Creating the Public Realm

The public realm created at the base of the building highlights the future of mobility in the City of Vancouver. The Active Transportation imperatives for moving people in around and through this site are born out through the design and functionality of the public realm.

Because active transportation is fundamentally facilitated through ease of transition between modes, amenities for pedestrians, cyclists, transit users and car coop members are seamlessly interwoven at this site.

Coming north on Granville, pedestrians are greeted with an active and permeable building facade. Transparent glazing and multiple portals make passers-by, visitors and tenants feel like their access between the street and interior of the mezzanine is unimpeded. The seating areas are creatively and safely interspersed with bike lock areas. Cyclists visiting the building are encouraged to use the Granville side for bike parking through landscape design, provision of numerous parking stalls and the welcoming commercial uses at the mezzanine level.

Leading the way in cooperation with the City’s Public Bike Share (PBS) initiative, 320 Granville offers up key space on the Cordova frontage for 16 PBS stalls and a kiosk. In this location, transit users along Cordova and Granville Streets join the throng of transit riders moving to and from Waterfront Station who have opportunities to also grab or drop-off a bike share. The most recent research conducted by car coops concludes that cycling and pedestrianism are facilitated by access to a car coop, thereby increasing modal transitions for all.

Streetscape Levels

The base of the building marks a distinct rotational shift where the hem of the pleats separate from the splay of the feet and ankle. The lower levels are being developed to enhance both transparency and enclosure. On the one hand they open up the visibility of the street corner and then turn towards the mid block colonnade of the CP Station opposite and on the other they provide a well lighted interior, public place with a screened filigree. This reduces the impact of the ungainly urban context of the Cordova overpass and prominent street end parking entry at Granville square, with emphasis on inviting interior activity at the Cordova and mezzanine levels.

Thus, through using the established streetscape scale of the surrounding buildings, each with a different presence of solid and void, the pivot creates a complement to the heritage context within which it sits. By generally eschewing the solidly of a masonry base it provides a glimpse to the indoor activity that will enhance the appreciation of the surrounding environments.

The slender pivot comes to a point of rest at the cross walk. Thus the building streetscape reinforces the safe channel for pedestrians to cross the complex street intersection and providing the relief of a visual syncopation for the continuation of Granville Street promenading.

In addition to lobby access the interconnected lower two levels provide for a variety of cafe/winebar CRU’s, public seating space and a bike station, providing bike accessories, rental, repair and valet care, as well as access to expanded bike storage.
Mobility + Access

The streetscape design, including setbacks and building entries, provide a high amenity walking path both inside and out at the Granville frontage, including provision of a recessed building face that enables both street facades to welcome higher foot traffic, potential bus stops, and cyclist movement to and past the building. Vehicular access at the lane has generous sight lines to enhance the safety of all modes of movement.

The two level lobby of the building invites active use and overlook that enhances passage to the office floors, as well as social amenity for passers-by. In addition to a coffee shop and multiple casual seating areas, the mezzanine (at the Granville Lane level) provides opportunity for complementary active retail and food and beverage uses, with open connecting stairways. Thus an open figure ground is provided with weather protected short cuts and places for informal social meeting.

In conjunction with the lobby, the amenity of a full service Bike Station is proposed, in addition to the provision of substantially more than the number of bike spaces that required in the parking by-law. These spaces are accessible via the parking ramp from the lane off Granville, as well as through a bike stairway that leads through the Bike Station to the lower grade floor at Cordova. Supplementary services are to be provided at the Bike Station, including valet parking, repair, accessory retail, bike rental. Showers and change room facilities are provided at grade level, as well as on every office floor in the tower.

Required Bike Parking

In addition to any bike parking (rental and storage) within the Bike Station at the Cordova Street level, over 210 bike parking stalls are being provided at and above the upper level of parking stalls. 72 of these are needed meet the requirement for Class A bikes for the 376,000 sq ft of FSR for commercial development, with over 140 additional stalls available for the Bike Station, all with secure access to and from the Cordova Street Hub as well as potentially to the parkade. The Cordova frontage accommodates the City’s proposed bike share modules, providing 16 Bike Share Stalls, in addition 18 Class B bike stalls are provided in at the lane entrance and along the Granville frontage. All the bike stalls and access points have been co-ordinated to complement rather than constrict the primary pedestrian flows to and through the building.

Supplementary Parking Units

The commercial value of bike parking is considerably less than vehicular parking, and yet a Green City Goal is seeking to reinforce a paradigm shift for workforce commuting from automobile towards transit/cycles. Evidence of Bike Station precedents is that they require free rent at least in order to be sustainably viable in operation. They are inherently an amenity as opposed to a commercial use. Furthermore, the location of this site at the original city shoreline, makes it extremely onerous to build below sea level. Addition of sunk costs for parking would have to be balanced with a reduction in amenity elsewhere in the project. Considering the interrelation of all the above factors of intent, program, site conditions, cost and value, it is proposed that the impact of the parking ramp on the development be mitigated by crediting the additional bike stalls against the overall parking unit requirement. At one car stall for 5 bikes this represents a spatial and cost equivalence in the public amenity provided.

Transportation Context

This project is located directly adjacent to the Region’s Major Transportation Hub. In addition to providing walkable amenity in its grade level uses, and in its enhancement of the pedestrian route between Waterfront Station and Downtown, it proposes to provide an extensive Bike Station Amenity.

Public transportation at this location includes, SkyTrain Canada, Millennium and Expo Lines, SeaBus, West Coast Express, Bus. The decommissioning of the two current curb cuts at Granville and Cordova will not only improve pedestrian and bicycle connectivity, they aid in the turning movements for buses, and will be particularly beneficial in the implementation of the Downtown Streetcar.

The following program of transportation storage, using the supplementary two-wheeled parking units, is combined with the provision of shower and change room amenities, both in the Cordova grade level Bike Station and on each office floor. Thus, in conjunction with the adjacent public transportation it is proposed that the parking unit provision matches the “right size parking” profile applicable to this specific site, providing appropriate access to mobility at least equivalent to the objectives for public amenity in the City Parking By-law.

Because of the ramp and grade impact and the geometric constraints for this tight site, considerable structural analysis has been done to establish preliminary design of column sizes and location, including 3D Architectural and Structural Modelling. This is in order to validate that the proposed access and parking program can be implemented. Accordingly, while much design development may occur in the tower portions of the development, there is very little room to manoeuvre the below grade configuration.
Bike Station
In conjunction with the retail and café uses at the Cordova Street Lobby, a Bike Station occupies a large portion of the lobby floor level. Direct access is provided in the Cordova setback space for people to bring bikes into the building and to the Bike Station repair/rental etc facilities, as well as for valet parking. In addition to being adjacent to the Class B exterior bike stalls, a bike stair connects directly to and from the Class A and supplementary bike parking on the floor immediately below grade. At the ground floor level shower and changing facilities are also provided as part of the bike station facility. In addition there is a shower room and lockers provided on each office floor, as part of the amenity for tenants.

The Bike Station proposal optimizes the functionality and attractiveness of this type of facility, and is in an excellent location. Several discussions with bike store operators, HUB and City Engineering have reinforced the interest in the Bike Station, and its integration with a potential Public Bike Share Station along Cordova Street frontage. Noting the international precedent of Bike Stations (such as McDonald’s Bike Center at Millennium Park in Chicago), it is not expected the Bike Station would be able to sustain revenue to cover more than its staffing and thus would require a long term subsidy from the building owner.

Public Accessibility
The bike station and supplementary bike parking demonstrate public access to amenity. In addition the building seeks to enhance pedestrian movement at this busy urban turning point. The building is setback from the Granville street property line, thus enhancing the continuation of the Granville Promenade. During business hours a weather protected access is provided through the building linking the Granville Lane and Cordova Street levels through a public stair, with public seating areas. The Granville Cordova street corner provides generous pedestrian area to enhance the cross walk to and from Waterfront Station, and this surge space will be an increasingly significant amenity as the Transportation Hub is expanded to include the streetcar and the Granville and Cordova connectors to Canada Place Way.

Public Bike Share
This project will lead the way in cooperative efforts with the City in delivering Public Bike Share (PBS). An SRW will be provided to the City adequate to the intent of providing 16 PBS stalls at the Cordova side of the building. The continuity of bike facilities is continued between the Bike Facility inside the building at ground level and the PBS offered on the exterior of the building. This complements the excess number of Class B bike lock stalls on the Granville side, resulting in a wholistic view of cycling facilities for all users.
Transportation – Destination And Storage Motorized Transport

In addition to the adjacent public transit, the project provides on site storage for a full range of motorized transportation modes.

Automobile Parking Context

Over the years the parking requirement for downtown office buildings has changed – both up and then down. The general trend is now to reduce the parking requirement, and this is in keeping with Greenest City transportation strategy to focus on modes other than the low-occupant automobile.

For practical administrative reasons the parking requirement is usually established as a specific rate for a specific area of reasonable size. However even in the downtown peninsula there are areas that are different in terms of transit service versus automobile service. Automobile service i.e. the street system covers the area with a grid of streets. Bus service, on the other hand is only provided on some streets and rail transit service is only in a few corridors with a few stations. To a degree the automobile can provide door-to-door service whereas transit does require a walk or drive at the residential end and a walk of variable length – virtually nothing to a few blocks – at the downtown end.

Having a maximum concentration of non-auto transportation services in a reasonably small area would be a desirable strategy. This is realistic for perhaps one or two areas but not for the downtown office area as a whole.

How does the above relate to 320 Granville? This proposed building happens to be located in the one (only) area of downtown that has the maximum concentration of non-auto services within easy walking distance. These are:

- SeaBus: terminal across the street
- Canada Line: station across the street
- SkyTrain (Expo & Millenium lines): station across the street
- WestCoast Express: station across the street
- Bus service on Cordova, Granville and Hastings
- Float plane service within 4 blocks
- Helijet service within 4 blocks
- Future Downtown Street Car line on Cordova.

The building is also located within walking distance of numerous residential buildings. Hence, if the ever was a site that was a candidate for a reduction in the parking requirement this is it.

The Parking By-law does recognize the benefit of transit for projects outside the downtown whereby a reduction of 10% is allowed if there is a transit station or east-west and north-south bus routes near by. The By-law rate for parking in downtown does take into account the higher level of transit service however as stated above the overall transit service at this site is much higher than in the downtown as a whole. A transit location amenity credit of 20% seems reasonable in order to enable the maximum feasible amount of employment space to be created and to diminish the impact of private vehicle movement in this location of optimum access for active transportation and transit connection.

Marketplace demands for parking are diminishing, but parking provision must still balance leasing expectations. Based on the total net usable office floor space being about 310,000 sq ft, the total number of employees in the building is expected to be about 1,300, not all of whom would be on-site at any one time.

At an average of 30 employees per company the building might house 40-45 companies. For these companies there is growing precedent that only 2 or 3 people need the privilege of bringing their car to work; therefore needing provision of about 130 stalls.

Thus the proposed provision of approximately 138 stalls, satisfies both the aspirations of City Policy and a provides a measured response to marketplace trends.

A System of Comprehensive Access to Mobility

In conjunction with the above analysis of the appropriate level of parking for private automobiles on-site, and the access to transit and pedestrians, significant amounts of bike parking and related facilities are planned. In addition a comprehensive co-op car provision is proposed to allow those without a car at their workplace access to a vehicle where needed for out of office trips. The breakdown of the types of ‘parking units’ is as follows:

### Electric Charging + Moped / Electric Bike Stalls

Electric charging stations can be considered, especially for a co-op car stall, on the assumption this does not increase required parking. In conjunction with the bike parking power outlets have been considered, in conjunction with provision of 8 to 10 parking units for larger Motorbike / Scooters on the P1 level. These are not added directly into the parking unit count, but complement the substitution of bicycle parking units for vehicular parking units (most specifically mitigating the impact of accommodating the parking ramp).

### Handicapped parking stalls:

Changes since 2007 have increased the required provision of Handicapped parking stalls. For the proposed density the direct interpolation from the parking bylaw would increase from 3 to 15 stalls, now representing approx. 6% of the total parking stalls. These stalls are intended to be as near grade as practical (referencing the additional floor to ceiling height they require). Maching the intent of the recent parking bylaw change to improve accessibility, 11 Handicapped stalls are proposed. These comprise over 8% of the total parking stalls, and are all at the top level of parking. Each of these stalls counts as 2 parking units as per the parking bylaw.

Co-op / Car Share Stalls:

Employers are increasingly using these services in order to minimize unnecessary automobile use and storage, and to enable employees have the benefit of not commuting by car. A total of 7 Co-op stalls are proposed. This has been done in discussion with Modo and Zip Car operators. This ensures that there is a critical mass available both for convenience of access and for pre-booking, all an emphasis on compact vehicles. Each of these stalls is counted as 5 parking units.

General Parking

The lowest level of parking is between the mean high and low tide levels, enabling a cost efficient construction that does not unduly disturb the area’s tidal hydrology. Subject to final structural design, approximately 120 Parking Stalls are provided for general parking, in addition to the 18 H/C and Co-op stalls. It is expected these will be reserved parking and these stalls are split approximately 50/50 between Regular and Small car stalls.

Location Of Vehicular Access + Driveway Ramp

The preliminary design meetings with City Planning and Engineering have led to the City’s request to revise the proposed location for vehicular access from Cordova Street to the Lane, as well as abandonment of the existing Granville Street curb crossing for the existing 320 car garage. A necessary corollary to this has been the increased gradient of the parking ramp, as well as a compression of the space available for service access from the lane.

The initial Rezoning Submission optimized the use of the subgrade spaces for contiguous bike storage in conjunction with operation of the Bike Station. This required a parking ramp grade of 18% (for which buildings by VIA and others in Seattle is cited as a precedent of functionality). However Engineering has determined that a parking ramp grade of greater than 15% would not be acceptable. Accordingly the ramp location has been moved towards the party wall to accommodate this criterion, and the bike storage areas have been reduced in size and are now grouped in two clusters. In order to assist vehicles movements the ramp width has been increased at the top and bottom curved sections by approximately 1 metre. This gives more maneuvering room for traffic passing in opposing directions.

Loading

In light of the request to re-organise vehicular access, Engineering has agreed in the pre-submittal meetings that the parking bylaw requirement for Loading can be amended by increasing the provision of one additional Class A Loading Bay from 4 to 5, and reducing Class B Loading from 3 to 2 bays, which are located with the garbage/recycling at the eastern corner of the lane, immediately adjacent to the existing loading bays for 333 Seymour Street. The additional Class A Loading Bay is at the lane, providing optimum operation for short term deliveries. It will require a relaxation of approx. 210 mm in length in order to avoid conflict with the clearance at the parking ramp. This keeps truck and automobile access movements as separated as possible, and both away from active pedestrian routes.