

URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: July 31, 2013

TIME: 4.00 pm

PLACE: Town Hall Meeting Room, City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
Ryan Bragg
Daryl Condon
Walter Francl (left after 2nd Item)
Joseph Fry (left after 2nd Item)
Veronica Gillies (3rd Item only)
David Grigg
Bruce Hemstock
Phil Mondor (Excused item #3)
Norm Shearing (Chair)

REGRETS:
Vincent Dumoulin
Joseph Hruda
Goran Ostojic
Peter Wreglesworth

**RECORDING
SECRETARY:** Lorna Harvey

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING	
1.	5805 Wales Street (Avalon Dairy)
2.	1933 Fraser Street (501 Great Northern Way)
3.	West End Community Plan

BUSINESS MEETING

Chair Shearing called the meeting to order at 4:10 p.m. and the Panel had a brief Business Meeting. The chair then noted the presence of a quorum and the Panel considered applications as scheduled for presentation.

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| 1. Address: | 5805 Wales Street (Avalon Dairy) |
| DE: | N/A |
| Description: | The proposal is for the restoration and heritage designation of the historic farmhouse on site, 68 strata-titled units in a 3-storey stacked townhouse form, and a significant urban agriculture component as well as enhancements to the Avalon Greenway adjacent to the site. The proposed floor space ratio is 1.22. |
| Zoning: | RS-1 to CD-1 |
| Application Status: | Rezoning |
| Review: | First |
| Architect: | Hywell Jones Architect |
| Delegation: | Hywell Jones, Hywell Jones Architect |
| | Rod Maruyama, Maruyama & Associates Landscape Architects |
| Staff: | Michelle McGuire and Tim Potter |

EVALUATION: NON-SUPPORT (0-7)

- Introduction:** Michelle McGuire, Rezoning Planner, introduced the proposal for a rezoning application for a large parcel at Wales Street and East 43rd Avenue. The site contains the former Avalon Dairy, including its original farmhouse listed as Category A on the Heritage Register although the farmhouse is not currently protected. The site is just over one acre and under the current zoning could be subdivided into approximately ten lots with twenty-eight dwelling units including secondary suites and laneway houses. Ms. McGuire noted the context of the surrounding area is primarily single family homes. The rezoning application proposes to rezone the site from RS-1 to CD-1 to allow development of 65 dwelling units with nine 3-storey stacked townhouse buildings and the retention of the heritage farmhouse that will be retrofitted with three dwelling units. The proposal also includes upgrading the Avalon Greenway and new community garden plots. As well the proposal will include parking for 75 vehicles and 75 parking stalls for bicycles.

Tim Potter, Development Planner, further described the proposal noting that East 43rd Avenue forms a cul-de-sac which leads to the greenway. The farmhouse is not protected in the base zoning. The point of access is located to the L-shaped laneway to minimize some of the traffic impacts to the adjacent neighbours. The principle idea was to plan the site that included the farmhouse by way of bringing a cluster of pavilions which lend themselves to a scale that is larger but in the spirit of the zoning. The 3-storeys have been expressed in gable and pitched form roofs to respect the prevailing context in the single family homes. The parking garages are under the townhouses and the existing mature trees will be retained.

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

In addition to any comment on the overall form of development proposed for this rezoning application, the Panel's advice was sought on the following questions:

- Given the importance of open space on the site for the greenway, pathways and gathering spaces, is the open space and overall site planning for the proposal successful?
- Is the programming and use of the open space of the landscape design supportable?

- Is the suspended “bridge” massing element with regard to their effect on open space, entries and concerns for CPTED supportable?
- Is the height, density, and overall form of development for this site successful and supportable?

Ms. McGuire and Mr. Potter took questions from the Panel.

- **Applicant’s Introductory Comments:** Hywell Jones, Architect, further described the proposal and mentioned that the neighbourhood is made up of two and three storey residential homes. He explained that the neighbourhood doesn’t want to see heights of more than two or three storeys on the site. He said they distributed the buildings as stacked townhouses with eight units as the neighbours didn’t want to see rowhouses. He described the architecture and the unit layouts noting that there are eighteen three bedroom units for families. Mr. Jones mentioned that they looked at increasing the height for more open space on the site but felt it was a poor trade-off. He noted that everyone who lives in the development will have access to a gardening plot and the extra ones will be rented by the neighbours. A community area is planned for the base of the farmhouse to store gardening accessories.

Rod Maruyama, Landscape Architect, described the landscape plans and said that the urban agriculture is the driving force of the landscape and dealing with the greenway connection. They wanted to create spaces that are unique with walkways and trellises as well as fruit trees and other edible landscape.

The applicant team took questions from the Panel.

- **Panel’s Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - Design development to increase the open space on the site;
 - Design development to reduce the amount of shadowing on the site;
 - Design development to improve the wayfinding across the site;
 - Design development to the buildings to express a clearer hierarchy of the forms.
- **Related Commentary:** The Panel did not support the proposal but thought it was a wonderful opportunity to preserve the heritage farmhouse while adding new residential units.

The Panel supported the revitalization of the heritage farmhouse with the addition of housing as they thought it was a good fit for the neighbourhood. However there were a number of concerns regarding the open space and thought it did not reflect what the site was originally. They were also concerned with the amount of shadowing across the site. One Panel member noted that the internal spaces would be dark and uncomfortable.

The Panel also was concerned with the way finding across the site. They thought it was confusing between the public and private spaces as it was not clear how pedestrians would access the site. One Panel member noted that the distribution of unit entrances on all sides of the buildings didn’t offer a clear hierarchy.

Although the Panel supported the urban agriculture plots in front of the farmhouse, they thought the space didn’t work very well as the area needed to have more open space for it to be successful. Most of the Panel thought the location for the farmhouse should stay in its present location, however a number of Panel members suggested that relocating the house to another part of the site would provide greater flexibility in the planning of the

property. The planning of the site and design should celebrate the farmhouse and the former use of the property.

The Panel also had some concerns regarding the bridging elements and the porches. While the porches successfully reduce solar gain they restrict the open spaces. The panel felt the density number as proposed seemed appropriate for the site due to the massing it appeared far too dense. The applicant and staff may need to reconsider the distribution of the density and the massing to arrive at built form that supports and addresses the Panel's concerns. As part of this review an increase in building heights should be considered.

The Panel supported the number of family units being proposed but felt the size and configuration of the play areas seemed constricted. They also thought the greenway seemed unresolved. One Panel member suggested that the landscaping should have a more heritage expression in order to better reflect the history of the site.

- **Applicant's Response:** Hywel Jones thanked the Panel for their good comments especially about improving the wayfinding across the site.

2. Address:	1933 Fraser Street (501 Great Northern Way)
DE:	416768
Description:	To construct a new four storey office building with two levels of underground parking.
Zoning:	CD-1
Application Status:	Complete
Review:	First
Architect:	Musson Cattell Mackey Partnership
Owner:	The Great Northern Way Campus Trust
Delegation:	Mark Whitehead, Musson Cattell Mackey Partnership Renante Solivar, Musson Cattell Mackey Partnership Rod Barnes, Perry + Associates Landscape Architecture
Staff:	Anita Molaro

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (6-1)

- **Introduction:** Anita Molaro, Development Planner, introduced the proposal for a development on the Great Northern Way Campus. The zoning has been established and it envisioned an alignment with the SkyTrain Station and staff have been working with TransLink to make it a more workable alignment. As well they looked at development challenges for the site. The site is not going to be affected by the road network or the remainder of the site. Staff supported the campus to move forward with their plan to develop the whole site. Ms. Molaro noted the building adjacent that the Panel had reviewed previously. The proposal is for an office building and staff are supportive of the approach being taken by the applicant. She noted that the applicant has been working with the student population and have developed some unique modeling.

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

- Comments on the architectural character and detailing.

Ms. Molaro took questions from the Panel.

- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** Renante Solivar, Architect, further described the proposal using a power point presentation. He noted the building is 4-storeys with two levels of underground parking. He explained that the campus is a collaboration between UBC, Simon Fraser University, Emily Carr and BCIT. The site is currently a parking lot and the building design responds to the completed two buildings on the campus. He said they wanted to integrate the building into the current plan that encourages both pedestrian and visual connections. As well they wanted to create a strong sense of identity and develop a massing that reflects an inner city development. Mr. Solivar described the architecture noting the main access for parking is off Fraser Street. The entrance to the building is facing the new pedestrian walkway that has been created between the buildings.

Rob Barnes, Landscape Architect, described the landscaping plans and mentioned that the intent was to compliment the building. The hardscape is industrial in nature and the main arrival area has a distinct lobby forecourt using timber material. The wrapping planes of the building come down to the ground to make seating areas and as well there are a number of benches. Fraser Street will have a double row of trees and some signage that identifies the pedestrian right-of-way. As well there is a deck on the fourth floor with moveable furniture.

The applicant team took questions from the Panel.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - Design development to improve the expression of the building;
 - Consider improving the programming in the plaza area;
 - Consider improving the sustainability strategy.
- **Related Commentary:** The Panel supported the proposal and thought it was an ambitious building.

The Panel thought the design seemed to be fighting with the sophisticated and clear expression of the neighbouring building. That building has an abstract image of the ribbon and most of the Panel thought it was more compelling design solution. They thought the circuit board expression of the proposal needed to be reconsidered making it simpler and more abstract. One Panel member mentioned that the expression felt like a graphic. Another Panel member thought the overhangs on the south side helped the design but felt they could be used to define the volume more significantly. As well the Panel thought the ribbon element in the first building had some real tension where the two ribbons come together which is missing in the design for this proposal. Although they liked the ribbon expression several Panel members would like to see it used as a shading device where needed while allowing the fritted glass to play a stronger role in the over-all composition.

The Panel supported the simplicity of material and colour palette. They also supported the landscape plans but would like to see more programming in the plaza area with one Panel member suggestion a public art piece might be used to tie the space together. Another Panel member noted that there were four bench expression and thought that could be simplified. The Panel appreciated the attempt to activate the edges with benches. One Panel member thought there could be CPTED issues along the north side of the building and suggested there could be a low cost solution of landscaping to mitigate the issue.

Regarding the sustainability strategy, it was thought that the roof could be used to house solar panels and that the air conditioning could be reduced with the addition of shading.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Whitehead said the Panel had touched on a lot of issues that they have already considered. He noted that the first building was easier as it had distinctive uses whereas this will be an office type building. He added that the ribbon express is more of a challenge to tie it altogether but will work with stall to make the improvements.

3.	Address:	West End Community Plan
DE:		N/A
Description:		Workshop to seek input and advice on the draft Land Use Plan, and urban design directions.
Zoning:		N/A
Application Status:		Workshop
Review:		First
Architect:		N/A
Owner:		N/A
Delegation:		N/A
Staff:		Scot Hein and Holly Sovdi

EVALUATION: Non-Voting Workshop

- **Introduction:** Scot Hein, Development Planner, said they would present the urban design principles for the plan, the urban systems and the bigger ideas with respect to density. He mentioned that their intent was to get out into the community with the plan and before coming the Urban Design Panel.

Holly Sovdi, Planner, made a power point presentation. He explained that they have been working on the plan since last April. It is a thirty year plan and deals with issues related to housing, jobs, public spaces, connectivity, place making and public facilities. He explained that they have taken on a broad consultation process with over 50 events and talked to over 4,000 people.

Mr. Sovdi gave an overview of the of the West End and mentioned that the area started developing in 1880's with a series of growth spurts that each time created a unique personality and form which has added to the diverse form found in the West End. In the 1950's and into the 1960's the West End went through an incredible building boom where over 220 high-rises were built.

The West End is 112 city blocks in size, houses 45,000 people and 23,000 jobs. In terms of land use it is mostly residential with commercial spaces on Davie, Denman, Robson and Alberni Streets and then a portion between Robson and Georgia Streets that is mixed-use. The area is one of the densest areas in the city and half of the population is between 20 and 39 years of age. Eighty-one percent of the dwellings in the West End are rental and makes up a third of the entire city's rental stock. Most of the stock was built in the mid 1950's to the early 1970's and although the stock is starting to age it is in relatively good condition.

He said they looked at the building types and number of bedrooms and noticed that there is a significant number of studio and one bedroom apartments. As well they noticed that the West End has one of the highest numbers of children of any neighbourhood in the city. Half of residents work within the downtown peninsula and as well a large number work in the metro core. Within the next 20 years, it is predicted that 30,000 more jobs will come into the central business district.

As part of the planning process, the community emphasized character as being an important aspect of their community. The green leafy streets are important as well as the mix of old buildings and new. As a result they started to look at three distinct character areas in the community: the four historic neighbourhoods within the West End, the corridors and the core village areas (Denman Village, Robson Village and Denman Village).

As part of the plan they looked at growth and how it can be managed. The plan outlines potential new sites for building with most of the growth up along Georgia and Burrard Streets as well as lower Davie Street. They anticipate that in 30 years they area will have 50,000 to 55,000 people and around 10,000 more jobs.

Mr. Sovdi described the design principles noting the seven step process going from high level principles down to more detailed. He explained that the plan will also follow the domical skyline that the rest of the downtown is moving towards with the urban frame on two edges and the nature frame (Stanley Park and English Bay) on the other two edges. As well there are prevailing view cones and shadowing that will shape building heights. The ground oriented design is important as it shapes the West End with quiet streets in the older neighbourhoods and active, social places along the commercial areas.

In terms of big moves, the commercial streets have core villages with lots of activity and each one has a distinct personality. As well the plan calls for a lower scale building heights to keep the sunlight on the sidewalks, recognizing the distinct character of the villages and promote walkability. Mr. Sovdi explained that they are looking for opportunities to widen the sidewalks particularly on Denman Street where they are looking at removing one lane of traffic, expanding the sidewalk in the short term with two lanes of traffic in the long term.

The plan is looking at façade improvement as some of the buildings on the commercial streets are looking tired. Patios help to animate these areas and potential patios on commercial streets as well as improving weather protection are being considered.

Knowing that there is a need for more housing for families with children, affordability, protecting the rental stock and character they looked at the laneways for the solution. The West End has the widest lanes in the city at 33 feet. They saw an opportunity for ground oriented housing as well as integrating rain gardens and areas for gardens. The big move is transforming the lanes and how to make them more walkable, green and also what can happen to provide a sense of community.

In terms of next steps, they have started to draft the plan and they anticipate taking the plan out to the community in the fall with workshops and to Council in November. If Council approves the plan they move to implementation by looking at the zoning, public realm plans and looking at the potential development on larger sites.

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

- Comments on the seven principles as well as thoughts on the big moves in the plan.

Staff took questions from the Panel.

- **Related Commentary:**

- What is the connection between the numbers of one bedroom units versus the numbers of children? Need to make that argument more clear.
- How the West End's growth projections fit within the greater Vancouver growth projections? Is it enough?
- What is the current plan for redevelopment of older stock?
- Laneway infill is a great idea.
- How does the existing stock relate to density? Existing older stock is larger than modern/new apartments. Both rental and purchase affordability is important as the new larger units are more expensive and the older larger rental units are expensive to operate.

- How do we fit more residents in the West End while maintaining the character and vibrancy?
- Emphasize the West Loop.
- Improving something that is already really good. Viability: what mechanism will save the West End? Could the formula such as the Heritage Density Transfer Bank (for Gastown) make a difference?
- Different people will be living in the West End in 30 years.
- The plan seems timid. The West End will be gentrified as other residents flood into the West End seeking the lifestyle.
- Is the domical skyline important?
- What about protecting private view? Do you really want that to be a stated principle?
- Parking: Affordability and safety of underground parking is important. A conditional component of density bonusing could be getting parkades user-friendly.
- Plant larger street trees especially in the lanes.
- Would like to see an integrated stormwater management plan.
- Regarding the larger picture, Burrard Street could be a "grand street" - a wall of the citadel.
- Nelson Park is underperforming. Morton Park to the Burrard Bridge could be used as a bike route.
- Push the envelope.
- Since there will be consolidation of land, principles that address character, form, rhythm and texture could be necessary.
- Parking: takes way too much time planning out parking. It will happen naturally with less focus?
- Redevelopment will occur in the existing residential area. The Community Plan has to acknowledge that development and redevelopment will occur there.

Adjournment

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 8:22 p.m.