

URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: August 26, 2015

TIME: 4.00 pm

PLACE: Town Hall Meeting Room, City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
Russell Acton
Stefan Aepli
Stuart Hood
Ken Larsson
Jennifer Marshall
Chris Mramor
Roger Hughes
Julien Fagnan
Muneesh Sharma

REGRETS: Matthew Soules
Arno Matis
Meghan Cree-Smith

**RECORDING
SECRETARY:** Lidia McLeod

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING

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| 1. | 717 Davie Street (1193 Granville Street) |
| 1. | 7828 Granville Street |
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BUSINESS MEETING

Chair Marshall called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. and noted the presence of a quorum. There was a brief in-camera meeting, and then the panel considered applications as scheduled for presentation.

1. Address: 717 Davie Street (1193 Granville Street)
 DE: 419301
 Description: To construct a seven-storey mixed-use building containing 94 dwelling units with commercial at grade.
 Zoning: DD
 Application Status: Complete Development Application
 Review: First
 Architect: Musson Cattell Mackey Partnership (Mark Whitehead)
 Owner: Deecorp Properties Ltd.
 Delegation: Peter Kreuek, Keurek Durante
 Mark Whitehead, MCM
 Anna Citak, MCM
 Staff: Sailen Black

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (8-0)

- **Introduction:** Sailen Black, Development Planner, introduced the project as being at the north-west corner of Davie and Granville Streets. The proposal is for a seven-storey mixed-use building with retail at grade on both frontages. It included 94 residential units, with an entry off Davie Street and an extensive green roof deck at the north side.

The site currently contains a one-storey restaurant at the corner, which was formerly a bank branch from the late 1940's. North on the Granville Street frontage are older one-storey commercial and two-storey mixed use buildings. The site extends 150 ft. north along Granville, stopping before the white brick five-storey "St. Helens Hotel", which is on the Vancouver Heritage Register.

On the other corners exist a two-storey commercial building with a Blenz, a three-storey mixed use building with the Two Parrots Bar and Grill, and a five-storey live performance space and dance studio. There is a 27-storey residential 'tower and podium' building across lane to the north.

The Downtown ODP establishes a maximum density and height for the site. It also stipulates an angled envelope for this area of Granville to maintain a midrise building scale with good natural light at the pedestrian realm. Guidelines for the Granville Street area include general intents for:

- Creation of a distinct urban character for Granville Street as a pedestrian-oriented shopping area for Downtown South
- Ensuring a high standard of livability for residential projects and for the area as a whole
- Ensuring high quality developments

The guidelines also note that Granville Street is intended to be a major neighbourhood-serving commercial street for the Downtown South and adjacent communities. Along with Davie Street it provides such businesses as grocery stores, pharmacies and banks. Granville Street contains a number of buildings on the Vancouver Heritage Register which reinforce the character of the street with detailed facades.

Maintaining Granville's historic character is important. While new developments should take their cues from the heritage buildings, it is equally important that it create a strong, fresh character of its own within the streetscape. New buildings should respect the massing, scale and quality of the heritage structures, but modern expressions and the use of non-traditional materials are encouraged. Buildings at cross-streets have a role in highlighting these significant points in the streetscape. Buildings with important entrances should showcase them with signage, lighting, canopies and treatments that recall the outdoor lobbies of the theatres

Buildings above 30 feet in height require a rear setback of at least 15 feet. On a corner site a street wall element of a minimum of 30 feet in height and a maximum of 70 feet in height should extend along the flanking street to the rear property line.

Treatment of the rear portions of buildings along Granville Street should respond sensitively to adjacent residential developments across the lane so as not to diminish the quality of enhancements to the lane environment.

Landscaping should be provided where opportunities exist in rear setback areas, at grade and on roof decks.

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

1. Response of the design to the intents and recommendations in the Granville guidelines
 2. Fit of proposed façades with the scale, rhythm and lines of this part of Granville Street
 3. Prominence and legibility of the residential entry, and
 4. Does the design of the building respond to and reinforce this busy commercial intersection?
- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** The applicant team started by mentioning that Granville Street is morphing from north to south. The character of retail is distinct from Davie Street, with this corner being more service oriented. Granville Street is made up of two, five and seven-storey buildings.

There is a commercial Heritage building adjacent to site with a cornice at top. This is also an active pedestrian and transit area. A lot of buildings in the area do not celebrate the residential entry.

The proposal is for three rectangular boxes which respond to the adjacent heritage. The canopy uses a cornice and the vertical elements are playful. Moving up the building the cornice becomes more pronounced and the glass less dense. There is a subtle entrance with a solid black canopy on Davie Street which responds to the return.

The units inside are wide, with 25% of them having two bedrooms. They also include Juliet balconies and lightly tinted glass. There is an articulated retail base with portal frames for smaller retail tenancies. Large tenancies would need to respond to the livability of the units.

The building is not LEED certified, though the exterior wall aspires to 40% glazing, with metal panel and spandrel glass.

The ground plane is proscriptive, but a series of different roof spaces can be seen while moving up the building. There is an extensive green roof on top, and a common amenity space is supported by an amenity inside the building.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**

- The building needs to embody the different characters of Granville and Davie Streets more; there is a lot of sameness, but fancier or distinctive elements would help it stand out more
- Design development of the commercial retail unit frontage
- Portals are distracting and not appropriate to Granville shop front character
- Provide reference to heritage character at the retail level
- Address how the proposed materials will weather
- Rethink response to solar exposure and ventilation with the Juliet balcony detailing

- **Related Commentary:**

The loss of the Heritage bank building marking this corner is noted as unfortunate.

The panel noted that the project seems to match the intents and purposes of the guidelines, and in general it matches the scale and rhythm of the area. Although the approach is expressive, this is the same as many other developments elsewhere in the city. Something subtle like a colour change may be needed to make it stand out more. It also doesn't appear to embody the uniqueness of the area and could do more to embody the quirky character of Granville and Davie Streets.

More work is needed at the corner to reinforce it and make it a place. More whimsy should be given to this corner as all sorts of artistic responses are possible here.

Retail frontages do not fit Granville streetscape. Design development to retail frontages to create positive rhythm to connect it to the Granville streetscape and better emphasize the importance of the commercial space. Examine what is distinct about how Granville retail is articulated. The awnings also need to be wider as they currently do not provide the type of weather protection needed.

The residential entry seems to be done well, but there needs to be more of a sense of space. An arrival space of some kind would strengthen the expression of the entry. While a black canopy is ok more needs to be done to reinforce the corner and direct people towards the entryway.

Livability in these units is questionable, as living on two busy streets with double-glazing and natural ventilation poses a problem with traffic noise. Juliet balconies are great but there needs to be more allowable airflow into the units. The south façade needs solar shading to improve habitability of these units. There is a real need to take a look at solar exposure for the residents in this building.

The materials on the building are worrying as they are all white metal panels. If they are detailed right they will weather well enough, but will not weather as well as brick or stone.

The panel appreciated the amenity and outdoor space, and commented that the landscape was well-designed.

- **Applicant's Response:** The applicants noted that perhaps the glass on Davie Street could be changed to rainbow colours. Overall they appreciate all the comments, and a tender look will be taken at the retail. The Manhattan on Granville was an inspiration for this and some of its greatness could be replicated.

2. Address:	7828 Granville Street
DE:	419185
Description:	To construct a four-storey residential building containing a total of 40 dwelling units.
Zoning:	RM-9N
Application Status:	Complete Development Application
Review:	First
Architect:	Gateway Architecture Inc. (Michael Cox)
Owner:	CM Bay Granville Developments
Delegation:	Peter Kreuk, Durante Kreuk Micheal Cox, Gateway Architecture
Staff:	Ann McLean

EVALUATION: NON-SUPPORT (2-6)

- **Introduction:** Ann Mclean, Development Planner, introduced the project as an application under the RM-9N zone, which was developed as part of the Marpole Community Plan implementation last year.

The intent of this zone is to permit a variety of medium density residential buildings. Emphasis is on a high standard of liveability and creation of a variety of dwelling unit sizes, including those appropriate for families with children. All new development will demonstrate high quality design, and activation of street life. A degree of 'neighbourhood fit' is intended, while recognizing that the new development's form and siting is not intended to be the same as developments under RS zoning. To achieve cross ventilation and good daylighting, an "alphabet form" is anticipated for apartment buildings.

The current application site is a consolidation of three sites, and is 187 ft. wide and 106 ft. deep. There is a building line on Granville Street, but it has already been taken from these lots. There is also a significant cross slope on the site of 16 ft. from the northeast corner to the southwest.

The proposal is for a multiple dwelling residential building over one level of underground parking. The building has been massed into two four-storey portions with a two-storey section between them. The adjacent properties on and across Granville Street are zoned RM-9N; across the lane and north on Granville Street is RM-8N, a townhouse zone. Further south on the same block is zoned C-1.

The RM-9N zone allows:

- An FSR of up to 2.0 on sites with a frontage of more than 90 ft.
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- A discretionary Height up to 40ft; with further discretion to 45 ft. to accommodate sloping sites.

The FSR for the proposal conforms with the by-law and the proposal conforms to height expectations.

The zone prescribes a tight box for yards, but permits discretion as long as the intent of the zone is achieved. The by-law yard sizes are: 16 ft. for the front yard, 7 ft. for side yards, and 25 ft. for the rear yard. The proposed front yards, on Granville Street and 62nd Avenue, and rear yard are 12ft. These are both supportable, except that the front yard setback is generally retained at 16 ft. within 16 ft. of a property line.

The zone has a maximum frontage of 50m (164 ft.) to encourage a variety of smaller developments. A larger frontage can be considered in particular cases, as long as an exceptional effort is made to create differentiation between the street-fronting buildings on site.

The Director of Planning has considered this discretion here. There are 5 lots and the middle lot should be able to join one development or the other as it faces Granville Street where longer buildings exist nearby, and the building has been massed to appear as two forms.

There are three healthy trees onsite which have been deemed worthy of retention by City staff; these include Scot's Pine and two Cypress trees. The Marpole Plan seeks street trees and a sidewalk of at least 6 ft. in this area of Granville.

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

1. The massing approach as it relates to:
 - the grade change on the site
 - the request for discretion for the larger frontage
 2. Discretionary height and yard setbacks with regard to the zoning intent (above)
 3. The interface with the public realm
- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** The applicant team noted that, as the site has a larger width, the massing is broken down into two forms with a setback section in the centre. This makes the project appear to be two buildings.

The grade change created a lot of challenges. The main floor is stepped 3 ft. and sections of it go below grade. Of the units in the building 40% of them are one bedroom, or one bedroom with a den. The remainder of the units have two or three bedrooms, with most of these being on the ground floor. The amenity space also has an outdoor patio which looks over kids play area.

Brick has been used on the façade facing 62nd Avenue, with hardy panels being used to break this up. There are two entrances to the buildings with separate addresses. These are designed like two mini high-rises in terms of floor plates. This design has created a lot of corner units which exponentially increases light into units for a lot of suites.

Changes have been made to create window casements to add more ventilation into units instead of just using awning ventilation units. Accessible ramps have also been shortened and are now single runs as previously they were too complicated.

Everything in landscaping is on ground floor. Patios are maximized, and hedges are used to define public and private realms. Everything is softly handled, with a soft lot existing in the back against the east-facing amenity space.

This is not a LEED building, but there is exterior insulation and solar exposure has been taken into account. There is also storm water detention and other various sustainable details.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - There needs to be a clarity of intent on the setbacks
 - Public and private realms need to be more connected
 - The connector does not work and needs to be downplayed
 - The grade change is awkward and needs attention
 - There needs to be activation of the lane to create a sense of community
 - The colour pallet is dull - more forceful colours are needed
 - The amenity space is poor; exterior spaces needs to have more of a vision
 - More presence and delight are needed along Granville street
- **Related Commentary:** The panel thanked the applicants for a good presentation and noted that, although the project seems to hit the intents of the guidelines, it has not come together in a very coordinated manner.

Improvement is needed on the frontage, and the ramps need to be set back. If discretion is given for larger frontages it usually results in a better solution or some benefit. This does not seem to be providing that benefit and is not earning the larger frontages. The frontage is also trying to do way too much; completing the brick façade will give the building a lot more substance. As well, introducing some walls might also be a good way to alleviate, protect and anchor the building

The guidelines have emphasis on street life and residential character, and this project just looks like a mirror of two boxes which creates awkward grade changes between the two buildings. The building lacks a sense of place

This is a challenging site with all the grade changes. The building could be more stepped as a response to the grade change. The interface with the public realm is non-existent, and the corners of the buildings are not handled well as one side has no edge or support. The biggest deficiency is the lack of direct connections from each unit to the street. A lot more connections are needed to address the public/private interface.

The landscape needs design development to connect the building to its context. This is where the strongest expression of grade change should happen. More lawn or landscape is needed to create more usable space. The Granville Street frontage in particular has a lot of wasted space. While it is good that there are patios, there needs to be more outdoor amenity space. More and more usable green space would help support the greater frontage. The planter walls should be more delightful. If the ramps could be stepped back so planter was not right on the property line it would better.

The protected patios are good, but the landscaping is too close to the building. Pulling it back for light or air would improve the livability of the lower units - in particular the unit 2 ½ ft. below grade at the north-west elevation is too low and needs careful landscaping to address this. Moving the big trees near the entrances would help mark them as special.

Overall the elevations have good promise and proportions. In terms of materiality and business the facades are inappropriate for Granville Street - too much happening. The expression of the building would be stronger if the brick façade was simpler. Currently it appears too articulated with dull colouring. Using a single material would help to balance the building more and provide a stronger calmer street presence.

The entry façades needs design development as the current windows at the bottom have a bunker-like quality. More airflow is needed into the units and facades developed to improve habitability and response to solar exposure..

There also needs to be an amenity room on the south side of the site, or the single amenity located in the north building needs to be more accessible from the south building as currently it is awkward for residents to access. There are concerns that outdoor amenity space will be in the shade for a lot of the year.

- **Applicant's Response:** The applicant noted that the challenge of changing the massing would push the project beyond the 35 ft. height limit because of the sloping plane. The form of the building on the corner is based on staying under the height limit. The applicant also appreciated the comments and will take them into consideration, as most of them can be taken into account.

Adjournment

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 6:30p.m.