

December 5, 2019

Development on the site of Wellburns

If a Vancouver development company gets their way, the 108 year old heritage building known as Wellburns on the corner of Pandora and Cook will be demolished (with exceptions of portions of the exterior façade) and 2 buildings of high density for North Park neighbourhood, one 6 storey and the other 4 storey, will be put up where the existing building and parking lot are now. One more heritage building will be gone in a city that used to pride itself (and indeed still relies on it for tourism) on heritage preservation. But the North Park neighbourhood will lose one of its finest and most visible and iconic heritage buildings in exchange for a façade, or a small relic of a heritage building stuck on the outside.

The benefits of this development for the community are dubious as the affordability of these new 103 units will likely fall in line with the Bosa development next door where a one bedroom apartment rents start \$1,750 and a two bedroom costs \$2,550. There are no provisions in the Wellburns development proposal for affordable housing. While the existing heritage building currently has rental units that are affordable (\$1,150 for a 2 bedroom) it is likely not going to be many North Park residents, who will be renting in the new buildings, as they have on average, the lowest incomes in the city.

The two large proposed new buildings have other problems like crowding out the corner of Pandora and Cook and Franklin Green Park behind. This is a small but precious green space that is well used and loved by the community. The buildings close proximity to the park will remove any sense of open green space or sun in this park that has already been crowded by the massive Bosa development on the west side of it.

The Wellburns building has closed just recently due to a sewage pipe blowing apart in the basement. A failure of building plumbing of this magnitude points suspiciously to a lapsed maintenance program of the building, something that the current tenants have been complaining about for some time. The tenants have had to leave their apartments with only hours notice and with likely no chance of being able to return. The NPNA is following up with these tenants.

This development will be discussed at the December 12 Committee of the Whole. If the proposal gets a positive response and no suggestions are made for improvements, or if the improvements are minor, then the application will likely go to Public Hearing some time in the new year.

North Park Neighbourhood Association Land Use Committee