:

The spaces in and around the towers are essential and required. The *raison d'être* for the open bases of the towers is to further alleviate their overwhelming mass by creating the illusion they are floating on air. The spaces also provide ground level vectored sea breezes and provide open sea views. In the height of summer, the tower-vectored sea-breeze cools and disperses the tremendous heat built up by so much expanse of concrete in this confined area. To infill the spaces with discordant glass and concrete blockhouses for maximum profit and/or to fulfill a civic need for 'more suites' is shortsighted and disregards both the physical function of the spaces, the integrity of the original site and the cohesiveness of the neighbourhood itself.

#### 'Boring' Sidewalk Along Beach Avenue:

The 'boring' sidewalk stretch along the north side of Beach Avenue beside Beach

Towers, could be greened with a low waterfall and small trees along the entire length; similar to others in the city such as Wall Centre's. It would provide air cooling and pleasant shade in summer for pedestrians along that side, making it a joy to walk along the frontage. In all seasons it would be attractive for pedestrians and traffic moving past the complex. It might also inspire drivers to slow down along that straight 'boring' stretch. They now speed up to get past it as fast as they can - a phenomenon which has led to numerous traffic accidents along here. It would also provide 'white noise' for tenants, muffling the constant roar of Beach Avenue traffic. The swimming pool on the other side of the front wall already has a pump system which could be adapted/augmented to serve this waterfall.

#### Human Scale Village Alternative:

Instead of a 9 storey building on Cardero, why not build low rise two storey rows of luxury Tudor/european, 'olde worlde' classic style, townhouses along BOTH Cardero and Harwood corner (replacing the current unsightly, scraggly bushes). These low rise homes would add a quaint and homey English/European seaside character to English Bay (and harmonize with other Tudor style homes and apartment facades in the Westend). Such a 'quaint' village look behind Beach Towers would surprise and delight both Vancouverites and tourists, and would retain much more of the sea views from neighbouring buildings on Harwood/Cardero, than the large, square buildings proposed.

Additionally, neighbouring residents would derive pleasure looking across the street at lower, more human scale 'cottages', feeling as though they too were living in a classic 'homey'village. Low rise Tudor or village type townhouses would minimize the overwhelming 'walled-in' effect of the existing towers neighbours now face. Set back behind the townhomes, the lower 'half' of the towers would recede behind the more attractive foreground 'Tudor' Village look.

Low rise buildings, with peaked rooftops, (as opposed to square block buildings) would retain more space, light and air and cast much less shadow. Classic townhome luxury rents would be more acceptable to wealthy, discerning tenants for the value-added *cachet* of living in a 'Tudor' character village cottage with all modern conveniences on English Bay; without the bone-chilling conditions of living in an *actual*, non-centrally-heated, Tudor european cottage.

#### Detailing:

Classic lampposts, matching those already along Beach Avenue bathhouses/Denman corner area would add to the classic village atmosphere.

#### Proposed Infill Building Designs: Design and Social Effects:

Low rise, village style, human scale row townhouses will also likely lower crime rate in this neighbourhood. Larger than human scale, impersonal, cold, aloof looking glass and concrete 'box' buildings, towering above street level (albeit 9 storeys) contribute to social alienation and crime.

For example, one needs only assess the area where the recent hockey riot occurred

downtown: among cold, aloof, towering, alienating glass and concrete 'box' buildings.

These unimaginative towering boxes engender a 'people against the corporate world' reaction. Just proposing the drawings has already elicited this response from neighbourhood residents. Such cold-looking, big box buildings do not belong in a residential neighbourhood, and certainly do NOT blend with this 1960's architectural area.

The proposed Beach Avenue townhouses and 9 storey Cardero building look like any other concrete and glass building located anywhere in N. America. There is nothing unique or distinctive about them. They look like what they are: expedient additions. The proposed designs resemble contemporary *downtown commercial office blocks*, out of place in a heritage neighbourhood of 1960's buildings. Design-wise, they are '*bulls in a chine shop*'.

The classic post-modern uniqueness of Beach Towers' design and a classic 'olde worlde' european (Tudor for instance) low rise townhomes would both *contrast and complement* each other in a pleasing way; as *latté and whipped cream*. They would have harmony of classic era designs; virtually a living architectural art gallery.

#### Ambiguous Drawings:

The architect drawings are 3 colour line drawings which do not indicate true life colours of the towers or the infill buildings. The limited 3 colour line drawings suggest the different buildings all harmonize. They harmonize as 3 colour line drawings only, but they neither harmonize in true colour, design, nor shape; nor do they match or complement by harmony or contrast, each other, nor any other buildings in the neighbourhood . The colors of Beach Towers utilize the colors of the English Bay beach - sand beige, terra cotta and rock-like brown. The 3 color line drawings do not indicate what the final colors of the proposed infill buildings will be. The drawings show the entire complex as matching WHITE color, which is simply not true to life. Beach Towers complex color is NOT white.

#### Emergency Vehicle Access:

Columbus House tenants have already expressed fear that the three proposed flanking buildings will remove any access for fire trucks and other emergency vehicles. If emergency access will still be possible, then consider building all three Columbus infill buildings in mock Tudor style to match the rows along Cardero and Harwood corner:

#### Lower Cost and Higher Revenue:

Two storey, low rise mock, Tudor style (as an example) townhouses (fireproof concrete and steel superstructure), should not cost more than the greater number and size of the combined total of concrete, glass and steel Columbus buildings, the larger townhouse building on Beach Avenue and even larger 9 storey building on Cardero, with their close proximity, lack of privacy and lack of uniqueness of character. On the contrary, the grand total for three Columbus Tudor buildings, two right angle rows of two storey Tudor townhouses along Harwood/Cardero corner

should cost less, and could well rent for much higher rates to wealthy tenants of refined and discriminating taste.

#### Views Less Impacted:

The more upscale Tudor Village concept would enable retaining the existing Beach Ave plaza space view which would be visible from their south-facing windows. And as already stated, it could be easily enhanced by greening with garden, fountains and statuary, retaining full volume of seabreeze air flow to the entire complex and streets behind it.

#### Marketing:

Instead of marketing ONE concept called *Beach Towers*, with five mismatched, stuck-on square block buildings, the owners would gain market reach by offering a choice of TWO entities to market: *Beach Towers and Harwood Village*. Standard rents could apply to Beach Towers and higher rents/leases for the upscale, prestigious Harwood Village (low rise, classic 'olde worlde' townhomes).

#### Tourism:

In such a scenario, in future copies of *Lonely Planet* type travel books, editors would likely note about Beach Avenue walks:

"Be sure not to miss the Tudor look of Harwood Village side of post modern-looking Beach Towers. A hidden delight!".

#### Summary:

In short: rather than tenants and neighbourhood being massively impacted by the proposed infill, why not adopt a more refined, selective and scaled-back restoration-upgrade to the existing property? Instead of a jumble of mismatched, crowded commercial office looking infills, create a more harmonious, low rise 'village look' with rows of character townhomes on Columbus/Harwood and MacDonald/Douglas/Cardero sides?

#### Maintenance Sustainability:

At the last hearing, the owner said, 'BT infrastructures and systems: heating, air circulation, rooftops, exterior cladding etc. are nearing the end of a 50 year lifespan'. He is correct! The heating and plumbing systems frequently require shutting down for servicing. A scaled-back, less monumental infill project, will mean lower cost, faster construction and higher rental/lease revenue. This would more quickly finance repairs, upgrades and maintenance of the towers and entire complex.

It would also finance the restaffing of 24/7 resident managers in each tower which will attract new tenants and quickly result in full occupancy. That in turn will finance current maintenance needs; all achievable without destroying any of the existing aesthetic, physical or public heritage values already present in the complex.

*Since Beach Towers ownership changed there have been no resident managers on*

*site - not even ONE for all four towers and 600 to 800 tenants.* Many tenants have expressed the feeling they are aboard a land-bound ship with no crew. They feel the need to have resident managers who can be quickly alerted to plumbing, electrical, heating and other emergencies, along with the myriad other helpful services on site building managers successfully provided since BT was built.

The fact that BT had 24/7 on site managers (usually married couples) in each tower, including a full time licensed and qualified maintenance team, with night security guards on site was a major selling point. Along with the large and beautiful pool and hot tub spa. these aspects attracted tenants to live here. For 38 years, BT had full occupancy, which in turn financed the ongoing maintenance of the entire complex.

#### Disembarking Rhetoric:

The BT comment on TV the other week that 'New luxury suites are needed to finance maintenance of the original towers', is putting the cart before the horse. Proper maintenance and early alert to maintenance issues ensures optimum condition of the property, that in turn ensures full occupancy which in turn finances the cost of full time building managers and maintenance team.

The comment, 'Luxury suites to finance repairing the original towers, or else they will crumble...to nothing' is more pro-development propaganda than economic fact.

#### Vacancies:

According to BT tenants, each tower now has many vacancies. Some say 'conditions are being allowed to deteriorate' resulting in tenants becoming disgusted and moving out. One former tenant said, 'They're trying to pi\*\* you off so you'll all leave'. After they move out the rents are vastly increased. So far we haven't heard of any tenant 'renovictions', and the owners have promised publicly there would not be any.

However if the above scenario is true, renovictions would not be necessary to empty the complex and increase all rents to luxury level. Recently there has been a flurry of maintenance repairs. Hopefully it isn't just a temporary response to the ongoing rezoning hearings. At any rate, if there are many vacancies (and allegedly 100 empty parking spaces) it is the first time in 40 years Beach Towers has had ongoing vacant suites.

#### A Larger Amenities Facility:

Instead of the cramped, 'afterthought token amenities bunker' at the corner of Douglas House, a larger amenities fitness, rec. room facility (with perimeter skylights/lightwells) could be built underground beneath the Harwood/Cardero parking lot; much larger than the small corner space proposed at the corner of Douglas House; and much larger than the tiny existing fitness room beside the pool.

An underground connecting corridor could lead from that larger fitness area to the **existing** pool so tenants could access the facilities from Harwood/Cardero row houses, Douglas, MacDonald and Laurier Towers without having to go outdoors to access it in cold spring, fall and winter weather. Keep the existing classic, beautiful pool and hot tub, instead of 'replacing' these with a tiny lap-wading pool. Such a

comparatively tiny lap tub to serve 4 existing towers is grossly inadequate, never mind also having to serve an additional 4 Columbus townhomes and two rows of low rise townhomes along Harwood/Cardero. Will tenants have to reserve tickers for their turn in the lap tub? There surely won't be room to accommodate more than one or two swimmers at a time. But then we don't really know for certain as no plan drawings have been shown as to exactly what the interior or the amenities 'mini bunker' will offer. This playing card has so far been hidden from the presentation.

BT Owners' Benefit:

A scaled back, but more refined classic row of townhouses could rent/lease for higher rates than the proposed concrete and glass 'boxes'; and would cost less to build (fewer buildings) and with far less upheaval. A scaled-back low rise concept would retain most of the current air, light and sea views and provide a pleasant 'village' foreground landscape view to neighbouring Harwood/Cardero residents. It would create an atmosphere of 'small town' social harmony in the existing neighbourhood. It would TRULY be a win-win-win-win situation for tenants, neighbours, owner and city; unlike the UDI "win-win" which would benefit only one or two vested interests.

By adopting a more integrated, harmonious and scaled back plan, rather than being vilified and demonized by "Westenders Against Everything", the city and owners would be lauded as true visionaries. Less upheaval, less cost, better public relations, higher income from rentals, faster construction time, delighted and surprised tourists, pleased and contented tenants and neighbours...all parties happy ... what's NOT to like in this suggestion?!

This scaled-back concept could well defuse all conflicts and anxieties among the disparate parties and contribute to the liveability of the area without destroying the existing positive key features of the complex and its location, which make it so unique and valuable to owners, tenants, neighbours, public, Westend, Vancouver City and tourists.

Beach Towers is one of, if not THE, largest Westend apartment complexes. Set as it is, *center stage* on the Westend's picture postcard views of English Bay, it has for decades been a major landmark and focal point on Beach Avenue: a UNIQUE ARCHITECTURAL STAR. It would not only be urban sacrilege, but simply bad stage management, to wall her in as just one of the chorus line of glass and concrete boxes along Vancouver's world famous English Bay shoreline.

My opinion is: retain the original, existing Beach Towers brilliant fusion of beauty and function with a carefully considered, refined, complementary and harmonious 'village' development BEHIND Beach Towers' world famous English Bayside proscenium.

In short:

More suites, perhaps; complete infill, no.  
Overfill, no; scale-back, yes.

Blocking up access to sea-breeze, light and spacious views, no.  
Creating low rise, human scale, classic era townhomes BEHIND Beach Towers, yes.

Retaining Beach Towers' landmark, beautiful, English Bayside facade, yes.  
Totally infilling and disfiguring it, no.

Whatever is decided, I appeal to all parties involved:

Please do not throw the Beach Towers 'baby' out with the English Bay view.

Sincerely,

Norman G, Drew

**From:** [Correspondence Group, City Clerk's Office](#)  
**To:** [Rachel](#)  
**Subject:** RE: Beach Towers Rezoning & Development - Parking  
**Date:** Friday, February 15, 2013 11:28:50 AM

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Thank you.

**From:** Rachel §. 22(1) Personal and Confidential  
**Sent:** Friday, February 15, 2013 10:42 AM  
**To:** Correspondence Group, City Clerk's Office  
**Subject:** Beach Towers Rezoning & Development - Parking

Hello,

My name is Rachel Harriman and I am a resident of the §. 22(1) Personal and Confidential on Bidwell Street. I am writing to you about construction in my area and my priority concern that I would like to get addressed.

There has been a lot of construction in my neighbourhood recently which is great for our growing city.

Recently it is proposed for the Beach Towers to get 3 new buildings which will replace the 3 parking lots which are currently there.

My greatest concern is that it will further limit parking for WestEnd permit holders which has already been overcrowded in the last few years with the Cartogo's. I understand the city is trying to promote a greener city and have less car traffic in the downtown area but there are

still residents here with cars myself included.

It would be optimal if I did not need a car but the fact of the matter is I do need a car, and due to where I live street parking is my only option to park my car. As a tax payer in this fine city I would like there to be more accessible street parking for myself and others like me and if those 3 condos get put in to replace the parking lot I would like the Beach Tower Owners to address parking for all renters whom reside in there soon to be 6 towers.

I look forward to your response in this matter and plans on what the city is going to do moving forward regarding the parking issue in the West End.

Kind Regards,

s. 22(1) Personal and Confidential

