

Notes for Planning Committee meeting June 17, 2014  
Re: Steveston Flats

It is highly unlikely that a person's first mental image when they hear the word "village" is Vancouver's Georgia Street, or Yaletown, or the Olympic Athlete's Village in False Creek or even River Green here in Richmond. More likely it will be something that can be described by the adjective "quaint". I don't think Steveston is a cute, whimsical place but according to the dictionary definition, which is that a village is a cluster of buildings larger than a hamlet but smaller than a town, I think Steveston qualifies as a village. So must a lot of other people, including this Council, since that is the way it is always described and advertised, and extensive measures are being taken to preserve it as such including the most recent idea to have it declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

One of the defining characteristics of a village is the relationship of buildings to people. Large structures dwarf people while smaller buildings make people, in comparison, appear larger, more important. This is what is referred to on page 14 of the 1987 Design Criteria for Steveston, also known as the Sakamoto Guidelines, as "human scale".

If we are going to continue using Steveston's village appeal as a selling point, we need to seriously think about protecting it from inappropriate development which alters its fundamental character. We need to learn from past experience. Case in point – the new building at Third Ave. and Bayview. It looked good on paper. It fit all the required criteria and bylaws and yet, when built, is absolutely monstrous. The reaction from everyone I've talked to, without exception, has been something akin to "Oh my God, that's awful, who let that happen? How on earth did that ever get approved?"

If you approve this proposal for Steveston Flats, you are letting it happen again. This will become another monument to bad judgment.

I appreciate the fact that the owner has made some cosmetic revisions to remove the industrial look of the building but putting peaks on the roof and painting it in sky blue or lime green or even "heritage" colours, whatever they may be, does not change the fact that the building is just too big.

I don't have a propensity for math but I can add simple numbers and when I total the elevations listed on the old and new architectural drawings, the height of the building remains the same at 13.49m – over the allowable 12m limit – and that's not including the elevator tower. When the owner says that he has lowered the roofline, he omitted the part about it being only a portion of the roofline not the entire roofline. And the totally illogical explanation by the planning department that there is some leeway in terms of height for a gable roof as opposed to a flat roof doesn't alter the fact that the peak of the roof is overheight. Does everyone think this portion is invisible? It won't be to us.

Removing the bench at the west lane entrance was a petty appeasement compared to my second major concern which has been pretty much ignored - that being the rooftop deck. Again, has nothing been learned from past mistakes? The rooftop living area on the

building at No. 1 and Chatham snuck in under the guise of “access”. The others, on 1<sup>st</sup> Ave., and on Chatham at 5<sup>th</sup> Ave, weren’t slip-ups. They were allowed even though Council said it would never happen again, and now it seems to have become the norm. As pleasant as it might be for the residents, whether it can be seen from the street or not, it is not something that should be approved in Steveston. You can pooh-pooh the notion if you want, but I don’t think it would be far-fetched to find out that residents tired of conveying their lawn chairs in and out of winter storage on the ground level, and hauling their trowels and bags of potting soil and garden fertilizer up and down have installed a small garden shed on the roof. I’m not saying that’s going to happen but how would any of us know if it did?

By eliminating the rooftop deck area you also remove the necessity of the elevator tower thus automatically getting rid of that annoying little height problem.

To see the huge impact of the size of this proposed structure on the privacy of our yard, I took a photograph I had taken of the Gulf and Fraser building in March of 2013 and scaled it to match the architect’s drawing of the west elevation. The composite clearly shows how overbearing this building will be.

This massive building with its commercial base is out of scale and out of place in a block of single family residences. It does not, as the concluding paragraph of the city’s report states, “respect the surrounding single detached housing”.

Please do not approve this application.

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March 26, 2013



WEST ELEVATION (with foreground trees) Art panels scaled to match

3/26/13