

TO: CITY MANAGER

2001 January 17

FROM: DIRECTOR PLANNING AND BUILDING

SUBJECT: 485 MACDONALD AVENUE
**SHARED UNDERGROUND PARKING GARAGE FOR
 WEST COAST COMMUNITY HOMES AND PUBLIC PARKING
 HASTINGS STREET AREA PLAN**

PURPOSE: To inform Council of the intent to reconfigure the subject parking garage at 485 MacDonald Avenue in order to increase safety and security at the facility.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. **THAT** this report be received by Council for information purposes.

R E P O R T

1.0 BACKGROUND

On 1993 July 26, Council gave Final Adoption to Rezoning Reference # 18/92 for the construction of a mixed-use project with non-market housing, a commercial component and a public parking facility (see attached location sketch). Through a legal agreement reached under the terms of the rezoning, the underground parking garage at the development provides 51 public parking spaces as well as 6 spaces for commercial tenants in the building and 42 visitor and resident parking spaces for the non-market housing. The provision of the public parking was used as a payment to the City for the lease of the land to the non-profit housing agency which allowed this project to proceed, while providing much needed public parking in the Hastings Street commercial area. The facility has been operational since 1994 and has been experiencing security and personal safety problems over the past two years. This has led to the resident/visitor parking not being used at any time, and only a limited use of the public parking. The purpose of this report is to inform Council of a strategy to address security and safety in the garage which has been developed by the non-profit housing cooperative manager, West Coast Community Homes, in conjunction with City staff.

2.0 DISCUSSION

The parking garage at the subject site has a total of 99 parking spaces and is a combination of public parking on the first three levels providing 57 spaces, with 8 visitor spaces for the residential building and 34 residential spaces and 1 car wash space provided on a portion of the third level and the fourth level. A security gate is in place which separates the residential parking. The public parking in the

garage is intended to be used between 9 a.m. and 6 p.m. and a sign is located at the entrance indicating this, but, there is not a security gate in place to secure the area after hours. Due to the majority of the area within the garage providing public parking (57/99 spaces or 58%), much of the garage is open 24 hours a day. This has caused security, vandalism and personal safety problems within the garage, corroborated by the RCMP, related to drug users and dealing, assault and loitering within the garage itself and in the enclosed exit stairways which provide a weather-protected and private loitering space.

The residential parking area at the bottom of the garage is secured with an aluminum security gate which has been damaged and provides inadequate security and allows free access into the residential parking area. Residents of the Co-op are not using this parking area at all. As well, only the first, street level, of public parking is well-used on a regular basis during the day (24/57 or 42% of public parking spaces), with the lower levels being unattractive due to the personal safety concerns.

West Coast Community Homes (WCCH), the organization which manages the Co-op, has approached the City to work towards improving the safety of this parking garage. They are proposing to install a solid security gate between the second and third levels which would provide security to the third and fourth levels of the garage. As a result, an exit stair which leads from the front of the building at Hastings Street down to the first and third level of the garage would require a security/exit-only door past the access to the first level of underground parking. As well WCCH is proposing to remove the doors from two exit corridors which lead directly to the outside in order to make these corridors not as comfortable for the people who have been loitering there and increase visibility from the street into these spaces. The Building Department has stated this is acceptable and that the building would still meet fire code if these doors were removed. The intent of these improvements is to secure the residential parking area so that residents will park in their assigned spaces and, as a result, the increase of legitimate users in the parking garage will provide passive surveillance and a safer environment. WCCH is proposing to fund the security improvements in the garage and is not seeking any funding from the City.

From a planning perspective, the placement of a new security gate between the second and third levels would have an impact on the accessibility to both public and visitor parking spaces. The new security gate between levels 2 and 3 would cause the current location of the 8 visitor parking spaces and 11 public parking spaces on level 3 to become inaccessible. The Burnaby Zoning Bylaw states that visitor parking stalls cannot be limited in use by security gates or fencing, but should be at a safe location. A relocation of the visitor parking stalls to the area outside of the new security gate would allow the visitor parking to be accessible and be located in a safer place due to the increased visibility to the well-used public parking area.

Relocating the assigned visitor parking from the third to the second level would also cause the loss of 8 parking spaces which are currently assigned to public parking. This, in combination with the 11 public parking spaces which would be behind the new security gate, would reduce the number of parking spaces openly available to the public by 19. In order to attempt to offset this loss, staff are

investigating the possibility of creating long-term public rental parking in the 11 public and 8 visitor parking spaces which would be located behind the proposed security gate. These spaces would be made available to area merchants and their staff for rental on a first come/first served basis, potentially freeing up scarce on-street and on-site parking. Any income from the rental of such spaces would go towards offsetting operating costs such as more regular cleaning and graffiti removal in the public parking area.

In light of the fact that none of the public parking spaces which would become inaccessible due to the relocated visitor parking or the new security gate are currently being used, their removal from casual public use is seen as reasonable under the circumstances. Therefore, installation of the proposed gate would improve the security of residents parking in the garage and while continuing to satisfy Zoning Bylaw requirements the usability of the underground parkade would be enhanced. The Engineering Department has also reviewed this proposal and supports it. As well, the proposal has been reviewed by the RCMP through the City's Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design Committee and they also feel that the amendments would improve the current situation within the garage. This proposal would still provide free public parking for the Hastings Street area in order to aid merchants and meet the area's parking needs.

The proposed reconfigured parking garage would provide 38 public parking spaces, 8 residential visitor parking spaces, 19 potential long-term public rental parking spaces, the required 36 residential parking spaces and 1 car wash space. The Planning Department would submit a PPA application for the above noted changes in order to keep a current record of the parking configuration in the subject parking garage.

3.0 SUMMARY

The existing configuration of the underground parking garage at the subject development is a safety concern for residents of the non-profit housing and the majority of the public parking. Adjustments are required within the parking garage to improve the current situation. The installation of new security doors, removal of fire exit doors and relocation of visitor parking spaces is proposed. This will improve the safety of the facility with the ultimate goal of providing a safe environment for residents of the non-profit housing and public parking users. The changes would ensure the optimum use of the parking garage by both residents and public parking users while helping to meet the parking needs of area merchants, as was the original intent of this shared-use facility. Unless otherwise directed by Council, staff will continue to pursue the changes outlined above with West Coast Community Homes. This report is provided for the information of Council.



D.G. Stenson
Director Planning and Building

PSF:gk
Attach

cc: Director Engineering
Supervisor, Building Inspection



Location Sketch - 485 MacDonald Avenue

