

URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: January 11, 2017

TIME: 3:00 pm

PLACE: Town Hall Meeting Room, City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
Helen Avini Besharat
Amela Brudar (excused for item #1)
James Cheng
Nell Gasiewicz
David Jerke
Renee Van Halm
Karen Spoelstra
Meredith Anderson (excused for item #2)
Yijin Wen
Neal LaMontagne
Muneesh Sharma
Kim Smith

REGRETS: Veronica Gillies

RECORDING SECRETARY: Lidia McLeod

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING

- | | |
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| 1. | 5733 Alberta Street & 376-392 W 41st Avenue |
| 2. | 105 Keefer Street & 544 Columbia Street |
| 3. | 1550 Alberni Street |
| 4. | Sign By-Law Review |
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BUSINESS MEETING

Anita Molaro, Assistant Director of Planning, called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. and noted the presence of a quorum. There was a brief business meeting in which Kim Smith was elected as the new chair, and Helen Besharat and Veronica Gilles were elected as the new co-vice-chairs. The panel then considered applications as scheduled for presentation.

1. Address: 5733 Alberta Street & 376-392 W 41st Avenue
 Permit No. RZ-2016-00029
 Description: The proposal is for a six-storey residential building comprised of 54 market dwelling units over two levels of underground parking (including 62 vehicle spaces and 84 bicycle spaces), with a maximum building height of 21.0 m (69 ft.) from grade and a floor space ratio (FSR) of 2.63. This application is being considered under the Cambie Corridor Plan.
 Zoning: RS-1 to CD-1
 Application Status: Rezoning Application
 Review: First
 Architect: GBL Architects (Daniel Eisenberg)
 Owner: iFortune Homes Inc.
 Delegation: Amela Brudar, GBL Architects
 Amaya Rocca, GBL Architects
 Grant Brumpton, PWL Partnership
 Eric Aderneck, iFortune Homes Inc.
 Staff: Zachary Bennett & Sailen Black

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (10-0)

- **Introduction:** Zachary Bennett, Rezoning Planner, introduced the project as a rezoning application composed of three single-family parcels at the southwest corner of Alberta Street and 41st Avenue. The site is presently zoned RS-1 and developed with three single-family houses. It is approximately 21,342 sq. ft., with 150 ft. of frontage along 41st Avenue, 142 ft. of frontage along Alberta Street and a proposed FSR of 2.63.

Across the lane sites are zoned RS-1 and are included in Cambie Corridor Phase 3 (CC3) planning. Staff note that CC3 policy planning is still underway and final direction for these sites has not been determined. Sites along W 41st Avenue are zoned RS-1. Rezoning of up to six storeys can be considered to the west, and up to four storeys to the east. The site is one block from Oakridge Centre, an urban centre for the metro region. Two nearby rezonings have been approved at 2.55 and 2.91 FSR.

The proposal is for a six-storey residential building with a total of 54 units set over one and a half levels of underground parking. It is being considered under the Cambie Corridor Plan, which anticipates six-storey residential buildings in this area and an estimated FSR range of 2.0-2.5.

Sailen Black, Development Planner, continued by noting that the Cambie Corridor policy allows for residential buildings up to six storeys; however, above four storeys the upper floors are stepped back from 41st Avenue. Buildings are to provide front doors on the street and should activate and enhance the lane with active uses and public realm features, such as trees or landscaped setbacks.

To improve the streetscape and way-finding the policy notes that:

6.3.3 - *To help identify connections and links to parks and other community amenities, mark streets with notable, high quality streetscape treatments (street trees, wide paving, lighting, street furniture, public art). These street improvements would be distinct from the streetscape design for other areas along the Corridor in order to provide a visual cue to where these important community amenities are located.*

The building includes frameless glass balcony enclosures and a green roof above. There is also currently a glassy feeling to the facade on 41st Avenue, and brick has been suggested as a material at the base on Alberta Street.

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

1. Does the Panel support the proposed form of development including
 - Height of six storeys
 - Setbacks of approximately
 - 12 ft. to 41st Avenue and Alberta Street
 - 5.5 ft. to the lane
 - 8 ft. to the interior property line
 - Density of 2.63 FSR with total floor area of 56,149 sq. ft.
 2. Responsiveness of the north façade and open space design to this part of West 41st Avenue
 3. Preliminary comments on the proposed exterior treatment
- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** The applicant team started by noting that this was an opportunity to create a different building in the Cambie corridor, which was quite refreshing. This building meets the intent of the guidelines by stepping from six-storeys to a two-storey townhouse form at the back, but turns the corner to add something new.

The approach was to create a building which meets the guidelines but which addresses each elevation slightly differently. Along 41st Avenue the first floor is setback to provide space for the residents and allow them to close themselves off against the noise. The second floor is highlighted through frameless balconies and a window-wall expression with spandrel. There is also a framed box-like element which provides privacy and visual interest.

There is a strong streetwall with brick and a punched-window approach. The stepping goes down into two-level townhomes at the back, and the townhomes are connected through the building and have access at the lane. There is also an intimate 34 ft. courtyard between the building and townhomes.

The side elevation is rendered in a brick expression with a more restrained approach. By turning the building into an L-shape it creates narrow units with a lot of light. The ground floor units have big patios, and the upper floor units have balconies and terraces. The building also includes a glazed window-wall contemporary expression.

The setbacks at 41st Avenue allow for a planting strip and street trees to add an acoustic buffer, and layered planting provides separation between public and private spaces. There is a water feature at the corner to catch people's eye. Proposed are a couple of curb extensions to add some greenery and traffic calming, and the townhomes are provided with layered planting at the lane. The courtyard has good afternoon light and there is an opportunity for a children's play space. At the roof there are private patios and an extensive green roof with planters to help mitigate overlook.

The applicant team then took questions from the panel.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - Provide more public amenity to earn the increased FSR;
 - Design development on the courtyard to make it bigger and better;
 - Design development on the ground-floor units to increase daylight access and to provide them with a better acoustic buffer;
 - The materials could be simplified and more cohesive;
 - Design development should be considered on the water feature to add artistic merit;
 - More separation is needed between the laneway houses and the lane;
 - Simplify the elevations by reconsidering the frames;
 - Something is needed to warm up the townhouses a bit more visually;
 - Consider reconfiguring the west units to add windows to the corridors.
- **Related Commentary:** The panel members had no problem with proposed density or form of development, but noted that overall the buildings are too dark. More also needs to be done to address the overall sustainability of the development. The applicants should consider increasing the building passivity through expression and materiality. One panel member supported the pop-ups on the roof as they create a more interesting skyline.

There is a bit too much metal in this building, and other materials should be considered. With all the glass and brick it feels a bit cold for passersby.

There are a lot of different things happening; simplify the materials and expression a bit. The glass strategy for the north façade is classy and functional, but the frames are not really necessary. More could also be done to make this into a different building from other Cambie Corridor buildings. The brick cuts off abruptly turning the corner and turns into metal, and this makes the metal portion seem too separate from the rest of the structure. Consider more windows on the west façade, and more screening and layering on the building at the upper floors would help with the floating aspect of the face. The first floor is a bit depressed with such a large balcony overhang from the second floor. Lighten this area up a bit.

Larger patios at the lane would help activate it more and provide a better transition between the public and private realms. Privacy could also be better handled between the townhomes and the main building, and something needs to be done to better activate the laneway in a playful way. There should also be an accessible entry at the back from the laneway.

The courtyard is tiny and does not seem sufficient as a public amenity, and design development on this space and better programming are needed. Really develop the play area with something other than landscape features. As well, more outdoor space is needed to warrant the additional FSR. Consider putting additional public space on the roof to increase the amenity.

More could be done to flesh out the water feature and have it add to the artistic merit of the building. More street furniture is also needed, and consider adding outdoor cooking features to the courtyard. The first level planters need to have lush, evergreen planting. The ground floor units facing 41st Avenue have noise and privacy issues, and the landscape does not seem to provide a sufficient acoustic buffer. More privacy screening is also needed for the ground-floor units facing the courtyard.

- **Applicant's Response:** The applicant team appreciated the comments and will use them to guide further design development. They are happy to continue working on the building.

2. Address:	105 Keefer Street & 544 Columbia Street
Permit No.	LAN# 2014035
Description:	The revised proposal is for a 12-storey mixed-use building that includes 110 market residential units, 25 seniors social housing units on the second floor, which will be operated by a non-profit housing provider, commercial space on the ground floor (including a dedicated seniors' cultural space), a floor space ratio (FSR) of 7.04, two levels of underground parking, and a height of 35.1 m (115 ft.)
Zoning:	HA-1A to CD-1
Application Status:	Rezoning Application
Review:	Third
Architect:	Merrick Architecture (Gregory Borowski)
Owner:	Beedie Development
Delegation:	Gregory Borowski, Merrick Architecture Paul Merrick, Merrick Architecture Bruce Hemstock, PWL Partnership Rob Fiorvento, Beedie Development
Staff:	Yan Zeng & Paul Cheng

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (10-0)

- **Introduction:** Yan Zeng, Rezoning Planner, and Paul Cheng, Development Planner, introduced the project as a rezoning application under the Rezoning Policy for Chinatown South (HA-1A).

This is the fourth iteration and third visit to the Urban Design Panel for this project. The site is dimensioned approximately 150 ft. by 122 ft. and currently contains a surface parking lot. Previous to that there was a gas station and automobile repair shop; however, the site has been sitting empty for many years.

The proposal is for a 12-storey mid-rise, visually-preceded by a streetwall of varying heights along Keefer and Columbia Streets. Through the rezoning policy, the project proposes a new 115 ft. building in an existing zoning context that permits 90 ft. tall buildings. This proposal has introduced a design strategy which uses the streetwall podium to respond to the historical context, while setting back the tower element from the perimeter of the site in order to be visually subservient as seen from the nearby public sidewalks.

Previous Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement

- Overall the building form is too tall and does not align with the scale of Chinatown's distinct silhouette;
- The massing concept and architectural language, should reflect or be informed by the dominant north south grain of the built form of Chinatown.
- The south west corner of the building at the end of the Quebec Street axis should make a stronger architectural statement;
- The balconies on the tower lantern create too much mass, bulk, and conflict with the vertical façade elements;
- The 'spirit' of Chinatown and the contemporary reinterpretation of history were not evident in the design.

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

1. Does the revised Rezoning proposal successfully respond to the Urban Design Provisions of the Chinatown HA-1A Rezoning Policy, with respect to overall massing, density, height, form and proposed Uses?
 2. Does the revised proposal successfully address the concerns previously voiced by the Urban Design Panel, with respect to its scale, mass, height, architectural language, and the “spirit” of Chinatown?
- **Applicant’s Introductory Comments:** The applicant team noted that they tried to understand what is at the root of building of the Chinese community and the spirit of Chinatown. This world is not the same as the downtown high-rise world; this area has a level of richness and experience not found in other areas.

The area is adjacent to false creek and the railyards, and is a very real transition between urban circumstances. Thus the idea has been to develop a place of presence with some considered social housing. Overall the bulk, fit and performance of the building are much improved and provide good value to the area.

The 25 ft. lot has a cadence which goes north to south, and which is consistent with what has historically been on this site. At the ground the 25 ft. language turns the corner and goes west. Along this wall the building as an entity is not perceived; it is just another piece of the urban experience and environment. There is a glass room to the west at the seventh floor, and special attention was paid to make this piece a cohesive part of the whole.

The landscape was an important part of dealing with the neighbourhood fit. An important part of the area was the mosaic tile storefronts and the extensive use of granite and brick. This mosaic tile is reused to denote the notion that storefronts used to exist in certain areas. The alleyway uses granite as a modern interpretation of the granite paving in a tactile way. As well, the trees used reflect the species of trees in the adjacent Dr. Sun Yat-Sen gardens.

There is a pattern of vertical signs which give a real sense of going into Chinatown, and a poem will be used on the building to further highlight this. Opportunities for public art are available but have not yet been concretely defined.

The applicant team then took questions from the panel.

- **Panel’s Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - Design development to get more daylight into the breezeway;
 - Consider simplifying some of the building elements, particularly on the rooftop;
 - Use colour to activate the building more;
 - Design development is needed to make the senior’s housing supportive to seniors;
 - Engage a public art consultant to enhance the building.
- **Related Commentary:** The panel noted that this responds to the previous panel concerns very well. The fine-grain detail, scale and orientation are improved and the increased verticality is good. However, the panel was split on whether scale, massing and height are supportable. Some panel members thought that the reduced number of units represent a loss of density for the neighbourhood, additional units could have made the building more affordable overall. One member thought that more density would be supportable if the front façade came down further, and other members thought that even the current height was too high for the location.

This does not respond to senior's needs in terms of layout and the location of the amenity. Significant design development is needed to allow this building to better serve senior citizens. As well, a better mix of units is needed in order to better provide for the communities' needs.

More is needed in order to animate the passage which leads into the loading bay. Consider setting the passage back from the lane, or widening it into a real breezeway and getting more natural light into this space. The lobby is not clearly identified and should be made more significant. The applicants should also really consider the ground floor as it will be a key piece in terms of streetwall and transition. They should also consider re-thinking the vertical scale of the corner element in relation to the rest of Chinatown.

The top section feels a bit squeezed and does not have its own identity. More could be done to mitigate the glowing, glass luxury condo top which is currently glowering over the neighbourhood. The clear top also needs to better acknowledge the orientation of the building, and it could be more linear or embody more strength of design.

More could be done with colour to integrate the building into Chinatown as currently it is too grey and muted to fit into the area. Pump up the colour a bit to strengthen and embolden the building, and consider public art at this stage in order to get a very developed and significant piece of art. The signs create a nice gateway into this area of town.

The landscape looks great in its current composition, but more could be done to acknowledge and preserve the memorial plaza as it has a very strong community element and is significant. Consider integrating the pavement outside the building into the plaza in order to preserve its current size and function. There could also be a transition to the residential areas made through landscaping.

- **Applicant's Response:** The applicant team noted that the points were well-made and well taken. They thanked the panel for their enthusiasm and comments as they will make this project better in its next iteration. A higher building would be a good trade for an increased setback on the lane, but this may not be feasible.

The loading bay is a facet of the idea that the ground is an inhabitable space; it could be paved and furnished, not just used for loading. The fabric of Chinatown has a history of a life in the back as well as the front, and the hope with this dimension is to continue this rich tradition.

The top is not intended to be glitzy, and from the street it will not be visible. However, the comments regarding it are well-taken.

3. Address:	1550 Alberni Street
Permit No.	DP-2016-00640
Description:	To develop a 43-storey mixed-use building with commercial units at grade and residential above (including 191 market dwelling units) all over eight levels of underground parking accessed from the lane.
Zoning:	CD-1 Pending
Application Status:	Complete Development Application
Review:	Second (First at DP)
Architect:	Merrick Architecture (Gregory Borowski)
Owner:	Westbank Projects Corp.
Delegation:	Gregory Borowski, Merrick Architecture Kelty McKinnon, Merrick Architecture David Leung, Westbank Projects Corp. Veronica Owens, Light House
Staff:	Patrick O'Sullivan

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (10-0)

- **Introduction:** Patrick O'Sullivan, Development Planner, introduced the project by noting that this is the first UDP appearance as a development permit application. The previous Panel appearance was December 2nd, 2015, and the project was unanimously supported at that time.

The site is located at the corner of Alberni Street and Cardero Street, and is 158 ft. by 131 ft. deep. There is a cross-slope of 12 ft. from the southeast corner to the northwest. Cardero Street is also a local bikeway.

Context buildings in the area include a 20-storey office building at 1500 W Georgia Street and an application for a building at 1575 West Georgia Street. Other buildings in the area include a 28-storey residential building at 1500 Alberni Street, a 22-storey residential building with commercial at grade to the southwest, and a two-storey retail and office building to the south on Robson Street.

The West-End Development Plan established adjacent C-6 zoning on Robson Street offering up to 8.75 FSR for developments creating new social or rental housing. This site has been rezoned under the West End Plan from DD to CD-1, and contains 191 market residential units along with commercial uses at grade along Cardero Street and Alberni Street.

The project has a proposed density of 13.85 FSR and a proposed height of 43 storeys (434 ft.). View cones B1, C1, and 3.2.1 limit the maximum height on this site to approximately 438 ft. Due to this, the penthouse units are two-storeys with internal stairs so that no elevator overrun is required.

On the North elevation at grade there is a bamboo grove and stone entry paths which lead towards the back of the forecourt. The domed forecourt has stone seating, a moss garden, a water feature, and a performance area. To the west along Cardero Street are three commercial retail units (CRUs) and a restaurant proposed at the northwest corner. To the south at the lane are the loading area and an access to eight levels of underground parking. To the east where the site meets the adjacent neighbour there are hedges and planting, and a retaining wall along the property line is being proposed. The proposed sculpting of built form at upper levels is intended to preserve sunlight access to sidewalks as well as public and private views.

Proposed amenity spaces include a domed amphitheatre for the private use of residents. They also include an amenity lounge on Level 1, a children's play area, a swimming area on Level 3, an amenity on the northwest corner of Level 4, and amenity gyms on Level 5 and 6.

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

1. Are you satisfied with how the applicant has addressed the consensus items from the rezoning UDP appearance?
 2. Please comment on the proposal's detailed design, which includes:
 - composition of exterior facades;
 - the design of the perforated screens;
 - weather protection;
 - Kigumi lattice work of the exterior dome;
 - horizontal fins/floor extensions;
 - the design of the top of loading area (private deck area).
 3. Please comment on the landscape design, which includes:
 - the public realm;
 - the bamboo grove along Alberni;
 - the forecourt/exterior domed performance space (moss garden, stone seating, mirrored columns);
 - the at-grade interface with the neighbour to the east;
 - the lane treatment.
- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** The applicant team introduced the project by noting that the idea is to take a simple form and allow erosion of it through the natural elements in a way which responds to this specific site. The carved out 'scoop' allows view aspects in a way which contrasts with the orthogonal geometry of the building.

There is a use of warm wood in the lower parts of the building and under the soffits in the upper few levels to allow for contrast with the cooler metal elements. Off Alberni Street there is an amphitheatre space which welcomes people looking in from the street and is meant to project visual accessibility. There is also bamboo in this space to create atmosphere while allowing for transparency. Perforated screens allow for a sense of play while adding some pixilation. The windows are triple-glazed for sustainability and attention has been paid to solar protection.

There is a 1.8 m sidewalk where the street trees are being replaced to create a lush landscape with ornamental grasses and planting. The street trees are malformed from pruning due to overhead wires currently. At the front there is yellow bamboo, which is very permeable and will allow for a lot of transparency. This bamboo is meant to be pruned annually to allow it to obtain a maximum height of around 6 ft. Extra lighting and lit bollards provide a sense of additional safety around the property, and a children's play structure surrounded by an urban 'forest' is currently under development.

The intent is to shoot for LEED gold, and there is triple-glazing and a high window-to-wall ratio to accomplish this. The transparency of the building was played with to really highlight the triple glazing.

The applicant team then took questions from the panel.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - More focus is needed on solar shading and building orientation;
 - The site and amphitheatre needs to be more accessible;
 - Give more of the site over to the public realm by inserting some city vitality into this space;
 - Consider the canopy over the loading area and how exhaust will function;
 - Re-consider the glazed wall by the pool to add solar control and mitigate exposure;

- Design development on the children's play area to make it focused towards children and not just sculptural;
 - Consider creating a more logical ramp.
- **Related Commentary:** The panel noted that this project is good and very supportable. All of the previous commentary seems to have been addressed. However, it would be a great public element if a plaque explaining the design rationale were added to the outside of the building as a way to tell its story.

The sunken lobby and landscaped space looks like it could be a 'Crime Prevention through Environmental Design' issue, and consideration should be given to resolving this and making it more visually accessible. Consider better daylighting of the amphitheatre space and how the acoustics will work. Overall, the site, and especially the amphitheatre, needs to be more accessible. As well, consider integration of the children's play area and the amphitheatre in some way.

A suggestion was made to create access to a commercial function, such as a coffee shop or the proposed restaurant through the amphitheatre to enliven the space and share it with the public.

There is a clearly thought-out plan to the public art which is commendable. Overall the building is looking quite beautiful.

The building needs to better address orientation and how the sun hits the different elevations during different times of the year. Consider also adding ventilation and means of addressing solar gain by adding some shading to the structure, and re-think the pool mechanical systems and solar exposure to better consider sustainability.

The ramp slope is quite steep and does not appear to have been developed very logically. If possible re-consideration might be given to its design.

The moss garden is great and very 'west coast', but thought should be given to the bamboo as it is a living thing and will be difficult to control in the long-run. Something more permeable should be considered as the bamboo may ultimately restrict views to the amphitheatre. Consideration should also be given to creating more variety in how the children's play space is put together, and to adding more street furniture along the east-west connection.

- **Applicant's Response:** The applicant team thanked the panel for their comments and confidence in this application. The applicants are really proud of the building and think that it is beautifully resolved.

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4. Address: Sign By-Law Review
Permit No: N/A
Description: Staff with the City-Wide & Regional Planning Division are currently updating the Sign By-law to reflect best practices, introduce new types of signs, help ensure good signage, and make it easier for businesses and stakeholders to understand and work within the rules of the by-law. Regulations for signage support businesses, set standards, protect the character of an area, and enhance the look and feel of the neighborhoods. Staff will provide a presentation of the proposed changes to the By-law followed by a discussion. Please see the Sign By-law Review webpage (<http://vancouver.ca/your-government/sign-by-lawupdate.aspx>) for more background information.
- Zoning: N/A
Application Status: Presentation
Review: First
Architect: N/A
Owner: N/A
Delegation: N/A
Staff: Heather Burpee, Helen Popple & Ann McLean
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EVALUATION: NON-VOTING PRESENTATION

- **Introduction:** City staff made a PowerPoint presentation to the panel members and summarized the concepts of the proposed sign by-law amendments. They then took questions from the panel.
- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** N/A
- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - N/A
- **Related Commentary:** The panel members provided a variety of comments to City staff on the presentation including the following:
 - Comments
- **Applicant's Response:**

Adjournment

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 8:33 p.m.