

## URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

**DATE:** December 10, 2014

**TIME:** 3.00 pm

**PLACE:** Town Hall Meeting Room, City Hall

**PRESENT:** MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:  
Ryan Bragg (Chair)  
Walter Francl  
Joseph Fry  
David Grigg  
Arno Matis  
Phil Mondor (left after 2<sup>nd</sup> Item)  
Chris Mramor

**REGRETS:**  
Joseph Hruda  
Jennifer Marshall  
Goran Ostojic  
Matthew Soules

**RECORDING SECRETARY:** Lorna Harvey

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### ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING

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| 1. | 4175 West 29 <sup>th</sup> Avenue (St. George's Senior School) |
| 2. | 5099 Joyce Street (Joyce-Collingwood SkyTrain Station)         |
| 3. | 800 Robson Street (Robson Square)                              |
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**BUSINESS MEETING**

Chair Bragg called the meeting to order at 4:10 p.m. and noted the presence of a quorum. There being no New Business the meeting considered applications as scheduled for presentation.

1. Address: 4175 West 29<sup>th</sup> Avenue (St. George's Senior School)  
 DE: N/A  
 Description: The proposal is to develop a long term master plan for this existing Secondary School with three phases of redevelopment. Phase one includes a 3-storey boarding house with 120 dormitory units and the associated staff residences, as well as two 3-storey academic buildings. Phase two includes an addition to the main building. Phase three is to develop an additional 3-storey boarding house including 120 dormitory units with associated staff residences.
- Zoning: RS-5 to CD-1  
 Application Status: Rezoning Application  
 Review: First  
 Architect: Fielding Nair  
 Owner: St. George's School  
 Delegation: Randy Fielding, Fielding Architecture International  
 Dylan Chernoff, Durante Kreuk Landscape Architects  
 Tom Matthews, St. George's School  
 Julio Wong, MMM Group (Traffic Consultant)
- Staff: Grant Miller and Colin King

**EVALUATION: SUPPORT (6-0)**

- **Introduction:** Grant Miller, Rezoning Planner, introduced the proposal for an application to rezone the site of St. George's Senior School from RS-5 to CD-1 to facilitate the implementation of the school's long-range plan in three phases. The goal is to upgrade outdated classrooms and facilities and to accommodate residential students on site. Currently, senior school residential students are housed in dormitories at the St. George's Junior School site two blocks to the east. The current student enrollment is approximately 750 of which 120 are residents. The school does not intend to increase total enrollment, but rather to create a world class campus with potential to accommodate up to 240 residential students.

Phasing is proposed as follows.

**Phase 1:**

- 3-storey boarding house including 120 dormitory units with associated staff residences (maximum height 49 feet);
- Two 3-storey academic buildings (maximum height 57 feet).

**Phase 2:**

- Addition to the Main building (maximum height 42 feet).

**Phase 3:**

- 3-storey boarding house including 120 dormitory units with associated staff residences (maximum height 49 feet).

**Parking:**

- 54 surface parking spaces;
- 111 underground parking spaces.

Mr. Miller described the policy context for the site noting that the Dunbar Community Vision supports consideration of rezoning applications on institutional sites for purposes of expansion, downsizing or reuse. Further, the Rezoning Policy for Sustainable Large Developments applies to this 14 acre site. This policy complements the standard Green Buildings Policy for Rezoning's intending to realize the potential of large redevelopment sites. However, in this case the proposed use is of modest density and is therefore not deemed a viable candidate for a neighbourhood energy utility.

Colin King, Development Planner, further described the proposal and mentioned that the proposal is to put in place a master plan guide for future development of the St. George's Senior School Campus on the corner of West 29<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Camosun Street. Mr. King noted that the school is located within the western quadrant of the site, and is predominately one and 2-storey buildings. In describing the context he noted that currently there are playfields and an undeveloped edge on the Camosun Street frontage and then single family residences to the east. As well there are mature trees on the West 29<sup>th</sup> Avenue frontage with vehicular access to the site and single family residences to the west. On the north of the site there are single family residences along half of the frontage and a substation to the east.

Mr. King explained that from a form of development point of view, the rezoning aims in terms of height and density are broadly possible under current zoning using relaxations available to schools to reconcile their land-use with the predominately single-family dwelling districts in which they are located. The master plan through rezoning is a tool that facilitates broad agreement of the form of future development of the site. If agreed, it gives the school security in fund raising by demonstrating a vision for their operation. For the neighbourhood, it gives security in terms of knowing what to expect in the future. The alternative is to pursue each of the buildings or phases under zoning seeking relaxation of the Director of Planning in each and every case.

The proposal plans to address deficiencies of existing academic spaces and the off-site location of senior boarders at the junior school. As well there is a provision of new academic spaces, decanting of school uses with renovation of existing academic spaces and the development of residential dorms. Mr. King mentioned that parking is currently surface parking accessed from West 29<sup>th</sup> Avenue. The proposal will reduce the surface parking and provide an underground parking area beneath the academic houses accessed from Camosun Street. The proposed dorms are envisioned as 3-storey residences for 60 students in each house with common areas. They will be split into two phases: the first in the northwest corner to the rear of the existing dwellings and the second to the northeast adjacent to the substation.

Mr. King mentioned that the site is large enough that the City's sustainable large sites policy will apply. As the project moves forward through the development permit application stage, additional information will be required to confirm the proposed LEED™ points are achievable under the Sustainable Sites category and to provide detailed information, confirming the performance of the site design under this policy direction.

Advice from the Panel on this application is sought on the following:

- Is the Panel in support of the form of development as it relates to height, density and massing?
- Provide commentary around the athletic hall volume within the west elevation as it relates to contextual fit with surrounding residential uses.
- Commentary on the neighbourliness of proposed development along the north property line as it relates to both form of development and proposed phasing.

Mr. King took questions from the Panel.

- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** Tom Matthews, St. George's School's Headmaster gave a brief introduction on the school. He mentioned that the Plan will help improve the quality of teaching and learning spaces. Some of the classrooms do not have windows so the plan is to relocate that space into more spacious surroundings with better light.

Randy Fielding, Architect, further described the proposal and mentioned that the way they are looking at the site is to have better connections. The original building had more daylight and connections to the site originally and over time pieces were added and made it more closed off to the community. They are preserving the big lawn and trying to make it feel more significant and as well they are taking out a piece of the building to increase indoor connections. Mr. Fielding mentioned that they have a path that is open to the public with edible gardens. The way the massing was done was to be able to relate to the adjacent residential and soften the edge to create small outdoor spaces. He mentioned that the gym building has been located 75 feet from the property line and set a level below grade in order to respect the adjacent residential. There will be 110 new underground parking spaces that will reduce a lot of the traffic on West 29<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Part of the Plan is working with the City to reduce traffic for people accessing and exiting the school property. Mr. Fielding mentioned that there was some concern in the neighbourhood regarding phasing the proposal. He said that if the residential halls weren't constructed the space would probably end up being playing fields with lights. In meetings with the City, residential to residential was the best use for the area and will be the quietest use for the neighbours.

The applicant team took questions from the Panel.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
  - Design development through phasing to allow for more room between the new academic building and the existing building;
  - Design development to improve the expression of the west elevation;
  - Consider noise mitigation measures for the work shop;
  - Consider adding pathways and weather protection around the edge of the property;
- **Related Commentary:** The Panel supported the height, density and massing in the proposal.

The Panel supported the separation between the athletic hall and the residential area. They thought it would be a strong move to frame the green space with the residences. They did however have a concern regarding the general massing and layout and through the new academic building pinched up against the existing building on the corner. They liked the grand feel to the entrance but through the new building being taller than the existing buildings, crowded them a little. One Panel member suggested shifting the massing in the wing to give it more space. Another Panel member noted that the west elevation had a long run with a flat elevation whereas the other buildings have a grain and scale that fits well with the surrounding neighbourhood. It was suggested that some breaking up and articulation of the façade was warranted.

Regarding the landscaping, it was noted that the site design strategy needs to be more comprehensive and acknowledge the quad. As well there should be some acoustic control for the wood shop. It was suggested that the landscaping was not developed as there is still a need to look at having pathways along the property line as well as screening and fencing

for privacy. There could also be a strategy regarding circulation through the site. One Panel member suggested screening the parking area to the neighbours.

The Panel thought the level of sustainability was well thought out but there needed to be weather protection on the new buildings. As well one Panel member suggested the applicant consider renewal energy across the site. Another Panel member thought this was an opportunity to look at storm water planning and to ensure that the storm water coming off the site feeds into a cistern and then into the water shed. He also suggested the school work with the First Nations for a water stewardship management plan.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Fielding said he appreciated all the comments and thought they were thoughtful and helpful.

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2. Address:	5099 Joyce Street (Joyce-Collingwood SkyTrain Station)
DE:	418543
Description:	To renovate and expand the existing Joyce SkyTrain Station including expanded station house and upgrades to the public realm.
Zoning:	C-2C
Application Status:	Complete Development Application
Review:	First
Architect:	Office of McFarlane Biggar Architects + Design
Owner:	TransLink
Delegation:	Nick Foster, Office of McFarlane Biggar Architects + Design Doug Shearer, Hapa Collaborative Landscape Architecture Bill Orr, TransLink
Staff:	Chris Robertson and Ann McLean

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**EVALUATION: SUPPORT (5-0)**

- **Introduction:** Ann McLean, Development Planner, introduced the proposal for upgrades and additions to the Joyce-Collingwood Station. Along with the Development Permit Application there is a proposal for a long term layout for the station area. As part of the current proposal the west station house will be removed and the east station house will be renovated and expanded. Most of the existing east station house, which is quite small, will be removed. The proposal includes the removal of the “kiss and ride” parking lot as this area is proposed as a plaza and queuing area for buses. The drop off area will be relocated further east, in a layby arrangement. Ms. McLean described the context for the area noting that to the north and across Joyce Street is C-2C zoning with heights of 45 feet. To the south is CD-1 with a 16-storey residential tower on a 3-storey mixed-use podium. To the northeast is RS-1 single family zoning. Along the guide-way to the east is the BC Parkway.

Ms. McLean explained that the site is zoned RS-1, which is primarily a single family residential zone, but is also the zoning for most schools and parks. There are no guidelines for this zone. The C-2C zone has guidelines that encourage the success of a local shopping street. As well it encourages a pedestrian friendly streetscape including continuous storefronts and weather protection. The new east station house will be 230 feet long and will open onto a new open space. The building includes an ancillary space adjacent to Joyce Street which staff would like to see as a CRU and bike storage area at the east end.

Advice from the Panel on this application is sought on the following:

- The proposed building design for the station renovation and expansion;
- The interaction at ground plane with the Joyce shopping street and Vanness Avenue;
- The interim public realm design pathways and plazas and their success in achieving safety and clarity with regard to the multi-modal uses (transit, pedestrian, bike);
- The long-term public realm and bus loop design and its success in achieving transit function, and safety and clarity for multi-modal uses.

Ms. McLean and Mr. Robertson took questions from the Panel.

- **Applicant’s Introductory Comments:** Nick Foster, Architect, further described the proposal and mentioned that the intent of the station upgrades is to accommodate the increase in ridership. The station needs to extend in length to accommodate longer trains. That triggered the need for additional circulation, vertical conveyance and exit capacity. At the same time there is also an objective to revisit and recreate a new identity for the station that integrates better into the context. All the bus activities currently don’t have enough public realm to accommodate all the traffic so they are looking at including a

dedicated bus drop off area and as well a dedicated pickup area. The existing structure is recognizable and speaks to an important part of the city's history but at the same time the construct doesn't really allow it to nestle into the context. The station lacks a neighbourhood identity and public realm and also the station reads big as a solid mass. Mr. Foster described the response architecturally which has been to not replicate the existing station but to showcase some of the legacy elements of the existing station. They want the forms to be simple and legible and showcase the activities in and around the station. The building is glazed on the ground level and they have consolidated all the service spaces in the station behind solid elements. As well there will be a retail unit and bicycle storage room. The entrance is marked with high level landscaping and they have made the platform more transparent with the use of glazing for wind screening. He mentioned that the material palette is mostly concrete but they are looking at introducing laminated wood panels to the soffit and the use of metal panels with a fine grain expression for the building elements. There are new skylights along the whole roof of the station.

Doug Shearer, Landscape Architect, described the landscaping plans and noted that there are two aspects in terms of phasing. The plaza sets the tone and then future phase work that deals with the parkway and how it fits into the larger landscape to the east. In terms of the immediate work, they are proposing the addition of trees in the plaza that are tall and narrow. They have two types of seating in the plaza. One is a basic cast in concrete seat wall that is under the canopy and the other kind will be a round seating feature made from either cast in concrete or precast concrete. The top will likely be a painted metal that provide some colour in the plaza. Underneath the guide way there is space for a seating if there is a café or coffee shop. Around the west side there is also space that could be used for seating. The back of the building has soft landscaping that will be clean up to improve the circulation.

The applicant team took questions from the Panel.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
  - Consider a lighter colour palette;
  - Consider improving the wayfinding in particular around the west side of the station;
  - Consider adding side by side escalators;
  - Consider a more pure form for the box volume;
  - Consider adding soft landscaping around the bus loops;
  - Consider improving the parkway in the first phase.
- **Related Commentary:** The Panel supported the proposal and thought the design was well handled.

The Panel thought the proposal and how it deals with the existing building with the use of screens, skylights and a sense of lightness was commendable with one exception and that is the colour of the panels. They wanted to see a toning down of the colours. They liked how the applicant was dealing with the iconic structure as they thought it was treated sensitively.

With regard to the additions to the existing building, the Panel saw it as a counterpoint to the existing building and relatively successful. They had some concerns with the purity of the form and the windows. Several Panel members thought the box expression was intriguing particularly with the punched windows, although a couple of members thought it would be cleaner without the windows.

Some Panel members thought the wayfinding could be improved and that the west station should have the same type of paving treatment as the east side to acknowledge entry. A couple of Panel members wanted to see a side by side pair of escalators and that since the applicant is making an adjustment to the platform they could make room for them at the end of the platform. Most of the Panel thought there was a good solution for the transit bus loops as well as the movement from the station to the buses. A couple of Panel members were concerned with the amount of pavement around the bus loops and wanted to see more soft landscaping in those areas.

Several Panel members thought the scale at grade from the transparency to the entry and landscaping worked very well. They wanted to see the landscape help to decrease the amount of asphalt that is bookended by the parkway and the station. Several Panel members recommended that the parkway be improved as part of the first phase rather than waiting as this would help to establish the landscape elements that will be permanent. As well, they wanted to see more trees added into the landscape especially along Vanness Avenue.

The Panel appreciated the material palette and thought the laminated wood panels would make the soffits a very prominent element.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Foster thanked the Panel for their really good comments.



3. Address:	800 Robson Street (Robson Square)
DE:	418434
Description:	Exterior alterations to add a glass entry at both the north and south entry locations for the University of British Columbia
Zoning:	CD-1
Application Status:	Complete Development Application
Review:	First
Architect:	Stantec Architecture
Owner:	Province of BC
Delegation:	Doug Hamming, Stantec Architecture Robert Lemon, Robert Lemon Architecture Sarah Kasaez, UBC Golman Lee, Province of BC
Staff:	Anita Molaro

#### EVALUATION: NON-SUPPORT (0-5)

- **Introduction:** Anita Molaro, Development Planner, introduced the proposal for a small project that will see alterations to Robson Square with respect to the University of British Columbia. She noted it is an important location within the city.

Advice from the Panel on this application is sought on the following:

- Is the proposed new north entry for UBC a supportable urban design response into the composition of Robson Square?
- Is the proposed glass vestibule within the south plaza a supportable urban design response into the composition of Robson Square?
- Are the proposed materials and resolution of the components supportable taking into consideration the approaches related to mechanical and electrical and maintenance in addressing how the glass volume(s) will perform under various climatic conditions?

Ms. Molaro took questions from the Panel.

- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** Doug Hamming, Architect, further described the proposal and mentioned that there is a high level of detail required for the alteration. He stated that UBC have a problem that people can't seem to find them. The physical presence of UBC is compromised by their position which is below grade. In terms of functional access, they have over 150,000 people trying to access their space and a student population of 35,000 annually. The way of getting into their space is largely through circuitous routes and none of them is essentially a front door. One of the largest drivers of the renovation is a having an acoustical separation from the outdoor activities in the plaza. Mr. Hamming said it was important for them to respect the asset which is Robson Square. They met with the Arthur Erickson Foundation and the Erickson family and as well they have gone to the Vancouver Heritage Commission. Mr. Hamming described the architectural plans and mentioned that it is a design enhancement to be consistent with the original vision for the site. In terms of public realm, it has a practical implication of animating the plazas with respect to how it is lit at night and how it provides access. He added that the City is looking at closing Robson Street in this location.

Robert Lemon, Architect, mentioned that the Vancouver Heritage Commission saw the proposal in October and gave the proposal support. Robson Square, all three blocks, is listed on the Vancouver Heritage Register in the A category. The former law courts (Art Gallery) is a national historic site as well as provincial and municipal designation. The current law courts have one of the first green roofs. He noted that UBC wasn't part of the

original concept for the site. The idea is to add a structure that represents education. The location of the new stair is where originally there was a notion of an escalator down to the plaza level.

The applicant team took questions from the Panel.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
  - Design development to the north entry stair element to reduce its scale and height;
  - Design development to simplify the arc element and to consider a more complementary shape, perhaps a platonic shape;
  - Design development to resolve the circulation at both ends of the stair;
  - Design development to reduce the volume of the vestibule element in the south plaza or make it more contextually appropriate;
  - Design development to improve the integration between the existing structure and the new elements;
  - Consider the future design of the existing pagodas as a component of the composition of structural elements within the plaza;
  - Improvement to signage and way-finding.
- **Related Commentary:** The Panel did not support the proposal although they appreciated the level of detail provided. Panel thought the proportions and configuration of the additional elements were not successful.

The Panel recognized that this was a difficult challenge for both Robson Square and UBC. With regards to the north entry, the Panel accepted that the proposal created an address for UBC and in some ways that address was being seen as an architectural icon. Some Panel members thought it was successful but others thought it was not successful as an architectural icon. Panel had comments that the proposal was either not bold enough or it was too bold and not sensitive enough to the context. Specifically the Panel thought the height and the scale of the intervention on the north side was excessive and fights with the immediate architecture.

With regards to circulation, there were a number of Panel members that saw a compromise in the circulation both at the top of the proposal where the stairs entered and at the bottom where the lower plaza is entered. The Panel thought the circulation had not been resolved with respect to access. They suggested that a more direct sense of entrance would be more successful as the proposal now makes people turn one way or the other in order to go anywhere.

The arc was questioned by some Panel members as they felt it was somewhat arbitrary and not necessarily relating to the existing architecture. They suggested a more platonic or simpler element; one that would be more recognizable might be more successful.

Some Panel members thought the idea of an element in the south plaza was warranted and there was support for a symmetrical approach in concept, although some Panel members questioned the manner in which the symmetrical element was provided and that there were some contradictions in the intent. The south plaza and the volume being proposed was questioned by the Panel as to its function. They suggested that there could be some other function added to make it have a better dialogue with the north. They suggested adding a stair or elevator and making it a bit larger as a possible revision.

With regards to the materials, the Panel commended the approach and thought a lot had gone into the planning. There were some questions about the language and whether or not

it was conflicting with the existing architecture. However, there was a real appreciation for the attempt. Some Panel members suggested the structure was being expressed too much.

The Panel thought it was difficult to assess the proposed design elements considering they don't have a clear understanding of what the pagodas will look like in the future. There was a recognition of the decluttering of the entire square, but without knowing how the pagodas might look like in the future, they were unable to comment on the element as they felt the two needed to be viewed together. Some Panel members felt the identification and signage could be achieved with a re-designed set of pagodas in lieu of the proposed entry and vestibule.

There were many comments from the Panel regarding signage and way-finding. The overall comment was that Robson Square is a precinct and needs to be better understood when it comes to signage and way-finding. They felt that in some ways the proposal created an address but it still doesn't seem to be clear for the whole precinct.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Hamming said he had no comments.

### **Adjournment**

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 6:57 p.m.