

[#LiveabilityFirst](#)

DENY the 601 BEACH CRESCENT REZONING DUE TO SIGNIFICANT LIVEABILITY ISSUES

GOAL: We urge Council to *turn down the rezoning of [601 Beach Ave.](#),¹ and retain the current zoning for a 17-story social housing development*, until new options for the site are identified that prioritize #liveabilityfirst for building and area residents, and the many visitors that live, work and recreate in and around the iconic Vancouver landscape that is False Creek. **WHY?**

1. ***The [Higher Buildings Policy \(HBP\) 1990](#) is outdated and increasingly [controversial](#), especially vis-à-vis [making cities more liveable](#). We urge Council to do a 20 year review of the HBP, with credible consultation, before any more spot rezonings.***



The proposal is being considered under the HBP, adopted in 1990 and revised 5 times (last in 2018), with no public consultation. **But tall towers don't belong a few blocks of the water, where they impact scarce and valued public amenities.** Before 2011, all potential tower sites were **in the CBD, where they have less impact on residential and shoreline areas.** The so-called "gateway" sites were added along the

edge of the downtown peninsula in 2011, with scant public input. **We believe that most Vancouverites see the mountains as our gateway!** And from anywhere around False Creek but the bridgehead, "gateway" buildings like Vancouver House just stick out like sore thumbs (see photo from Broadway).

In any case, the project runs contrary to the (relevant) HBP guidelines (Feb. 2018 version):

- A 535', 55-story building is proposed, but the HBP says "*The highest buildings (i.e. ~550-700') are located within the CBD. Secondary heights may be considered ... two towers framing the Granville Bridge Gateway (~ 425').* **Urban Design Committee members noted the additional height wasn't fully justified.**
- Despite the project scale and significance, and initial public concerns, "special public engagement", allowed for under the HBP to discuss broader urban design issues, wasn't done and **there was minimal outreach to stakeholders outside the immediate neighborhood.**
- Vancouver House, approved under the HBP, has had **extensive expert, media and public criticism**, based on urban design, liveability and equity issues, e.g., imposing location, size and massing; privatizing public views; intrusion into a wide swath of public views (see photos on [#LiveabilityFirst](#)); and the proliferation of luxury, investor-owned condo towers downtown.

¹ Proposed by GBL Architects Ltd. for Pinnacle International:
<https://rezoning.vancouver.ca/applications/601beach/index.htm>

2. ***Neither the proposal nor the development review have addressed impacts on/interactions with other major City land use initiatives in the area, including housing and infrastructure projects such as the [Granville Bridge Connector](#), [Granville Loops development](#), [Richards Bike Lane](#), [Drake bike lane](#) & bike network connections, and the [South False Creek Redevelopment](#) directly across from the site.***



- **Open Space & Views**: The tower will intrude on **views, open space and amenity values** for the huge expected increase in **people who “walk, roll and bike” across the Granville Bridge**. All users, including vehicles, already encounter a forest of towers and structures at the North End.
 - **Congestion**: The City justifies downtown density using sustainable transportation criteria, but **the revised proposal allows for one parking spot for each of the 455 units!** The review has not assessed (1) how additional vehicles will affect traffic, bike and pedestrian flows, and (2) how it will contribute to **cumulative negative impacts of current & planned projects** (e.g., Vancouver House, Granville Loops). How will more cars and bikes, spilling into an already busy area, affect **congestion, bike lanes, driver/cyclist/pedestrian safety, emergency vehicles and air pollution?**
3. ***Neighbourhood impacts: The proposal is counter to planning guidelines intended to ensure that False Creek North is home to liveable compact communities, built around the unique amenities of the False Creek Basin. Development in this area been “too much, too fast” for many.***

Inserting a 55-storey tower in a unique shoreline community designed to have primarily tiered 10 – 38 storey buildings runs counter to area policies: *False Creek North ODP 1990, Beach CD-1 Guidelines 2002, Downtown South Goals and Policies & DS Guidelines, CD-1 (366) 500 Pacific Street.* **These policies need review,** as they’ve been undermined by spot zonings, the HBP and significant DT South growth. Issues include:

- a. **Rapid densification**: We support density, but the pace and scale of development, lately dominated by luxury, [investor-owned condos](#), has resulted in cumulative negative impacts on transportation, infrastructure, schools, quality of life, (e.g. congestion, pollution, shading), in the Beach District and adjacent False Creek North neighbourhoods. We urge Council to **safeguard the uniqueness of this inner city urban landscape, providing liveable places for a diverse range of residents, citizens and visitors** to live, work and play within our sea-mountain-sky natural setting.
- b. **Building Height and Form**: [Beach Neighbourhood CD-1 Guidelines](#) (2002)
 - pg. 3: **High-rise towers are to be 10 – 38 storeys**, based on impacts on public and private views, sunlight and open space. p. 8: Unit counts and floor areas are subject to *“(a) livability for various*

household types; & (b) compatibility with adjacent development.” pg. 1: “Changes to maximum tower heights and floor plates are not anticipated.” Criteria for change to include relationships to adjacent development: shadowing, public and private views, public and common open space, public realm treatment, submissions from residents. **601 Beach doesn’t conform with the Guidelines.**

- 2. Urban Design Principles: “(a) respond to the unique characteristics of the waterfront site; (e.) step tower heights down from Pacific Street to the water; (j) create well defined, animated, landscaped streets with lower rise buildings.” Existing buildings “step down” to water; 601 wouldn’t.

c. **Schools:** Imagine a town of 18,000 without enough schools and no plans for more.

- The City supports a vision of family-friendly communities downtown. 601 Beach would add 455 units to the 100s of high-rise condos under construction in the V6Z area, **yet there are no more spaces for elementary students within walking distance of 601 Beach.** New schools planned for Roberts Annex and Coal Harbour are 5-10 years away and not walkable from the V6Z area.
- Elsie Roy Elementary, the only school in V6Z operates at capacity (410 students and a long wait list). No other downtown public schools are walkable; the West End is too far and too dangerous. **The share of kids and teenagers is higher in V6Z than other areas downtown (outside West End and business district).** In 2016, there were enough 5-14 year olds in the area for a new school with more than 3 classes of 20 students for each of the nine elementary school years.

4. **Impacts on surrounding neighbourhoods have not been considered, but should be, given the location, scale and extreme height of the project. This is in part due to some disconnect between City planning processes and rezoning and development review processes for large-scale projects.**



All False Creek North projects significantly affect residents and visitors who live in, work, play, shop or commute in/on the Seawall, False Creek North and South, and adjacent neighbourhoods. **We think the City needs a holistic vision and plan [for the interrelated neighbourhoods around False Creek](#), but in the meantime, it should take into account project impacts on these communities.**

- *Beach CD-1 Guidelines*, pg. 2 say that towers should “present their narrowest frontage towards the water to maximize the view for dwelling units and view corridors through downtown from the south”. **The tower would privatize public views of the water, beaches and North Shore mountains, and intrude on views to the city, sky and mountains** from the South False Creek waterfront up the rise, including Fairview Slopes, South Granville and Kitsilano. **Skyline and view studies didn’t analyze impacts on resident, office and visitor views in these heavily populated, densely used areas.** Vancouver House blocks many views from homes, streets, sidewalks and bike paths in those communities, e.g., along 10th and 14th Ave. (see website).

5. **The social housing component is flawed, offering an unacceptable quality of life for residents, and in stark contrast to the luxury condo component.**

- While the City has adopted the model of developers subsidizing social housing, **the contrast between housing types is extreme**. This will be a high-profile project, with strong public and expert scrutiny. Vancouverites want liveable, affordable housing, not more tall, luxury condos.
- It's ironic that the City sold this lot and now Metro [is seeking municipal land for low-cost rentals](#).
- **After waiting for years to see development of this City-owned site, zoned for 17-storey social housing, liveability for all should be a priority**. However, the tower/podium design, with market condos above the bridge deck and market housing below/next to the bridge is a **striking and embarrassing metaphor for social inequity in the City**. Separate entrances, lobbies and elevators starkly reinforce the different liveability standards for each group.
- The [Urban Design Panel report](#) was **highly critical of quality of the podium social housing** fronting the bridge deck, citing lack of light/shading, lack of privacy, air pollution, and traffic noise. These issues remain, despite the redesign, which proposes an outdoor children's play area on level 3, at bridge deck level, and 1/3 of the social units with windows facing the bridge.
- **The amount and quality of social housing is far from what was envisioned** under the *False Creek North ODP, Beach Neighbourhood G/L* and existing zoning for a 17-storey building.
 - The proposal has 152 units; we estimate current zoning would allow about 50% more.
 - The G/L show social housing units away from the bridge, along the Mews and Beach Ave.
 - Most units (97) are small (less than 750'), with only 55 family units over 750'.
- The City's definition of "social housing" vis-à-vis true affordability for middle and low income families have been highly [controversial](#), and this **project could exacerbate public and expert [doubt and concern](#) about this program, especially when combined with luxury condo towers**.

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Our VISION for 2021 and Beyond

The rezoning at 601 Beach has been turned down by Vancouver City Council. Existing zoning for a 17-story social housing building is still in place.

The City is seeking options to provide attractive and liveable social housing in a way that showcases for residents and visitors the City's commitments to sustainability and liveability of Downtown South, and the communities in and around the watery heart of Central Vancouver – the False Creek Basin, including False Creek North and South, Fairview, South Granville and Kitsilano.



Not more of this*

The Vancouver “Higher Buildings Policy” (adopted 1997, amended 2011, revised 5 times, last in July 2018) is undergoing a comprehensive 20-year review, with full consultation, (possibly in concert with the City Plan initiative). The sites for so-called “Gateway Higher Buildings” – sore thumb height anomalies on the periphery of the Downtown Peninsula – are deleted and higher buildings are kept in the CBD where they don't impact residential communities and amenities and the visitor experience.

An updated Official Development Plan (ODP) (and/or Neighbourhood Guidelines or similar) is being prepared for False Creek North and South, and dovetailed with Downtown South, Fairview, South Granville and Kitsilano plans, with full consultation. The ODP focuses on creating compact and complete downtown communities, with less reliance on the car, and for a diversity of residents. These neighbourhoods are models of urban #liveability and #sustainability, contributing to the City's new “Climate Emergency Action Plan” and its “bold new actions”.

The City's review of rezoning and development permit application take into account infrastructure, transportation and schools, as well as the cumulative impacts of other projects in the area, e.g., Granville Loops multi-use development. Developments are integrated into the City's public realm initiatives, such as Granville Bridge Upgrades, Greenways and bike networks.

Policy provisions for Community Amenity Contributions ensure that social housing on the site provides truly affordable and liveable housing for residents. New models are found for social housing provision that don't depend on permitting more high-rise luxury condo towers, with starkly contrasting quality of life and amenities, and separate entrances for social housing residents. Development within False Creek North communities follows the model in the proposed False Creek South redevelopment plan, which aims to provide for “diversity” of people and a “mixed-income community consists of one-third each for low-, middle-, and high-income residents.”

*Images top and below right: *Vancouver House: Whose House Is This?* [Christopher Cheung](https://thetyee.ca/Culture/2019/11/11/Vancouver-House/) 11 Nov 2019. TheTye.ca, retrieved Jan. 22 from: <https://thetyee.ca/Culture/2019/11/11/Vancouver-House/>

