

URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: December 16, 2015

TIME: 4:00 pm

PLACE: Town Hall Meeting Room, City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
Russell Acton
Stuart Hood
Ken Larsson (excused for item #2)
Muneesh Sharma
Roger Hughes
Jennifer Marshall

REGRETS: Matthew Soules
Meghan Cree-Smith
Arno Matis
Stefan Aepli
Julien Fagnan
Neal LaMontagne
Chris Mramor

RECORDING SECRETARY: Sally Hiller

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING

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| 1. | 155 East 37th Avenue (Little Mountain) |
| 2. | 526 - 548 W King Edward Avenue |
| 3. | 621 W 57th Avenue (Langara Gardens) |
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BUSINESS MEETING

Chair Marshall called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. and noted the presence of a quorum. There being no New Business the meeting considered applications as scheduled for presentation.

1. Address: 155 East 37th Avenue (Little Mountain)
 DE: N/A
 Description: The proposal is to develop the 15-acre site into a mixed-use development based on the Council-approved Little Mountain Policy Statement to include a variety of buildings between 3 and 12 storeys, mainly residential uses with some commercial and civic uses (approximately 1400 residential units), a total of 234 units of replacement social housing (53 of which have already been built under current zoning), a City-owned building containing a new Little Mountain Neighbourhood House, a 69-space childcare, and 48 units of affordable housing adjacent to Main Street, a new community plaza and public park, and a new City street and an extension of 35th Avenue.
 Zoning: RM-3A to CD-1
 Application Status: Rezoning Application
 Review: Third (first as rezoning application)
 Architect: IBI Group Inc. (Gavin Blackstock)
 Owner: Holborn
 Delegation: Martin Bruckner, IBI Group
 Stuart Jones, IBI Group
 Chris Phillips, PFS Studio
 Phillip Scott, Holborn
 Veronica Owen, Lighthouse
 Staff: Ben Johnson, Michelle McGuire, Patricia St. Michel, and Colin King

EVALUATION: NON-SUPPORT (2-3)

- **Introduction:** Ben Johnston, Senior Planner introduced the project as a rezoning application. The site is set on fifteen acres on the corner of 57th Avenue and Main Street, bounded by 33rd Avenue and Ontario. It is adjacent to Queen Elizabeth Park and down the road from the Hillcrest Community Centre. It is flanked by two major greenways on 37th Avenue and Ontario Street, and just over a 1km walk to the Canada Line stations at 41st Avenue to the south and West King Edward Avenue to the north.

The site is located on traditional Coast Salish First Nations land.

There is a commitment to replace social housing on the site, and invest proceeds of sale of site in supportive social housing projects within Vancouver.

Between 2010 and 2012, the City of Vancouver led a collaborative process to develop the Little Mountain Policy Statement, which was approved by Council in 2012. The statement was intended to inform the rezoning.

In January 2013, Council approved the Little Mountain Adjacent Area Rezoning Policy. In April 2015, a senior's social housing building, consisting of fifty three units, was completed and in November 2015, the Little Mountain Rezoning Application was received.

Key Policy areas that apply to this development:

- Public Places, Open Spaces and Memory
- Complete Community
- Circulation and Transportation
- Sustainability
- Built Form, Density and Height

There are two key public spaces; the green wedge in the centre of the site and a community plaza in the south east quadrant. The community plaza and other community assets and amenities are clustered together, with a retail frontage on Main Street, bringing people into the site.

The site is accessed by a main Central Street from 33rd Avenue to Main Street, allowing for all modes of transport while protecting bike routes. There is an east-west pedestrian and cyclist connection to Queen Elizabeth Park and Central Street, and permeability and connections for pedestrians through blocks.

In terms of sustainability, the aim is for minimum of LEED Gold. The buildings are to visibly express green elements and embody green buildings and passive design. The Rezoning Policy for Sustainable Large Developments offers a roadmap for the development of these types of sites.

The site has a gross density of 2.3 to 2.5 FSR (approx. 1,500,000 to 1,670,00 ft²). The top of Little Mountain in Queen Elizabeth Park is about 145 foot in height, and it is required that building heights on the site stay below 120 foot maximum (twelve storeys) to protect eastern views to Mt Baker from the top of Little Mountain.

Transitional edges on the site are required, with buildings stepping down to three or four storeys, with opportunities for taller buildings located towards the middle of the site.

Solar access on parks and public spaces guides the form, height and placement of buildings; Wedge Park, Community Hub, QE Park and Central Street.

The policy around variation and buildings is an important consideration. Blocks are to be composed of distinctive buildings, varied in scale and limited in length. Some key ideas are a rich and varied interface with context - setbacks, edges and trees. In terms of form, the upper levels should be stepped back to create interest, improve light, create outdoor opportunities and reduce apparent mass. Queen Elizabeth Park should be an inviting and permeable and playful edge.

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

1. General comments on form and massing, with particular regard for:
 - Relationship to key public spaces and streets - Wedge Park, Community Square, QE Park edge, Main Street
 - Transitional edges
 - Does the Panel have any comments on the proposed density of 2.5 FSR overall? (policy supports 2.3 to 2.5)
2. Key Public Spaces
3. Tree Retention

4. Response to the Rezoning Policy for Sustainable Large Developments

- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** The applicant team noted that they wanted to create a complete community, with vibrant public realm, balanced mobility, sustainable design, contextual integration and unity, and variety in the built form and massing.

The images and modeling are meant to indicate massing only and not architectural design. There is a lot of permeability of the site, with interesting new spaces, that are green and lush.

The upper floors above the neighbourhood house and day care centre will be City of Vancouver housing units. This will be the first phase, so the replacement housing can be delivered first. Delivery will then move east across the site and then northwards.

The south east corner of the site has senior's housing that has already been built. There will be family housing in the two buildings on Main Street, with the ground floor containing retail, possibility a food store. Building faces have been setback to retain mature trees.

Heights are guided by the policy statement, with the highest point to the middle of the site, higher buildings to the west, and then stepping down towards the perimeter, with the upper floors stepped back. Forty percent site coverage is proposed, with a gross density on the site of 2.5 FSR.

Rectilinear shaped, mid-rise buildings are used to provide very good sunlight in the parks.

Generally public realms are developed to allow for good setbacks from the street to have semi-private open space. Grade-level residential provides a good transition from the private to the public realm, with semi-private courtyard spaces. Ground-oriented units along the lane have private patios, activating the lane.

Community gardens accessible to the occupants will provide urban agriculture opportunities. There will be rooftop patios and extensively planted green roofs. Permeable pavers will increase filtration on the site dramatically.

Along Central Street, it is envisaged that the developments on the west-side will run all of their rainwater through a bio-remediation system. The street will be a green boulevard with linear rain garden providing a buffer between the private and public realm.

The community plaza has some large trees, with green space around them. The plaza then opens out with paving, with the possibility to hold farmer's markets, performances, events and festivals. The childcare centre and neighbourhood house face onto this plaza.

Wedge Park preserves two big oak trees, with some children's play equipment and open space.

Tree retention has been prioritised. Seventy-seven percent of 'good trees' on site will be retained. Street trees along the edge will be retained too. 350 new trees will be planted.

Permeability to existing bike lanes will be increased, encouraging bike use on the site and lots of bike racks, both at grade and underground will be added. There will be car-share spaces, and electric vehicle charging for resident use. Vehicular crossings have been minimised, with no parking access on Ontario, Main or 33rd Avenue, or crossing major bike routes.

The aim is to achieve zero-waste from construction to use, with district energy options and low carbon solutions being explored.

The applicant team then took questions from the panel members.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - A larger, open space plaza is needed, and it requires a stronger sense of place. Add some drama to space. Consider relocating density to allow this to happen
 - Concern about the quality of space, with the big building shadowing. Consider moving density to accommodate the larger vision and have the driver be daylight activation
 - Concern that the massing is too monotonous. The massing needs to support elegance and refinement of the public realm
 - Going into the detailed design phase the project needs to be making a stronger commitment to reducing carbon creation and consumption, improving the envelope, and considering alternatives to the district energy system
- **Related Commentary:** The Panel expressed concern that the built form of the development has a sameness and monotony that will struggle to create a sense of place. It is too rectangular, too the same.

Daylight activation has to be the driver of the sustainability of the public realm. The northwest corner needs more light in the courtyards; consider moving the massing back. The space coming off Main Street needs to be opened up more. Consider a large south facade to reflect light into the space. More western sunlight is needed in the plaza.

The transitional edges were supported by the Panel. The transition on the south is fine. Stepping would really help with the massing to get more efficiency and economy out of it.

Density is 3.2 if you take out the public realm squares. Being at the high end is pushing the envelope a little too much.

The central spine and permeability were well regarded by the Panel. Access to bike routes and pedestrian access are great. 35th Ave to the park is a great walkway.

The Panel felt that the plaza required further design development. The square should have a road on two sides and pedestrian access across the road into the park to create a stronger sense of place. It could be larger and the triangle reinforced. The plaza feels more like a day-care forecourt than a plaza. More commercial in the plaza could activate it. Good plazas have supported, activated edges. Consider taking density off and creating more space. Maybe take one edge out to the south?

Tree retention was supported by the Panel. The existing trees are a strong part of the scheme. The amount of tree retention is very good on a site this size.

The Panel suggested that sustainability of the overall built form and what that can bring to place-making and community building, should be considered during the detail design phase. Be more committed to the sustainability of the building envelope. The carbon commitment is very weak.

Consider alternatives to the district energy system. If used, district energy systems need to be planned for and considered. If this does not happen, commit to a passive house design instead.

Consider a grocery store and more options to live car-free.

- **Applicant's Response:** The applicant team thanked the panel for their comments. The insights were valued and a different prospective on design work is always valued. The comments on open space are good and will be worked towards. Some of the things presented were driven by Council policy, but the advice on achieving these in a different way was appreciated. Work will be done on the transition to the south, and more thought will be given to the district energy strategy.

The comment about the success of the open space is critical, and access to sunlight will be added in as much as possible. The relationship of architecture to the space is critical.

2. Address:	526 - 548 W King Edward Avenue
DE:	N/A
Description:	To construct a six-storey residential building with four units of townhouses on the north lane, for a total of 67 residential units.
Zoning:	RS-1 to CD-1
Application Status:	Rezoning Application
Review:	Second
Architect:	Romses Architecture (Scott Romses)
Owner:	Tianco Investment Group Ltd.
Delegation:	Scott Romses, Romses Architects Christina Craiu, Romses Architects Jennifer Stamp, Durante Kreuk Steve Di Frusca, Tianco Investment Group Ltd.
Staff:	Graham Winterbottom and Ann McLean

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (5-0)

- **Introduction:** Graham Winterbottom, Rezoning Planner, introduced the project as a rezoning application.

This is a three lot assembly on the south side of King Edward, west of Cambie Street; it is the second time that the Panel has seen this proposal. The first was in September at which time it was not supported. Since then the applicant has worked with staff to respond to the Panel's advice and the proposal today reflects this.

The proposal is being considered under the Cambie Corridor Plan and is within the Cambie Village neighbourhood. In this area the Plan contemplates buildings transitioning down from six to four-storeys with active townhouse uses on the lane, and a density range of 1.25 - 1.75 subject to urban design performance.

This area has had numerous approved rezonings in the area from four to eight-storeys. The properties west to Heather are also guided by the Cambie Corridor Plan. The sites across the lane to the south are part of future planning for Cambie Corridor Phase 3, currently underway.

The proposal is to rezone three one-family dwellings from RS-1 to CD-1 to develop a residential building, containing 67 units, a reduction from the originally proposed 69. Building heights range from six-storeys on the eastern two-thirds of the site to four-storeys on the western third. A two-storey wing flanks the east lane with seven garden units; four two-storey townhouses are proposed along the south lane. 31% of units are two and three bedrooms suitable for families. Total floor area proposed is 2.35 FSR, a reduction from 2.45 FSR at the time the Panel first saw the proposal, and from the 2.49 FSR at the time of the original application.

Ann McLean continued and noted that the adjacent four and six-storey areas have differing FSR ranges, from 1.25 - 1.75 / 2.0 - 2.5 respectively. A two-third balance of the midrange of these FSRs is 2.0, or a hypothetical range of 1.75 to 2.25, which could be considered as a guide for this building.

At the first viewing of the application in September advice from the Panel included:

- Design development to reduce the massing and to open up the tight interior spaces;

- There was direction to look at reducing the mass of the balconies, increasing the front yard setback and softening the treatment of the front yard and courtyard;
- There was also a direction to increase the openness of the breezeway.

In response to the previous comments, the applicant had made the following revisions:

- The front yard has been increased from 10ft to 12ft (noting that it is measured to face of balconies),
- The main floor at King Edward has been brought down by one foot,
- The building has depth has been reduced,
- East-west courtyard has a clear dimension of 24ft, instead of 23ft, due to balcony and overhang reductions,
- A second level unit was removed to increase the height of the breezeway at the south side,
- Parking ramp has been pulled away from the west property line, reducing the width of the townhouse building at the lane.

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

1. Advice from the panel was sought for the following: have the revisions to the proposal addressed the Panel's previous concerns?
 2. Are there items, as a consequence of the revisions, that you have comments on?
- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** The main concern the Panel expressed last time, was that the girth to the building compromised the setback on King Edward Street. Four feet has been removed from the width of the building, and two feet has been taken out of the townhouses.

The Cambie Corridor Guideline requirement of a clear 24 foot courtyard has been met.

The patios on the units facing King Edward were a bit too harsh, so these have been lowered by one foot to make the transition softer and help with the breezeway (another big concern previously).

One unit has been taken out on the south-side of the breezeway to in order to allow more light in by raising the breezeway height. The exterior corridor on level two has been turned into a social overlook space.

There are two outdoor gathering spaces on the third level at the southern end. One is passive and a bit more adult oriented with urban agriculture, while the other has a children's play space associated with it.

Dropping the elevation of the building has allowed for more planting along the King Edward frontage and the width of the entrance stair has also been reduced.

The townhouses have been shifted over to the east with one unit removed to allow for a landscape strip at the parking ramp edge to create a better transition to the adjacent property. Green crawlers will add a green canopy to the area.

Fencing, planting and garden walls have been added for privacy for the townhouse units along the lane.

Seating along the north/south path way has been relocated to the terminus of the courtyard walk. A garden wall with water feature exists to add ambiance to some seating areas.

There is extensive green trim around level three and a similar green trim around level five.

The applicant team feels that they have addressed all the comments from last time while preserving the bold expression and the bones of the building.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - Look at the entrance ramp and stairs at lobby
 - Potentially sculpt the building
 - Look at how the amenity spaces could connect better. Could support spaces be given to the great outdoor spaces on the upper levels?
 - Look at the balcony protrusions at the lane
 - Look at the interface (privacy) between the townhomes and the condos
- **Related Commentary:** The Panel felt that previous concerns and comments had been addressed admirably and revisions were good. The perceived bulkiness has been reduced. Stepping the massing into the breezeway is very good. There is much better space around townhouses.

Consideration should be given to how amenity spaces can be connected and support each other. An adjacent indoor amenity space is possibly missing. Consider shifting the amenity south, more into the sunlight. The outdoor amenity spaces and landscape treatment look great.

The Panel expressed differing opinions on the breezeway. The courtyard and breezeway is a dynamic combination but does not break the building well enough. Consider stepping it from the north to create a two-floor breezeway. The lobby might perform better if it was shifted west and was contributing and activating the breezeway.

The ramp and stair combination off King Edward Avenue to the lobby needs some massaging. Having the stairwell at the lobby makes the most sense as this is where the public interface is. Taking the stair through the breezeway is not supportable.

Additional design comments suggested that ways in which to reduce overhang where the balconies intrude into the setbacks at the lane trees should be looked at; that the courtyard still feels slightly tight; that privacy between units and townhouses should be considered; and that the west terminus inside the courtyard seems a bit of a dead end and should have some kind of design element.

- **Applicant's Response:** The applicant thanked the Panel and expressed that they were quite excited about the positive changes.

3. Address:	621 W 57th Avenue (Langara Gardens)
DE:	N/A
Description:	Workshop to discuss the current concepts for the Langara Gardens site. This planning program will ensure that existing rental units are protected or replaced, and potential new residential, retail, and community amenity uses are explored.
Zoning:	CD-1
Application Status:	Workshop
Review:	First
Architect:	James K.M. Cheng Architects Inc. (James Cheng)
Owner:	Peterson and Concert Properties
Delegation:	James Cheng, James K.M. Cheng Architects Inc. Chris Phillips, PFS Studio Craig Watters, Concert Properties Tim Yeung, Peterson
Staff:	Kirsten Robinson, Patricia St. Michel and Ann McLean

EVALUATION: NON-VOTING WORKSHOP

- **Introduction:** Ben Johnson, Rezoning Planner, introduced the presentation as a workshop to discuss and refine the current concepts for the Langara Gardens site. The workshop will inform future rezoning of the site, with the view to going to Council for consideration in the spring of 2016.

The site is approximately twenty-one acres and is located at 57th Avenue and Cambie Street. It sits right across 57th Avenue from the twenty-five acre Pearson Dogwood site. That site has an approved policy statement on it supporting densities of up to 2.8 FSR (gross) over the whole site, and heights up to twenty-eight storeys. It will be mixed-use; primarily residential, but will also have health facilities, a future YMCA, retail, a large park and childcare facilities.

The site also sits across from the 120 acre Langara Golf Course, next to Churchill Secondary School and the Churchill track.

The site is mid-way between two rapid transit stations, with the potential future development of a Canada Line station at 57th and Cambie.

The Oakridge Langara Policy Statement (OLPS) approved in 1995 supports a density increase of 0.9 - 1.0 gross FSR on the site. The existing 605 rental units are protected by Rental housing Stock ODP (2007). In 2014, Council approved a planning program to explore building heights and density beyond the OLPS.

Guiding principles:

- Respect Residents
- Memory and Character
- Complete Community Dogwood site
- Diversity of Housing
- Community Connections
- Sustainable Systems and Environmental Performance

The three preliminary Concepts all have the same level of density, about 2.8 FSR, propose to retain significant trees, and the four existing eighteen-storey towers on the site. They also propose to retain and improve retail at Cambie and 57th.

The Vancouver Park Board is interested in creating an enhanced running track on the corner of Heather Street and 57th Avenue, which necessitates an expansion of the track towards Langara Gardens and onto the site. This expansion is a real consideration for the future development of the site.

There is an ambition to retain the current character of the site, build on form and energies of the Dogwood Pearson site, and Cambie Park, and create a green connection through the community. We're looking at connections to and through the community. Solar access is an important consideration.

Building designs at this point are notional. To the north are single family homes, which are part of the Cambie Corridor Phase Three. So there needs to be an appropriate response to that edge, to the Pearson Dogwood site to the south, and to the existing towers.

At the corner of 57th Avenue and Cambie Street, local-serving retail is important, as is the potential future transit station.

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

1. Quality, configuration and connectivity of public open spaces proposed
 2. Height, massing and built form shown to date
 3. Integration and relationship to surrounding neighbourhood, and the future redevelopment of the Pearson Dogwood site
 4. Local serving retails in relation to Pearson Dogwood, transit and 57th Avenue.
- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** Instead of introducing something new, the applicant team chose to be guided by and respect the existing design and context. It is a park-like setting with lots of character.

This is a very unique 1968 urbanism site which is bounded by a heritage boulevard on Cambie Street and an urban edge on 57th Avenue. There are lovely mature hedged edges along the laneway separating single family homes. The sports field edge has a slope which could be used to tuck underground parking and services, and would have a good interface with the building. It's the Cambie Park edge which can be improved upon the most. Currently it's like a private park, with not much ability for public access.

The proposition for the retail corner is for improved grading at 57th Avenue and to add a small retaining wall, to make the plaza level with the retail, making it more usable. Retail will be moved out and a glass canopy added to make it more pedestrian friendly.

Currently there's only nineteen percent site coverage; the four towers and townhouses, with a single road running through, and a service road. The pedestrian system works well. Trees link the open spaces together. Residents really value the patios, swimming pools and clustering of trees. There is a strong sense of community and belonging here.

The design team is using the following design principles for concept development:

- Small footprint - maintain low site coverage
- Maintain courtyards
- Retain trees

- Maintain pedestrian connection
- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - Improve the north/south connection through the site and the connections to Cambie Street and 57th
 - Ensure the main north/south road maintains some of its existing character
 - Create a site that is distinctive and a pleasurable experience for pedestrians
 - The building height, form and massing should enhance the spirit of the place. Apply the fine-detailed approach to the retail corner to the rest of the site
 - Solar implications should be a major driver in determining the placement of buildings and open space
 - Improve energy efficiency of existing towers and address carbon creation and consumption issues
- **Related Commentary:** The Panel strongly supported proposed Concept A and recommended that concept inform development of the Policy Statement This Concept, which maintains the road in its existing location is the strongest concept.

The public realm should be the main driver of the site plan; height, form and massing need to catch up to the strength of the public realm concept to enhance the genuine spirit of the place.. Maintain as much of the existing open spaces as possible. The street wall works against the idea of retaining the garden character of the existing space. Explore how to apply fine grain of the building typology and make it successful with the typography of the site.

Improve the walkability of the site, including more connections with Cambie Street.

Continue to advance the level of detail and the distinctiveness of the built form and massing. The mid-rise podium forms provide some opportunities, but there should be more building diversity and they could be done better. Improve the variety in the towers; the buildings could be a bit taller. The built edges require further refinement as they feel a bit the same at the moment.

The proposal to improve the sunken plaza is very strong. Consider including neighborhood amenity for residents. The facelift retail strategy is good and ties in well with the Pearson Dogwood site. Transit is so important and will support a real retail node. It was commented that there was a need to define the type of retail on site; destination retail, and/or supportive services.

The Panel agreed that solar implications need to be considered in detail. Specifically it was suggested that moving the tower to the south of the pool would improve daylight to the courtyard.

The energy performance of the existing buildings needs to be addressed, including potential improvements to the building envelope. Carbon energy is the key sustainability issue for the City, and it needs to be better addressed. Greater resolution of district energy on these major sites needs to be better considered.

Generally the Panel supported the proposed connections to the neighbourhood and the relationship to the surrounding neighbourhood should be strengthened. The street is going to change in character with the increase in density, consider creation of a very bold street with a sense of grandness.

- **Applicant's Response:** The applicant thanked the panel for a lot of insightful comments.

Adjournment

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 8:18 p.m.