

Summary and Minutes
of the Community Land Use Meeting
Wednesday Aug. 2, 2018, 7pm

RE: 1050 Pandora Ave and 1518 Cook Street, Redevelopment Proposal

Mayor, Council and City Staff

Please find attached a summary of the Community Land Use Meeting regarding the redevelopment proposal for the “Wellburn’s building” and parking lot.

SUMMARY

About 60 people attended, of which 50% were North Park residents and business owners. Much of the balance was made up of residents from the Downtown and Fernwood neighbourhoods.

While the general mood in the room seemed favourable towards the redevelopment, primary concerns related to:

- **Insufficient parking** and the need for a traffic study to understand the impact of all new developments in this area (Cox, Bosa)
- The need for **non-market housing** and the desire for a City policy to require a percentage
- **Insufficient setbacks** for the new building on Pandora Street to delineate it from the heritage restoration
- **Insufficient interaction with the park** (Juliette balconies, not enough eyes on the park)
- **Insufficient access to the park** – the mid-development walk-through concept isn’t fully developed, and the setback on the north side of the building offers nothing to pedestrians – especially once the smaller building/parcel at the corner of Mason Street builds out to its full potential

Submitted by

Jenny Farkas, Acting President

Minute taker: Mel Groves

MINUTES

PROPONENT:

- Mike Nygren, President & CEO, District Development Corp

ARCHITECT:

- Michael Green, Principal and Architect, Michael Green Architecture

ATTENDANCE:

- Approximately 30 residents and 30 non-residents (most from Fernwood and Downtown neighbourhoods)
- Councillors Loveday, Madoff and Thornton-Joe were also in attendance

OPENING REMARKS

Mike Nygren

- District Developments owns the site with partners.
- District Developments Corp is a Vancouver-based company with deep Vancouver Island roots and projects across the Island.
- The project will require a rezoning application, development permit and Heritage Alteration Permit (for the Wellburn's building).
- The new project is primarily proposed as rental apartments, with some retail opportunities on the ground level street front.
- The project mirrors the Scott building project at Douglas and Hillside, which also has a focus on being a city gateway, and protecting the heritage features of the building while providing purpose-built rental apartments.
- We are in the early stages of this project and all comments are welcome.

Michael Green/PowerPoint slide show

- We want to make this project something the community embraces. We want the building to be contextual and enhance the neighbourhood.
- The Wellburn's building is a beautiful heritage building that has huge potential.
- Pandora and Cook is considered to be one of four gateways to the City of Victoria.
- We will be looking carefully and doing light/shadow studies in order to respect Franklin Green Park in terms of light and access.
- The property divides into two lots: the building on Lot A (Wellburn's) could be 8-10 storeys high. The second building on Lot B (currently a parking lot) could be 4-6 storeys.
- The two buildings will total approximately 100,000 square feet with 82 rental units and a café on Cook Street and other commercial office or shop space at ground level on Cook and Pandora. A mews/outdoor space will provide an outdoor walking area between the two buildings. We'll have to explore whether it would need to be gated at night.
- There will be a mix of residential units: townhomes at ground level, 1 bedroom, 1 bedroom and den (46 units), plus a few 2 and 3-bedroom units.

- The heritage façade at Cook and Pandora will be retained, with massing stepped back above to accentuate the original heritage structure. The mews separating the two buildings will also help to make the heritage façade the most prominent feature.
- Vehicle and ample bicycle parking will be provided in an underground garage, with access off Cook Street. Current plans call for 33 residential and 12 commercial parking stalls. A variance would be required for parking, as the number of stalls is 55% lower than City of Victoria Schedule C.
- The project will feature a strong amount of garden space, including a rooftop garden and barbeque area for residents. Many units will have balconies, and townhomes will have patios.
- The project features darker colours, intended to contrast with the grey skies, sloped walls and window louvers.
- The anticipated project schedule involves 12-18 months for design, followed by 12-24 months for construction. The goal is for District Developments to own the building long-term. There will be a 20-year covenant on the property to ensure the units remain rental apartments.
- We are in discussions with Wellburn's and hope to get them to stay on in the new building.

QUESTION PERIOD

Will the project include affordable housing? (NOTE: this issue came up repeatedly)

The current proposal is for market housing, not subsidized housing. The average unit size is 625 sf. Depending on the size of the unit, the market rent will likely be \$1300-\$2200. (NOTE: double check cost with developer)

What will happen to the current tenants in the building, who have extremely affordable rents?

We will have relocation plans for all 11 of the existing tenants, and are working with partners to provide comparable housing in nearby buildings. These tenants will have the option to move into the new buildings when they are complete.

“We will never be able to find a rental in the neighbourhood that is close to our current rent of \$1000 per month. The neighbourhood will become unaffordable.” Current Wellburn apartment tenant.

Parking is already very congested in the neighbourhood on nearby streets (e.g. Mason and Chambers) and you're only providing 33 stalls for 82 units – this is not enough parking. (NOTE: This issue came up repeatedly). There is inadequate commercial parking being provided.

There is an assumption that living in this downtown area will appeal to those who don't necessarily use cars as their primary mode of transportation. There will be plenty of bike parking provided. We will consider your comments closely.

A traffic study may be required by the City as part of the rezoning process to help determine the appropriate level of parking needed.

There is already a lot of dust, noise and extra vehicles parking on nearby streets due to the construction at Pandora and Vancouver streets (St. Andrews school site). How will you manage the impacts of construction?

We will have a construction management plan that the City of Victoria will need to sign off on. We'll follow the City's policies and controls around dust, noise, hours of work etc. We're also exploring doing more off-site construction, which will reduce the work on site and is also more economical.

The new St. Andrews complex has windows facing Franklin Green Park, which is useful for security in the area. Does the proposed building have any units overlooking the park?

Yes, the townhouse units will look out onto the park at ground level. Some of the upper units will also have Juliet balconies facing west.

The height and size of the project is out of scale with the surrounding area. What will the setbacks be for the new buildings?

The new zone that will be created when the parking lot is rezoned will deal with height and density, consistent with the Official Community Plan. The setbacks are currently 20' from the north and west boundaries. The setback on Pandora is 10' to the heritage façade. The new building on Cook will add an additional 6' back beyond the current Wellburn's building.

Will the project include the small building at the corner of Cook and Mason streets?

No, that is a separate lot. We are providing adequate setbacks to allow for development of that parcel in the future if desired.

The proposed colour of the building is very dark. Can you change the colour? (NOTE: This issue was raised several times)

A: Using dark colours is a very common practice in Scandinavia, for example, as they provide good contrast with the dull grey winter skies.

I'm glad that the design is not a wall of windows.

The windows are louvered and the massing is broken up in various ways – by the balconies and mews, for example – so that the buildings have some texture and don't look like a solid block.

Will you be getting a rebate on taxes because of the heritage element of the project?

We're unsure if the project will qualify at this time. The goal of the heritage aspect of the project is to refurbish the heritage façade to 1906 standards and we have not had this conversation with the City as yet.

COMMENTS

- Providing rooftop gardens and preserving only the façade of the building is not adequate.
- The building is gorgeous and I'm moved by the thoughtfulness of your approach. But please take advantage of innovative partnership opportunities with the CRD and other levels of government to ensure some of the units are non-market.