

DATE: March 2, 2023

TO: Chair Ledell and Planning Commission members

CC: Rebecca Kennedy, Deputy Director Community Development, rebecca.kennedy@cityofvancouver.us

FROM: Bryan Snodgrass, Principal Planner, Community Development
Greg Turner, Land Use Manager, Community Development
Amy Zoltie, Real Estate Project Manager, [Economic Prosperity & Housing](#)

RE: **March 14 workshop review of proposed Heights HX Plan District changes**

Background

The Heights Mixed Use (HX) Plan District was adopted in 2021 following City Council's approval of the Heights District Master Plan in 2020 and after a lengthy community planning process that started with the acquisition of the Tower Mall property in 2017. The Heights District is envisioned as a vibrant 15-minute walkable neighborhood that is safe, accessible, equitable and sustainable, and includes a variety of amenities such as a civic plaza, neighborhood park, linear park spanning almost a mile looping around the district (Grand Loop), mixed-income housing, a variety of commercial space to offer entertainment and services to the community and multimodal travel opportunities throughout the district.

Since the adoption of the HX code, the City team has been working to advance the next phases of plan implementation. The City entered into a contract with urban design firm, First Forty Feet (FFF) to refine the layout of the district and design the infrastructure. FFF reviewed the Plan recommendations for the Tower Mall Redevelopment Area (TMRA) and recommended a suite of refinements to ensure future development meets the Plan goals and intent, which require several updates to the HX code.

Summary of Proposed Plan Refinements and Code Changes

Proposed refinements to the Tower Mall Redevelopment Area (TMRA) Plan include the following:

- Relocation of the Civic Plaza east to front Devine Road and be visible from the Mill Plain Boulevard, thus improving both access and visibility to this major public gathering area. As a

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major attractor, the Civic Plaza is an opportunity to promote ground-floor uses to create a retail, dining, and entertainment destination and a focus for activity in the district.

- Realignment and extension of the Grand Loop to promote its identity and increased use by connecting to the Greenbelt Park and planned walk and bike facilities along MacArthur Boulevard.
- Relocation of the Neighborhood Park to promote increased visibility, use and function and a clear and identifiable “entry gateway” to the Grand Loop. Future development provides active edge uses surrounding the park and increase the value of redevelopment properties.

The revised plan and notations of the changes is shown below.



The project team has engaged the community in reviewing and providing feedback on the proposed plan changes. These include an open house hosted on October 6, 2022; a workshop with City Council on November 28, 2022; presentations to the Culture, Arts and Heritage Commission on November 15, 2022, the Transportation and Mobility Commission on December 6, 2022, and the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee on January 18, 2023; as well as one-on-one conversations with community stakeholders and online surveys through the project’s BeHeard page. There was no public opposition to the changes.

Proposed code changes will amend VMC 20.670 to align with refinements to the Tower Mall Redevelopment Area (TMRA) Plan as detailed above.

These modifications include:

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- Update the *Ground Floor Use Map*, Figure 20.670-2 consistent with the Master Plan refinements for street layout and block formation.
- Modify the Ground-Floor Use Regulations by Frontage Type to promote active retail, entertainment, and dining oriented to the Civic Plaza.
- Adjust portions of text to maintain consistency and delete some unclear or non-essential narrative.
- Add new standards to regulate off-street parking access by limiting vehicle, pedestrian, and bicycle conflicts and better promote non-motorized access and use of the Grand Loop.

Attachment A is a tracked changes copy of VMC 20.670 to identify the proposed changes.

These recommendations are in line with the Heights District vision of creating a vibrant and engaging neighborhood center and ensures private development executes this vision.

Next Steps

Staff anticipates returning to Planning Commission for a public hearing pending Council review at an April 10 workshop. Future Planning Commission and Council public hearings have not yet been scheduled.

Staff Contact Information

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Attachments

- A. RECOMMENDED MODIFICATIONS to VMC 20.670, THE HEIGHTS PLAN DISTRICT