



Advisory Design Panel Report

For the Meeting of October 25, 2017

To: Advisory Design Panel **Date:** October 12, 2017

From: Charlotte Wain, Senior Planner – Urban Design

Subject: **Rezoning Application No. 00593 and Development Permit No. 000502 for 930 Fort Street**

RECOMMENDATION

Recommend to Council that Rezoning Application No. 00593 and Development Permit Application No. 000502 for 930 Fort Street requires the following design revisions to better respond to the applicable design guidelines:

- a) provision of a taller podium, at a minimum height of 8m
- b) provision of distinct, well defined retail bays, consistent with the context along Fort Street
- c) revisions to the tower to address the uniform appearance, with particular attention to the north and side elevations
- d) increased setbacks on the east elevation to ensure consistency with the minimum separation distance of 3m
- e) provision of materials that provide a sensitive response to the immediate context within the Heritage Conservation Area
- f) enhanced landscaping and provision of a functional roof deck for residents
- g) any other recommendations by the Advisory Design Panel.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Advisory Design Panel (ADP) is requested to review a Rezoning and Development Permit Application for 930 Fort Street and provide advice to Council.

The purpose of this report is to present the ADP with information, analysis and recommendations regarding a Development Permit Application for the property located at 930 Fort Street. The proposal is to construct a 12 storey, mixed use building containing 62 residential units and two ground-floor commercial units. A parking variance is currently proposed as part of the Application.

The following policy documents were considered in assessing this Application:

- *Official Community Plan (OCP, 2012)*
- *Downtown Core Area Plan (DCAP, 2011)*
- *Guidelines for Fences, Gates and Shutters (2010)*
- *Advisory Design Guidelines for Buildings, Signs and Awnings (2006)*
- *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada.*

COUNCIL DIRECTION

The Application has not yet been presented to the Committee of the Whole. The intent is to present the Application to Committee with the benefit of advice from the Panel.

BACKGROUND

Project Details

Applicant:	Mr. Dan Robbins Sakura Developments
Architect:	Mr. David Echiav-McGrath, MAIBC Wensley Architecture Ltd.
Development Permit Area:	Development Permit Area 7B, Corridors Heritage
Heritage Status:	N/A

The following data table compares the proposal with the existing CA-42 Zone, Harris Green Commercial District. An asterisk is used to identify where the proposal is less stringent than the existing Zone.

Zoning Criteria	Proposal	Zone Standard
Site area (m ²) – minimum	838.20	N/A
Density (Floor Space Ratio) – maximum	5.47:1 *	2.00:1
Total floor area (m ²) – maximum	4587.16	N/A
Height (m) – maximum	43.12 *	15.50
Storeys – maximum	12 *	4
Setbacks (m) – minimum		
Front Lot Line (south)	0.60 *	3.00
Rear (north)	0.00	N/A
Side (east)	0.00	N/A
Side (west)	0.00	N/A
Parking – minimum	27 * (including visitor)	64 (62 residential, 2 commercial)
Visitor parking (minimum) included in the overall units	3	3

Zoning Criteria	Proposal	Zone Standard
Bicycle parking stalls – minimum		
Class 1 (secure stalls)	80	62
Class 2 (visitor stalls)	6	6

Description of Proposal

The Proposal is to construct a 12 storey, mixed use building with ground floor retail fronting Fort Street with residential units above. The building has a Floor Space Ratio (FSR) of 5.47:1 and a maximum height of 43.12m.

The proposal includes the following major design components:

- 62 residential units
- two commercial units along Fort Street (a total of 88.57m²)
- two levels of underground parking for 27 stalls
- secure bike parking for 80 bikes located on the main floor behind the retail units
- publicly accessible bike parking for 6 bikes located in front the retail unit on the west of the property
- residential amenity roof deck located on the north side of level 12.

Exterior building materials include:

- powder coated metal panels in charcoal and silver colours
- spandrel glass panels
- sealed concrete
- stack bond brick – hebron onyx ironspot
- perforated metal panels above the commercial units
- pre-finished aluminium louvre panels
- pre-finished aluminium sun shade
- pre-finished aluminium architectural element on the front (south) elevation of the tower
- glass/aluminium guard rails
- opaque privacy screens.

A number of inconsistencies have been identified on the elevation material annotations and the applicant has been made aware of this.

Landscaping elements include:

- concrete entrance planter on Fort Street with accent planting and shrubs
- seating wall concrete planter with ornamental grasses and accent planting adjacent to the parkade exhaust grate, in front of the commercial unit on the east of the property
- precast concrete planters with Japanese maple trees on the podium roof fronting Fort Street and the communal residential amenity space on level 12.

The proposed variance includes a request to reduce the required number of vehicle parking stalls from 64 stalls to 27.

Sustainability Features

As noted in the applicant's letter, green building features are proposed to use passive and active strategies such as shading and overhangs across the façades, contemporary heating and cooling systems and high performance envelope and glazing design. No further green building features have been identified.

Design Revisions

Since the Application was submitted, a number of design revisions have been included in response to staff comments including:

- addressing the uniform appearance of the tower to some extent by introducing an architectural sun shade screen on the south elevation
- mitigating Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) concerns by locating the residential entrance and vestibule closer to the street
- responding to building separation guidelines by increasing the east side yard setback from 2.22m to 2.43m at the building face projection (bump out)
- introducing a small communal residential amenity space on level 12
- introducing brick adjacent to the commercial unit on the west of the property.

Consistency with Design Guidelines

The *Official Community Plan 2012* (OCP) identifies this property in Development Permit Area 7B (HC): Corridors Heritage. The objectives of this designation are:

- to revitalize arterial and secondary arterial streets to strengthen commercial viability and improve the pedestrian experience
- to conserve the heritage value, special character, features and characteristics of the area
- to achieve a more cohesive design and enhanced appearance through high quality architecture, landscape and urban design responsive to its historic context through sensitive and innovative interventions
- to encourage pedestrian and cycling use of corridors by enhancing the experience of pedestrians and cyclists through human-scaled urban design.

Design guidelines that apply in Development Permit Area 7B are the *Downtown Core Area Plan, 2012* (DCAP), *Advisory Design Guidelines for Buildings, Signs and Awnings* (2006), *Guidelines for Fences, Gates and Shutters* (2010) and *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada*.

ISSUES

The issues associated with this project are:

- lack of a through-block walkway
- design of the podium and retail bays at street level
- uniformity of the tower (with particular attention to the north and side elevations)
- building separation distances and upper storey setbacks
- functionality of the residential amenity deck
- materials and finishes
- landscaping enhancement.

ANALYSIS

Through-Block Walkway

The subject site is located within the Priority Through-Block Walkway Area identified in the Downtown Core Area Plan (DCAP). In these areas, the guidelines encourage the consideration to redesign and replace key pedestrian connections with new through-block walkways. The applicant has noted that a through-block walkway along the western edge of the property is unfeasible due to an existing easement that exists to secure vehicular access and loading for the rear of the property at 926 Fort Street (Lund's Auctioneers). Any amendment to the existing easement or introduction of a new easement would require the consent of the adjacent property owners and collaboration with the developer to the rear as part of a separate Development Permit for the property at 937 View Street.

Staff have encouraged the applicant to explore lot consolidation to improve the site planning for the proposed development, although the applicant has stated this is not possible. As a result, the property has a relatively narrow frontage of approximately 24m, and the introduction of a through-block walkway would create design challenges. Guidelines require a minimum width of 5m to allow the penetration of natural light and to avoid creating canyon effects for pedestrians. Activating the walkway with retail uses could potentially be limited with the entrance/exiting requirements and an already small commercial unit. However, a walkway would present opportunities to create a more functional bike room, with direct access at grade. A mid-block crosswalk is also being proposed in front of the subject property as part of the Fort Street Bicycle Lane initiative, therefore a through-block walkway would complement this new feature.

With consideration of these competing factors, and given the physical site constraints, staff are not proposing to advocate for a through-block walkway in this location, since it would likely result in an unwelcoming space for pedestrians. Staff would welcome commentary from the ADP on this matter with the inclusion of necessary wording in the recommendation to Council, should the Panel view the need for a walkway as a requested design revision.

Podium Design and Retail Bays

The guidelines require a primary street wall between 10m and 15m high and vertical street walls that consider the architectural context of surrounding buildings. The proposal includes a podium height of only 5.8m, which in the opinion of staff is too low. The applicant has noted that the podium height is in response to the adjacent single storey building at 926 Fort Street (Lund's Auctioneers) and provides a more balanced response to the composition of the tower and podium. Staff do not support this rationale and would prefer to see the podium increased by a minimum of one storey to create the appearance of a three-storey street wall. This would improve the massing relationship with the tower above and would also have the benefit of improving the livability of the private patios above the podium, through increasing the separation distance from the street.

One of the key characteristics of Fort Street is the rhythm of retail bays representing smaller commercial units. The applicant has made efforts to define the retail bays by introducing a brick element at the western portion of the street frontage, although this has not been continued along the remainder of the commercial frontage which would assist in "grounding" the building and providing an alternate material to the glazed curtain wall. The ADP is invited to comment on the design of the Fort Street podium and any opportunities for refinement.

Tower Design

The Downtown Core Area Plan (DCAP) provides detailed urban design guidelines to address the importance of sensitive built forms through building height, scale, massing, setbacks, floor plate restrictions and street wall design. The proposed towers are within the 45m height range envisaged for this property. The DCAP addresses the importance of the design of “base, body and top” in relation to taller buildings. The applicant has made revisions to the proposal based on the initial submission and has incorporated an architectural screen/grille on the south elevation to provide visual interest and to assist in breaking up the uniformity of the building face. While this intervention is an improvement on the original submission, the north and side elevations are still repetitious. Opportunities exist to provide more visual interest in these elevations, in particular the north (rear). The ADP is invited to comment on this issue and provide recommendations for refinement.

Building Setbacks and Separation Distances

To address privacy issues and open up views between buildings, the street wall guidelines in the DCAP require a 3m setback for portions of the building up to 30m and a 6m side yard setback for portions of the building above 30m (level 10 – 12). Where feasible, additional clearances for windows are encouraged to enhance livability for residential uses. Although the proposal meets the minimum 3m distance for the lower levels, a setback of only 2.43m on the east and 4.09m on the west has been provided for upper levels. These increase to 3.12m (east) and 4.7m (west) for level 12 but this is still inadequate for the guidelines. The ADP is invited to comment on the inconsistency with the guidelines and whether design revisions are warranted.

Communal Residential Amenity Deck

In response to staff comments, the applicant has incorporated a small communal roof deck on the north side of level 12, containing seating, benches and planting. Staff are questioning the functionality of this space and would prefer to see a larger, more usable space on level 12 above the penthouse. Although this would increase the proposed building height with stair access to the roof, staff would likely include an exemption for roof top structures in the new zone to accommodate a more usable amenity space. ADP is invited to comment on the amenity space and any opportunities to improve this aspect of the design.

Materials and Finishes

As noted earlier in this report, the objectives of DPA 7B are to achieve a more cohesive design for corridors through high quality architecture and urban design, and to conserve the special characteristics of the area. Staff have raised concern with the proposed use of perforated metal above the commercial units at street level as being inappropriate for the context and too industrial in appearance. Although Fort Street does have a varied palette of materials, there are examples of brick within close proximity to the subject site and staff have suggested that this, or a similar material in scale such as tile, would be a more fitting choice for this location. The ADP is invited to comment on the use of materials and any opportunities for refinement.

Landscaping

The objectives of DPA 7B include provision of high quality landscaping. Minimal landscaping has been included in the proposal and where planters have been incorporated, the use of cast

in place concrete materials creates a stark setting. In certain circumstances, this may be appropriate, but coupled with the choice of building cladding materials, this may not create the most welcoming of environments at the street level. Although the site is located in Harris Green, an urban setting, there are opportunities to enhance the landscaping in order to soften the appearance of the building. This includes increased planting at the street level and roof top patios, as well as opportunities to incorporate climbing vegetation on the architectural screening on the south elevation. The ADP is invited to comment on any opportunity areas for improving the landscaping in the proposed development.

OPTIONS

1. Recommend to Council that Development Permit Application No. 000502 for 930 Fort Street requires the following design revisions to better respond to the applicable design guidelines:
 - a. provision of a taller podium, at a minimum height of 8m
 - b. provision of distinct, well defined retail bays, consistent with the context along Fort Street
 - c. revisions to the tower to address the uniform appearance, with particular attention to the north and side elevations
 - d. increased setbacks on the east elevation to ensure consistency with the minimum separation distance of 3m
 - e. provision of materials that provide a sensitive response to the immediate context within the Heritage Conservation Area
 - f. enhanced landscaping and provision of a functional roof deck for residents
 - g. any other recommendations by the Advisory Design Panel.
2. Recommend to Council that Development Permit Application No. 000502 for 930 Fort Street be approved as presented.
3. Recommend to Council that Development Permit Application No. 000502 for 930 Fort Street does not sufficiently meet the applicable design guidelines and polices and should be declined.

CONCLUSION

The proposal would result in a major redevelopment of a key site within Harris Green, and would add vibrancy to an otherwise underutilized site. This Application is consistent with some of the applicable design guidelines prescribed within Development Permit Area 7B; however, the Application would benefit from further design development to improve consistency with the relevant guidelines, in particular the design of the podium, uniform appearance of the tower, building separation distances, materials and landscape finishes. To this end, staff are recommending that the proposal does not sufficiently meet the applicable design guidelines and polices and that the Application should be revised based on staff's feedback as well as with input from the Advisory Design Panel in order to better respond to the guidelines.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment A: Aerial Map
- Attachment B: Zoning Map
- Attachment C: Applicant's letter date stamped August 10, 2017
- Attachment D: Plans date stamped September 12, 2017

cc: Dan Robbins, Sakura Developments