

Future of the Safeway Site

Open letter to the community from Friends of Point Grey Village

July 12, 2023



Perspective from 10th Avenue



Perspective from 9th Avenue

A new proposal for the Safeway site was unveiled at a community open house on June 27, 2023. Thank you to everyone who took the time to attend and thank you to the developer for providing an “in person” chance for the community to see the plans.

How to find out about the new proposal and how to have “input”.

We know there is widespread citizen fatigue and cynicism related to how community aspirations have been considered in the planning and development process. We also know one thing for sure—if we choose to be silent we will not accomplish positive change.

Here is what you can do now:

1. BentallGreenOak has invited the community to submit their views on the new concept by July 18, 2023. Please visit the site and provide your views on the proposal by July 18, 2023 Updated Scheme: Pre-Application Consultation – June 2023 - 4545 W 10th www.4545wtenth.com
2. Write directly to the city planners and Mayor and Council, preferably before the end of the summer. Email addresses are at the end of this newsletter.

Vancouver Plan 2050 Goals Not Met

Hopes were high that a totally new concept would emerge because it was this time last year that City Council endorsed a bold new vision for the City, called **Vancouver Plan 2050**. This plan,

many years in the making, is meant to be the blueprint for everyone to follow to help meet the City's shared vision.

One of the three big ideas contained in the Vancouver Plan is "*Equitable Housing and Complete Neighbourhoods.*" The Plan explains that this means more affordable housing, especially rental, and at the same time will:

"create more complete, walkable, neighbourhoods by adding services and amenities like child care, plazas, community facilities, and access to affordable, nutritious food. [Vancouver-Plan-2022-09-23-1.pdf \(vancouverplan.ca\)](https://vancouverplan.ca/2022-09-23-1.pdf). page 40

If the Vancouver Plan is going to have any impact, surely there is a way to incorporate these aspirations into the three-acre Safeway site, a once in multiple-generational opportunity, in the heart of the village.

The Development Dilemma—Community loses out

BentallGreenOak (BGO): is a "global real estate company with 28 offices in 14 countries and \$83 billion of asset under management," according to a display board at the open house. BGO is owned by Sun Life International. It has the simple and clear objective of making profits and providing on this site a long-term revenue stream. BGO is only interested in providing rental housing and commercial floor space.

The previous City Council understandably wanted this site to make a contribution to the affordable housing crisis so it amended one of the their existing pilot project policies to allow BGO to create a development made up of 80% market rental, and 20% below market rental for moderate-income households. The original parameters of the pilot project were not intended for large sites. It is also worth noting that this pilot project has not yet been evaluated by city staff in terms of effectiveness in meeting City objectives.

BGO followed the formula given by the City. BGO crunched the numbers and determined that there was no money left on the table to fulfill Vancouver Plan's complete neighbourhood aspirations. The community had also asked BGO for a number of amenities such as a badly needed day care, a permanent home for the library, an attractive village square, wider sidewalks, improvements to 10th Avenue to make it safer and more pleasant, and careful traffic management to reduce impacts of the 1000+ people who will be living on the site and the hundreds of daily customers to the grocery store.

What did the second plan produce in the way of community amenities? There is a larger plaza on the west side of the property. In exchange for providing this modest plaza the developer proposed an additional 25,000 square feet of density over the 2022 plan. At, say 600 square feet per unit, that is 41 extra units. That bonus equals more than a third of the total number of affordable units in the entire project, which is 113.



View down 10th Avenue from Sasamat Street.

Artist Perspective provided by Bentall GreenOak

Better Community Solutions are Possible

What are the solutions for enabling this special site to provide both affordable housing and contribute to complete neighbourhoods?

1. **The City has to be flexible with its policies:** The requirement of 20% below market units does not have to be set in stone. City Council already adjusted its policy to allow BGO to apply. They can adjust it again. What happens, for example, if BGO is asked to provide 80 below market units rather than the proposed 113 units? How much money is left on the table for community amenities?
2. **Reconsider the grocery store size:** BGO says four grocery chains are interested in the 37,000 square foot space for a supermarket. The previous Safeway was about 25,000 square feet so this means about a 50% increase in store size. We do not need a supermarket that big. About 15,000 square feet is fine and there will be tenants interested in a smaller space—and hopefully more than just the big chains. That leaves 22,000 square feet for a day care and library, for example. In addition, the height of the grocery store is 30 feet in the concept plans—surely there must be ways to create a functional mezzanine level to locate missing community amenities.
3. **Apply some creativity and partnerships:** Global financial institutions are not known for their creativity and understanding of or care about local community needs. The City

needs to take the lead and work with BGO to create a development that creates enduring value to BGO, the wider City, and the local community.

BGO is expected to submit a formal rezoning application in the next couple of months. The public hearing will probably be in a year or longer from now. We will keep you informed on how you can continue to help improve the development before it gets to the public hearing stage.

Please take a few minutes to write to city hall staff and council.

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