

Summary Notes – Evening October 18, 2006

Dinner, Pinnacle Room, Sheraton Hotel

Agenda:

Pre Dinner Comments:

Ted Tyndorf (Welcome)

Gary Wright (A Tale of two Neighbourhoods: St. Jamestown and Railway Lands)

Post Dinner Comments:

Robert Freedman (Tall Buildings and the Growth Management Study)

Paul Strain (HOK Canada: Tall Building Guidelines Overview)

Comments from Guests:

- New York City: Is “insanely jealous” of the Tall building Guidelines; Who judges the qualitative aspects of our process, ie when we respond to applicants, how do they know if they have fulfilled the intent of the Guidelines?
- The guidelines are a wonderful document, and comprehensive, and it is a good idea to test them for 1 year. At what height are they triggered? Is it a 1:1 ratio?
- Speaking from the trenches, if developers follow the criteria in these guidelines, will they give direction to what is an appropriate height? For example, will this help settle an issue of 38 vs 40 storeys? What if Residents in an area don't care? Where does height go?
- Residents like the one year trial period. We need something in the Downtown area, from north downtown to the railway tracks (not just the waterfront). There is no secondary plan, and we are free floating; in a free fall. These Guidelines don't deal with the problem of how high is OK? Residents give a knee-jerk 'no' because there are no parameters, no range of acceptable height, and no protection. How will we be protected?
- What's happening in other Cities? Will we hear tomorrow? How are you going to decide how to regulate tall buildings?
- In Chicago there are no height limits; the zoning gives an FAR, but no height. There is a review process, and a negotiation. Each project is unique, and considered the skyline and neighbourhood fit. There is a culture of working together with the developers, and have a faster approval process than San Francisco (where it can sometimes take 6-7 years). Chicago can learn a lot from this process; we have no Guidelines.
- In New York it is very similar to Chicago; in Midtown there are no height limits. Other areas like Tribeca, Greenwich are neighbourhoods, and have height limits.

- IN Vancouver height is an Urban Design issue; they allow 1-2 towers per block. The question is where to put landmarks. The city insists on lower buildings at the waters edge. Location depends on views, the skyline. The highest buildings are in the financial core. Larry Beasley protected the view corridors, which are framed by the mountains.
- One developer thinks the guidelines threshold is too low; 1:1 is often 8 storeys, which is not a tall building
- What about the Riocan fiasco on Avenue road, where the proposal met the new OP, in light of the Avenues etc, yet was so vehemently opposed by the ratepayers. How do we know this will be real? How will new guidelines/GMS be implemented? Is this real?
- What is needed is the education of the population at large. Staff at Urban Strategies wrote a Citizens Guide to Density. The City should do something similar, like a layman's review to describe height and density; some qualitative case studies. The mode of comparison could be an educational aspect to communicate the message to a broader public audience.