

Development Permit Panel
Tuesday, September 26, 2012

The Chair, in addressing Mr. Sandu, stated that the Panel expected Mr. Sandhu to: (i) meet with concerned neighbours; and (ii) provide feedback of the meeting through City staff, to the Panel.

Panel Discussion

There were positive remarks regarding the applicant's effort to retain trees on site, the amenity area, the public walkway, and the integration of the project into the neighbourhood.

Comments were made regarding the Panel's desire that the applicant be a good neighbour and address concerns raised by residents at 7771 Bridge Street.

Panel Decision

It was moved and seconded

That a Development Permit be issued which would:

1. *Permit the construction of 34 Townhouse Units at 7691, 7711 and 7731 Bridge Street on a site zoned "Medium Density Townhouses (RTM2)"; and*
2. *Vary the provisions of Richmond Zoning Bylaw 8500 to:*
 - a) *reduce the required side yard setback along the south property line from 3.0 metres to 1.50 meters for Building 7 to enable the retention of a mature tree on the Bridge Street frontage of the site; and*
 - b) *permit resident parking to be provided in a tandem parking configuration for all 34 units.*

CARRIED

The Chair directed staff to report to the Panel on the outcome of the discussion Mr. Sandhu was to have with residents at 7771 Bridge Street.

3. Development Permit 12-615424

(File Ref. No.: DP 12-615424) (REDMS No. 3644532)

APPLICANT: Onni Contracting Ltd.

PROPERTY LOCATION: 7731 and 7771 Alderbridge Way

INTENT OF PERMIT:

1. Permit the construction of a 659-unit project in four (4), six-storey wood frame buildings over two (2) concrete parking structures located at 7731 and 7771 Alderbridge Way;
2. Vary the provision of Richmond Zoning Bylaw 8500 to:

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- a) reduce the required exterior side yard setbacks for portions of partially below-grade parking structures on the proposed Lots 1 and 2 from 3.0 metres to 0.0 metres respectively along Cedarbridge Way and Gilbert Road;
- b) reduce the required interior side yard setback for limited portions of partially-below grade parking structures from 1.5 metres to 0.0 metres along the west property line of the proposed Lot 1 and the east property line of the proposed Lot 2;
- c) reduce the required visitor parking from 0.20 spaces/dwelling unit to 0.15 spaces/dwelling unit for the development as a whole; and
- d) relax the requirement for the provision of on-site loading spaces for two (2) WB-17 loading spaces.

Applicant's Comments

Eric Hughes, Development Department, Onni Contracting Ltd., spoke on behalf of the applicant regarding the proposal to develop four, six-storey buildings, over two concrete parking structures on a site near the Olympic Oval. He stated that the project encompasses 620,000 square feet, and includes 659 units, 48 of them affordable housing units, and that 528 the proposed units meet universal guidelines.

Mr. Hughes mentioned that Onni is making a voluntary contribution to Richmond's Public Art Program, including a cash contribution for a public art piece at the City-owned corner lot at Gilbert Road and the New River Road.

With regard to a timeline for the proposed development, Mr. Hughes noted that the Planning Committee had considered the staff report regarding the site's rezoning, the project had been discussed by the Advisory Design Panel on two separate occasions, the project had been considered at the May, 2012 and June 2012 Public Hearings, and that after approval of a development permit, Onni hoped to launch sales of the proposed residential units in the autumn of 2012.

Mr. Hughes described the wood frame structures as different from surrounding concrete towers, and said that Onni desired to bring a variety of housing stock to the Lansdowne neighbourhood.

He said that the architect's design has a 'concrete feel' and includes design features such as a terrace on the upper floor and aluminum window systems.

Mr. Hughes concluded his remarks by saying that the applicant had worked with staff to refine the project and that upon completion the project, "Riva", would set a benchmark for six-storey wood frame development projects in the Lower Mainland.

Taizo Yamamoto, Yamamoto Architects Inc. provided the following details regarding the proposed development:

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- two greenways are to be provided with pedestrian paths: (i) one runs from the east to the west boundaries of the development, crossing Cedarbridge Way in the centre of the development site; and (ii) one extends from the north to the south on the west side and intersects the west end of the east-west greenway;
- there are four buildings on four quadrants, and each building is arranged around a courtyard, thereby providing semi-public space within each building, while allowing for the maximum amount of sunlight into the courtyards; three buildings are oriented west, while one is oriented north, facing the Fraser River;
- a main challenge is that Alderbridge Way's current elevation is lower than that of the New River Road, resulting in: (i) a 2.6 metre geodectic elevation; and (ii) a 2.5 metre grade difference between Alderbridge Way and the first floor of the adjoining units;
- one solution to the issues that arise from the grade difference is a set pattern around the perimeter of the site realized by a continuous street wall, complete with railings mounted on the face of the wall, or post-mounted, so that there is no additional height requirement;
- there is access to the sidewalk from all ground floor units, with some units having steps up, splitting to individual units;
- along the Alderbridge Way frontage, Buildings 1 and 4 have setbacks that are in excess of those required by the zoning bylaw, and the sidewalk is well within the generous setback;
- Cedarbridge Way will slope up gradually to achieve a 4.0 metre elevation that creates level access through the centre of the subject site, with terraced planters located between the unit patios and the street level;
- the on-site greenway slopes up to a height of 4.0 metres and is level with all at-grade units and lobbies;
- the four lobbies are situated such that they create a "node", which serves as the project's public realm;
- there is one parkade under Buildings 1 and 2, with a second parkade under Buildings 3 and 4; each of the four buildings has its own parkade entrance and visitor parking area; the reduction of parking spaces from 0.20 spaces per dwelling unit to 0.15 spaces per dwelling unit has been worked out with the City's Transportation staff;
- the current lane that runs north/south at the western property line will eventually be turned into a greenway;
- in Building 1 there is a shared ground floor indoor amenity space that includes an indoor swimming pool that will open up on a large common courtyard patio; small meeting rooms will be a feature of both Buildings 3 and 4;

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- the central lobby design, as well as the secondary lobbies, create the opportunity to introduce a “store front” element, with full glazing from ceiling to floor, to provide more emphasis, and a more iconic character;
- the architectural goal was to form a distinctive and modern wood-frame project, with a heavier base for each building, clad in panels, with materials chosen to allow hidden fasteners to create a more solid appearance;
- work was done to differentiate the appearance of the buildings, in terms of massing and material treatment, to ensure a lack of conformity;
- some secondary balconies in Building 1 have been removed since the first design iteration, so that the elements read strongly and create a break in the building’s facade;
- the vertical corner element in Building 2 has the appearance of a concrete and glass tower;
- elements were created for the exterior of Building 3 in order for it to respond better to the existing buildings on Cedarbridge Way;
- Building 4 was designed to create more diversity throughout its streetscape;
- Omni has committed to achieving LEED silver equivalent criteria;
- sustainability features include permeable pavers in the pedestrian pathway areas, and the use of low flow fixtures; and
- the plan is to be ready to connect with a future district energy utility.

David Stoyko, Sharp and Diamond Landscape Architecture Inc., addressed the Panel and briefly described the project’s landscape scheme:

- water features and a variety of gardens in the building’s courtyards will create attractive transitions from the semi-private courtyards to the public streets;
- landscape elements will be applied to the on-site walkways, and individual garden plots will be featured;
- the stepped patio and landscaped terraces help reduce the appearance of grade differences;
- the street walls on Alderbridge Way and New River Road create attractive greenway edges;
- each of the four central courtyards provide a high level of amenity space available to all residents, with generous private terraces, creating a mix of spaces;
- individual buildings feature slightly different amenities, including flex space, a children’s play space, and gardening plots; and
- generally, the landscape materials include ones that relate to the river environment, connect with the river, and provide seasonal colour.

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Panel Discussion

Discussion ensued between the Chair and Mr. Yamamoto, and in particular regarding how the project is in conflict with its parking scheme. In response to that comment, and queries from the Chair, Mr. Yamamoto provided the following advice for clarification:

- due to the lower grade of Alderbridge Way, the rest of the development has been designed to be relative to the grade of Alderbridge Way, with lowered patios and stepped walls; and
- the water table on the subject site impacted the parkades, and if the two parkades were lowered: (i) the privacy of the patios sited on the New River Road would be compromised; and (ii) the parkades would have to be “tanked”, something that is not proposed in the design scheme; the “River Green” project has tanked parkades, but that project is concrete, not wood-frame, as is “Riva”;

Discussion continued among the Panel, Mr. Yamamoto and Mr. Hughes. In response to Panel queries the delegates provided the following information:

- the public art component for the prominent corner at Gilbert Road and the New River Road was discussed with the City’s public art staff and it was determined that the design for the art component would: (i) be undertaken with the City; and (ii) come at a later date;
- the interim treatment of a parched block, with a concrete wall, is planned if the requested variance to reduce the required interior side yard setback for limited portions of the partially-below grade parking structure along the west property line of the proposed Lot 1 and the east property line of the proposed Lot 2 is granted;
- in terms of the 25% reduction in visitor parking spaces, the request to vary the required visitor parking from 0.20 spaces per dwelling unit to 0.15 spaces per dwelling unit for the development as a whole was informed by the intent to provide the 0.15 spaces, even during the rezoning process;
- there are 192 proposed tandem parking spaces on the site;
- due to the connectivity of Alderbridge Way the “ramp up” and “ramp down” design element remains constant: and the private courtyards as well as the water feature will soften the appearance of the ramp elements;
- the private courtyards as well as the waterfall feature, will soften the interface between the subject site and the roadway; and
- the orientation of the buildings’ individual courtyards is such that they will receive the maximum amount of sunlight; and the relatively short height of six stories will also enhance the quantity of sunlight in the courtyards.

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Staff Comments

Mr. Craig drew attention to: (i) the substantial indoor amenity space in Building 1 and noted that it would be part of the first phase of construction; and (ii) the two small amenity spaces in Buildings 3 and 4.

Mr. Craig added that the project was designed to meet the noise mitigation standards set out in the City's Official Community Plan, in relation to aircraft noise.

In response to a query regarding the lack of comment from the City's Parks staff on the Gilbert Road greenway, Mr. Craig advised that only a portion of the greenway is adjacent to the proposed project, and that staff's desire is to look at the entire length of the Gilbert Road greenway. Mr. Craig added that there is no timeline for this.

Gallery Comments

Gordon Walker, CTC Group, advised that he owns the property to the west of the subject site. Mr. Walker supports Onni's "Riva" project but stated concern about the requested variance along the west property line. Mr. Walker stated that his company is in the process of examining its site for development, and was concerned that if the "Riva" parkade was to rise to 8.2 feet, as he understood from the staff report, his company's building and Onni's building would butt up against one another.

Mr. Walker suggested that the applicant meet with the principals of CTC Group to: (i) explain what Onni's proposed development will look like; and (ii) how the proposed development would impact CTC Group's property.

The Chair queried the applicant regarding the proposed height of the street wall. In response Mr. Hughes advised that City staff requested a 10 metre-wide north-south link, and that the design scheme proposes a 5 metre wide right-of-way, with the other 5 metres being added at the time of future development of the property to the west of the subject site.

When the Chair stated that the street wall's height was approximately 8 feet, Mr. Walker advised that that height would have an impact on what CTC Group could develop on their site in the future, and that it should not be assumed that CTC Group's future development would "match" what Onni proposes to do on the subject site.

The Chair directed the applicant to meet with Mr. Walker and the principals of CTC Group for discussions, and to apply the City's area plan guidelines to that discussion.

Correspondence

None.

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Panel Discussion

The Chair complimented many of the features in the proposed design scheme, but raised some concerns. He remarked that the parkade, despite being partially below-grade, dominated the streetscape, and due to this, the project was inconsistent with the City's desired "eyes on the street" casual surveillance of public streets.

The Chair then stated that he would like the applicant to revisit the treatment, particularly for the Alderbridge Way frontage, to determine whether something more can be done. He said that he would like staff to: (i) prepare more information on the northwest corner of the subject site, as well as the plan and timeline for the City's Parks and Transportation departments to work within the adjacent Gilbert Road allowance; and (ii) examine the effect of the disproportionate 25% reduction in visitor parking.

The Chair added that he also wanted the applicant and staff to work together to provide more information regarding the interface with the property to the west of the subject site.

There was general agreement that the Panel supported the Chair's suggestion to refer the application back to staff, to explore the areas outlined by the Chair, and that the application should be brought back for consideration at the Wednesday, October 10, 2012 meeting of the Development Permit Panel.

Panel Decision

It was moved and seconded

That Onni Contracting Ltd.'s DP 12-615424 (7731 and 7771 Alderbridge Way) be referred back to staff, and brought forward for consideration by the Development Permit Panel at its October 10, 2012 meeting, to be held at 3:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers, City Hall, in order for:

- 1. The applicant to revisit the treatment, in relation to the parkade and other elements, for the Alderbridge Way frontage, and determine whether something more could be done;*
- 2. Staff to prepare more information regarding:*
 - (a) the northwest corner of the subject site; and*
 - (b) the plan and timeline for the City's Parks and Transportation plans within the adjacent Gilbert Road allowance;*
- 3. Staff to examine the effect of the disproportionate 25% reduction in visitor parking on the development; and*
- 4. The applicant and staff to provide more information regarding the interface with the property to the west of the subject site.*

CARRIED