

URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: August 29, 2012

TIME: 4.00 pm

PLACE: Town Hall Meeting Room, City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
Robert Barnes
Helen Besharat
Gregory Borowski (Chair)
Daryl Condon
Vincent Dumoulin
Veronica Gillies (Item #1 only)
David Grigg
Bruce Hemstock
Geoff McDonell
Norm Shearing
Peter Wreglesworth

REGRETS:
Alan Endall
Arno Matis

**RECORDING
SECRETARY:** Lorna Harvey

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING	
1.	5658 Victoria Drive
2.	320 Granville Street

BUSINESS MEETING

Chair Borowski called the business meeting to order at 4:10 p.m. He then noted the presence of a quorum and the meeting considered applications as scheduled for presentation.

1. Address: 5658 Victoria Drive
 DE: 415029
 Description: Concurrent rezoning and development proposal to construct a new six-storey mixed-use building containing 28 dwelling units on the second to sixth floors with retail on the ground floor all over 22 parking spaces accessed from the lane. The project is under the STIR program.
 Zoning: C-2 to CD-1
 Application Status: Rezoning & Complete
 Review: First
 Owner: Bhandal Homes Ltd.
 Architect: Matthew Cheng Architects Inc.
 Delegation: Matthew Cheng, Matthew Cheng Architects Inc.
 Patricia Campbell, PMG Landscape Architects
 Staff: Grant Miller and Dale Morgan

EVALUATION: NON-SUPPORT (1-9)

- **Introduction:** Grant Miller, Rezoning Planner, described a concurrent rezoning and development Permit application for a C-2 site with approximately 66 feet of mid-block frontage on Victoria Drive just north of East 41st Avenue to allow the development of a six-storey mixed use building with commercial at grade and secured market rental residential units above. Mr. Miller described the Policy Context noting the site falls within the Kensington-Cedar Cottage Vision Area where it borders the Victoria Fraserview Killarney Vision Area, specifically the Victoria Drive Neighbourhood Centre Area.

Further, this application was made under the Short term Incentives for Rental Program under which additional height and density can be considered to support the provision of rental housing. The project is under the STIR program adopted in June 2009 which provides incentives for the private development of guaranteed rental units. These incentives include:

- DCL waiver for rental units
- Parking requirement reduction
- Additional density consistent with policy and attention to urban design

While the STIR program has now been superseded by Rental 100, this proposal also aligns generally with the principles of Rental 100.

Mr. Miller remarked that the application was received in August of 2011. At the date of application, the City's Green Building's policy required registration for LEED Gold with a minimum of 63 points including 6 energy points, 1 water efficiency point, 1 stormwater point, and proof of application for certification.

Dale Morgan, Development Planner, further described the application noting that it is a 6-storey mixed-use proposal for 28 residential rental units contained within five floors above ground floor commercial uses. Mr. Morgan described the form of development in comparison to the adjacent C-2 District that requires stepping of the upper floors to maintain consistent street scale and at the rear to respect adjacent lower scale development. There is a proposed commercial unit and common residential entry at grade off Victoria Drive. Commercial parking and loading is integrated within the building

envelope at grade off the lane. The residential units are comprised of 10 two bedroom and 18 one bedroom units. There are large private patios planned for the second floor rear yard and private terraces on the sixth floor. No common outdoor space or common amenity space is provided.

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

- Is the density supportable?
- Is the height supportable?
- Expression: Comments on the cornice and balcony treatment;
- Livability: Comments on lack of common indoor and outdoor amenity space. Should common access to open space at the rear podium level be considered?
- Urban Agriculture: Would the Panel encourage the applicant to explore opportunities to introduce urban agriculture.
- Comments requested on the height and functionality of the weather protection.

Mr. Miller and Mr. Morgan took questions from the Panel.

- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** Matthew Cheng, Architect, thought the Development Planner had covered everything in his presentation and had no additional comments.

Patricia Campbell, Landscape Architect, described the plans for the landscape. She stated that since there is a narrow sidewalk, although there could be street trees the public realm will have texture in the sidewalk with pots along the building edge. She said they have selected drought tolerant plantings.

The applicant team took questions from the Panel.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - Design development to the service and commercial parking area to rationalize the commercial space;
 - Consider adding common indoor and outdoor amenity spaces;
 - Design development to enlarge the residential main entrance;
 - Provide interior furniture layouts to test viability of units;
 - Design development to widen and lower the canopy along the street;
 - Design development to improve the architectural expression of the building;
 - Consider adding irrigation to the landscaping;
 - Consider adding street trees along Victoria Drive.
- **Related Commentary:** The Panel did not support the proposal.

The Panel supported the use, density and height. Several Panel members noted that it seemed the proposal had too many units on the site and thought the livability was questionable. They suggested the applicant implement furniture layouts to accomplish livability in the floor plans. One Panel members thought the lobby needed to be wider and as well the access to the elevator from the parking needed to be more transparent and open. Several Panel members noted that the cornice seemed a little tight with a couple of Panel members suggesting that there needed to be an element of fun expressed in the building. They felt the project could be improved with a bolder expression and better quality finish that would stand the test of time.

The Panel also felt there needed to be an amenity space for the residents. Several Panel members suggested providing an indoor and outdoor amenity space. A couple of Panel members thought the amenity space could be provided if one of the bedrooms was

eliminated in the northeast unit on the second level to give a passage to the gardens for the residents.

The Panel felt there needed to be a redesign of the retail, the service area behind the retail and the parking. They also thought the weather protection wouldn't work given the height and that it needs to be lower and wider.

There was also some concern regarding the height of the rear patios in relation to the units. A couple of Panel members were concerned with the viability of the landscaping because of the lack of irrigation. As well it was suggested that adding street trees would improve the public realm along Victoria Drive.

Regarding sustainability, it was noted that some visible sustainable features could be added to the project such as preparation for solar panels on the roof and sun protection on the upper balconies. One Panel member suggested introducing natural light to the units as well as the circulation area on the top floor.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Cheng said he appreciated the Panel's comments.

2. Address:	320 Granville Street
DE:	N/A
Description:	A 32-storey office tower with commercial on grade with a FSR of 25.5 and a maximum height of 367 feet.
Zoning:	DD to CD-1
Application Status:	Rezoning
Review:	First
Architect:	VIA Architecture
Delegation:	Graham McGarva, VIA Architecture Agnes Lapointe, VIA Architecture
Staff:	Karen Hoese and Dale Morgan

EVALUATION: NON-SUPPORT (1-8)

- **Introduction:** Karen Hoese, Rezoning Planner, introduced the proposal for a new rezoning application for the site at 320 Granville Street, located immediately across from Waterfront Station. The site is currently occupied by a parkade. The intent of the rezoning application is to increase the density beyond that permitted under the current zoning, from a maximum of 9 FSR to 25.5 FSR. The application proposes a 32-storey, 367 foot office tower. At grade, the proposal shows a café at the corner of Granville and Cordova Streets and next to it, a bicycle mobility centre fronting Cordova Street with a CRU on a mezzanine level above. Ms. Hoese noted that the site is in the Area B of the Downtown District, with land use regulated by the Downtown Official Development Plan (DODP). Area B forms a key part of the Central Business District, Vancouver's prime business district and the focal point of the region's transportation system. Ms. Hoese described the policy for the area noting that the MetroCore Jobs and Economy Land Use Plan, as well as the Downtown Waterfront HUB framework emphasizes non-residential uses and the creation of job space close to transit. As well, to ensure continued economic vitality and competitiveness of the Central Business District (CBD), the Rezoning Policy for the CBD was adopted in 2009. The objective of this policy is to increase the potential for commercial capacity by guiding rezonings for non-residential buildings to reach heights and densities up to the view cones, thereby improving the climate for new office development. Ms. Hoese added that all rezonings are subject to the Green Building Policy, which requires that rezonings apply for LEED™ Gold certification, with specific emphasis on optimized energy performance.

Dale Morgan, Development Planner, further described the proposal at Granville and Cordova Streets. The existing building is an old above grade parking structure and is not on the heritage register although it is the oldest free-standing parking structure remaining in the downtown core. The proposal is for 32-storeys of office including commercial uses at and near grade and a bicycle mobility station. Mr. Morgan described the context for the site noting that it is an important corner site at the foot of Vancouver's most important north/south street, a highly prominent intersection with close adjacencies to landmark heritage buildings, transportation confluences and views northward. He also explained the strategies in the Hub Study done in 2009 which included a better integration of transportation systems; re-connection of city to waterfront; and new commercial and mixed-use development. As well, the study stated that heights of new buildings within the framework area should seek to create a varied but coherent profile. Mr. Morgan also described the policy and guidelines for the area noting that the ODP recommends a height of 300 feet with discretionary increases to 450 feet. but that consideration needs to be given to such things as view cones, size and location, siting, surrounding buildings and existing views. As well, the guidelines speak about open space, that new structures in an area of older buildings should respect their scale, window rhythms and general façade

treatments, as well as environmental considerations such as minimizing shadowing on public and semi-public areas.

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

- **Density:** The ODP for this part of the Downtown has a maximum density of 9.0 FSR. The applicant is proposing of 25.0 FSR. Is this supportable or is it too much density for this site?
- **Height:** The proposed height is 367 feet and 32-storeys to the underside of the Queen Elizabeth View Cone. The ODP allows height up to 300 feet which may be increased to a maximum of 459 feet after careful consideration of site and context. Notwithstanding the error in height calculation, is the height as measured to the underside of the view cone supportable?
- **Massing:** Does the massing respond well to its immediate context, its relationship to the waterfront and the broader context of the downtown? Should modelling of the upper massing be explored to achieve a slimmer form and less shadow impacts on the adjacent public realm?
- **Expression & Materiality:** General comments on the proposed expression are requested. It is of sufficient high quality and strength for this important site to justify the proposed heights and density?

Ms. Hoese and Mr. Morgan took questions from the Panel.

- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** Graham McGarva, Architect, further described the proposal noting that the key part of the context is the Central Waterfront Hub that has identified an approximate floor area and height for the site. He added that the building will be a catalyst for a very key aspect of animating the regional transportation hub. They want to be able to effect a reconnection from Cordova Street up through Granville Street to the Granville Mall. There is a commitment to provide job space and as well a Bicycle Station that will provide bike parking and repair as well as bike rental. Mr. McGarva described the architectural plans for the site noting that it is about being part of a community of buildings. They are focusing on a building that is warm and welcoming. They want it to be a building that will be fun to pass through. They are planning to open up the pedestrian crossing at the corner both visually and functionally. They have tapered the building back for access into the Bicycle Station and they plan on giving the building a sense of turning away from its neighbours. Mr. McGarva noted that they have held back on the landscape treatment because it is important and will need to be integrated with rest of the design as well as the streetscape. He added that they are looking at a high performance building with triple glazing and a full energy modeling will be undertaken.

The applicant team took questions from the Panel.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - Design development to have the density driven by the massing;
 - Design development to strengthen the corner and to create a better connection to the Canada Line Station;
 - Design development on the south and east elevation to improve the relationship to the neighbouring buildings both at the ground plane and in the tower;
 - Consider a richer expression with respect to the materials and colour palette;
 - Explore transparency and opacity in relationship with the neighbours as well as the degree of reflectivity;
 - Develop the public realm in a detailed manner and further the concept;
 - Design development at the lobby with respect creating a permeable space and to the transition at grade;

- Consider further sustainable measures including marine heat exchange and to review the glazing ratios.
- **Related Commentary:** The Panel did not support the proposal as they felt the project was not earning the FSR proposed.

The Panel noted that this was a critical site and the design of the building needed to be done right. A number of Panel members felt the expression wasn't living up to the story of the design. They felt the expression could be stronger as it was not resolved well enough. One Panel member noted that the story promises bold moves through the twisting skirt and mesh bent forms but ends up being a slightly articulated square box.

Some of the Panel thought the FSR might be accomplishable on the site but would have to be earned with respect to excellence of design. They felt the density should be driven by the massing and that currently it felt too constrained. The Panel supported the height of the tower and had no concerns with it reaching up to the underside of the view cone. However some Panel members thought it needed a stronger response to its immediate context. They were particularly concerned with the way the building turned the corner, how the base of the tower was developed and the view from the front door. They thought it was important that there be a significant arrival point and that the relationship to the neighbouring building needed work. One Panel member noted that the way the building reads from the south was most successful. Several Panel members thought the pedestrian experience needed to be improved for better access from Granville Street to the Canada Line Station.

Most of the Panel felt the story of the pivots and the draping of the architectural form was a strong notion but thought the building wasn't dynamic enough to live up to that story. They noted the very thin elevational treatment that turns around the building and thought the design needed to be much stronger to earn the density. One Panel member had some concerns regarding the location of the core.

Expression and materiality and the notion of the twist was very well received along with the simplicity and the glass layering. They felt there were some promising ideas for the streetscape. Several Panel members noted that careful consideration needed to be given to the glass in considering privacy between the surrounding buildings. Some Panel members noted that public art is going to be an important component for the site.

Several Panel members were concerned about the viability of the Bicycle Station. A couple of Panel members noted that the street is hostile for cyclists and may be the wrong location for this amenity.

No comments were made regarding the landscape plans as they were not presented to the Panel.

Regarding sustainability, some Panel members thought the applicant should pursue LEED™ Platinum as the owner will be able to save money in the long term and would make for a good marketing tool. One Panel member thought there was an opportunity to go further in terms of energy given there is so much glass on the building and suggested a marine heat exchange.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. McGarva thanked the Panel for their comments. He said that as it was a rezoning they had pulled back on the expression on the envelope. The tower will be around 40% vision glass. He added that they will work with the comments to make a successful building.

Adjournment

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 7:12 p.m.