

PH2 - 1. CD-1 Rezoning: 110 West 4th Avenue - Oppose

Date Received	Time Created	Subject	Position	Content	Name	Organization	Contact Info	Neighbourhood	Attachment
11/16/2021	09:33	PH2 - 1. CD-1 Rezoning: 110 West 4th Avenue	Oppose	Dear Council, Re: Re-zoning Application in the Mount Pleasant Industrial Area (MPIA) for 110 and 150 W 4th Avenue, Vancouver I am writing to about the re-zoning application in the Mount Pleasant Industrial Area (MPIA) for 110 and 150 W 4th Avenue. I share concerns expressed by many people in the neighbourhood (who either work or live there ' and in some cases both) about the proposed 'campus' that the large biotech company AbCellera intends to establish in the middle of this neighbourhood and I am opposed to both re-zoning applications. Green-lighting this proposal will profoundly impact the MPIA, which is currently comprised of mostly smaller light industrial businesses ' a type of use that the City itself has identified as important to maintain because of its scarcity in Vancouver. My concerns relate to both the nature and impacts of the proposed re-zoning as well as the process as it has unfolded so far. I should note that I have no objections to AbCellera as a company specifically. My concerns are about the impacts on the neighbourhood that the project as proposed will result in. Please refer to the attached letter that I sent to each Council member on Oct 18, 2021.	Kristin Bingeman		s22(1) Personal and Confidential	Mount Pleasant	Appendix A

Oct 18, 2021

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Dear Councillor,

Re: Re-zoning Application in the Mount Pleasant Industrial Area (MPIA) for 110 and 150 W 4th Avenue, Vancouver

I am writing to draw your attention to a re-zoning application in the Mount Pleasant Industrial Area (MPIA) for 110 and 150 W 4th Avenue that will be before Council for consideration very soon. I share concerns expressed by many people in the neighbourhood (who either work or live there – and in some cases both) about the proposed ‘campus’ that the large biotech company AbCellera intends to establish in the middle of this neighbourhood. Green-lighting this proposal will profoundly impact the MPIA, which is currently comprised of mostly smaller light industrial businesses – a type of use that the City itself has identified as important to maintain because of its scarcity in Vancouver.

My concerns relate to both the nature and impacts of the proposed re-zoning as well as the process as it has unfolded so far.

I should also note that I have no objections to AbCellera as a company specifically. My concerns are about the impacts on the neighbourhood that the project as proposed will result in.

Re-Zoning Process

1. No Plan for the MPIA / Broadway Plan Prohibits Rezoning

A planning exercise for the Mount Pleasant Industrial Area has yet to be undertaken. This is problematic as a starting point and alone is a strong argument against allowing for re-zoning requests until a planning exercise has taken place. At the very least it is important to consider that there is no plan to refer to in considering AbCellera’s re-zoning request. The only plan that I am able to identify that covers this neighbourhood is the Broadway Plan, which explicitly states that no re-zoning requests should be entertained until the Broadway Plan is complete.

2. Public Perceptions of City Development Processes & Meaningful Public Engagement – Lack of Public Trust

The City has a perception problem when it comes to its planning and development process overall. Public trust in the City to act in the best interests of the City as a whole is low. The common perception is that zoning bylaws are only meant for those who cannot afford to get the bylaws amended to suit their needs. It begs the question of whether the “Shaping Your City” process to engage the public is

really seeking input? Or is it just about ticking a box for a pre-determined decision? I'd refer you to the Q&A portion of the 'virtual open house' for these re-zoning proposals that took place in May/June 2021 and the underwhelming answers provided by the City to the questions that were raised. This kind of process can't possibly lead to an engaged or equitable city.

Council has publicly said that it is committed to engagement and transparency for the creation of the new Vancouver Plan. They should start with engagement and transparency in these types of rezoning applications that, one could argue, have a higher direct impact on neighbourhoods.

For instance, in contrast to what is happening in the MPIA with the rezoning process for 110 and 150 W 4th Avenue, the work that the CoV planning staff did in Railtown included a significant amount of outreach and consultation with stakeholders in the area. It was a multi-year process (report on Railtown I-4 is online). And it should be noted that concerns that were raised during that consultation included the displacement of small businesses and increased property values/taxes/rents to which the Planners at the time responded that "limiting higher value uses can reduce negative impacts" and that "limiting office space will dampen speculation and protect industrial tenants." It would be no stretch to see that approving the rezoning requests for 110 and 150 West 4th would do exactly this – allow higher value uses and allowing more office space.

3. Stop Work Order for Construction of 150 W 4th Avenue (in the last couple of weeks)

The construction of 150 W 4th is an example of one of the reasons for the public perception that planning and development in Vancouver is driven by the developers themselves and that public engagement is largely lip-service.

150 W 4th Ave was approved to proceed under existing I-1 zoning but they are concurrently pursuing the re-zoning to build in accordance with that proposal (more density, larger structure).

However, as construction continued it was obvious that AbCellera was not waiting for CoV approval of their re-zoning application before proceeding with construction that was outside of the existing zoning. There is now a stop work order posted at the site and construction has been halted. A flagrant disregard of bylaws and rezoning request protocols.

Key Message on Re-Zoning Process - -

The report on the re-zoning application is being sent to Council on October 19, and the request is that it be approved by Council 'in-principle'. This essentially means it will be approved even though a public hearing will be held at a later date. A Public Hearing is not good enough. The CoV needs to undertake genuine community engagement, go door-to-door to engage small business and artists in the area, seek input from industry associations, etc.

Council should just say "no" to this re zoning request, based on the process to date on its own.

But there are also other reasons to reject this re-zoning request – see below regarding the impacts on the MPIA.

AbCellera Re-Zoning Proposal – Impacts on the Mount Pleasant Industrial Area

1. Loss of Industrial Lands

The City itself has said that industrial lands need to be protected as there isn't much left in Vancouver. The AbCellera applications require rezoning industrial lands to CD-1. Both an American Planning Association report and a Metro Vancouver report concluded that while allowing a higher proportion of

accessory office and other uses would be one way to create higher densities in industrial zones, municipalities have found that, over time, these uses have become the primary activities in areas intended for industry. Even if the applicant's sites retain the amount of industrial use on the site, rezoning to CD-1 makes it easier for amendments down the line, even for future owners of the site (in the event that AbCellera moves out to further grow its operations elsewhere). The Planning Department has already allowed for the erosion of industrial use in MPIA when it rezoned the two blocks off Main Street from I-1 to I-1A for the tech sector. If the CoV wants to protect what remaining industrial lands it has left, it should not be allowing rezoning to CD-1 in these areas in the heart of the MPIA.

Bottom line: once you change the zoning from Industrial into a different zoning designation, you erode industrial lands.

2. Loss of Smaller Industrial Users

There are also other examples to learn from when it comes to impacts of re-zoning. When the City tweaked the zoning to allow Hootsuite some office use as long as one floor was "industrial", space was lost for traditional industrial users, tech companies flooded in and prices went up. When additional height and density goes up on one property, it forces the price of land up on properties around it and the taxes increase. Land goes up, taxes go up, and rents go up. As Patrick Condon wrote recently in the Tyee: "as soon as the City even hints that new density will be allowed at some future date, land values skyrocket, often years ahead of tabling a rezoning proposal. And high rents will do nothing at all to house the service workers and artisans, many of whom are in our own families. These are people who make this city run and make it worth living here." While Patrick Condon was commenting on the housing crisis, it is pretty much the same phenomenon happening to the small businesses in the industrial sector.

3. Jobs/Economic Action/Employment Lands

The AbCellera re-zoning proposal is situated in the geographic heart of the MP industrial area but it is completely out of scale for the area and as noted above may result in the smaller businesses in the area being pushed out.

For context, what the MPIA is, though, is an area of Vancouver that provides affordable production, distribution and repair space. The Mount Pleasant area has also been referred to as the Arts and Creative District because of the large number of artists, artisans, and community media outlets there. But if the City allows for such a massive change in what is allowed on a site, as well as such an intense change in massing and density, this decision could have a cascading effect, increasing pressure to change land use and increasing property values, which could lead to both job loss and loss of small businesses in the area. A healthy economy has a diversity of big and small businesses/industries, makers and manufacturers. And unlike office work, manufacturers, the creative sector and repair services need space and need to be on site. This is not the kind of work they can do from home.

Further, the biotech sector is very volatile and speculative. This doesn't mean we shouldn't support them, but why should the City be favouring the tech/biotech sector at the expense of other sectors? As we saw with Hootsuite just over a year ago when they laid off 10% of their workforce, while it looks like a lucrative employer at first, they can easily outsource to other countries and are not immune to needing to cut overhead costs such as office space.

Finally, saying no to the rezoning request for 110/150 West 4th is highly unlikely to dampen AbCellera's plans to grow. They would adjust to the change, build within the zoning by-laws and

perhaps shift the plans for their other sites (they have several sites in the works all over Vancouver) if they truly need that much more office space.

Final Comment:

Saying yes to the re-zoning request will likely have multiple negative impacts to to the MPIA – forcing out artists, makers and other small industrial businesses. It will also continue the erosion of public trust in local government, and be in conflict with the only plan that exists for the area (the Broadway Plan).

But saying no to AbCellera’s re-zoning request is unlikely to truly negatively impact the plans and future of AbCellera or its operations within this City.

Saying “no” is a win-win.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Kind regards,

Kristin Bingeman