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Thomas Daley, Planner
City of Vancouver



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Downtown Vancouver BIA

Feedback on proposed Official Development Plan Amendment for Granville Street in Area K3 -Granville Street between Drake and Helmcken

Granville Street needs a refresh. The street will benefit from a comprehensive vision for the street design and land use between Robson Street and the Granville Bridge. This important and historic commercial corridor is underutilized and underperforming.

While we are encouraged to see some attention given to Granville Street with this proposed zoning amendment, we do not feel that zoning for residential is where the focus should be. We would prefer to partner on a complete plan for the entire corridor (Robson to the Granville Street bridge) that will enhance existing commercial uses and integrate opportunities for new businesses and development.

The feedback period for this amendment is too short. We ask that the consultation period be extended to January 15, 2021 to ensure that stakeholders have ample time to provide comments prior to the referral report.

Our initial feedback regarding the amendment is as follows:

Residential development on Granville should require retainment of commercial spaces.

At our November 30th workshop we asked participants to describe the current strengths of Granville Street. The participants described Granville as lively and vibrant, and bustling with commercial activity. It is the businesses that draw people to the area for shopping, dining, socializing, and entertainment. Our goal is to enhance the commercial opportunities on Granville Street, not replace them. Any existing square footage of commercial space on redevelopment sites should be replaced as a requirement of the redevelopment. We welcome more mixed-use buildings with street-level retail, several floors of commercial (office or hotel), and residential on the top floors. We have seen the success of mixed-use buildings in other parts of the downtown peninsula such as Yaletown and Gastown. The tenants of mixed-use buildings contribute to the prosperity of businesses at street level.

Residential development on Granville should not replace existing hotel stock or opportunities for new hotel development.

There is a shortage of hotel rooms in Vancouver, as noted in the City's Employment Lands and Economy Review summary. In particular, there is a shortage of affordable hotel rooms on the downtown peninsula. Granville Street is one of the remaining areas with affordable hotels. These hotels are essential for facilitating overnight visitations to the downtown area, and visitors are an essential customer base for downtown businesses. The conversion of the Howard Johnson hotel at 1176 Granville Street to social housing, albeit serving a great public need to house the homeless that the DVBIA supports, has resulted in the loss of 100 hotel rooms available to thousands of tourists annually who would be supporting many of the nearby bars, restaurants, retail outlets and other street-level businesses.

This area cannot afford to lose any more hotels. To encourage new stock in hotel rooms, we recommend that the revised zoning allow for relaxations in FSR and height to allow for additional hotel use that would be above 5 FSR and the current height limit.

New residential development should introduce a more diverse socio-economic mix to the area.

The majority of housing on Granville Street is currently supportive or low-income housing (SROs). If more residential development were to be added to the area, the aim must be to create a more diverse socio-economic mix with market rents. To further concentrate strictly low-income housing into one small area would increase stigmas and other challenges that the street is currently facing. There are many other locations where new social housing developments can and will be built throughout downtown and elsewhere in the city.

We are unable to support this proposed downtown official development plan amendment at this time unless our suggestions are incorporated and concerns are addressed.

Sincerely,



Charles Gauthier, MCP
President & CEO

Cc.

Selina Bull, Planning Analyst, Community Planning
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