## City of Richmond

## Report to Development Permit Panel

To: Development Permit Panel<br>Date: October 5, 2017<br>From: Wayne Craig<br>File: DP 15-700370<br>Director, Development<br>Re: Application by Sian Group Investments ( 0846930 BC Ltd.) for a General Compliance to Development Permit (DP 15-700370) at 9560 Alexandra Road

## Staff Recommendation

That the attached plans involving changes to the design of the perimeter retaining wall and associated landscaping features along the western property boundary and adjacent to the east-west greenway at the north end of the subject site be considered to be in General Compliance with Development Permit (DP 15-700370).

## Wayne Craig

Director, Dévelopment
DCB:blg $\qquad$
Att. 4

## Staff Report

## Origin

Sian Group Investments ( 0846930 BC Ltd.) has requested a General Compliance ruling regarding perimeter landscaping changes to Development Permit (DP 15-700370) issued on July 11, 2016, for 20 three-storey townhouse units at 9560 Alexandra Road. This Development Permit was endorsed by the Development Permit Panel at its meeting held on April 27, 2016. The rezoning for the project (RZ 14-669511) was adopted by Council on July 11, 2016.

The General Compliance is necessitated due to ongoing grade and greenway/park design changes being made by the City's Parks Department to the May Drive greenway which runs along the property immediately to the west of the subject lot ( 9540 Alexandra Road) and across the northern 20 m of the subject property within a Statutory Right of Way (SRW) with Public Rights-of-Passage (PROP).

## Background

Development surrounding the subject site is as follows:
To the north: A large 1.37 ha. lot ( 9500 Tomicki Avenue) owned and under development by Polygon Development into two four-storey wood frame residential apartment buildings over a single level parkade. The development will contain 263 dwelling units. (RZ 16-734204 adopted June 26, 2017).

To the east: A 4 acre lot under redevelopment to construct 96 three-storey townhouse units on a site zoned "Town Housing (ZT67)" (RZ 13-649999 adopted June 22, 2015).
To the south: Alderbridge Way and the Garden City Lands ( 55.18 ha zoned "AG1").
To the west: Two City-owned park/trail lots (future May Drive greenway), the future alignment for the extension of May Drive and a 2.8 ha . (7 ac.) lot owned by First Richmond North Shopping Centres Ltd., which will include a new Walmart outlet. The shopping centre lot is currently under construction and is zoned "Neighbourhood Commercial (ZC32) - West Cambie Area".

## Staff Comments

The proposed changes to the scheme attached to this report are in General Compliance with the original Development Permit considered by the Development Permit Panel (Attachment 2). In addition, the modified proposal (Attachment 3) complies with the intent of the applicable sections of the Official Community Plan (OCP) and is generally in compliance with the "Town Housing (ZT67) - Alexandra Neighbourhood (West Cambie)" zone.

## Approved Landscape Features Affected at the Subject Site

Under the approved Development Permit plans, a series of structures and landscape features are required to provide an acceptable visual interface between the higher grade elevations of the development site and the lower grade elevations of the adjacent greenway. These include the following:

- A 0.6 m high wood retaining wall along the majority of the west property line and a second 0.6 m high wood retaining wall setback approximately $0.7 \mathrm{~m}(2.3 \mathrm{ft}$.) from the west property line and screened with planting in the lower terrace. A similar terraced wall is to be placed along the northern interface with the east-west portion of the greenway.
- A 12 m wide section of vertical retaining wall constructed with a mix of stone face lock blocks and utility grade lock blocks was to be located adjacent to the northwest visitor parking space and drive aisle end for structural support.
- A guardrail height picket fence (approximately 1.07 m high) is to be located adjacent to the walkway in front of the amenity area and buildings 2 and 3 . A 1.2 m high fence is to be located in front of buildings 1 and 4.

Under the approved plans, the development's internal walkway would not have any direct connection to the May Drive greenway. All of these structures and landscape features are shown in Attachment 2.

## Grade Changes to the May Drive Greenway

In order to retain as many of the existing, mature coniferous trees as possible, the objectives were to avoid changing the grade of the May Drive greenway as little as possible and to introduce storm drainage to protect the long term health of the trees. After development of the surrounding roadways and the adjacent development properties, the greenway is substantially lower at between 0.49 m and 0.96 m GSC. Excessive rains in the past year, a high water table and poor drainage conditions within the May Drive greenway resulted in the remaining trees dying and needing to be removed by Parks Department staff for health and safety reasons.

To prevent a similar situation from occurring in the future with any replacement tree planting, the Parks Department has been working to bring in clean soil fill to raise the May Drive greenway site up to approximately the same elevation as the adjacent lands. A storm drainage system will also be installed once the greenway is fully constructed. Along the property boundary with the subject property at 9560 Alexandra Road, the greenway will be raised to approximately 1.99 m GSC ( 6.52 ft .).

Parks Department staff have prepared a preliminary plan for the greenway (Attachment 4) which they anticipate implementing in 2018, after the site has been raised. In the interim, the greenway will be grass seeded. Given the grade changes to the greenway, the greenway design proposes three pathway connections to the development site at 9560 Alexandra Road if the terraced retaining wall structures can be removed and the interface area raised to match the proposed future grade of the greenway and the development site. Should the terraced retaining wall not be filled in there is a significant likelihood that it will accumulate water and drowning any vegetation in the lower level of the retaining structure.

## Proposed Changes to the Subject Site's Landscape Features

In consultation with City staff, the developer of the subject site ( 9560 Alexandra Road) prepared the plans (Attachment 3) submitted for this General Compliance request that, if approved, will result in a number of modifications to the landscape features at the interface with the adjacent greenway. The main objective of these modifications is to remove the previously approved terraced retaining wall and fill in the grade at the interface between the subject site and the adjacent greenway so that there will be a level transition between the two properties.

The modifications proposed as part of the General Compliance request are as follows:

1. Removal/burying of the terraced wood retaining wall along both the western and northern sides of the site adjacent to the City's greenway (the plan is to remove the top two beams from the taller retaining wall and to bury the lower retaining wall entirely).
2. Removal of the top one or two layers of the vertical concrete block retaining wall adjacent to the parking space and the road end.
3. The lower terrace and the area with the concrete blocks removed would be filled in up to the grade of the overall development and the proposed future grade of the adjacent May Drive greenway.
4. The stepped back guardrail picket fencing will be relocated to the western property boundary.
5. The stepped back fencing north of building one would be relocated to the boundary with the 20 m wide greenway across the north end of the site.
6. A narrow vegetation strip would be installed on the subject property adjacent to the relocated guardrail picket fence along the western property boundary.
7. The pedestrian walkway in front of the amenity area and buildings 2 and 3 would be shifted westward adjacent to the relocated picket fence and the associated vegetation strip.
8. Moving the fencing and pedestrian walkway outward will result in slightly larger rear yard spaces for the amenity area and units in buildings 1,2 and 3 .
9. Three new pedestrian connections will be added between the subject property and future walkways planned within the May Drive greenway; one located at the road end; one located near the amenity building and one adjacent to the gap between buildings 2 and 3 . Gates will be added at each of these locations.
10. Refinement of the landscape shrub and groundcover selections to accommodate the proposed interface changes. No changes are proposed to the originally approved tree selections/quantities.

The proposed changes are highlighted in Attachment 3 plans. A visual characterization of the change is provided in the diagrams below.


## Analysis

The existing terraced retaining wall was intended to provide a softer transition to, and better interface with the adjacent greenway, and was in response to comments by Development Permit Panel (DPP meeting April 13, 2016) which was concerned with the visual abruptness of the grade changes between the greenway and the subject site. With the filling of the greenway site by the Parks Department, the need for the retaining wall structures is negated from both a structural perspective and a visual impact perspective. Removal of the retaining wall affords several improvements to both the greenway and the subject site. Notably:

- It allows for new 'at grade' pedestrian connections from the development to the greenway.
- Residents would now not have to go outside their property to get to the greenway.
- It will result in a better visual interface by removing/burying the retaining wall structure entirely.
- It allows for slightly expanded backyard space for three of the subject site's townhouse buildings and its amenity space, as the subject site's walkway and landscaping shift westward.
- It eliminates the potential for water pooling within the lower terrace level of the retaining wall structure a concern if these structures are now retained.


## Conclusions

Sian Group Investments ( 0846930 BC Ltd.) has requested a General Compliance ruling for proposed changes to the interface conditions with the adjacent May Drive greenway at 9540 Alexandra Road which is currently in the process of being raised by the City Parks Department to alleviate water accumulation concerns and improve the growing conditions for trees to be planted within the greenway.

The proposed modifications identified in this report are within the scope of the General Compliance Guidelines as adopted by Council. Staff have no objection to the proposed revisions. Staff recommend support of this General Compliance request for the proposed changes to the approved Development Permit.


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Attachment 1: Context Map
Attachment 2: Relevant Approved Development Permit Plans
Attachment 3: Proposed Modifications to the Development Permit Plans
Attachment 4: Parks Department Plans for the May Drive Greenway

## City of Richmond




DP 15-700370

Original Date: 07/13/15
Revision Date: 09/29/17

Note: Dimensions are in METRES

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