

Planned GWAC Speech,
Public Hearing beginning 7:30pm Tue 18 May 2010,
Agenda item #9: Rezoning of 2250 Commercial Drive

[Agenda: <http://vancouver.ca/ctyclerk/cclerk/20100518/phea20100518ag.htm>]

[Staff report (8 April 2010): <http://vancouver.ca/ctyclerk/cclerk/20100420/documents/p6.pdf>]

[Staff memo (7 May 2010): <http://vancouver.ca/ctyclerk/cclerk/20100518/documents/phea9memo.pdf>]

[GWAC web page: www.vcn.bc.ca/gwac/2250Commercial/index.html]

Mr Mayor, members of Council:

I'm here representing Grandview-Woodland Area Council, known to most people as GWAC. GWAC is recommending that the rezoning not be allowed.

As Council knows, the developer's architects, Ankenman Marchand, have made public two proposals for 2250 Commercial Drive, each offering identical density and uses.

One proposal is to accommodate the density and uses within the existing C-2C zoning of four storeys and 45 feet at the discretion of the Director of Planning. Ankenman Marchand has explicitly stated this is possible, saying — quote, “[W]e could achieve the same uses and density within the existing zoning,”¹ unquote.

The other proposal is to construct a building five storeys and 63 feet high, requiring rezoning from C-2C to CD-1.

The main claim the architects makes for the proposal requiring rezoning, is that it's more environmentally sustainable.

GWAC questioned this claim in a letter to City planning staff and Council back in November 2009, before the staff report about the proposed rezoning was written.

Unfortunately, the staff report, which was heard at Council on the 20th of April, only obliquely acknowledged GWAC's letter. It mentioned and then rapidly dismissed the questioned claim, in its penultimate paragraph. The staff report said:

Quote, “The proposal ... retains the majority of the existing structure. This is a better solution than demolishing the existing building, consigning its material to landfill and building *a new building of the same density within the existing 45 foot height limit,*” unquote.

There is no other reference in the report to this very important point.

In a letter to Council on April 17, GWAC recommended that the staff report be rejected and the applicant produce a design that

- a) Achieved the same uses and density within the existing zoning, and
- b) Minimized demolition work by preserving as much of the building's frame as possible.

Instead, Council produced a kind of compromise. It accepted staff's recommendation to send the rezoning application to Public Hearing but, through Councillor Jang, asked staff to produce a memo that addressed the questions raised in GWAC's letter.

¹ From a handout given to members of the public at a 20 October 2009 neighbourhood workshop.

Unfortunately, the 3-page memo does not address those questions. The memo says that GWAC's, quote, "letter raised seven points of concern. Six of the seven points refer to the staff recommendation to retain the existing building" (page 1), unquote. Instead of dealing with the questions the memo repeats its support for the design requiring rezoning. With regard to the zoning-conforming design, the memo says, quote, "Council will have the opportunity to hear from staff, the applicant and the public ... at the hearing" (page 2), unquote.

The staff memo thus fails to answer three particular questions about the environmental sustainability of the proposals that GWAC asked in its last letter:

- (1) First, the staff report stated that, quote: "The majority of the existing structure (applicant estimates 98%) including two floors of underground parking would be retained" (page 3). So GWAC asked: How much of the existing structure is in the two floors of underground parking, because presumably that structure could be retained in a zoning-conforming design.

The staff memo didn't answer this question.

- (2) A second question was: Why can't the existing concrete and steel frame structure be retained above ground in a design that conformed to the existing zoning?

Again, the staff memo didn't answer this question.

- (3) The third and final question was: What about the environmental impact of the extra materials required to build the applicant's proposed 63-foot, five-storey structure versus a compact, zoning-conforming 45-foot, four-storey one?

Once again, the staff memo did not answer this question.

Unfortunately, then, neither the staff report nor the staff memo has given consideration to the architect's zoning-conforming proposal, which both the architect and staff have stated is viable. GWAC must therefore continue to recommend that the rezoning not be allowed.

In making its decision, GWAC would remind Vision Vancouver of part of its election platform, which said that, quote: "At City Hall, citizens have felt shut out of the decision-making process. People want to be heard by their city government," unquote.

I'd close by encouraging Council to ask "Why rezone?", to give that zoning-conforming proposal the serious consideration it merits, and reject the proposed rezoning, because to do otherwise will have a negative impact on the perception of Council and community engagement.

Thank you.