

URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: Wednesday, August 24, 2016

TIME: 4:00 pm

PLACE: Town Hall Meeting Room, Vancouver City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
Russell Acton
Roger Hughes
David Jerke
Neal Lamontagne
Meghan Cree-Smith
Kim Smith
Stefan Aepli
James Cheng
Veronica Gillies
Karen Spoelstra
Meredith Anderson

REGRETS: Ken Larsson
Muneesh Sharma

**RECORDING
SECRETARY:** Camilla Lade

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING

1. 399 E 1st Avenue (Great Northern Way "Lot P")
 2. 1708 Ontario Street (formerly 26 E 1st Avenue)
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BUSINESS MEETING

Chair Roger Hughes called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. and noted the presence of a quorum. After a brief business meeting the panel considered applications as scheduled for presentation.

1. Address: 399 E 1st Avenue (Great Northern Way "Lot P")
DE: DE420195
Description: To develop four towers including: two live/work buildings, one hotel, and an office building, all with retail at grade that is connected by a public plaza over a common (5-level) underground parkade accessed from Thornton St. A storage warehouse is also located on level P5.

Zoning: CD-1 (402)
Application Status: Complete Development Application
Review: First
Architect: IBI Group (Jeffrey Mok)
Owner: Onni Group
Delegation: Martin Bruckner, IBI Group
Jeff Mok, IBI Group
Gerry Eckford, ETA
Jamie Vaughn, Onni
Tim Tewsley, Recollective
Eoghan Hanes, Ion Engineering

Staff: Tim Potter

EVALUATION: NON-SUPPORT (2-8)

- **Introduction:** Tim Potter introduced the project site located on East 1st Avenue at Thornton Street with the BNSF railway located immediately to the north. The site is governed by the CD-1 (402) By-law, updated in 2013 that permits a height of 150 ft. The development application is comprised of a hotel building, an office building, two (2) live-work buildings, a public plaza, and a landscaped area on the Brewery Creek statutory right of way (SRW).

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

1. How well does the proposed massing (and open space) relate to the site and its context keeping in mind the emerging and potential future context occurring in the campus and neighbourhood;
2. Please comment on the architectural expression of the buildings in terms of use of colour, articulation, materiality, solar exposure (see also question 6d). Also comment on how the architectural expression of the buildings relate to or is reflective of the varied uses on the site;
3. Please comment on the success of the retail interface to adjacent sidewalks in general instances and also, in particular, along East 1st Avenue (SW Live/Work Building) and on Thornton Street (Office Building);
4. Please comment on the landscape design, plaza and in SRW area, in terms of pedestrian interest and scale, place-making, support of active retail uses, and providing ways through the site. Please also comment on the design and location of the children's play space;

5. The site will host a public art contribution to enhance the campus and community. The panel's advice and ideas are welcomed in terms of what might be the best approach (location, mode) to public art on the site; (see page 23 of the UDP booklet).
 6. Does the Panel have any advice on the approach to sustainability on the site with respect to:
 - a. Energy;
 - b. Water;
 - c. Transportation;
 - d. Solar gain, shading and orientation.
- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** The applicant stated that the site planning was informed by the original arrangement of the buildings as proposed in 1999. The building separations range between 60 feet and 80 feet. Windows on the south elevation of the office buildings are smaller to improve privacy towards the adjacent residential uses. The site will be connected to the False Creek Energy system. The greenhouse gas reduction on the building is up to 60%. The project employs passive design strategies such as a window to wall ratio of 50%. The window walls and building envelope will be 'enhanced'. Sun shading, both horizontal and vertical, has been designed to improve the character of the building(s). Storm water retention measures have also been incorporated into the sustainability features of the project.

The project design is related to 3D art, pixilation, and the Rubik's Cube has been used as a metaphor for the design. The project is 3 clusters of stacked voxels however office building design does not follow this voxel idea. The live-work building has deeper balconies. The retail expression is minimal, mostly glazing, with bits of articulation to indicate entries. The landscape narrative relates to the Brewery Creek history. There is a strong connection to Brewery Creek, it was the first creek to provide water for industrial uses, and the narrative of the creek was integrated into the project.

In the public realm, there is a combined sewer line that passes through the area, by taking the drainage from the buildings into the greenspace it can easily flow into the main water line. The connection between Emily Carr and Red Truck Brewery will create a lot of activity at the site. There is a lot of wood-decking to emphasize the industrial nature of the site. The paving pattern, like the architecture, uses the voxel design feature. The child's play space is located, at the edge of the site to allow children to watch the trains pass by. There are private patios, sitting areas, urban agriculture, and dining areas.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - Overall, the site massing and layout does not fit together well based on past guidelines, and does not appear to be generated from the context of the site;
 - The pixel / voxel articulation is a superficial applied expression and is not 3 dimensional enough, for example the unit planning and how it relates to the massing and expression of the building are not integrated;
 - The layering and materiality could be further developed;
 - The landscaping is too commercial and corporate and doesn't take into consideration the live-work residential uses;
 - There should be more amenity space for the live/work residents;
 - There should be a more credible separation between the live work/space evident in the unit plans.

- **Related Commentary:** The Panel had mixed support for the overall massing. One Panel member thought the office and residential building were too close to each other, although one panel member felt they should be closer because it would be less ‘homogenous’ spacing than other areas. It is creating a lot of diversity, but is not a good fit for the future context that is emerging. One panel member thought that the office and hotel buildings should be merged into one building to create a greater variety of building scale. Some panel members thought there should be a signature building on the corner that could be a hotel with a high profile, a better view, and adjacent park proximity. One panel member thought the massing creates dead ends in the way it leads pedestrians through the site. Another panel member noted the proximity to the Skytrain should affect and better inform the concept and massing of the project.

The architectural expression was supported by some members of the panel. However some other panel members were concerned that the design concept is too literally expressed. The office building was seen to be merely extruded and unarticulated. It needs more design development, especially in relation to other office buildings recently reviewed in the area. A few panel members mentioned the typology could have been revisited within the live /work concept in order to make it more 3 dimensional. The voxel expression was too arbitrary according to some panel members and its large scale expression was unsuccessful.

The retail location is in the right place and it would improve the greenway, and the open space could be further developed. One panel member thought that the change in grade created along E 1st Avenue created a problem for pedestrian movement. With respect to the landscaping design, the shadowing needs to inform the design and use of the open spaces. The demographic of the project should inform the open spaces of the project according to panel members. The children’s play area is not currently in the right location in relation to hotel according to some of the panel. One panel member thought there is a lack of wayfinding opportunities on the site, and drop off places.

There is a lot of opportunity for public art at the site, but it “should be brought to the edge” and integrated into the landscape, which would make it more interactive and dynamic. A panel member noted that the hotel wall should not be used for public art. The art students in the school adjacent to the site could be involved in creating some of the public art. The Rubik’s Cube idea could be added to the public art as well, and one panel member mentioned the art should reference music.

The sustainability measures were satisfied, but could be better. There should be stronger more robust shading elements, especially on the office or hotel buildings.

- **Applicant’s Response:** The applicant thanked the panel and noted it was a large complex project. The applicant agreed the circulation of the vehicles needed to be examined to make it an amenable space. The applicant noted that there would be fewer vehicles in future due to more transit, and less demand for access areas. The aim was to take advantage of more sustainable transportation routes. More amenities will be considered. The kids play area had mixed reactions, so the area will be re-considered.

2. Address:	1708 Ontario Street (formerly 26 E 1st Avenue)
DE:	DE420164
Description:	To construct an 18-storey residential building (140 dwelling units) over five levels of underground parking.
Zoning:	CD-1 (464)
Application Status:	Complete Development Application
Review:	Fifth (Second at DE for current design)
Architect:	Bingham + Hill Architects (Doug Nelson)
Owner:	Pinnacle International
Delegation:	Doug Nelson, Bingham + Hill Architects Peter Kreuk, Durante Kreuk Richard Tam, Pinnacle International
Staff:	Sailen Black

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (8-1).

- **Introduction:** Development Planner Sailen Black introduced the project, a development application proposal for a new 18 storey high rise containing 140 dwelling units, with open and enclosed private balconies. The proposal includes common access amenity spaces, indoor and outdoor spaces are proposed at different levels and locations around the building, including space for children's play on top of the podium. The revised development permit application has altered the exterior design in a number of ways from the previous proposal presented. The site is located at the southeast corner of Ontario Street and East 1st Avenue due south of the future location of East Park, with adjacent bikeways on Ontario Street and 1st Avenue.

The site policy context is under CD-1 with text amendments approved in principle October 2015, allowing for an increased density of up to 6.98 FSR and height of up to 175 square feet. At the development application stage Planning is able to consider: Green Buildings Policy for Rezoning, High Density Living for Families with Children Guidelines, and South East False Creek Design Guidelines for Additional Penthouse Storeys. The size, shape and expression of the additional height and floor space must meet a number of criteria including: to provide very high quality architectural design, contribute to an interesting and engaging roofscape, reinforce the originally-intended scale of the building in the Official Design Plan, minimize negative impacts on- and off-site, including neighbouring buildings, view obstructions, privacy and shadowing, and integrate well with the overall massing and expression of the rest of the building.

At the previous UDP, the following key aspects needing improvement were given:

Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement

- The overall design became generic after the rezoning stage and lost its quality as a 'landmark' building;
- The black metal panel frame on the front facing the park needs to be more deliberate;
- There should be more elaboration of the railyard theme currently incorporated only in one small area in this scheme;
- The relationship between the tower and podium should be stronger;
- The penthouse needs more of an element of 'delight' in the design development;
- The grade connection at the lobby could improve.

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

1. Has the applicant addressed the consensus items for improvement raised by the Panel on June 1, 2016? In particular, have the concerns regarding the overall landscape and architectural design of this development permit application been addressed.
- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** The applicant described the project further, which has been revised to continue the north central bay element down to grade. The applicant intends provision of minimal height landscaping where the central bay form meets grade. The glazing layout has been reconfigured within the black frame. The applicant believes the new design provides definable separation between the tower and podium elements. The penthouse form was 'barren' in the prior application, but is revised with vertical colour glass screen accents, and the north facing Level 18 balcony is extended, to take advantage of the views.

On the ground floor the courtyard is more 'complex' than the last presentation with railyard theme elements such as train wheels and signals added, as well as bird feeders and a pollinator garden. The top of the building has a significant step back at the penthouse levels, to address view obstruction concerns. The revised submission has many landscape improvements with added thematic elements. The podium roof paving includes a railway track expression. On the tower roof, a railway tie pattern is strengthened. Down on the ground floor plane, galvanized metal entry posts are provided, which provide address signage for ground level units, and include reference to the industrial era South East False Creek shoreline.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - The black frame should be more 'deliberate', for example, the base could be changed to avoid a glass expression all the way to the bottom;
 - The penthouse expression could be improved and further developed.
- **Related Commentary:** The Panel generally thought the suggestions needing improvement from the last UDP presentation were satisfied, but only with modest improvement. With respect to the idea of a 'landmark building', some of the panel felt it could be a stronger design. One panel member said it could be a good background building, and it does not necessarily need to be a landmark building. One panel member commented on the 'energy' of design in the area, because there is a 'wall of grey buildings' in this area when viewed from Main Street, and the proposal should punctuate the grey buildings. Another panel member mentioned that the building lacks 'something', and maybe bolder colour would address that deficiency.

One panel member recommended the glass could be reflective glass or to change the angle of the glass relative to the building to create a different reflection from the glass, in order to create a stronger centre piece. One panel member recommended the glass did not need to reach to the penthouse level, and the cantilevered balcony could be treated in a way that it 'tops' the building. There was general support for the elaboration of the railway theme.

The panel generally supported the relationship of the tower to the podium. One panel member thought it was a nice extension to the black frame, and that the expression of the tower is quite well done. A few panel members did not like the latest balcony treatment. The resolution of the front balcony might help the expression, but one panel member said that adding glass panels was not enough to improve the expression of the penthouse as recommended at the previous review.

One panel member thought the landscaping was nicely done at the lower level of the site, and the green roof was appreciated. One panel member strongly supported the pollinator garden and bird feeders.

- **Applicant's Response:** The applicant thanked the panel and appreciated the variety of comments, particularly regarding the north façade and the relationship with the balconies.

Adjournment

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m.