

## URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

**DATE:** August 28, 2013

**TIME:** 4.00 pm

**PLACE:** Town Hall Meeting Room, City Hall

**PRESENT:** MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:  
Ryan Bragg  
Walter Francl  
Joseph Fry  
David Grigg  
Bruce Hemstock  
Phil Mondor  
Goran Ostojic  
Norm Shearing (Chair)

**REGRETS:**  
Daryl Condon  
Vincent Dumoulin  
Veronica Gillies  
Joseph Hruda  
Peter Wreglesworth

**RECORDING  
SECRETARY:** Lorna Harvey

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ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING	
1.	706 West 13 <sup>th</sup> Avenue and 725 West 14 <sup>th</sup> Avenue
2.	3496 Mons Drive (Vancouver Christian School)

**BUSINESS MEETING**

Chair Shearing called the meeting to order at 4:10 p.m. and noted the presence of a quorum. He represented the Urban Design Panel at the Development Permit Board on Monday, August 26, 2013 where 7298 Adera Street that was previously reviewed by the Panel was approved. The Panel then considered applications as scheduled for presentation.

1. Address: 706 West 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 725 West 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
 DE: N/A  
 Description: The proposed amendment would include a total of 230 mixed income rental units in three buildings: one 5-storey (15.5 m) building, one 7-storey (21.5 m) building, including a rooftop amenity space and one 10-storey (28.7 m) building. A total floor area of 19,729.9m<sup>2</sup> (212,194 square feet), including a 521.6 m<sup>2</sup> (5,614 square feet) common amenity space with a floor space ratio (FSR) of 2.29.  
 Zoning: Amend CD-1  
 Application Status: Rezoning  
 Review: First  
 Architect: NSDA Architects  
 Owner: Metro Vancouver  
 Delegation: Jerry Doll, NSDA Architects  
 Rob Barnes, Perry + Associates Landscape Architecture  
 Don Littleford, Metro Vancouver  
 Eesmyal Santos-Brault, Recollective  
 Staff: Janet Digby and Sailen Black

**EVALUATION: SUPPORT (7-0)**

- **Introduction:** Janet Digby, Rezoning Planner, introduced the proposal for a rezoning. She mentioned that Council policy under which the application will be considered is the Affordable Housing Policy and includes objectives such as maintaining and expanding housing opportunities in Vancouver for low and moderate income households. She also noted that the project will address objectives related to other applicable Council policies including Rental Housing Stock ODP and Rate of Change Guidelines, Rezoning Policy for Greener Buildings and the Rezoning Policy for Sustainable Large Developments. A community open house was held on July 30<sup>th</sup> where there was neighbourhood concern regarding the project as well as some support.

Sailen Black, Development Planner, further described the proposal noting that the current zoning is CD-1 while the surrounding zoning is RM-4 except for the Vancouver General Hospital to the north. Mr. Black noted that the adjacent RM-4 district is intended to permit medium density residential development, including a variety of multiple dwelling types, to encourage good design, and to achieve a number of community and social objectives through permitted increases in floor area. He also described the built context for the area, including the Willow Street Pedestrian Alignment. The proposed rezoning is intended to replace the existing wood frame rental buildings with a 5-storey building on West 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue, a 7-storey building on West 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue facing the park, and a 10-storey building at the corner for a total of 230 new rental units. Tree retention will include the notable copse of trees to the southwest. Mr. Black mentioned that the proposed form of development reflects nearby development, with significant terracing of the mass in some locations. As well he mentioned that there are some challenges including potential shadow impacts on the daycare across the street, and taller heights in the proposal compared to the existing 1 ½ to 2 storey houses across the lane.

Advice from the Panel on this application was sought on the overall form of development and siting in this rezoning application in general, and in particular:

- Does the Panel support the proposed setbacks (8.6 to 19.7 ft.), the height of each block (5, 7 and 10 stories), and the overall density (2.29 FSR) within this neighbourhood context?
- Does the Panel have any advice for the form of development with regard to neighbourliness, including potential shadow or privacy impacts?
- Considering the proposed program, siting and landscape goals, does the Panel have any preliminary advice regarding the different public realm interfaces along each of the five “edges” of the site?

Ms. Digby and Mr. Black took questions from the Panel.

- **Applicant’s Introductory Comments:** Jerry Doll, Architect, further described the proposal and mentioned that they had not modeled all of the elements in the daycare courtyard yet.

Rob Barnes, Landscape Architect, described the landscaping plans and explained that the urban forest as this is a heavily treed site and the buildings and underground parking is being designed to save as many of the trees as possible. As well another fifty trees will be added to the site. Moves have been made to accommodate both pedestrians and cyclists on the site. There are a number of areas that are semi-public use, community corners and a north-south link. There is a major space on the roof top for the residents. Building B will have green roof and an extensive urban garden on the roofs along with a greenhouse and water collection.

Eesmyal Santos-Brault, described the sustainability features and mentioned that the buildings respond well to their orientation in terms of shading and they are looking at thermal broken aluminum windows as well as balconies and eyebrows. In terms of the zero waste requirements they will have on site composting. As well the development will connect to a district energy system.

The applicant team took questions from the Panel.

- **Panel’s Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
  - Consider improving the architectural expression of the high-rise;
  - Design development to the lane to improve pedestrian and cyclist use;
  - Consider moving the bike amenity to grade.
- **Related Commentary:** The Panel supported the proposal and thought the package was very well detailed for a rezoning.

The Panel supported the form of development, height, setbacks and density. They noted that the applicant had attempted to make the buildings neighbourly. They also thought that within the development the shadowing and privacy issues were not a concern as well as over the daycare space. The Panel also thought the layout of the suites was respectful of the amenity space and the 10-storey building responded well to the Tapestry across the street. A couple of Panel members thought the high-rise had the correct massing but was a little uniform in its treatment.

Some Panel members wanted to see a greater rationale for the heights and the lower portion that relates to the street to make a better interface with the public realm. One

Panel member mentioned that the access point from West 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue has no celebration and thought there was an opportunity to make it a mid-block access point instead.

The Panel supported the retention of the trees and noted that there seems to be a lot of stairs to make the grade changes. One Panel member noted that the lane seemed to lack engagement with the buildings and that there was potential for an urban, but calm space. As well there was some concern regarding the lane that there were no gradation of elements that would encourage pedestrian movement. Another Panel member wanted to see the play space on the corner more celebrated and more of a neighbourhood space perhaps with some benches. The Panel also thought the urban agriculture feature was a good addition.

The Panel commended the applicant for the bike amenity but wondered why it was in the basement and wanted to see it at grade.

Regarding sustainability, the Panel supported using waste heat from the Vancouver General Hospital for the development. One Panel member noted that the solar and shade analysis had been well done. Another Panel member encouraged the applicant to look at solar panels for the project.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Doll said they would take all the comments to heart and build on them to make for a better scheme.

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2. Address:	3496 Mons Drive (Vancouver Christian School)
DE:	416986
Description:	To construct a new K-12 school, with underground parking and outdoor play space, on an existing school site in a residential neighbourhood.
Zoning:	RS-1
Application Status:	Complete
Review:	First
Architect:	Omicron
Owner:	Vancouver Christian School
Delegation:	Kevin Hanvey, Omicron Randy Sharp, Sharp & Diamond Landscape Architects
Staff:	Danielle Wiley

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**EVALUATION: NON-SUPPORT (0-7)**

- **Introduction:** Danielle Wiley, Development Planner, introduced the proposal for a new K-12 school building for the Vancouver Christian School (VCS). The new school will accommodate approximately 600 students. This proposal will replace the VCS's existing elementary school which currently has 375 K-8 students. Their goal was to create a school that will accommodate their whole student population on a single site. Ms. Wiley described the context for the area noting that the surrounding neighbourhood is one-family residential homes. The site is flanked by one larger park and two small pencil parks so there is a substantial amount of green space in the area and makes for amenity space for the school and residents. There are some challenges for the site including the fact that it is located on a dead-end street (Mons Drive) and has lanes on four sides with no real street frontage. To the east the lane is actually chained off as it serves the park and to the north the lane doesn't go through the whole block. Ms. Wiley described the design for the proposal noting it is an L-shaped building with the goal of locating most of the mass adjacent to the green spaces to mitigate impacts on neighbouring residents. As well she described the programming for the proposal noting that due to the sloping of the site, staff parking is entered from the lane at grade level but is underground at the east portion of the site.

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

- "Key" edge conditions of the site (north-west & south-west);
- Location and expression of the "suspended" wing: (relationship to main entry; also quality of space underneath);
- Expression of the north-west corner, gymnasium;
- Pinch-point corner at north-east side;
- Materials and colour palette;
- Any other development or design issues of interest to the Panel.

Ms. Wiley took questions from the Panel.

- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** Kevin Hanvey, Architect, further described the proposal. He mentioned that the site sits as a hub with parks around it and is an interesting part of the city. The school will be bigger than what is presently on the site and will use the surrounding green space. Some of the irritants between adjacent neighbours and the existing school relates to parking and vehicle circulation. He mentioned that they looked at how they could take a lot of that traffic pressure from surrounding streets and lanes and move it as much possible onto the site. Hence the lane on the south was lifted up to create some space at the ground plane to allow for a cueing area for vehicles as a dropping off

and picking up space for the children. This will also allow vehicles to better move through the area. As well all the long term parking has been put underground. Mr. Hanvey described the architectural plans and noted that the classrooms have direct access to the playground as they are on the ground floor. He added that they have created wings for the primary year's children, as well as the middle years and the secondary year's children. There is a roof garden that will have great views to Burrard Inlet. This space will make for additional outdoor space for the children. Mr. Hanvey described the colour and material palette noting that there will be brick at the base. He added that they wanted a bolder colour palette but the client wanted a more conservative palette.

Randy Sharp, Landscape Architect, described the landscaping plans. He mentioned that the large tree at the front of the school will be retained. The generous covered spaced for play along with a rain garden will be provided. Mr. Sharp stated that there will be screening around the basketball court and other areas to separate play areas and as well more trees will be added to the site.

The applicant team took questions from the Panel.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
  - Design development to improve the suspended wing space or move the square footage elsewhere;
  - Design development to improve the entry to the school;
  - Design development to program the roof top space;
  - Design development to improve the edge conditions;
  - Consider reducing the number of parking spaces;
  - Consider adding clear storey windows in the gym;
  - Design development to improve the landscaping;
  - Consider using a brighter colour palette;
  - Consider improving the sustainability strategy.
- **Related Commentary:** The Panel did not support the proposal although they thought the project would be a significant improvement over what is currently on the site.

The Panel noted that it was an unusual site but a huge opportunity was available to make the most of it for the school. Most of the Panel thought the suspended wing made for a mean space even if it was well lit and providing for covered play space in inclement weather. However, they thought it might be a place where crime could also take place. A couple of Panel members thought the suspended wing space could be put on top of the gym or someplace else. As well they thought the entry to the school was lacking and needed to be better celebrated. Additionally a third storey would allow for programming to the roof top space which was lacking in the scheme. One Panel member suggested adding class rooms to the area as well.

Most of the Panel thought the edge conditions didn't work and were at odds with the context. They thought the lanes could be enhanced to give something back to the community and make them more functional. As well they thought there were too many parking spaces given the close proximity to Rupert SkyTrain Station. A number of Panel members thought there was a lack of access to the park and suggested it should be visible through the building. A couple of Panel members suggested adding some clear storey windows at the top of the gym for some natural light into the space.

The Panel thought the landscaping seemed a little fuzzy and mentioned that there were a lot of grade changes across the site that was not useable space. One Panel member

suggested adding a slope around the basketball court to make the area more robust. As well some Panel members thought the elements could be loosened up a bit and thought the rain garden didn't work as a rain garden. The Panel liked the green screen on the gym building with one Panel member suggesting adding trees to reinforce the design and to soften the edge.

Some Panel members thought the colour and material palette could be brightened up a bit.

Regarding the sustainability strategy, most of the Panel thought there were some good elements but thought they could be improved since there wasn't anything for energy points. One Panel member noted that there was an opportunity to create an economical and efficient building.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Hanvey said the Panel had some good comments and said it was a tempting idea to look at adding a third floor but not sure the community would agree.

### **Adjournment**

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 6:43 p.m.