

URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: May 10, 2017

TIME: 3:00 pm

PLACE: Town Hall Meeting Room, City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
Kim Smith (Chair)
Yijin Wen
Neal LaMontagne
Karen Spoelstra (excused from item #3)
Muneesh Sharma
James Cheng

REGRETS: Veronica Gillies
Meredith Anderson
Helen Avini Besharat
Renee Van Halm
Nell Gasiewicz
David Jerke
Amela Brudar

RECORDING SECRETARY: Camilla Lade

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING
1. 349 W Georgia Street (Post Office Site)
2. 1500 Robson Street
3. 500 W Broadway

BUSINESS MEETING

Chair Kim Smith called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. and noted the presence of a quorum. A brief business meeting took place before the presentations commenced.

1. Address: **349 W Georgia Street (Post Office Site)**
 Permit No. RZ-2016-00021
 Description: The proposal is to allow the retention of the heritage building (Class A heritage, yet to be designated) and convert it into a mixed-use seven-storey podium. The proposal also adds three towers above the podium, including 17 storeys of office, and 18 and 20 storeys of residential. An overall floor space ratio of 12.08 FSR is proposed as well a total floor area of 145,998 m² (1,571,506 sq. ft.) and a height of 67.7m (222 ft.).
 Zoning: DD to CD-1
 Application Status: Rezoning Application
 Review: Second
 Architect: MCM Partnership (Mark Thompson)
 Owner: Bentall Kennedy
 Delegation: Mark Whitehead, architect, MCM
 Mark Thompson, architect, MCM
 Chris Phillips, landscape architect, PFS
 Donald Luxton, heritage consultant, DLA
 Staff: Michael Naylor & Paul Cheng

EVALUATION: SUPPORT with Recommendations

- **Introduction:** Rezoning Planner, Michael Naylor, provided a brief overview of the policy context supporting the rezoning. He indicated that there are two provisions in the Central Business District Rezoning Policy for which the site qualifies. One is for sites that have heritage and the second is for sites over 50,000 square feet in area. Under these two provisions, residential use can be considered in a project provided that the maximum FSR achievable under the current zoning is also realized in non-residential, employment-generating uses, such as office, retail or hotel.

Paul Cheng, Development Planner, introduced the project a site for rezoning for additional density over 7.0 FSR of commercial use only. There is an immediate context of large floor-plate buildings and not a context of slender residential towers this close to the entertainment district. There is obligation to retain a massive existing floorplate. There are challenges with having uses in some of the deep dark spaces where no residential or office building could work in that floorplate. The current adjacent sidewalk experience is quite weak, and the project represents some “urban repair”.

Urban Repair:

- 1) the porosity through all four sides compared to current opaque heavy walls of granite.
- 2) Significant new Commercial Retail tenancies, not just shopping, but “third places” where socializing urban life takes place outside of the private and public realms such as pubs, restaurants, cafes, hair salons, etc.
- 3) existing surface parking lot converted into public spaces and also restaurant terraces.
- 4) four existing curb cuts reduced to two

New iteration: Some 115,000 square feet carved away at the most strategic locations in order to maximize the usability of the roof gardens for the daycare and for all the inhabitants of the project. The proposal also introduces public access to a roof garden and a community gallery space.

Mr. Cheng reviewed the consensus items from the previous Design Panel and then took questions from the panel.

Please provide comments on how well this second design iteration has addressed these concerns:

Overall Building Form, Height, Density:

- Consider a different form on Georgia above the post office;
- Design development to better daylight the building spaces (the proposed roof deck);

Interface with the public sidewalks:

- Design development to reduce the building mass;
- Consider animating the abrupt straight Georgia facade with something other than offices;
- More animation is needed on the Georgia Street side;
- Consider how the office entrance takes up street space and how this will affect after-hour use;
- Design development to better animate Homer Street;
- Consider Hamilton Street and location of car and loading access in relation to Queen Elizabeth Plaza;

The new public space:

- The terraced walls on Hamilton Street are too high;
- Add more public space to this terrace area rather than private outdoor café space;

Issues that can be dealt with at the Development Permit level:

- Design development to better relate the rhythm of the top additions to the post-office;
- Mitigate after-hour office light pollution in consideration of the building residents;
- Provide more connectivity between Homer Street and Hamilton Street;

- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** The applicant team started by noting the levels are designed to be easily accessible. Every column and slab is retained and added to, so that very little had to be removed.

The proposed massing 'response' is located above the podium. There is a direct visual relationship between the residential pieces. The day care is south facing in the new design. The open space was also re-oriented with more solar access, and the building is now stepped down. The building gaps in the design are increased.

On Homer Street, the building is re-sculpted to create a different scale. The mass improved the solar access. The Georgia and Dunsmuir façade proposals have articulation moves and materiality that could provide a passive solar element. The silicone grid is subtle but corresponds to the heritage building. There is more diverse architectural expression in the new iteration. The residential building design is more vertical. There are green elements introduced, with dynamic glass on the west and east.

Parking is reduced and some of the parking can be used for something else in the future with a level slab. There is a bicycle co-op on the site as a 'store front element'. There are bike and co-op parking spaces provided in the proposal.

The daycare has better daylight orientation. The public art process is separate from the development process, but there are strategies about where it is placed, and some heritage art that will be retained. Public access is proposed on the upper office deck.

In terms of the public realm, Georgia Plaza was redesigned. There are accessible landscape and soft edges. The lobby design is accessible and provides access to the roof from it.

There are amenity spaces at top and below for the community that lives at the site.

The applicant team then took questions from the panel.

- **Panel Consensus:** Having reviewed the project it was moved by Mr. James Cheng and seconded by Mr. Muneesh Sharma, and was the decision of the Urban Design Panel:

THAT the Panel the project **SUPPORT** the project with the following recommendations to be reviewed by City staff:

- Consider the existing urban plazas on both sides of Georgia and have the building relate more to it
- The office building on top of the podium should speak more to the post office, on Homer and Hamilton Street with elements such as active solar shading and massing
- Consider some massing moves that could open up the residential and office space even more on the southwest elevation
- Bring more of the retail out to the front of the street or make it an open arcade public at all times
- Make the streetscape be more walkable
- Make a connection through at the mid-block for pedestrian traffic

Related Commentary: The panel noted there should be more differentiation between the office and residential components. There could be a better way to design the plaza for the restaurant. There should be a way to soften the slope to accommodate the plaza. The building could be cut shorter to deal with the overlap issue. The public experience could be improved with a building platform. Add connection paths from west to east to activate the open space.

- **Applicant's Response:** The applicant team thanked the panel for their comments.

2. Address:	1500 Robson Street
Permit No.	DP-2017-00304
Description:	To develop this site with a 21-storey mixed-use building with retail on the ground floor and residential above (comprised of 127 market rental units), including 99,861 sq. ft. of floor area, a building height of 210 ft. and four levels of underground parking accessed from the lane.
Zoning:	C5-A
Application Status:	Complete Development Application
Review:	First
Architect:	IBI Group (Lauren Macaulay)
Owner:	Geoff Heu, GWL Realty
Delegation:	Martin Bruckner, architect, IBI Group Lauren Macauny, architect, IBI Group Kelty McKinnon, landscape architect, PFS Studio
Staff:	Danielle Wiley

EVALUATION: SUPPORT with Recommendations

- **Introduction:** Danielle Wiley, Development Planner, introduced the project as a development permit application under C-5A zoning. The site is at Robson Street and Nicola Street adjacent to the Empire Landmark building. It is 99' by 131' feet at the corner site with a lane.

The proposal is for a 21-storey development, with an over-height one-storey podium (including a mezzanine) containing commercial retail uses, and 100% secured market residential dwelling units in the tower.

The West End Plan and C-5A District Schedule are the two major pieces of policy that pertain to this application. Additionally, the "West End - Tower Form, Siting and Setbacks" bulletin provides design guidelines for tower developments in the West End, but staff note that the bulletin was released after this DP application was received. The policy allows consideration of up to additional density and height - up to 7.0 FSR and 210ft, providing the proposal provides 100% secured rental housing. This application is also seeking a 10% FSR bonus via a heritage density transfer, resulting in a total 7.7 FSR. Note that this project does not meet the standard site frontage to be eligible for a tower development: 132ft is required, *whereas this lot has a 99ft frontage*. The application is seeking a relaxation to site frontage.

The policy seeks a 2-storey podium in this area of Robson St, in order to create consistent streetwall and commercial/job space opportunities. The Plan limits the tower floorplate to 5500 square feet maximum floorplate, in order to create slender towers and maximize light and views in the public realm. The policy also recommends the following setbacks:

- 7 feet on Robson Street, for improved public realm;
- 25 feet from the centre line of lane to the tower;
- 12 feet setbacks from the podium face to the tower face on street frontages;
- 40 feet setback at the interior side yard, to ensure a minimum of 80 feet of separation to future/potential towers;
- Maximum 85 feet tower depth, to avoid overly deep "slab" towers.

The proposed development largely meets the intents of the these form of development guidelines. The proposed podium is one-storey, but is overheight and contains mezzanine space, thus achieving a two-storey expression. The required 7 foot setback on Robson Street is met, and an additional notch at the corner is provided for patio space. The main floor slab is stepped to follow grade along Robson St, resulting in narrower retail spaces. Stepped canopies also help to create animated, pedestrian-scaled public realm on Robson St. The development is tighter on the Nicola

Street frontage, with most of the podium at “0” apart from a 7 foot deep alcove for the residential entrance.

The proposed tower is 54 feet wide and 96 feet deep. This exceeds guidelines for maximum depth (85 feet). Staff note, however, that the 5100 square foot floorplate is significantly less than the maximum 5500 square foot, due to the “relaxed” site frontage and setback constraints.

Common amenities include: an outdoor space at the top of the podium, along the interior property line; a second outdoor space at the uppermost roof deck of the tower; and an indoor common space (gym, meeting and multi-purpose rooms) which occupy the entire 21st floor. The unit mix is 127 units total, with 35% family-oriented units (33% 2-bedroom and 2% 3-bedroom).

Ms. Wiley then took questions from the panel.

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

1. Is the interface with the public realm on each street frontage (Robson and Nicola) successful?
 2. Is the proportion and siting/setbacks of the tower appropriate? (Noting that some guidelines are not met, ie. max tower depth of 85 feet and a minimum of 12 feet setback on Nicola Street.)
 3. Is the provision of family-oriented housing and amenities (indoor and outdoor spaces) successful?
 4. Are the overall density and height supportable? (Noting that the application requires a relaxation for site frontage, from 132 feet to 99 feet.)
 5. Please comment on the architectural expression, materials, and detailing (including sustainable design features).
- **Applicant’s Introductory Comments:** The applicant team noted that their primary goal is to build rental housing, and that it is very challenging to develop such a project on Robson Street. It is also a challenge to meet the guidelines and requirements of the West End Plan. On staff’s advice, the proposed floorplate is less than the maximum allowed. Although the tower exceeds the recommended building depth, it is nonetheless significantly set back at the north side (facing Robson St). The design aims to create a rich pedestrian experience on Robson St. The design fits the context of the neighbourhood, where older buildings typically have tight setbacks. The façade design is articulated on three planes, using different cladding materials. There is solar shading and banding on the slab edges. Masonry cladding provides a rich texture at the podium.

Along Robson, there is a 7 foot setback with a 12 foot setback at the corner. The sidewalk is improved with scored concrete, and the residential entrance has a special stone paving. The intention is to replace the existing trees on Nicola St (which are unhealthy) to make the public realm more appealing. The amenity terrace on the podium rooftop is broken into three outdoor rooms: an outdoor seating; mounded gardens with low flowering trees for a children’s play area; and a grassed area. Moveable bollards and stones are also proposed, as well as a chalk board on the side of the exit stair wall. At the 21st floor storey, there is 100 percent amenity and outdoor space, with two outdoor seating areas.

The applicant team then took questions from the panel.

- **Panel Consensus:** Having reviewed the project it was moved by Mr. Muneesh Sharma and seconded by Mr. Neal Montagne, and was the decision of the Urban Design Panel:

THAT the Panel **SUPPORT** the project with recommendations by the panel:

- The laneway needs more consideration, particularly at the corner of Nicola Street;
- The location and prominence of the residential entrance requires design development;
- An improved experience and access for cyclists should be considered, such as a bike entrance ramp;
- Improvements to the rooftop outdoor space should be considered.

Related Commentary: The panel noted that the proposed height and density were supported, as well as interface with public realm. One panel member thought the blue grid was a strong design move, but the spandrel pattern inside that grid was questioned. It was also suggested that the grid be brought down into the podium.

The proposed open grass space on the podium was strongly supported. The roof deck could be better programmed or 'greened up' more.

- **Applicant's Response:** The applicant team thanked panel for their comments, and said that they would explore improvements to the corner of the lane.

3. Address:	500 W Broadway
Permit No.	DP-2017-00358
Description:	To develop the site with a seven-storey building with retail units on the ground floor, commercial units on the 2nd floor including office, financial institution, and restaurant uses, and office on levels 3 to 7, all over two levels of underground parking with vehicle access from the lane.
Zoning:	C-3A
Application Status:	Complete Development Application
Review:	First
Architect:	W.T. Leung Architects (Christiane Cottin)
Owner:	YORKSON INVESTMENT CO LTD
Delegation:	Wing Ting Leung, architect, W.T. Leung Architects Christine Cottin, architect, W.T. Leung Architects Daryl Tyacke, landscape architect, et al.
Staff:	Patrick O'Sullivan

EVALUATION: SUPPORT

Patrick O'Sullivan, Development Planner, introduced the project as a development application to build a seven-storey building at a density of 3.3 FSR. The proposal provides 4 retail spaces at grade level, a retail and restaurant on level two and office use on levels three through seven. There is an amenity gym proposed on the southwest corner of Level 3 and a number of patios.

The guideline height for this sub-area of the C-3A zone is 120 feet. Height of the new development between Heather and Cambie is also restricted to avoid obstructing views of City Hall from Downtown bridges crossing False Creek. The Guidelines set a height of 250 feet geodetic which works out to be about 6 storeys, and approximately 82 feet on this site. Mr. O'Sullivan said that staff had inserted the applicant's digital model into our Sketch-Up master and studied the views and found that views to City Hall were preserved given the proposed height.

The massing is pulled back 30 ft. at upper levels back from the Cambie Street property line. Setbacks from both Cambie and Broadway comply with the City's setback requests for enhanced breadth for sidewalks. An enhanced setback area is provided at grade to create an outdoor corner space of 65 feet by 30 feet.

Mr. O'Sullivan then took questions from the panel.

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

1. Do you support the proposed height and massing?
 2. Please comment on the design of the landscape and public realm.
 3. Please comment on the proposed building expression and materiality.
- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** The applicant team started by mentioning that it is a busy intersection with a lot of pedestrian traffic. The massing was considered under the view cone guidelines. The characteristics of the buildings along Broadway have two basic typologies. Proposed is a two storey box floating over the ground floor. There is a potential coffee shop and an outdoor patio. The proposed colour for the materials is orange tone with a shimmering surface. There is a more neutral on the box and a third colour on the vertical portion of the westbound access in the design. The proposed colours of the landscape are coordinated with the pallet. There is a location for a potential public art piece.

The public realm is designed to be fairly open. The restaurant tucked underneath should provide animation. The patterning is a loose metaphor for the underground streams.

There are two finishes of the same stone in the proposed materials. There is a walk over strip lighting proposed that compliments the banding. Along the lane, there are several small planters with lines up the side.

At the podium levels, there is a lot of soil volume. The planting pallet is geared to birds and pollinators. There are bird houses proposed. There is a shared amenity space and gym and outdoor amenity space on some office levels. The roof will be treated with a gravel decorative band.

The proposed sustainability measures include sunscreens, glazing, and the target is LEED Gold.

The applicant team then took questions from the panel.

- **Panel Consensus:** Having reviewed the project it was moved by Mr. Yijin Wen and seconded by Mr. James Cheng, and was the decision of the Urban Design Panel:

THAT the Panel recommend **SUPPORT** the project

- **Related Commentary:** The panel noted that they supported the height and massing. One panel member recommended there be no parking on site. Furthermore, the panel supported the colour, landscape and greenery and appreciated the rain screening on the busy corner.
- **Applicant's Response:** The applicant team thanked the panel.

Adjournment

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 6:05 p.m.