

3.3 Heritage Alteration Permit with Variances Application No. 00005 for 603-607 Pandora Avenue

The City is considering a Heritage Alteration Permit with Variances Application for a comprehensive development that would include adaptive reuse of the Plaza Hotel into a residential development with ground-level commercial use, and new additions above the Plaza Hotel building and to the north that would replace an existing one-storey addition facing Pandora Avenue.

Applicant meeting attendees:

ERIC BARKER	ERIC BARKER ARCHITECT INC.
NICK ASKEW	OCEAN GATE DEVELOPMENT
CAROLE ROSSELL	SMALL & ROSSELL

Ms. Conley provided the Panel with a brief introduction of the Application and the areas that Council is seeking advice on, including the following:

- compatibility, distinguishability, and subordination of the contemporary additions to the heritage-designated Plaza Hotel
- retaining the prominence of the Plaza Hotel
- integration of the character of the historic streetscape into the general expression, such as expressed concrete window sills
- contextual expression of the façade that is more sympathetic to the Old Town context and the Chinatown National Historic District
- diversity of built form
- massing and design of the building additions
- finishing materials
- clarification of exterior lighting location and style for the public plaza.

Ms. Conley then provided a brief summary of the recommendations from the Heritage Advisory Panel at their meeting February 13, 2018.

Eric Barker provided the Panel with a detailed presentation of the site and context of the proposal, and Carole Rossell provided the Panel with details of the proposed landscape plan.

Questions of clarification were asked by the Panel on the following:

- how does the project's design respond to redevelopment potential of the lot directly to the east?
 - many windows are set appropriately back from the face
 - windows on the eastern property line are not the only source of light for units
 - interior lighting is not entirely dependent on the windows on the property line
 - it would also be problematic to have units face each other across the light well; it is better for units to face east and risk the possibility of development to the east
 - the south-eastern corner is also set further back from the property line
- is it only the three middle units that look out to the east?
 - yes
- what is new and what is old on the Plaza building?
 - two-thirds of the existing structure, including the timbers and façade, are being maintained
- what is underneath the existing heritage building?

- just a basement; there is no parking as none was previously required
- does the proposal tuck some parking underground?
 - yes
- why are only 28 parking stalls proposed?
 - the client is comfortable with this proportion of parking given the number of units and the downtown location
 - initially no parking was required; 11 parking spaces have since been added
 - additional parking costs an estimated \$50,000 per stall and would negatively affect unit affordability
- what are the glass panels on the ground?
 - these prisms are only along Government street
- what is proposed for the urinal at the corner?
 - the applicant is putting \$50,000 towards its relocation
- will the existing street trees be removed?
 - yes, for construction and because the City has advised that they be replaced
- how is it that can the courtyard be heard without being accessible?
 - it is open to the air and the communal area at the same level, but is not designed for walking through
- have there been detailed shadow studies on the courtyard?
 - the lower levels will not get direct sunlight; this is part of the reason why the interior garden will be so lush and active with a water feature, and why there are only six units facing east
- was it considered to have fewer, wider and shallower units to increase the courtyard space?
 - this can be considered
- was a more unified approach to the new building considered, to better relate to the Plaza Hotel?
 - the glass treatment carries through as one treatment idea, with the one column element that wraps around and frames the edge of the Plaza
- is the intention of the brick element to relate to the adjacent building façades?
 - yes, to provide a scale transition and to relate to the Old Town context
 - wanted to make a contemporary statement rather than a contextual statement
- what is the intention of the glass railing projection?
 - yes, to signify a cornice over the brick and appropriately respond to the brick element
- are these market units?
 - yes
- are the load-bearing walls between suites what determine unit configuration?
 - the walls are offset to coincide with the existing columns within the Plaza Hotel
- are the southeast corner balconies open to both the south and east?
 - the fourth level and above are open to the south and to the east, below the fourth level they are open only to the east.

Panel members discussed:

- concern for 6m wide, six-storey light well, especially with this as the only daylight to the west for lower levels
- questioning the liveability of some units, as the only source of direct light for the east-facing units could be closed with adjacent redevelopment

- appreciation that this is a challenging site, but the design struggles to bring light into some spaces
- need to design with consideration to the possibility of future development to the east, to avoid the possibility of buried, borderline liveable units
- commend the meaningful roof garden design
- concern for the significant reduction in proposed parking
- excessive width and starkness in plaza design
- questioning the need for open space with many open public spaces nearby
- opportunity for more creative plaza landscaping; a raingarden or meadow would require minimal maintenance
- reluctance to lose existing mature trees on Government Street
- there are about 6 balcony treatments proposed, and all seem very exposed; there are many successful examples of recessed balconies in Chinatown
- appreciation for the proposed restoration of the Plaza Hotel
- proposal lacks coherency and feels like a cluster of four or five different buildings
- north elevation could be simplified to strengthen thesis
- new development overshadows the heritage building
- proposal could benefit from refinement to a singular treatment so as to showcase the Plaza Hotel
- Plaza Hotel could be echoed or referenced around the corner to increase cohesion
- corner design contrasts with the way buildings typically turn corners in Chinatown
- heavy-handed articulation of the corner gives a tower-like appearance; it doesn't need to be its own element and should be integrated
- north elevation gives the visual impression of an entry where the brick and white elements come to the ground, yet the entry is obscured and embedded within the retail bay
- desire for renderings illustrating the pedestrian experience
- the importance of resolving the design in a way that does the site justice

Deborah LeFrank left the meeting at 2:25 pm.

Motion:

It was moved by Justin Gammon, seconded by Jesse Garlick, that the Advisory Design Panel recommend to Council that Heritage Alteration Permit with Variances Application No. 00005 for 603-607 Pandora Avenue be considered for approval subject to the following recommendations:

- increase the degree to which the contemporary additions along Pandora Street and the key corner element are compatible, distinguishable, and subordinate to the heritage-designated Plaza Hotel and integrates with the rest of the new building
- provide a more contextual expression of the façade that is more sympathetic to the Old Town context and consideration of recessed balconies
- consider a simplification of the built form, materials, scale, rhythm and window openings within the historic district and the Chinatown National Historic District to add to the coherence of the proposal
- reconsider the plaza planting design to encourage activity and animation including planting, surface treatment, seating and active program elements
- consider light and liveability of suites and mitigate possible future development impacts.

Carried Unanimously