

Message from Community to Developer: “Let’s work together to create livable density and a heart for Point Grey Village”

You might be tempted to say any housing development with a grocery store is better than the vacant Safeway site so let’s get on with it. That is how the developer, BentallGreenOak (BGO), wants you to react. In fact, BGO was so sure of what it believed was best, it submitted a first design scheme without consultation with the City. BGO staged pre-application Open Houses for the community in May 2022 and that is when the City found out about its first proposal. So, the City sent BGO back to the drawing board. BentallGreenOak came up with a revised plan and had a pre-application community Open House on June 27th 2023.

BGO has now submitted a rezoning application to the City. Over the next year or so, City staff will be reviewing it and the proposed design will go to public hearing. So that means there will two more opportunities for you to let the City know what you think 1) at a City-sponsored open house in the new year and 2) at the final public hearing, probably in about a year’s time.

The purpose of this newsletter is to encourage the developer and the City to work with the community and improve the proposal for future residents, current residents and the vitality of Point Grey Village.

Please send us your comments and suggestions concerning a) if you agree with these ideas or not, and b) if you have additional ideas we all should be thinking about. Comments can be sent to jeanbaird@shaw.ca.

We all want a grocery store and more housing supply as quickly as possible. However, [Friends of Point Grey Village](#) feel it is too vital a site for the future of the village to give up on creating enduring community value for our generation and generations to come. We know our view is shared by many of our neighbours and business owners. By putting these comment forward, we tried as much as possible to speak for both the current residents of Point Grey and the future residents who will live in the new development and become our neighbours.

The Thinking Behind the BentallGreenOak [Link to proposal](#)

As far as we can tell the current form of development was shaped by the following elements:

- 1) **Housing Tenure/Diverse housing types:** Rental housing only, the developer for Sun Life International, BGO, wishes to develop rental only housing for a long term cash flow and to hold onto an appreciating property asset.
A city rental incentive program called *Moderate Income Rental Housing Pilot Project* was amended by Council in 2019 to allow BGO to apply. This program requires developers to provide 20% of the units at below market rents. The original pilot project parameters was not intended for sites of this size, or in the middle of a village.
- 2) **Maximize density on the site:** Understandably the returns for the developer are maximized by putting as much density as possible on the site.
- 3) **Do not provide community services and public spaces:** BGO viewed its below market rental housing contribution as the community benefit so it did not offer any other amenities such as a

child care, more public space, including an inviting plaza. (The City is going to have to problem-solve this dilemma by either reducing the requirement for the number of below market units and/or providing funding for community facilities.)

- 4) **Provide a Large Grocery Store:** BGO stated that there was market interest in a 37,000 square foot grocery store, about 50% larger than the former Safeway. No market studies on retail trade areas have been shared to determine the right size for Point Grey Village. We all want a new grocery store but what is the right size and how best can space be used on this key village site? And why is the grocery store business determining the size, rather than community need?
- 5) **Minimize construction costs:** Design solutions such as providing truck deliveries at grade, rather than in the parking garage structure, and providing only one entrance to the residential units and retail space reduced costs but at the expense of reduced livability and poor traffic circulation. At a zoom Open House in 2022 the architect when pressed that the development was producing a “Noise Corridor” off Sasamat finally, with some frustration it seemed, declared that urban life is noisy.
- 6) **Minimize the impact of shadows on single detached homes north of the site by placing high rise buildings on 10th Avenue and reducing density on 9th Avenue.** This assumption has caused many design flaws. The narrow sidewalk on 10th Avenue with apartments located on the street creates a fortress effect and results in more noise and poor air quality for apartment residents. Community planning is all about trade-offs and a close look at who benefits and who is impacted from this approach is needed. Other solutions are possible.



Someone forgot to tell the architects that this development is located in a neighbourhood centre. BentallGreenOak's proposal shown to the community in June, 2023 misses the mark in providing an attractive, livable development appropriate to the village scale.

7 Innovative Place-Making Ideas from the Community

The illustration below shows the developer's proposal for 566 housing units. The accompanying table suggests ways to enhance the development and make it the heart of the Point Grey Village.

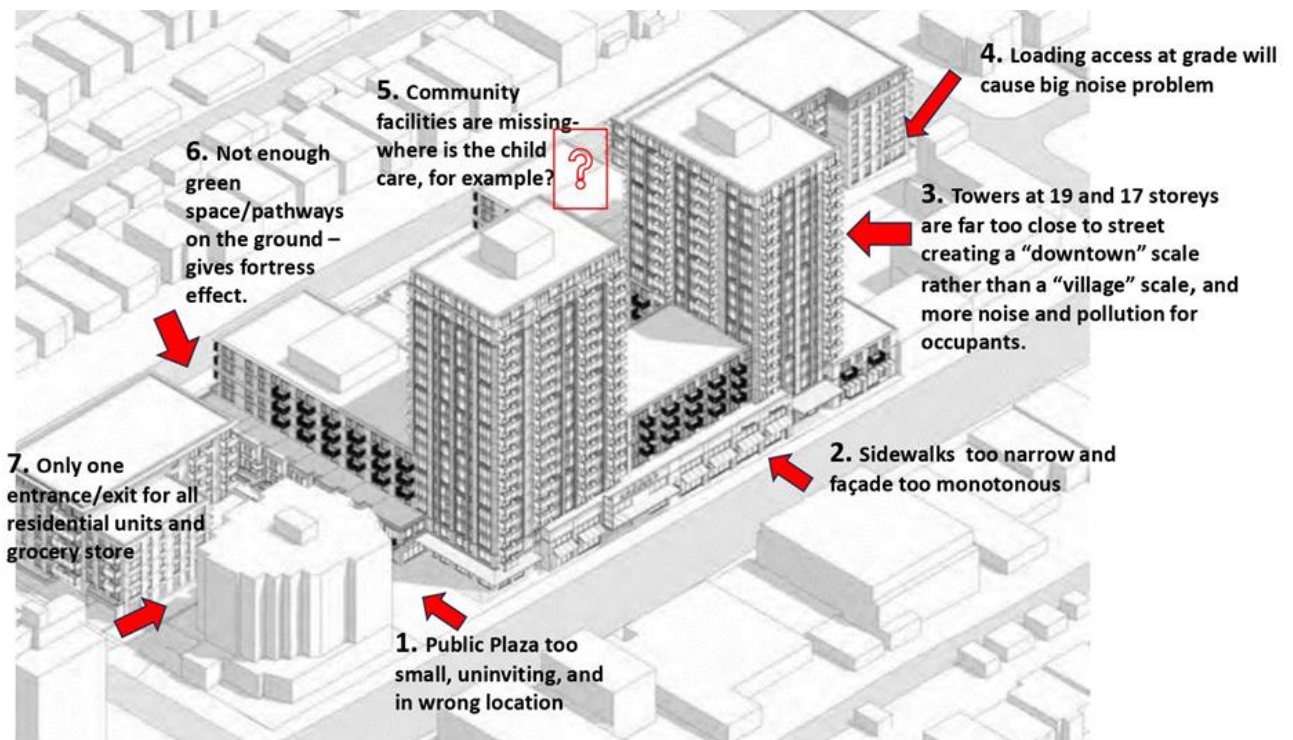
We want to be able to support the development at the public hearing next year. Many of these ideas have already been presented to BGO but unfortunately have fallen on deaf ears.

Now is the time to consider these improvements. By the time the public hearing occurs, City staff and Council will have already made up their minds.

The sources for these ideas are many:

- We gathered comments from our community, including our business owners.
- We asked a number of urban designers, planners and architects for their ideas on how to improve the proposal and they have generously provided their volunteer time to help out.
- A UBC urban planning class took on the ailing Point Grey Village as a class project and provided many bright ideas.
- We have looked at City planning policy for guidance, ranging from the aspirations for the site contained in the West Point Grey Community Vision, endorsed by Council in 2010, to the Vancouver Plan endorsed by Council in July 2022.

Many Creative Design Improvements are Possible



This diagram shows the proposed design from BentallGreenOak and explains 7 ways it can be improved. See table below for explanation of these improvements.

Problem	Vancouver Plan and other City policy guidance	Solution
1. Public Plaza too small and uninviting. It is set off to one end, away from the center of the village. It will not be an attractive gathering place and focal point for the community.	Policy-Equitable Housing and Complete Neighbourhoods. Create more complete walkable neighbourhoods by adding services and amenities like child care, plazas, community facilities. Studies on social isolation show importance of public gathering spaces.	Move plaza to centre of the development, which would break up the long boring façade created by the over-sized grocery store. Grocery store could be on one side of the plaza and library or other shops could be on the other side.
2. Sidewalks too narrow and façade too monotonous.	Vancouver Plan shows illustrations of generous sidewalks in neighbourhood centres providing important, safe, functional public space as well as room for cafes, tree planting, seating, bike racks, and display of retail goods.	Placing the towers right on the sidewalk leads to narrow sidewalks to maximize density. Setting the towers back in the site will provide more flexibility for wider sidewalks. The City could look at opportunities to reclaim some road space in this block, perhaps by removing some parking and extending the sidewalk. Also, a mid-block crosswalk would help with safety and excessive speed.

Problem	Vancouver Plan and other City policy guidance	Solution
3. Towers of 19 and 17 storeys are far too close to street creating a “downtown” scale rather than a village scale and creating noise and pollution for future apartment residents.	Vancouver Plan shows examples of mid rises and high rises on arterial and off arterial streets, such as Kerrisdale and West End examples. The existing apartment towers west of the site between Tolmie and Blanca have large, treed setbacks making them more pleasant for residents and for pedestrians.	There are many alternative ways to set the high rise buildings back to create a village scale as well as increase livability and sunlight for future residents. The main trade off is increased shadowing on detached homes on 9 th avenue. The homes on 9 th avenue are screened by mature street trees and have private backyards. The impacts on the current and future apartment residents on the south side of 10 th and at Point Grey Place also need to be considered. On balance, the benefits of setting high rises back in the site are greater than the downsides.
4. Truck Loading access at grade will cause big noise problems	City Noise policies focus on reducing noisy urban environments.	In developments of this size, loading is almost always within a parking structure, significantly reducing noise and pollution impacts.
5. Community facilities are missing.	Policy-Equitable Housing and Complete Neighbourhoods Create more complete walkable neighbourhoods by adding services and amenities like child care, plazas, community facilities. City of Vancouver Childcare Strategy.	Provide a child care – outdoor space can be provided on roofs of buildings. This is also the ideal location for a permanent home of West Point Grey Library. A more spacious, purpose-built library will double as a space for seniors, family events and activities, and other community space. One idea is providing the library in the mezzanine level over the grocery store.
6. Not enough greenspace/pathways on the ground – gives a feeling of being too dense and fortress-like.	Vancouver Plan and Green City policies emphasize the need for planting, storm run off, shaded areas for outdoor seating, etc.	A central plaza and a greenway extending to the north end of the property will improve greenscape considerably.
7. Only a single entrance and exit for all residential units and grocery store, located off Tolmie Street.	Transportation policies require analysis of ways of reducing traffic impacts and adding flexibility for emergency management.	Provide an additional entrance off Sasamat. Tolmie is not designed to carry all the traffic. Turning movements and queues concentrated on one intersection may interfere with bus speeds and other traffic as happened during the soil remediation work.

Design Ideas Illustrated

Central Plaza



A central plaza provides an inviting social space, well away from noise of 10th Avenue, room for café/restaurant patio space, and visually breaks up boring façade. Grocery store can be located on one side of the plaza and library/and or additional commercial space can be located on the other side.

Setting High Rises Back on the Site –Take Advantage of Extra Depth of Site

Make use of the depth of the site- it is a rare and wonderful design opportunity for the village:

Where would you rather live, in a peaceful location in the north part of the site or right atop 10th Avenue? There are many alternative locations to siting the high rises, which would help preserve the village scale and provide more livability for future residents.



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More Sidewalk Space on 10th Avenue

Guidance and diagram below from the Placemaking and Urban Design section of Vancouver Plan: Create equitable, resilient environments that have distinct identities, encourage social connections, and create better communities.

Note wide sidewalk with café seating but also a free, pleasant place to sit under the trees in a public space.





The developer says that the sidewalk on 10th will be as wide as in front of Stong's in Dunbar. This means only 20 inches wider than the normal setback on Dunbar. This café is pleasant but often conflicts occur with tables being knocked by opening car doors, and tables interfering with pedestrian space and bike racks. When it starts to rain, there is very little sheltered space. It is recommended that sidewalk space be at least 20 feet deep. It can be narrower than 20 feet in places, provided a central plaza is part of the re-design.



The multiple award winning “Rise” retail/housing development at Cambie and Eighth has many lessons for the Safeway site—very generous sidewalk width on Cambie, interesting façade, sunny plaza location, housing set back in the development, away from noise and pollution of the busy street.



Mid – block crosswalks are one of the many great suggestions on how to make 10th Avenue safer and more pleasant for everyone. Drawing by Lori Brown.



Possible treatment on 9th Avenue- save the existing street trees, provide a greenway through the centre of the site for direct access to shops and bus stop, and provide generous setbacks from the street. Drawing by Lori Brown.

Building Complete Communities and a Strong Village: The Importance of Community Facilities

Density is much more acceptable when it comes with all the facilities a community needs. Imagine, for example, the convenience of a child care in the development both for the residents in the new development and the wider community. Award-winning rooftop child care in Gastown shown below.



Permanent Home for West Point Grey Library

The West Point Grey Library, which also serves the rapidly growing family population at UBC, has had to make do with retail space designed for shops since it opened in 1978. The retail space they recently moved into is too small. Lighting is poor, and the seats near the window and natural light are in high demand and often all occupied.

What better place for a purpose-built library than above or beside the supermarket. Studies on the vitality of strong neighbourhood centres show that a library is a tremendous boost to the social and

economic make-up of centres.



Artist impression by Lori Brown of what purpose-built library spaces could look like.

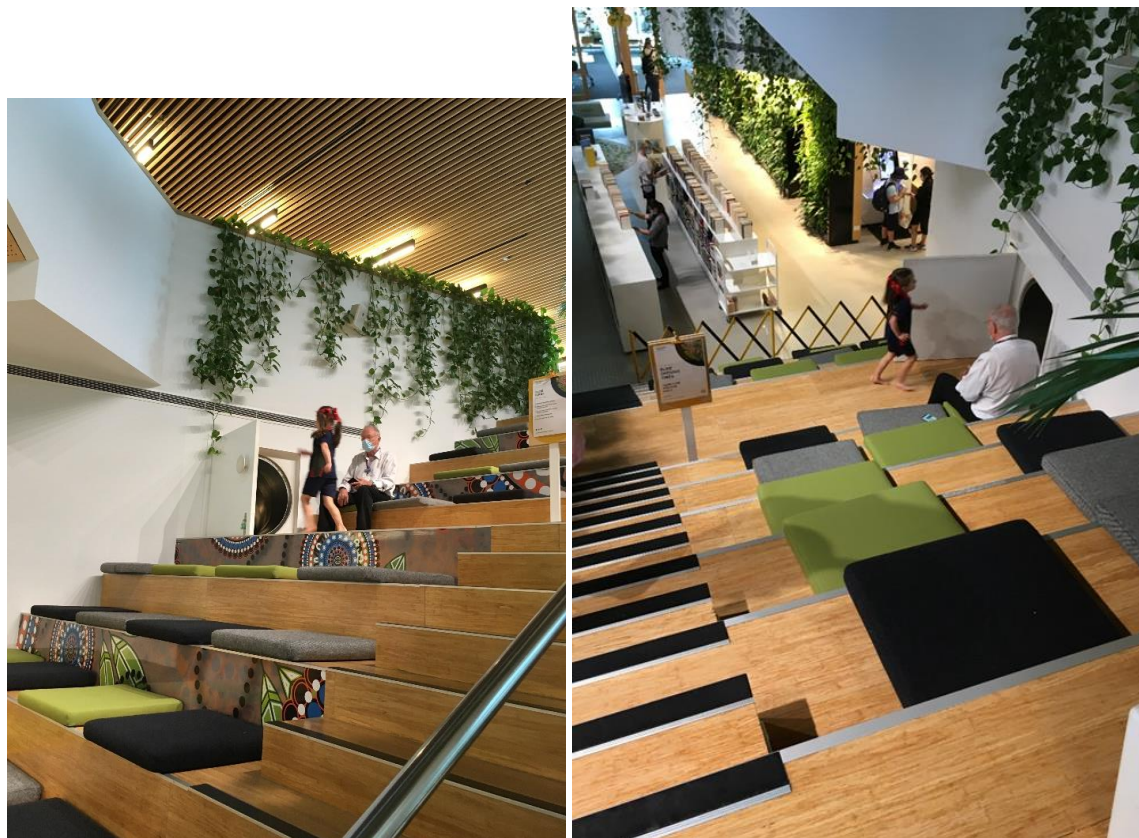


Ironwood library in Ironwood Shopping Centre in Richmond.



Bright lights celebrate this library in the municipality of Woollahra, near downtown Sydney, Australia. It is located above the shops on a retail street and was a joint venture between the municipality of Woollahra and a grocery store chain. Great example of municipality and developer working together.

<https://www.indeawards.com/the-social-space-2017/woollahra-library/>



On her way to the kids' book section via a slide.