

5. **603-607 Pandora Avenue**  
**Heritage Alteration Permit with Variances Application #00005**

Attendees: Eric Barker (applicant, Eric Barker Architect); Donald Luxton (Donald Luxton & Associates)

Merinda Conley provided a brief summary of the application.

Eric Barker and Donald Luxton provided a presentation about the application.

Panel Comments and Questions

- What are the existing regulations on the site? Merinda Conley: The property was rezoned in 2013 to CA-70, Plaza District, with a change in allowable height to 23.1m. The proposed height is 23.02m. 140 parking stalls are required; 28 are proposed. A bicycle parking variance is requested (8 onsite are required; 9 on the City SRW are proposed).
- What did the 2013 Heritage Alteration Permit approve? Merinda Conley: This is a new and separate application and is not entirely reflective of the 2013 application; the design has changed; the same architect has been retained by the new owner.
- Will the balconies overhang City property? Merinda Conley: Yes, an encroachment agreement will be required. The City-property appears larger than it is currently. Is that correct? Eric Barker: Yes. Has the City approved narrowing of the street? Merinda Conley: Yes, the Engineering Department has approved it. The Urban Planner has requested the relocation of the benches to enable space to be defined for public festivities/functions and to provide a linkage to Centennial Square across the street.
- Restoration of the heritage building is positive. The junction between the heritage building and the new building with a masonry element with punched windows provides a good transition and the progress around the corner opening up into a more contemporary design is interesting. A four-storey building with an adjacent six-storey building is an anomaly in Old Town. An important aspect of Old Town is the low scale of the buildings. Is there a better way to deal with the abrupt change from a four-storey to a six-storey building? The proposed new building is uniformly six storeys; however, two different heights are possible, i.e. drop the perimeter of the six-storey building to five storeys and then transfer the density to the southwest corner of the building; flip the open atrium with the front of the building to create a block at the back with a double order corridor which would be two storeys higher with the rest of the building one storey lower. Was this considered? Eric Barker: A number of options were considered including shifting the density to the back corner. Seven to nine storeys would be required to make up for the floor area lost; however, that many storeys in Old Town seemed excessive. The conclusion was to propose no higher than six storeys, which is supported in the zone.
- Is there a commitment to have wood sash windows in the hotel building? Donald Luxton: Yes.
- What is the height restriction for the PCC building (613/615 Pandora Avenue) if it were to be rehabilitated or taken down? Merinda Conley: A height of 15m would be allowed.
- Are scale, form, massing and composition character-defining elements of the building? Donald Luxton: Scale, form and massing are definitely character-defining elements of the building. It is a mid-block building so the new building is an addition to the top and side and related new construction conforms to Standard 11, i.e. it

should be ideally compatible with (materiality, proportions, details), distinguishable from; and subordinate to (respectful). An addition on top (1-2 storeys) is not unprecedented downtown; setback of the sixth storey lowers the perception of the extra storey from Government Street. Should a new building adjacent to a heritage building have its own character or stand alone? Should it relate to the heritage building, relate to the streetscape or should it be accepted as a contemporary building that relates to other buildings in Old Town as well as the hotel building. There are two impacts of the new building - one is above, one is beside.

- Is there a setback between the new building and the hotel or between the PCC building (613/615 Pandora Avenue) and the new building? Is there differentiation between the old and the new? Eric Barker: In both cases, the new walls are abutting the existing walls; there are no setbacks. The intention is to make an appropriate material relationship between the two with 6" of space between them. The wrap of the upper floor against the building going back to the 6<sup>th</sup> floor defines the separation most adequately.
- In Old Town, what are the constraints to be or not to be contextual? Merinda Conley: The Official Community Plan (OCP) stipulates that any new development in Old Town should be contextual. What is the degree of context required? Excerpts from the OCP that were referenced in the staff report were read aloud to the Panel.
- This is a significant heritage building within a significant site (Old Town HCA). Alison Meyer referred to Standard 11 in another report about another building as follows: Conserve the heritage value and character-defining elements when creating any new additions to a historic place or any related new construction. Make the new work physically and visually compatible with and subordinate to and distinguishable from the historic place.
- The 1964 Charter of Venice stated that new construction shall be differentiated from the historic. In the last 10 years the way in which new construction is considered in historic areas has been questioned. This has led to a change in guidelines for historic districts to "infill shall be compatible yet distinct" because the district is the resource not its individual parts and designated historic districts are significant as a collective whole and should be protected in their entirety. This is the guidelines' overarching principle. Infill buildings should also relate to and strengthen the core characteristics of the district; new construction should build on the story of the district through its design, landscape use, and cultural expression and associated interpretive displays.
- The Pandora Avenue elevation respects the existing building yet the new building will have a character of its own. On the Government Street elevation, there is concern about the abrupt change in height which is emphasized by the blankness of the wall. Also most buildings in the area have cornices (a capping feature). In order to enhance Old Town, it is important to maintain at least the idea of a cornice (to stop the eye). The building looks undressed without a cornice of some kind.
- Enhance the visual integrity of the landscape to indicate that this is an HCA. The proposed landscape is contemporary which does not indicate that it is adjacent to a heritage building.
- The façade rehabilitation and the conservation of some of the interior timber frame structure are commendable. The presence of amenity space and balconies immediately behind a parapet wall of the conserved façade raises the prospect of umbrellas, patio furniture, people, etc. The two-storey addition makes it appear as a façade, not an intact three-dimensional building. The upper addition is visible from the other side of street and looks subsumed by the larger complex. It would be better if the two-storey addition had a larger setback or preferably, the addition was

eliminated. This would lessen the parking variance and vastly improve the conservation strategy.

- The proposed balconies would overhang public space. This is a concern, especially in Old Town. Six storeys with overhanging balconies would overpower Pandora Avenue. It would be preferable to have four storeys, then setback for the other two storeys with the balconies within the building space; not City space.
- The proposed large concrete façade on the corner should be brick to be more compatible with the surrounding buildings. Pandora Avenue is becoming a mishmash of different materials (brick, steel, concrete) with no rhythm and context; all brick or masonry or at least a masonry pattern is preferable.
- Concern was expressed about the amount of glass on the Pandora Avenue elevation and the number of balconies. It is important to respect the brick in the surrounding buildings (i.e. McPherson Theatre and 588 Pandora Avenue). A corner entry would add an interesting feature to the building. The white masonry and exceedingly modern corner are contextually disturbing and out of place in Old Town. This is against Standard 11.
- The corner element is visually disturbing at any angle. Its white starkness and height appears as a white concrete tower attached to the old hotel. When you have two façades leading to a corner, the eye goes to the corner.
- Is height off the table? Merinda Conley: Yes, the property has a site-specific zone. How did we get to this height in an HCA? The height will block light and will have a considerable impact on the surrounding buildings.
- Building height is an issue around the perimeter of the site. Additional height could be tucked into the southwest corner so that it is not as visible from the street. The density would be retained.
- The dentils of the original façade are still in place and will be restored and the proposal is to replace the historic pressed metal cornice.
- Merinda Conley: A phrase in the *Buildings, Signs and Awnings Advisory Design Guidelines* was read aloud as follows: New construction will complement flanking heritage buildings in areas where they predominate. A contemporary solution can be quite acceptable in this context provided the design is in sympathy with the area's environment. In some cases, a "stunning contrast" can achieve the same end.

### Moved

### Seconded

The Panel commends the applicant for their thoughtful response to the current context and recommend to Council that Heritage Alteration Permit with Variances Application No. 00005 for 603-607 Pandora Avenue be considered with the following comments:

- a) Generally it is felt that the building is too tall for a proposal in Old Town. Modification of the Government Street elevation to provide a gentler and more respectful transition from the hotel and include a projecting "cornice-type" feature at the top of the Government Street elevation is recommended.
- b) Consideration be given to lowering the overall height of the Pandora Avenue and Government Street corner elevation.
- c) Brick needs to be the primary material in context with the building across from the site, Chinatown and the McPherson Theatre. Replace the white masonry with brick, or at least a masonry pattern.
- d) Landscape on Pandora Avenue should be more respectful of the heritage character of the landscape of the Old Town Heritage Conservation Area.

- e) Rhythm of Old Town is masonry with punched windows; the proposal addresses this as part of the corner element, but the contemporary addition is in contrast with the expansive use of glass.

**Carried (5 in favour, 2 opposed)**