



Revitalizing our Village

March 7, 2022

Dear Mayor and Council:

Re: Future of the former Safeway site in Point Grey Village (4545 West 10th Avenue)

I am writing on behalf of Friends of Point Grey Village¹, a recently formed group of residents and business owners who care deeply about the future of our neighbourhood shopping area. The redevelopment of the Safeway site presents a wonderful opportunity for needed commercial and residential uses, plus community amenities. As a proposed MIRHPP project, we are concerned that the proposal for this large site will be unreasonably limited if it has to closely adhere to the guidelines.

We formally request Council to direct staff to adopt flexibility with regard to MIRHPP limitations. The West Point Grey Community Vision, adopted by Council in 2010, outlined a process for a comprehensive planning analysis and engagement process in advance of any rezonings for the Safeway site. We ask the City to begin community engagement now in order to clarify community needs and hopefully come up with a community/developer win-win formula.

Our rationale: As you are aware, our Safeway supermarket closed in 2018, which was a big blow to the vitality of the Village. Of the 125 storefronts, about 25 are currently vacant. This means our local storefront vacancy is now 20%, three times the rate considered healthy according to a recent City study. These figures do not include the vacant Safeway property, (almost 3 acres) where approximately 40,000 square feet of commercial space was demolished. What happens on this key site is a multi-generational opportunity and will greatly influence the future of the Point Grey Village.

We understand from a conversation with Tony Astles, Managing Partner, Head of Canadian Real Estate at BentallGreenOak, that it wishes to develop the site under MIRHPP with rental housing and a major grocery store. There has been no public input so far, and we know from past experience that once a project is designated for MIRHPP City staff show very little flexibility in accepting community input. The situation that the rezoning enquiry is confidential eliminates the fundamental nature of community input at the initial conceptual stage which is most critical in developing and testing options.

All MIRHPP projects to date have had density and height limits specified in the original MIRHPP policy. That may be part of staff's rationale for lack of community engagement. However, in **November 2019**, City Council at staff's request, made an amendment to the MIRHPP policy to enable large sites to be considered, with no density and height limits specified. BentallGreenOak submitted a MIRHPP application in **December 2019**. This situation gives even more rationale for early and meaningful public engagement. The current process is in conflict with the City's policies on inclusive, equitable engagement.

¹ Friends of Point Grey Village has eight board members (four residents, four business owners) and 365 members. There is an advisory board and volunteer teams for various tasks.

The only large site situated in the heart of the Village offers a unique opportunity to deliver more than housing and a grocery store, specifically some public amenity such as a larger, permanent space for the library branch (as called for in the Library Facilities Plan 2018), a much-needed daycare, and a small but inviting public gathering place. The constraints of the MIRHPP policies and development finance will not allow this.



A pivotal Village site

- *no neighbourhood plan in place,*
- *no height and density guidelines in MIRHPP*
- *clear rezoning process guidance in the Council-approved WPG Community Vision not being followed*
- *need for public engagement at the initial conceptual stage—NOW*
- *One option presented at a developer's open house does not constitute community engagement*

We aspire to be proactive, think outside the ordinary, work with the City of Vancouver, BentallGreenOak, Point Grey Business Improvement Association, West Point Grey Residents Association, West Point Grey Community Centre Association, and Vancouver Public Library.

The absence of upfront meaningful community dialogue is likely to delay development of the site. We all aspire to more housing choice, a new grocery store, community amenities, and the development of the vacant lot scarring our neighbourhood as quickly as possible. Lengthy rezoning processes are in no one's interests. We want to be able to appear at the public hearing in support of this "jewel in the crown" of Point Grey Village.

Sincerely,

Jean Baird, Chair of Friends of Point Grey Village Board

<https://friendsofpointgreyvillage.ca>

Cc. Paul Mochrie, City Manager

Theresa O'Donnell, General Manager/Director of Planning

Christina deCastell, Chief Librarian and CEO, Vancouver Public Library

Yardley McNeill, Assistant Director, Rezoning Centre

Dan Garrison, Assistant Director, Housing Policy and Regulation

Peter Vaisbord, Program Lead, BIA Program/Business Districts

Karis Hiebert, Manager, Vancouver Plan

Andrew Pask, Senior City Planner

Paul Kreuger, Transportation Planner

Pat Lau, Rezoning Planner

Chris Robertson, Assistant Director, City- Wide Planning

David Roche, Project Manager, Bentall Green Oak

Marion Fudge, President, Point Grey Business Improvement Association

Lance Chung, Point Grey Village BIA Co-ordinator

Elizabeth Murphy, President, West Point Grey Community Centre Association

West Point Grey Residents Association Board of Directors

David Eby, MLA, Vancouver- Point Grey

Joyce Murray, MP, Vancouver Quadra