
April 2, 2024 Newsletter

Safeway Site Proposal: 10 Ways to Improve the Development

Building Housing and Community

Members of Friends of Point Grey Village are often stopped on 10th Avenue. Usually it is someone from the community who just wants to say, “Thanks for keeping the community informed” or “Thanks for helping us think of ways to improve the development.” Since the recent article in the national edition of the [Globe & Mail](#) community interest and concern has been heightened. As noted in the Globe, a significant development "can make or break a neighbourhood."

A question we are often asked by our neighbours and local businesses is, “What can we do to help?” Getting the proposal improved requires having voices from the community taken seriously. We are not NIMBY’s – we support significant housing development in the heart of the village and appreciate the benefits more residents will bring to our village. We also understand and support the City policies designed to create thriving neighbourhood centres.

In the [Globe & Mail article](#), David Roche of BGO says, "BGO understands how important this site is to the community." To date there has been no evidence of that. A recent letter to Friends noted that, "Concern for community isn't part of BGO's corporate DNA." [BGO](#) is a Miami- based multinational real estate investment firm with \$83 billion USD in assets under management. It is in the business of holding rental housing developments for the long term. The improvements suggested by the community and the Urban Design Panel, if

implemented, will create enduring value for the developer by increasing the livability and convenience of its development.

All levels of government are rightfully concerned about the housing crisis. There is no need, however, to throw proper planning and urban design out the window. It is possible to create the much-needed housing supply *and* have well designed, convivial and convenient places for everyday life.

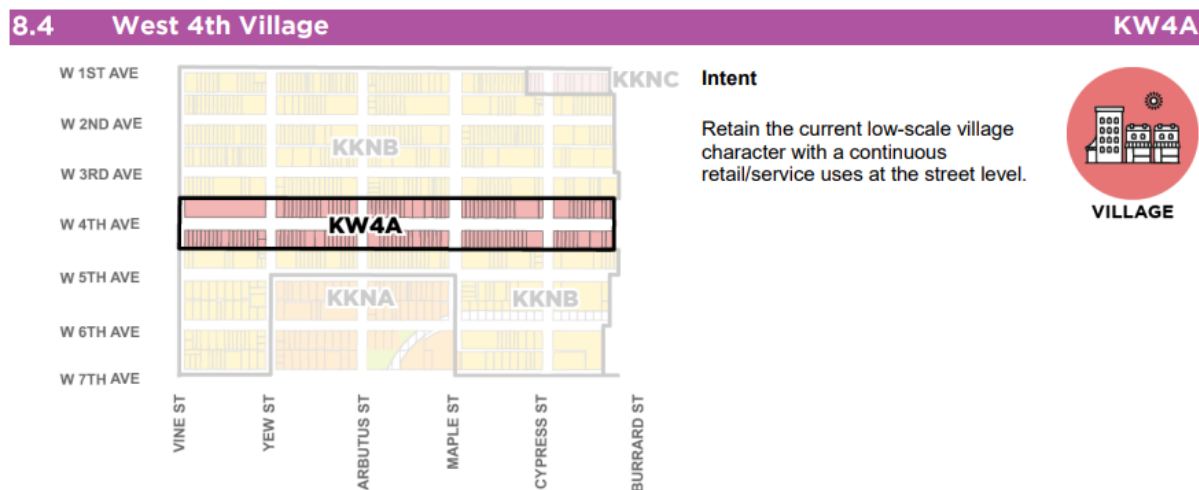
Update of Recent Actions

- a well-attended Open House on February 8, 2024.
- online comments still being collected by City staff [4545 W 10th Ave rezoning application | Shape Your City Vancouver](#).
- many dozens of questions from the community and staff responses can be found on this link [4545 W 10th Ave rezoning application | Shape Your City Vancouver](#).
- insightful critique in application review by the Urban Design Panel [February 21, 2024 - UDP minutes \(vancouver.ca\)](#).
- the proposal has garnered significant local and national media coverage, links below.
- the possibility of a childcare on site is being investigated.
- Friends of Point Grey Village made a presentation to the Board of the Point Grey Business Improvement Association to discuss possible improvements to the proposal.
- City staff is now reviewing the feedback and working with BGO, to include improvements in the final design.

Every Neighbourhood Deserves Attractive, Lively Neighbourhood Centres

A special appeal of Vancouver is its neighbourhood villages/centres. It is a long-standing City policy to protect neighbourhood shopping villages by keeping building height on the shopping street frontage to a maximum of 6 storeys. The reason for this height limit is for solar access and to create a pleasant, human scale. This concept is reinforced in Vancouver Plan, approved by Council in July 2022: *Policy L.1.6.5 Maintain lower building height (up to 6 storeys) along local shopping streets to maintain solar access, with higher forms considered in the immediate surrounding area.*

The most recently approved Area Plan, the Broadway Plan, maintains this policy for the 4th Avenue village in Kitsilano. You will see similar patterns throughout the city on neighbourhood shopping streets.



Broadway Plan, page 91-93, effective as of September 2022, maintains a height limit of 6 storeys on the 4th Ave frontage, consistent with neighbourhood centre policy throughout the City.

CALL TO ACTION

Several months ago, Councillor Lisa Dominato of A Better City (ABC) party told Friends of Point Grey Village that she has observed that better results occur when the community and

developer work together. Wise advice. Friends have repeatedly asked David Roche of BGO to discuss ideas for improvement and he has declined. (Recently David Roche of BGO was reportedly spotted on the site with three ABC councillors. Friends would welcome a conversation with councillors as well.)

Friends also approached BGO's two PR firms in the hope of community collaboration, Pottinger Bird and the Pooni Group. No interest on their part either.

It appears the PR firms, in exchange for their hefty fees, are being asked by BGO to produce some statistics to manufacture support, lobby council, and bring supportive delegations to the public hearing. This approach is crude and insulting to democracy.

Of course, Friends and the Point Grey BIA support a development on the site but surely the goal is to create an enduring community asset that works for the developer, the community, local businesses and is consistent with City-wide policies. So far all we see is a development that was designed on a spreadsheet of a multi-national corporation.

Had BGO and its PR firms taken a progressive attitude toward place-making and city-building, we would have no need to ask for your help. Once again, Friends are asking the community to write to City Staff, Mayor and Council to let them know how you think the development could be improved. Please see a list of suggestions below. THANK YOU!

Send emails directly to the Mayor and Councillors

ken.sim@vancouver.ca, mike.klassen@vancouver.ca, peter.meiszner@vancouver.ca, brian.montague@vancouver.ca, sarah.kirby-yung@vancouver.ca, rebecca.bligh@vancouver.ca, lisa.dominato@vancouver.ca, lenny.zhou@vancouver.ca, adriane.carr@vancouver.ca, pete.fry@vancouver.ca, christine.boyle@vancouver.ca

Send a copy to Project Coordinator. scott.erdman@vancouver.ca, and Director of Planning matt.shillito@vancouver.ca

Write to your Provincial MLA, Premier David Eby david.eby.MLA@leg.bc.ca and your Federal MP Joyce.Murray@parl.gc.ca

10 Ways to Improve the Safeway Site Development Proposal

1. Maintain Village Scale on 10th Avenue

As described above, it is long standing City policy to protect neighbourhood shopping districts by keeping building height on the shopping street frontage to a maximum of 6 storeys. Point Grey does not have its own neighbourhood plan but clear guidance is found in the Vancouver Plan neighbourhood centre policies. A re-distribution of housing density on this site could easily be achieved consistent with City-wide neighbourhood centre policy because of the depth and large size of this site.

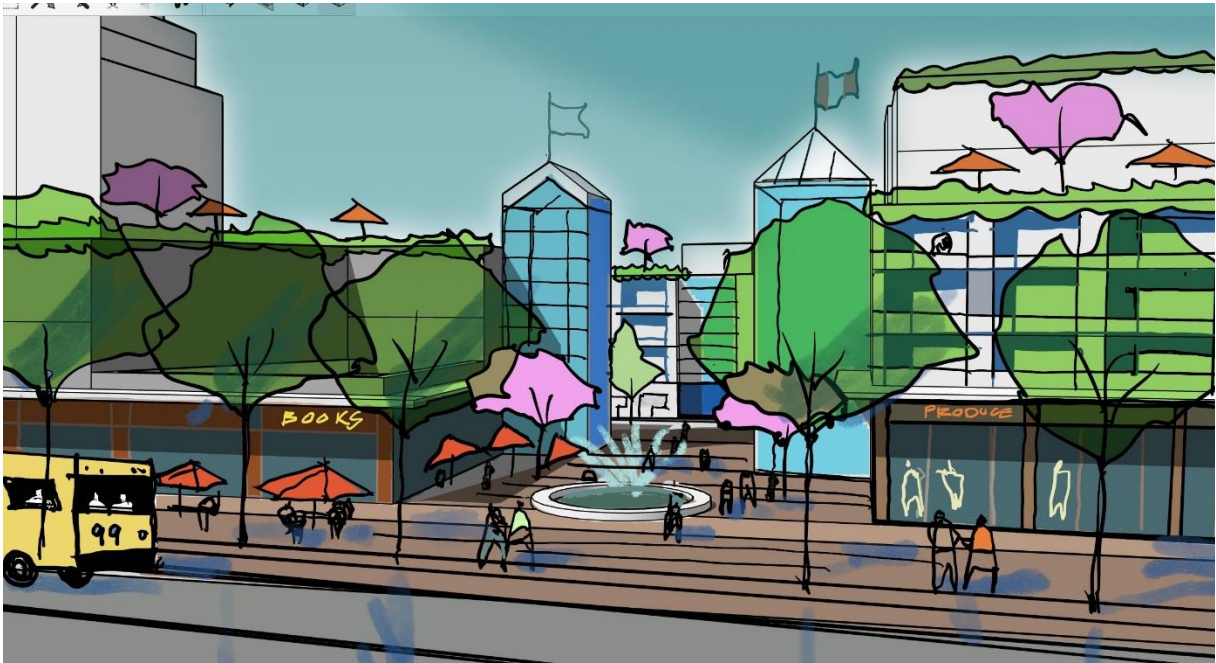
2. Create a lively, dynamic streetscape on 10th Avenue

Two factors are undermining the streetscape performance of the proposed development—the 10th Avenue sidewalk is too narrow (by at least 8 feet) and the large grocery store frontage is 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. City policies also suggest smaller shops along the façade to create lively, interesting shopping streets.

3. Provide a heart to the village with a well-designed plaza

The proposed plaza is too small and uninviting. (One member of Urban Design Panel said considering the size of the site, the proposed plaza is a "postage stamp.") It is set off to one

end, away from the centre of the development. It will not be an attractive gathering place and will be in shade at many times of the day. The best place for the plaza is in the centre of the development, which would break up the long façade and provide a greenway connection to the north of the site and also a connection to a mid-block crosswalk.



An urban designer's sketch of what a lively façade and public space could look like along 10th Avenue

4. Evaluate traffic management options

Only a single entrance and exit for all residential units and the grocery store patrons is proposed, located off Tolmie Street. Tolmie is a narrow street with currently two lanes of parking and only one lane for traffic. Tolmie is not designed to carry all the traffic that the development will create. Turning movements and queues concentrated on one intersection will certainly interfere with bus flow and other traffic.

Options to test include: providing an additional entrance/exit off Sasamat, providing entrance only on Sasamat and exit only on Tolmie. Another solution that needs evaluation is

the possibility of the existing west entrance off 10th Avenue being retained. It is a policy of the City to avoid creating curb cuts for parking access to protect the pedestrian environment but given the poor solutions proposed by BGO, this may need to be re-visited.

5. Provide more greenspace at ground level

For the size of the site, there is very high site coverage and there is little greenspace at ground level or greenways through the site. The two paths (mews) that have been provided are too narrow. Most of the greenspace provided is private space on a podium or on the roofs of the buildings and unfortunately will be in shade for many hours of the day given the placement of the two towers. Nothing is gained by overbuilding.

6. Improve truck delivery/garbage truck access

In developments of this size, loading/garbage collection is often within a parking structure, significantly reducing noise and pollution impacts. The City has many policies to help reduce noise levels to improve health and livability. Better solutions are possible.

7. Make everyday living easier for families—provide a childcare

Given the current demand for childcare, combined with 900-1000 more residents who will live in this development, providing a childcare is highly desirable. Imagine the convenience for young families. The co-location will help reduce car-based trips because the development is just steps away from excellent bus services.

8. Achieve better housing mix

Hopefully the development will provide housing that is suitable and affordable for families. Many seniors wanting to downsize are looking for accessible units. No information has been given on number and location of accessible units. The Moderate Income Rental Housing Pilot Program (MIRHPP) contains a guideline for a mix of housing types to suit singles and families but the developer is not following this guideline. No explanation is given by the City

or the developer on why the guideline was not followed.

City Unit Mix Guideline

Unit Type	% of total specified in City guideline	Actual % proposed by developer
Studios	24 %	5.6 %
1 bedrooms	40%	57%
2 and 3 bedrooms	36%	37.4 %

City of Vancouver MIRHPP Rezoning Policy, October 2023 page 7

9. Ensure equitable community benefits

The current zoning on the site allows a maximum of 5 storeys of rental housing, with one storey of ground floor retail. Very significant density bonuses are requested by the developer under the pilot rental project in exchange for providing 114 housing units at rents pegged at 20% below the average city-wide rents.

In October 2023, the City reduced the level of rent subsidy the developer was required to pay, effectively abolishing the Moderate-Income Rental Housing Pilot Program (MIRHPP). This situation opens up options for the developer to contribute more community amenity contributions which can be used for items such as more generous public spaces and a childcare. It also opens up the option for providing the below-market housing in an alternate form, such as co-op housing on site rather than privately-owned and managed below-market housing.

10. Implement Traffic Calming on 10th Avenue

Speeding traffic currently detracts from the livability, pedestrian comfort, and safety of the community. Vancouver Plan recognized the problems created by excessive speed in neighbourhood centres. *Policy 5.3.3 Reimagining Arterials to be safe and livable while efficiently moving people and goods.*

The 4500 block is over 200 metres long which is 50 metres longer than typical city blocks. A mid-block crosswalk would help create an attractive streetscape and address safety and excessive speed problems. Measures can be taken to improve the safety of all the intersections in the village which are the location of a high proportion of crashes and injuries.



Friends of Point Grey Village and the Point Grey BIA are advocating for traffic calming on 10th Avenue as part of village improvements accompanying this development—a perfect place to implement Vancouver Plan “People First” arterial street policies. Drawing by Lori Brown

In the Press

There has been interest in the media on the Safeway development

<https://canada.constructconnect.com/joc/news/projects/2024/03/can-a-mixed-use->

[development-revive-a-once-busy-vancouver-neighbourhood](#)

[Housing fight in Vancouver takes on density vs. amenities - Business in Vancouver \(biv.com\)](#)

[Commotion in Point Grey over what will replace grocery store- The Globe and Mail](#)

One comment on the Globe & Mail article says, "BGO should name this development 'The Fortress' because that's how the facade looks. I understand that BGO and the site owner, SunLife Insurance, want to maximize profit but how does having an unimaginative and monotonous design help them do that? Surely an attractive development where people would want to live, shop, eat, go for coffee etc. would be more in BGO/SunLife's own interests than this outdated concept that they're pushing."

Impact of Business Taxes on Small Businesses

Recent articles document rising commercial property taxes and impacts on small businesses in neighbourhood shopping areas. Friends will be following this issue and will advocate for fair business taxation policies.

[Vancouver real estate: 'Mystery' case of old buildings' value soaring | Vancouver Sun](#)
<https://storeys.com/kerrisdale-property-assessment-tax-owners/>

Mark your Calendars:

Mother's Day Party, Saturday, May 11th

In our next newsletter there will be information about the Mothers' Day Celebration and events sponsored by the Point Grey BIA.