

HISTORIC AREA HEIGHT REVIEW (HAHR): SUMMARY - March 2010

1. Introduction/Background

On January 26, 2010 Council made a decision on the *Historic Area Height Review: Conclusion and Recommendations* (RTS No. 08079). To view the HAHR staff report and minutes from the meeting visit <http://vancouver.ca/ctyclerk/cclerk/20100126/spec20100126ag.htm>

Council had directed staff to undertake the Historic Area Height Review with the specific Council direction and study boundary as identified in Figure 1. In response to Council's direction, staff undertook a detailed technical analysis of urban design, height, density and forms of development in the Historic Area, including input from a number of external consultants.

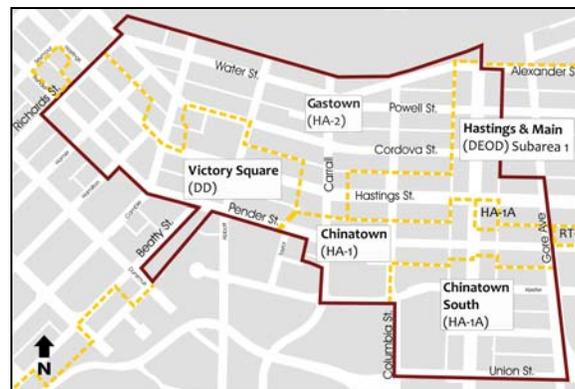


Figure 1: Historic Area Height Review Council Direction and Study Boundary

The following objectives have guided the HAHR and informed the policy recommendations in this report:

- To provide direction for growth and development in the Historic Area;
- To maintain the Historic Area's character and general building scale; and
- To ensure that any development potential resulting from this Review generates opportunities for public benefits and amenities for this Area.

2. Council Decision

- A. THAT Council affirm the importance of the "Historic Area" as defined in the Historic Area Height Review (HAHR), including its distinctive sub-areas, for its social, cultural, economic and built form value contributing to Vancouver's civic identity, and affirm that building height and scale for the Historic Area

should generally continue to reinforce the prevailing heritage context, including the existing heritage buildings, fine grain character and generally low to mid-rise development scale.

- B. THAT the appropriate building heights for the Historic Area be generally between 50' to 120' based on respective sub-areas' zoning, design guidelines and rezoning policies, noting the existing maximum building height range is 50'-100';

FURTHER THAT mid-rise development continues to be the primary form for new developments complementing heritage building rehabilitation in the Historic Area, considering its existing building scale, public realm, smaller lot pattern and the fragmented property ownership pattern; and

FURTHER THAT Council direct staff to prepare and report back with amendments to the Zoning and Development By-law, Design Guidelines and the Vancouver Building By-law and related by-laws and policies in order to provide a more supportive regulatory framework to facilitate development on smaller frontages (75' frontage or less) and mid-rise development scale (up to 120' in height) in the Historic Area.

- C. THAT Council endorse a moderate height increase in Chinatown and Downtown Eastside Oppenheimer District Sub-Area 1 (Main and Hastings) to support and enhance existing policy objectives in these sub-areas.

FURTHER THAT Council direct staff to:

- C.1. Prepare and report back on the following zoning and policy changes in Chinatown as part of the residential intensification strategy as identified in the Chinatown Community Plan:
- (i) amendments to the HA1 and HA1A District Schedules of the Zoning and Development By-law and Design Guidelines to increase maximum heights:
 - HA1: maximum height increase from 50' - 65' to 50'-75'
 - HA1A: maximum height increase from 70' to 90'
 - (ii) a Rezoning Policy for HA1A with a maximum height up to 120' in order to consider innovative heritage, cultural and affordable housing projects in Chinatown; and
 - (iii) options to the Transfer of Density Policy and Procedure to allow density to be transferred into or within the HA1A and the higher building sites in recommendation D, only.
- C.2. Prepare and report back on an interim Rezoning Policy for Downtown Eastside Oppenheimer District Official Development Plan (DEOD ODP) Sub-Area 1 with a maximum height up to 120' in order to consider special opportunities for affordable housing projects before completion of the DEOD ODP Review.
- C.3. That a social impact study be conducted to assess the effect on the existing low-income community of new developments in the historic area and where opportunities for enhanced affordability and live-ability may be achieved;

- D. THAT two additional higher buildings (sites 1 and 2 in Figure 2, appendix E of the Policy Report dated January 4, 2010, entitled “Historic Area Height Review: Conclusion and Recommendations”) as ‘high points of the pattern’ be proposed to provide additional strategic new development with resulting public benefits, within height limits that still reflect the prevailing mid-rise development pattern;

FURTHER THAT for the specific purpose of economic revitalization of Chinatown while also considering heritage values, staff report back on options for a limited number of carefully and strategically located additional higher building sites generally in the range of 150 feet to be further identified specifically in Chinatown South (HA1A);

FURTHER THAT Site 3 in Figure 2 of Appendix E of the above-noted Policy Report, known as the Keefer Triangle Site, is not supported by Council as a higher building site, and further that heights above the base zoning height of 90 feet on this site would be of concern due to potential impacts;

FURTHER THAT Council endorse that the maximum of the two higher buildings (sites 1 and 2 in Figure 2, appendix E of the above-noted Policy Report) above the prevailing height of 50’-120’ may be considered with heights generally in the range of 150’, having considered urban design and other performance factors including View Corridors Policy, shadowing considerations, compatibility with adjacent heritage building context and provision of public benefits;

FURTHER THAT Council adopt the Draft Urban Design Criteria for any Higher Buildings in the Historic Area as attached in the Appendix E of the above-noted Policy Report, and direct staff to prepare and report back with a Rezoning Policy for all Higher Buildings in the Historic Area, based on the adopted Criteria; and

FURTHER THAT for every supported higher building, a significantly higher standard of architectural and urban design excellence will be required.

- E. Subject to the approval of A, B and C1, staff update the Chinatown Community Plan to incorporate the approved changes. (see RTS 6478 “Chinatown Community Plan: summary of Council policies and directions”)

E.1. THAT Council as a priority directs staff to report back on a Chinatown Economic Revitalization Plan with a focus on near term action strategies, building upon existing revitalization initiatives (Hastings Street Façade Program, Chinatown Awning Program, Heritage Incentive Program and various initiatives under “Great Beginnings”) and heritage values, to immediately support Chinatown.

E.2. THAT the resources and expertise of the Vancouver Economic Development Commission be engaged, in consultation with the Chinatown BIA, Chinatown Merchants Association and other expert organizations as needed, to support the creation of the Chinatown Economic Revitalization plan.

F. THAT subject to a diverse array of community groups agreeing to a facilitated planning process, staff report back on methods and budget for all relevant city departments to be engaged to achieve an integrated community strategy for the DTES. This process would consider all existing plans and strategies for the area and would include a robust community engagement process. This effort should be coordinated through the City Mangers office.

G. THAT staff report back to Council with any suggested refinements or adjustments based on identified opportunities for improvement to economic development, heritage retention and/or social infrastructure.

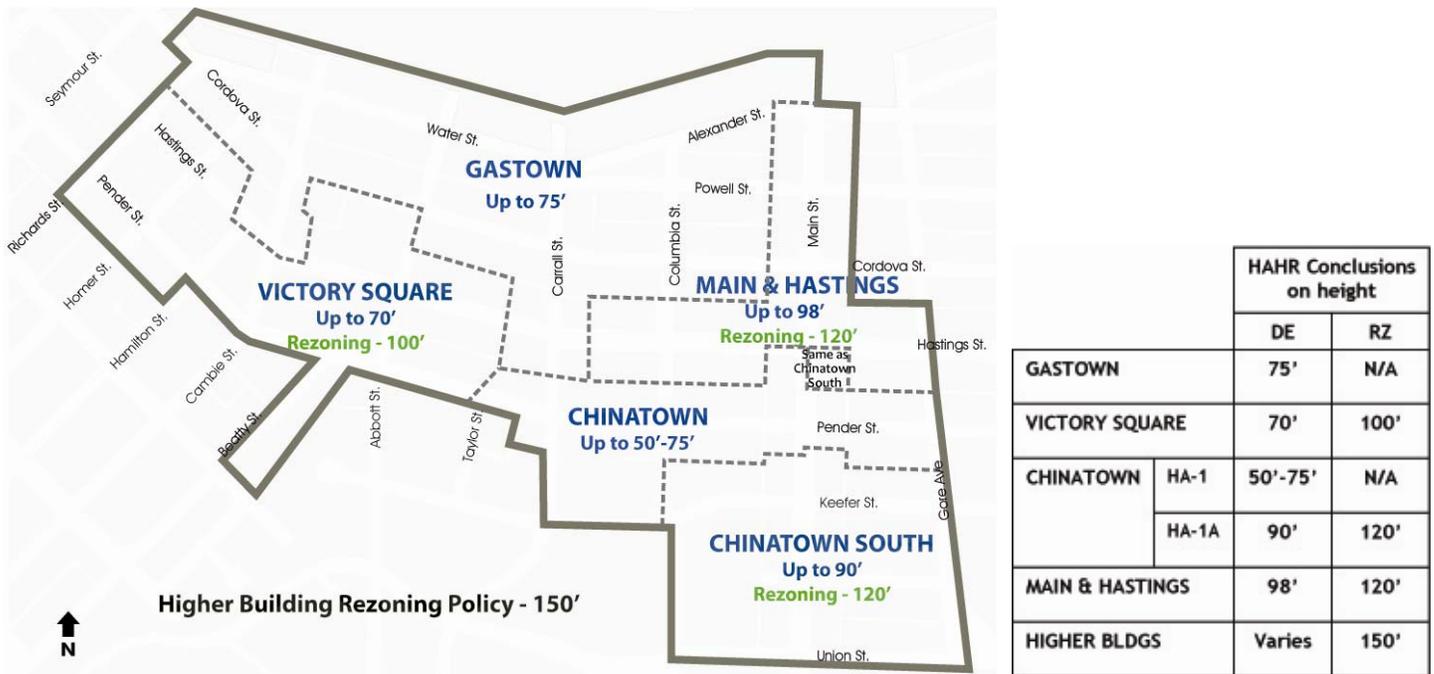


Figure 2: Maximum building heights for the Historic Area (based on respective sub-area policies)

3. Existing Policies in the Historic Area

There are many existing policies in the Historic Area, including the following:

- Downtown Eastside Oppenheimer District Official Development Plan (1982)
- Gastown Heritage Management Plan (2002)
- Victory Square Concept Plan (2005)
- Downtown Eastside Housing Plan (2005)
- Heritage Building Rehabilitation Program and Transfer of Density Review (2009)
- Chinatown Community Plan (2010)

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