

REPORT

Climate Action, Planning and Development

To: New Westminster Design Panel **Date:** June 28, 2022

From: Michael Watson, Acting Supervisor **File:** REZ00155
Development Planning

Item #: 2022-464

Subject: Rezoning and Development Permit Applications: 810 Agnes St

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the New Westminster Design Panel review the design submission and provide comments for applicant and staff consideration; and

THAT the New Westminster Design Panel consider a motion of support of the Rezoning and Development Permit applications or a motion requesting revisions to the project and re-presentation to the Panel.

PURPOSE

Ownership of Rezoning and Special Development Permit applications at 810 Agnes Street have changed. The applications have been revised to include a 32 storey building with 327 secured market housing units, including four townhouse units along Agnes Street, an overall density of 8.88 FSR, and a floor plate of 7,600 sq. ft. A previous iteration of this proposal was reviewed and supported by the NWDP at the meeting of July 24, 2018.

The purpose of this report is to provide information to the New Westminster Design Panel in regards to the overall project design and receive comments from the Panel, with special consideration of the items noted in the Design Considerations section of this report.

BACKGROUND

Previous Proposal

The previous owner submitted applications for Rezoning and Special Development Permit in January 2018 for 222 residential units, a density of 7.20 FSR and a height of 29 storeys / 89.7 metres (294.3 feet). All of the residential units were proposed to be fully stratified market ownership. The application was made prior to the City's development of the Inclusionary Housing Policy.

The application proposed, in exchange for additional density on this site:

- 1) funding a collaborative design process for a master plan for the adjacent park space;
- 2) constructing the park space in conjunction with the master plan;
- 3) providing to the City 370 square metres (4,000 sq. ft.) of publically accessible community amenity space on site within the building adjacent to the park area; and,
- 4) a cash contribution towards amenities following costing of the park space and financial analysis.

This previous proposal was reviewed and supported by the NWDP at the meeting of July 24, 2018. Drawings can be viewed within the NWDP agenda package at:

<https://www.newwestcity.ca/committees/archives/articles/5371.php>

Adjacent City Owned Site (824 Agnes Street)

The site at 824 Agnes Street (also known as 825 Victoria Street), which was formerly owned by the Chinese Benevolent Association (CBA), was a focal point for the Chinese community in New Westminster. It was gifted to the City by the CBA in 1979. The site has been included on a list of the top ten most endangered sites by the New Westminster Heritage Preservation Society and considered for Provincial recognition as a Chinese Canadian Historic Place by Heritage BC.

In 2009, as part of a Downtown Nuisance Abatement Strategy, this site was converted into a temporary off leash dog area. Through the Chinese Reconciliation Process, a consultation and visioning exercise was undertaken. City advisory committees, associations representing the Chinese community, and the public identified the space should be used for a park commemorating Chinese history and contributions, which would also provide a green space and refuge in the densely populated Downtown neighbourhood.

A master plan for the proposed commemorative park and adjacent interior community amenity space has been developed in parallel with the applications on the adjacent subject sites. The preferred design concept for the park was endorsed by Council on

August 31, 2020. An image of the concept endorsed by Council is included below and the full August 31, 2020 staff report to Council can be accessed at:

<https://pub-newwestcity.escribemeetings.com/FileStream.ashx?DocumentId=2642>.



Site Characteristics and Context

The subject sites are located in the Downtown neighbourhood and are adjacent to Agnes, Victoria and Blackie Streets. The subject sites are located 75 metres (246 feet) from the New Westminster SkyTrain Station. The sites slope steeply from the high point at the north-east corner of the site (corner of Agnes and Blackie Streets) to the low point of the site at the south-west corner. The grade change is 13.81 metres (45.32 feet) from the high to low point. These sites are currently used for a variety of light industrial and service commercial type uses including automobile service and repair.

To the north of the site are two residential high-rise towers which are 15 storeys and 49 metres (160 feet) in height; to the west of the site is the City owned site (824 Agnes Street) which is currently occupied by a temporary off-leash dog area and three towers two of which are 16 storeys and one of which is 14 storeys and with an average height

of 47 metres (154 feet). To the west is Blackie Street which has a width of 10.06 metres (33 feet). Across Blackie Street are several lots which are zoned and designated in the Downtown Community Plan for high density mixed use development.

To the south of the site is Victoria Street, which has a dedicated width of 10.06 metres (33 feet). Victoria Street is designated as a laneway/narrow street in the Downtown Community Plan. Across Victoria Street to the south, is a development site addressed as 813 Carnarvon Street. Construction is currently underway on this site of a 32 storey residential building with a height of 92 metres (302 feet) as well as an eight storey residential building which would include non-market housing units. This proposal would have a total of 204 market residential units, 66 secured non-market residential units and a FSR of 8.53.

Proximity to Transit

Transit Facility	Frequency	Distance
Skytrain Station		75 metres (246 feet)
Frequent Transit Network		75 metres (246 feet)

The subject site is located 75 metres from the New Westminster SkyTrain Station.

POLICY AND REGULATIONS

Downtown Community Plan Land Use Designation

Mixed Use High Density: The Downtown Community Plan notes the following details regarding the Mixed Use High Density Designation:

- mixed-use (commercial and/or residential) throughout Downtown, outside of Columbia Street Historic Mixed-Use;
- retail, office, service or residential uses;
- any combination of the above (can be one use or multiple uses)
- Commercial development is required only in areas identified in the Downtown Community Plan and only at street level.

The form of the proposed development is generally consistent with the Mixed Use High Density Land Use Designation in the Downtown Community Plan.

Development Permit Area

The site is within the #1 Downtown Development and Special Development Permit Area. The Development Permit Area seeks to support the Downtown's Regional Town Centre designation in the Regional Growth Strategy. This Development Permit Area outlines objectives and guidelines for:

- The form and character of commercial, multifamily, institutional and intensive residential development.
- Protection of the natural environment, its ecosystems and biological diversity.
- Revitalization of an area in which a commercial use is permitted.
- Objectives to promote energy and water conservation and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

A Special Development Permit (SDP) is required before doing any work which would result in development or alteration to the lands or exterior of buildings on the lands within this portion of the Downtown. SDPs function similar to a regular Development Permit, but under the New Westminster Redevelopment Act, the City was given special authority to regulate urban redevelopment within this area. SDPs can be issued by the Director of Development Services.

Downtown Building and Public Realm Design Guidelines and Master Plan

The Downtown Building and Public Realm Design Guidelines and Master Plan (DBPRDGM) provides guidance in achieving a high quality, cohesive Downtown that honours the historical and cultural context of New Westminster. This document serves as a toolkit to inform public realm improvements both on and off-site within the Downtown area.

The subject site is located within the Tower Precinct in the Downtown Building and Public Realm Design Guidelines. This area is described as follows within the guidelines:

The Tower Precinct will continue to develop as a highly urbanized component of New Westminster's Downtown with the SkyTrain Station at its core. Serving as a regional destination, it is anchored by existing and developing education and commercial destinations, including Douglas College, Plaza 88 and the retail mall at the foot of Royal Ave. It is anticipated that the area will accommodate a significant share of Downtown's residential and commercial growth.

Zoning Bylaw

The subject properties are currently zoned Multiple Unit Residential Districts (High Density) (RM-6). This zoning district allows a base residential density of 2.5 FSR and a maximum height of 21.34 metres (70 feet).

Density Bonus Phase 2

In 2014, Council adopted amendments to the Zoning Bylaw which implemented Density Bonus Phase 2, as well as the Density Bonus Phase 2 Policy, which covers high density development in Downtown.

The subject sites are located in Downtown and are included within the Program and Policy based on their current Downtown Community Plan designation. The Policy would support a rezoning of this site to RM-6(DB) which would allow the subject sites a maximum residential FSR of 5.2 and a maximum height of 73.15 metres (240 feet) – about 24 storeys - in exchange for bonus density amounts set out in the Zoning Bylaw. The proposed application exceeds the maximum height and FSR under this policy and proposes an FSR of 8.78 and 32 storeys.

Where an application exceeds the height and density anticipated, the policy allows Council discretion where unique and exceptional circumstances warrant additional density.

Family Friendly Housing Bylaw and Design Guidelines

The Family Friendly Housing Policy provides requirements for the mix of units with two and three bedrooms as well as guidelines that ensure units are usable by families. Secured market rental developments are required to provide 5% three bedroom units and 30% two and three bedroom units. The proposal includes 17 (5.2%) three bedroom units and 107 (32.7%) two bedroom units.

PROPOSAL

Ownership of the subject applications has been transferred to Brookfield Properties. The new applicant's current proposal is for a 32 storey building with 327 secured market housing units, including five townhouse units along Agnes Street, an overall density of 8.78 FSR, and a floor plate of 7,600 sq. ft. The current proposal still includes design and construction of the commemorative park at 824 Agnes Street, pedestrian street improvements of Victoria Street and provision of a ~325 sq. metre (~3,500 sq. ft.) interior amenity space to be provided to the City for future programming. The revisions to the proposal are summarized in the table below.

	Proposed	Previous
Units	327 Rental Units	222 Stratified Units
Density	8.78 FSR	7.20 FSR
Height	32 storeys	29 storeys
Floorplate	706 square meters (7,600 sq. ft.)	617 square metres (6,650 sq. feet)

Preliminary drawings are included in Attachment 4.

Project Statistics

	Permitted/Required Under RM-6B Zoning	Proposed
Existing Site Area (gross)	-	2424.14 sq. metres (26, 104 sq.ft)
Site Frontage (Agnes Street)	-	60.36 metres (198 feet)
Avg. Lot Depth	-	40.17 metres (132 feet)
Floor Space Ratio Residential Rental Public Amenity Total	2.5 FSR	8.76 FSR (237 units) 0.13 FSR) 8.88 FSR
Building Height	73.15 metres (240 feet) ~ 24 storeys	104.85 metres (344 ft.) 32 storeys
Residential Units	Family Friendly Housing Requirements (rental)– minimum 30% two and three bedroom units, of which min 5% three bedrooms or more	<u>Market Rental:</u> Studio: 98 (29.9%) 1 BDR: 105 (32.1%) 2 BDR: 107 (32.7%) 3 BDR: 17 (5.2 %) Total: 237 Units
Parking Residential Residential Visitor Public Amenity Total	221 spaces 33 spaces 3 spaces 257 spaces	140 spaces 21 spaces 3 spaces 164 spaces <u>TDM Measures</u> To be determined.
Bicycle Parking	Long-Term: 491 spaces Short Term: 6 spaces	Long-Term: 493 spaces Short Term: 6 spaces

DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

The applicant's design package is included as Appendix A. Staff would appreciate comments from the New Westminster Design Panel on the proposed development, including how it responds to the Downtown Community Plan Development Permit Area Design Guidelines and the Downtown Building and Public Realm Design Guidelines and Masterplan (DBPRDGM). Some items identified by staff for consideration by the Panel are identified below.

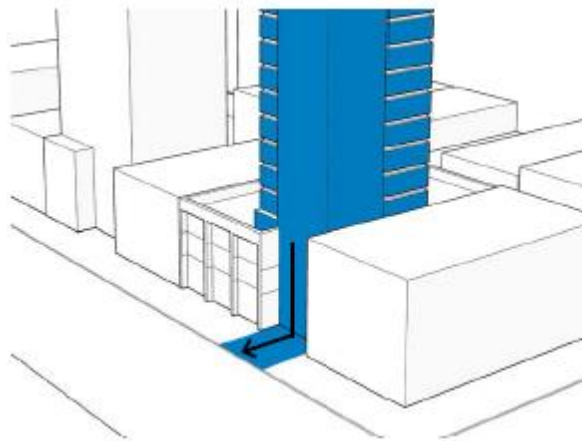
The concept plan for the adjacent park space has been previously reviewed by the NWDP and has been endorsed by Council. Comments are not being sought at this time.

Downtown Building and Public Realm Design Guidelines

Comments from the panel on how the proposal meets the Downtown Community Plan Development Permit Area Design Guidelines and the Downtown Building and Public Realm Design Guidelines and Masterplan (DBPRDGM) would be appreciated with focus on the following items:

Tower - Street Interface

The DBPRDGM (section 7.3.4.2) indicates that it is desirable for a portion of high rise building to break the pattern of adjacent lower building forms and to bring the tower portion down to address the street which contrasts from a distinct podiums disconnecting the tower from the urban fabric.



Comments from the panel on the tower – street interface would be appreciated.

Tower Floorplate

The DBPRDGM outline targets and maximums for tower floorplates in the Downtown. It calls to target tower floorplates (above the eighth floor) between 600 square metres (6,458 sq. ft.) to 650 square metres (6,996 sq. ft.) and states a maximum of 700 square metres (7534.74 sq. ft.).

The proposed tower has a floorplate of 696 sq. metres (7,495 sq. feet) in below the maximum tower floorplate size.

Comments from the panel on the tower floorplate, tower articulation and tower design would be appreciated.

Building Materials

Both the Downtown Community Plan Design Guidelines (DCPDG) and the DBPRDGM call for high quality building materials, such as stone, brick and concrete, particularly at street level. The applicant has proposed painted metal, metal panels, glass and spandrel glass and painted concrete.

There are some portions of the building where material details have not been provided. Comments from the panel on appropriate materials in these locations where no materials have been specified, especially those areas near grade, would be appreciated

Comments from the panel on the proposed building materials and materials would be appreciated.

Balconies and Projections

The DBPRDGM encourages the use of balconies throughout the tower precinct in a manner that is consistent with a project's overall design. It also recommends particular attention be paid to the underside of balconies, including colour, lighting, and quality material, as they become highly visible features from the street.

The submission from the applicant does not identify materials located on the underside of balconies.

Comments from the panel on the proposed balconies and projections would be appreciated.

Building Conclusion

The DCPDG call for consideration of the 'building conclusion' (the top several floors, roof and mechanical systems) to ensure that well tied into the overall building design. Simply attaching boxes on the top of buildings for encapsulating mechanical systems should be discouraged and building conclusions should have unique and identifiable character when viewed from afar.

Comments from the panel on the proposed building's conclusion and how it is tied into the overall building design would be appreciated.

Building Entries

The DCPDG call for pedestrian entries to the building to be clearly evident, accessible and to provide direct entry to the street and that there should be a direct sight-line into the elevator lobby from the street.

The building has four entrances – a primary residential entrance on Agnes Street, an entrance to the public amenity space, a secondary residential entrance near the corner of Agnes and Blackie Streets and a secondary residential entrance at the corner of Victoria and Blackie Streets.

Primary Residential Entrance

The residential portion of building would be addressed based on the primary entrance on Agnes Street which would provide access to lobby space and private amenity space and the elevator core. The secondary entrance near the corner of Agnes and Blackie Streets would provide direct access to the elevator core for residence and would provide more convenient access for residents to downtown amenities and transit.

Public Amenity Space Entrance

The public amenity space would be access from Agnes Street, adjacent to the primary residential entrance at the western side of the site. This entry is below the primary residential entrance and visibility of the entrance is obscured as it is sunken below the level of the sidewalk. It is also obscured by fencing, landscaping and a large canopy/overhang over the entrance space. There are also no architectural features which announce this as a primary building entrance and the elevator treatment is muted.

Secondary Residential Entrances

The secondary entrance at the corner of Victoria and Blackie Streets is intended to provide easy and convenient access for bicyclist and provides direct access to bike storage, bike maintenance and bike wash area.

Townhouse / Apartment Entrances

The applicant also proposes 4 townhouse style units along Agnes Street which would have entries facing the street and would be accessible via ramps from the street.

The proposal also includes a ground oriented apartment at the corner of Agnes and Blackie Street, which provides access to the street, but which does not provide a “front door” to the street, instead providing patio space and a slider.

Comments from the panel on the proposed building entrances and their function and street interface would be appreciated.

Building-Street Interface

Agnes Street

The elevations of the townhouses facing Agnes Street do not step with grade and range from at grade level to about 1 metre above grade nearest the primary building entrance. The DBPRDM (section 7.1.4.8) recommends that townhouses be separated from grade by 0.75 metres (2.5 feet) to provide a balance between privacy and overlook/interface with the street.

The ground oriented apartment at the corner of

Agnes Street is intended to be improved with 2.5 metre sidewalk, 2 metre boulevard, street lighting and street trees.

Blackie Street

Blackie Street is anticipated to be a strong pedestrian desire line from Carnarvon Street and the New Westminster SkyTrain Station. The DBPRDGM identifies Blackie Street as a “Pedestrian Connector” and anticipates consideration of ground treatment, wall art and overhead lighting.

Blackie Street is a very steeply sloped street and the applicant has proposed to activate this frontage with two secondary building entrances, each accessing a different level of the building. The space between these lobbies would include large planters with trees. The drawings do not indicate the materials of these planters and it is not clear which tree species is proposed. Staff expectations are that the quality of finishing of these planters would be of high quality given its interface with the public realm and requirements of the DBPRDM. The tree species would be review with City arboricultural staff.

Blackie Street is intended to be improved with a 2 metre sidewalk, a portion of which would likely need to be accommodated on the subject site.

Victoria Street

The DBPRDGM identifies Blackie Street as a “Pedestrian Connectors” and anticipate consideration of ground treatment, wall art and overhead lighting. Although Victoria Street function as a laneway, it provides an important connection from the Agnes Street park past the subject site and eventually creating a mid-block connection to Eighth Street through properties on the west side of Blackie Street.

The subject property includes vehicular access, parking space for amenity space and park and loading function along Victoria Street. The space is overlooked from level 2 of the building which includes the building private amenity space as well as from residential units above.

The streetscape design of Victoria Street is intended to include a pedestrian pathway of 1.8 to 2 metres separated from lane way activity by a row of trees.

Comments from the panel on the proposed building interfaces with Agnes, Blackie and Victoria Streets would be appreciated.

Questions for the Design Panel's Consideration

In addition to seeking general comments from the New Westminster Design Panel (NWDP) in regard to the overall design of the proposed development and the above-mentioned design considerations, staff has identified the following areas for the NWDP to provide specific feedback on the:

1. *tower-street interface;*
2. *tower floorplate, tower articulation and tower design;*
3. *building materials and materials;*
4. *balconies and projections;*
5. *building conclusion and how it is tied into the overall building design;*
6. *building entrances and their function and street interface; and*
7. *building interfaces with Agnes, Blackie and Victoria Streets.*

ATTACHMENTS

Appendix A: Architectural and Landscape Submission Package

This report was prepared by:
Mike Watson, Acting Supervisor of Development Planning