

REPORT

Planning and Development

To: Mayor Johnstone and Members of Council
Date: October 21, 2024

From: Jackie Teed, Director
Planning and Development
File: 05.1035.05-2024
#257882
REZ00255
DP001090

Item #: 2024-579

Subject: Rezoning and Development Permit: 140 Sixth Street – Consideration of Additional Building Height

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council direct staff to work with the applicant to advance a development proposal for 140 Sixth Street, which may consider towers between 30 to 40 storeys in height.

PURPOSE

To seek Council's approval to advance a development proposal for 140 Sixth Street (Royal Towers), which may consider towers between 30 to 40 storeys in height, provided the proposal includes a supportable public benefit package and Tenant Assistance Plan.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Rezoning and Development Permit applications have been submitted for the site at 140 Sixth Street (Royal Towers), located within Tier 2 of the Columbia Station Transit Oriented Development Area. In order to progress the applications, staff is seeking clarity regarding anticipated building heights for the site. The City has historically signaled that redevelopment on this parcel should be limited to below 30 storeys, given the site is located outside the core of the Downtown and Uptown neighbourhoods.

The applications include an initial concept with towers between 30 to 40 storeys. Staff are seeking direction from Council as to whether such building heights should be further

explored. As part of the application review process, staff would evaluate the proposal against City policies, such as rental replacement, public benefit/financing growth, tenant assistance, etc., and provide detailed analysis and related recommendations to Council.

BACKGROUND

Site Characteristics and Context

The subject site is located in the Uptown neighbourhood, in Tier 2 of the Columbia Station Transit Oriented Development Area. It is bounded by Royal Avenue to the south, Sixth Street to the east, and Seventh Street to the west. An existing 110-unit townhouse development is located to the north. The site is currently improved with a seven storey mixed residential and commercial building and above-grade structured parking. Originally constructed in 1961 as a hotel, the building was converted to 135 rental housing units in 2010, which are currently tenanted. Additional site context information is provide in Attachment 1.

Previous Feedback

A Pre-Application Review was submitted for the subject site and presented to the Land Use and Planning Committee (LUPC) on December 3, 2018 ([report](#) / [minutes](#)). The application proposed a mixed-use development inclusive of two towers between 36 to 40 storeys in height, and an overall density of 7.02 FSR. At this meeting, the LUPC: (1) endorsed staff’s recommendations, including to explore reduced overall tower heights and compliance with maximum tower floorplates, and (2) indicated the applicant should submit a detailed tenant relocation report prior to the development moving forward.

POLICY AND REGULATIONS

The initial development concept is consistent with the Official Community Plan, which designates the site Residential – High Rise. The site is located within Development Permit Area (DPA) 2.2 Sixth Street, and compliance with the DPA guidelines would be required. As the development concept is not consistent with the existing Community Commercial Districts (Restricted) (C-5) zoning, a rezoning would be required to facilitate the proposed form of development.

The subject site is located within Tier 2 of the Columbia Station Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Area (200 m. to 400 m.). Properties within Tier 2 may be considered for additional building height (up to 12 storeys) and density (up to 4.0 FSR) under the Minimum Density (MD) Framework. The initial development concept would exceed the MD Framework. A summary of relevant policies and regulation is provided in Attachment 1.

DISCUSSION

Tower Heights and Urban Design

A consistent urban design principle applied throughout Downtown has been to site the tallest buildings on the downslope, and reduce building heights as sites move upslope.

The intention of this principle was to maintain the visual prominence of Downtown and the riverfront, and feedback from LUPC in 2018 regarding proposed tower heights was in line with this approach. The City has received a proposal with towers between 30 to 40 storeys and, given a significant amount of time has passed since the LUPC feedback, staff is seeking Council confirmation regarding the height expectations for this property.

Any development application for this site would be expected to demonstrate consistency with urban design best practices, as well as the City’s DPA design guidelines. Considerations would include, but not be limited to, maintaining the visual connection to the riverfront from key public realm locations, providing appropriate tower separation, adhering to tower floorplate limits, and creating an active and human-scale pedestrian realm. Given the visual prominence of the site, architectural design excellence would be expected.

City Policy Alignment

Any application for the subject site will be expected to align with City policy, such as rental replacement, tenant assistance, and public benefits provision. A public benefits package, commensurate with the proposed level of density and in accordance with relevant City policy, may include, but would not necessarily be limited to, in-kind amenities such as affordable rental housing, institutional space for civic uses, public open space, a not-for-profit childcare; and/or, financing growth contributions. As part of the application review process, staff would evaluate the proposal against these policies and requirements, and provide detailed analysis and related recommendations to Council.

INTERDEPARTMENTAL LIAISON

The City has a project-based team approach for reviewing development applications, which facilitates interdepartmental review, providing comments to the applicant throughout the development review process. This project-based team includes staff from Engineering; Planning and Development; Parks and Recreation, Electrical and Fire Departments.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial considerations would be evaluated as part of the application review process and any relevant details will be included in forthcoming Council reports.

APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS AND NEXT STEPS

The anticipated next steps in the application review process are identified below. These steps are general in nature and are likely to be further refined and revised as the project advances.

- 1. Council consideration of additional building height **(WE ARE HERE)**;
- 2. Preliminary report to Council;

- 3. Interdepartmental staff review towards a suitable plan of development;
- 4. Applicant-led public consultation;
- 5. Presentation to the New Westminster Design Panel;
- 6. Creation of a Be Heard New West webpage;
- 7. Comprehensive Report to Council and Council consideration of First, Second and Third Readings of the Rezoning and Housing Agreement Bylaws following issuance of Notice of Public Hearing not Held;
- 8. Completion of adoption requirements;
- 9. Council consideration of adoption of Zoning Amendment and Housing Agreement Bylaws;
- 10. Issuance of Development Permit by the Director of Planning and Development.

OPTIONS

The following options are available for Council’s consideration:

- 1. That Council direct staff to work with the applicant to advance a development proposal for 140 Sixth Street, which may consider towers between 30 to 40 storeys in height.
- 2. That Council direct staff to work with the applicant to advance a development proposal for 140 Sixth Street, which limits tower heights to below 30 storeys.
- 3. That Council provide staff with alternative direction.

Staff recommends Option 1.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Background Information

APPROVALS

This report was prepared by:
Wendee Lang, Senior Development Planner

This report was reviewed by:
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This report was approved by:
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Lisa Spitale, Chief Administrative Officer