

## URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

**DATE:** November 30, 2016

**TIME:** 3:00 pm

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

**PRESENT:** MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:  
Stefan Aepli (excused for item #2)  
Meghan Cree-Smith  
James Cheng  
Roger Hughes  
David Jerke  
Karen Spoelstra  
Meredith Anderson (excused for item #3)  
Russell Acton  
Neal LaMontagne  
Muneesh Sharma  
Kim Smith

**REGRETS:** Ken Larsson  
Veronica Gillies

**RECORDING  
SECRETARY:** Lidia McLeod

---

### ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING

- |    |                          |
|----|--------------------------|
| 1. | 5469-5507 Willow Street  |
| 2. | 1640-1650 Alberni Street |
| 3. | 753 Seymour Street       |
| 4. | 131 Water Street         |
-

**BUSINESS MEETING**

Chair Hughes called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. and noted the presence of a quorum. After a brief business meeting the panel considered applications as scheduled for presentation.

1. Address: 5469-5507 Willow Street  
 Permit No. RZ-2016-00014  
 Description: The proposal is for a three-storey residential development, including three buildings (20 dwelling units) over one level of underground parking (30 vehicle parking spaces and 25 bicycle parking spaces), with a building height of 11.3 m (37 ft.) from grade and a net floor space ratio (FSR) of 1.20. The application is being considered under the Oakridge Langara Policy Statement.  
 Zoning: RS-1 to CD-1  
 Application Status: Rezoning Application  
 Review: First  
 Architect: Yamamoto Architecture (Taizo Yamamoto)  
 Owner: Coromandel Willow 39 BT Ltd.  
 Delegation: Taizo Yamamoto, Yamamoto Architecture  
 Meredith Mitchell, M2 Landscape Architects  
 Staff: Fiona McDougall & Marie Linehan

**EVALUATION: SUPPORT (10-0)**

- **Introduction:** Fiona McDougall, Rezoning Planner, introduced the site and policy context. Specifically that the site is being considered under the Oakridge Langara Policy Statement and is within the 'high-priority sub-area' which anticipates stacked townhouses with a density range of 0.8 to 1.0 FSR, and with the potential for up to a 20% increase for the provision of public benefits. Building heights should generally be 30 ft. (9.2 m) incorporating pitched roofs.

Marie Linehan, Development Planner, continued the introduction by noting that the provision of a 6 m. pedestrian and bicycle right-of-way (SRW) through the site informed the site planning. The two northern buildings are arranged in a courtyard rowhouse configuration, with a third row of townhouses located east to west along the southern edge of the public path. The right-of-way is located to align with W 39<sup>th</sup> Avenue and connect to a path planned for the Oakridge Transit Centre site to the west. A similar path was also provided for townhouse developments on the west side of the Oakridge Transit Centre.

A setback of approximately 15 ft. is provided along the south side, extending to just over 20 ft. at the upper level of the townhouses. The 10 ft. front yard setback aligns with existing townhouse developments. The setbacks at the north side are 10 ft. to match the neighbour, and 26 ft. at the rear to allow for the parkade entry and a 5 ft. landscape strip adjacent the driveway. The spacing between the buildings is 28 ft. at the common courtyard and 24 ft. adjacent the public path. The adjacent townhouse developments are located closer to the lane noting they 'turn their back' to the lane and have parking in garages at the base.

The Oakridge Langara Policy Statement (OLPS) notes that a small-scale residential character should be provided for new multiple dwellings with ground-oriented units and entry doors facing the street. Pitched roofs and other small-scale residential characteristics are recommended. For other sites staff have supported more contemporary roof forms with setbacks at the upper storey to achieve a similar result in terms of scale. The OLPS also notes that open spaces should be designed as usable functional spaces and public edges should be animated.

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

1. Overall form of development relative to the Oakridge-Langara Policy Statement.
  2. Lane edge condition in terms of providing an animated edge condition.
  3. Design of courtyards and amount of common outdoor space.
  4. Setback and transition to the remainder lot to the south.
- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** The applicant team started by noting that the main driving forces were the SRW requirement and a retained pine tree.

The streetscape has been established as strongly as possible, with individual units oriented towards the street in an attempt to establish a rhythm. Stairs in this area provide additional depth. The south building is pushed to allow privacy to the neighbouring building while maintain a clean public entry. The underground parking ramp follows the line of the building.

A more contemporary design has been used with a simple brick base. The frame element pops up to give variation in the roofline and adds interest.

Larger scale trees provide a buffer to the south. On the west side there is larger scale buffer planting. Planting is more layered with a black metal rail on the front. There is a large tree which can be seen from Willow Street at a distance, and flowering trees are at the entry along with a lawn space at the front. The courtyard has a seating area, and the private patios have hedges with a retaining wall to provide separation.

The applicant team then took questions from the panel.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
  - Design development is needed to express the individual units better and introduce more verticality;
  - Create more connection with the lane by providing access and openness;
  - The courtyard is too privatized and should do more to promote community;
  - Design development on the courtyard while considering it as a play space for children;
  - Design development to mitigate privacy issues with the neighbouring building to the south;
  - More focus on sustainability is needed.
- **Related Commentary:** The panel thanked the applicants for their presentation and noted that the east-to-west connection is quite interesting and really reinforces the path to the Oakridge Transit Centre. While the panel generally supported the design, they noted that more attention to sustainability is needed at the development permit stage. It would also be nice to see some spots designated for bikes coming off of the public walkway.

While this application generally complies with the overall form of development, the roofline is quite horizontal. Some panel members expressed that they could be in support of the flat roofs if they are differentiated in height and better articulated. Overall there needs to be more of an individualistic expression as currently the townhouse form, end to end, seems too uniform. Each individual unit needs to be expressed as a single-family unit rather than as a 'block' of townhomes. Consider more articulation and verticality in order to achieve this. The vertical rhythm and massing is a good approach though, so continue it throughout the development. Cross-laminated timber (CLT) would be a great structural solution for this building.

Most panel members thought that the edge towards the lane could be opened up a bit, noting there seems to be room to introduce steps as the patios are large. Gates or some kind of access into each unit would be great if feasible, but the focus should remain on the public walkway so keep it simple. The current scheme of a fence on top of the retaining wall at the lane is not very welcoming. The applicants could also consider flipping the access patios to have a neighbourly connection between the units, and lessen concern of theft from the lane.

The outdoor space is functional and sufficient. It is nice how the edges are pulled in to have trees with roots, and the front door entries off the public walkway were liked. One panel member thought that the courtyard could be a bit more flexible rather than privatized. Leave options for future residents, and consider how a kids' play space would integrate into the site, even with a park across the street. Also, remove the artificial turf.

The setbacks are generally sufficient. With regards to the transition to the south site, which will have design challenges, the panel advised to try and predict the eventual development of that site as best as possible and provide a suitable response. Consider orienting the massing and units at the SW corner towards the lane to provide more privacy for the neighbour and those units.

- **Applicant's Response:** The applicant team thanked the panel and noted that there are a lot of good comments to build on going forward.

2.	Address:	1640-1650 Alberni Street
	Permit No.	RZ-2016-00025
	Description:	The proposal is for a 42-storey residential building with a four-storey podium (276 units of secured market rental housing), over five levels of underground parking (148 vehicle parking spaces and 345 bicycle parking spaces), with a building height of 117.3 m (385 ft.) and a floor space ratio (FSR) of 13.69. This application is being considered under the West End Community Plan and Rezoning Policy for the West End.
	Zoning:	RM-5C to CD-1
	Application Status:	Rezoning Application
	Review:	First
	Architect:	Francl Architecture (Walter Francl)
	Owner:	Hollyburn Properties
	Delegation:	Walter Francl, Francl Architecture Andrew Weyrauch, Francl Architecture Jennifer Stamp, Durante Kreuk David Sander, Hollyburn Properties
	Staff:	Linda Gillan & Patrick O'Sullivan

#### EVALUATION: SUPPORT (9-0)

- **Introduction:** Linda Gillan, Rezoning Planner, introduced the project as a rezoning application for 1640-1650 Alberni Street. The site for this rezoning application is located on the south side of Alberni Street, mid-block between Bidwell Street and Cardero Street. The lot size is just under 17,300 sq. ft. and there is currently a 15-storey rental and office building on the site.

This application is being considered under the Rezoning Policy for the West End and the West End Community Plan. It is also part of the Georgia Corridor area of the West End. For sites with a minimum frontage of 130 ft. rezoning applications can be considered for market residential with heights of up to 385 ft. subject to view corridors and urban design considerations.

The proposed height is within a view shadow for View Cone 20. In 2010, Council provided staff with direction to consider development within view shadows if no additional, significant impact is created on protected public views of the mountains.

Other policies for this site include The Family Room: Housing Mix Policy, which requires at least 35% of family-oriented units, and The Green Buildings Policy for Rezonings, which requires a minimum of LEED Gold or equivalent.

The proposal is to rezone from RM-5C to CD-1 to allow for a 42-storey residential building with five levels of underground parking. There is a total proposed floor area of 236,870 sq. ft., a density of 13.69 FSR and a height of 117 m (385 ft.).

Patrick O'Sullivan, Development Planner, continued by noting that the site for this rezoning application has an 8 ft. crossfall from the southeast to the northwest. The building will contain 276 market rental residential units, and be comprised of four to five storeys of podium and a tower over six levels of underground parking.

The West-End Plan sets height at a maximum of 385 ft. subject to view cones. The most restrictive view cone is View Cone 20 from Granville Street and Broadway which would limit height to about 355 ft. However, as the view cone has already been encroached by other buildings in the area 385 ft. can be achieved on this site.

Developments in this area of the West End Plan have the option to develop a podium, as long as it is less than 60 ft. in height. In this case, the podium is three storeys on the west side and four on the right.

The building is open to Alberni Street but has principal entries from a central corridor. There are also three Amenity spaces located at the base of the podium on the east side, indoor and outdoor at Level 5 and indoor and outdoor amenity in the Penthouse.

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

1. Density and Form of Development:
    - a) Does the proposed overall tower depth of 113 ft. contribute to impacts (views, shadowing and daylight penetration onto spaces at grade in the public and private realms)?
    - b) Does the proposed balcony shaping, particularly broader balconies towards the top of the tower, contribute to impacts?
    - c) Do you support the proposed height and tower shape?
  2. Do you support the proposed podium massing in relation to its immediate neighbours to the east and west?
  3. Does the proposed form of development and landscape architecture contribute to enhancing the Public Realm on Alberni St. and the lane?
- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** The applicant team started by noting that the building is very much cognizant of the shadow impact on the major occupancies across the street. This means a long and deeper building plan. It was important to get a building placement which is neighbourly to the adjacent buildings. Attention was also paid to softening the building form with curves and shaped balconies.

Another major driver was the evolving energy code. There is a cladding system which responds to these energy requirements, and there is room to explore a pre-cast concrete and glazing system to give a high-performing building envelope.

The unit mix includes 38% family-sized units, and there is children's play area on the lower level with a craft room and outdoor space. A fitness and amenity space exists mid-building, and at the top there is an adult lounge space with good views.

A discussion with the Vancouver Engineering Department is currently in progress on the provision of a widened sidewalk and maintained bike lane. The private patios on the lower level are raised 3-4 ft. from the public realm to provide separation. As well, some moves have been done to soften the lane with landscaping while providing enough space for the functional requirements.

The applicant team then took questions from the panel.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
  - Design development of the balconies to allow the curvature of the building to show itself more;
  - The lane needs a bit more animation with regards to the sunken court;
  - The tower needs a better connection to the sidewalk at Alberni Street.

- **Related Commentary:** The panel generally supported the density, height and form of development. This appears to be an intelligent response to the site, and the articulation creates a handsome building. The panel also appreciated the amenities on Level 4 and the roof, both for their size and range of uses.

The shape of the building is very supportable, and the tower depth makes the units more livable. Panel members liked the thin north-to-south orientation as it allows for a good amount of light to stream down to the street and mitigate the shadow impacts. In fact, the form of the building is so well resolved that the balconies detract from it a bit. Consider developing the balconies to better support the overall form and breadth of the building.

The podium is important as it adds to the pedestrian experience and creates a strong form relative to the whole block. While one panel member preferred the Vancouver model of a lower podium, they understood the massing of this one and thought that it could even be a bit bigger. Other panel members thought that the current podium and light well are really the best scheme and should be left alone.

There appears to be sufficient light going into the lane, and the sunken courtyard has a good relationship to the building. The landscaping is elegant and well-handled and the setbacks of the townhouses along Alberni are supportable. However, the tower is pulled quite a bit back from Alberni, and a strong statement is needed to connect it more with the street.

While a garden use at the back will work, something more is needed to activate the space. Consider a water feature or lighting system in this space.

- **Applicant's Response:** The applicant noted that the comments were very insightful, and they look forward to incorporating them. The comments on the balconies were especially interesting.

3. Address:	753 Seymour Street
Permit No.	DP-2016-00540
Description:	The proposal is to add a 33-storey above-grade parkade/office tower over seven levels of underground parking and to alter the lobby for the existing office building.
Zoning:	DD/CD-1
Application Status:	Complete Development Application
Review:	Second (First at DP)
Architect:	MCM Partnership (Renante Solivar)
Owner:	GWL Realty Advisors
Delegation:	Mark Thompson, MCMP Renante Solivar, MCMP Kelty McKinnin, PFS Studio Geoff Heu, GWL Realty Advisors
Staff:	Paul Cheng

### EVALUATION: SUPPORT (8-1)

- **Introduction:** Paul Cheng, Development Planner, introduced the site as existing on the west side of Seymour Street between W Georgia and Robson Street. It is part of an overall site that includes the Scotiabank tower and the London Drugs.

The rezoning application is for a 32-storey office tower with retail and a lobby at grade. The proposed building has a height of 403 ft. and a density of 15 FSR (990,635 sq. ft.). In response to the parking requirements of the entire site, parking will be provided in six levels of underground parking and four levels of above-grade parking located above the ground storey. The above-grade parking levels have been designed so that they can be converted into office space in the undefined future pending future changes to the City's parking requirements.

#### Previous Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:

- Design development to move the building to improve the view to the Vancouver Block;
- Consider making a visual connection on the level 27 from the elevators to the deck;
- Design development to improve the atrium space.

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

1. The application proposes a smaller public plaza off Seymour Street in order to improve the atrium space, where public access will be permitted during acceptable hours.

Considering the location of these two spaces and the necessary access to the underground mall and Skytrain station, is this an acceptable trade-off of outdoor public space to indoor atrium space? Are there any improvements that can be made to these spaces to help activate them?

2. With its proximity to the Vancouver Block Historical building, does the proposal achieve a strong visual contrast in order to ensure the legibility of Vancouver Block, when viewed from Granville Street?
3. Please provide commentary on the proposed architectural expression for the body of the tower.

- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** The applicant team started by noting that there is an existing parking structure on the site which is being replaced with parking for the same amount of cars. Attention has been paid to make the new parking structure versatile in adaptation for other uses through removable ramps and 12 ft. floor-to-floor height.

A lane connection has been moved to the south side of the site to eliminate some of the existing curb cuts and create a cohesive public realm. The applicants are also comfortable with the proximity to adjacent buildings.

A condition was given at rezoning with regards to working on the articulated grid pattern, and this has been explored in detail. There are translucent glass fins which are meant to provide solar control, especially to the west. They taper down towards the lower elevation where less solar control is needed. The fins also help to sculpt the building in response to the view corridor which crosses the site. There is a secondary frit pattern which interacts with the parking and which is echoed around the building and at the top.

The building has a response to the proposed ground plane and entrance. The Scotia Tower lobby has been integrated into the project to strengthen the ground plane and create a welcoming space. The glass line has been pushed out to create a public plaza and atrium at the ground level, and there is more continuity of space with the corner of Seymour and Georgia than at the rezoning. Overall this is now a more traditional corner with more light in the space.

Landscaping was used to create a larger and more expansive space for the public. There are movable interior planters and seating areas with planters outdoors. There are also ferns on the outside and inside, as well as trees and movable seating elements which create a flexible space. Four existing street trees are being filled in on the streetscape along with standard cast-concrete and trench planting to allow for the continuation of the Georgia streetscape.

There is an opportunity for a large public art element at the ground plane to engage the space. Materials include a west coast palette with local vegetation and wood/concrete materials. Overall, the façade has really been structured to create a more usable interior space.

The applicant team then took questions from the panel.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
  - More weather protection is needed;
  - Design development to recapture some of the strength of the rezoning form;
  - Use sculpting to alleviate the feeling of uncomfortable 'closeness' to the Telus building;
  - Reconsider the skirt as it makes Seymour Street feel a bit tight;
  - Design development is needed above the entry where the parking levels are;
  - Consider generator noise impacts;
  - Increase reflectivity of the triple-glazing.
- **Related Commentary:** The panel noted that the massing is intelligent, but not necessarily logical. Some boldness and whimsy has been lost since the rezoning, so consider bringing back that whimsy. Connecting both atriums is a good move but more animation is needed in the lobby. This is more of a street face than a public plaza, so additional animated spaces are needed to break up the long block.

The forms in the interior and exterior complement each other well; however, fewer design ideas that are stronger would be better. The interior space doesn't need much more activation as it is primarily a transit space, but consider a few more big doors to broaden out the lobby. As well, an open lobby for office workers does not animate the space enough at the ground plane so consider adding something else in this area.

Close the gaps on the rain canopy to provide a stronger relationship with the public realm. The continuous rain canopy should be taken to the end of the block and be better expressed. Reconsider the apron as Seymour Street is already crowded by the Telus building and the apron exacerbates this. A finer fin pattern could strengthen the building more; currently it appears bulky and should be refined to provide a simpler and stronger shape.

There is a 25 ft. separation from the Vancouver Block, so the sculpting of the mass should allow for the Vancouver Block to breathe as much as possible. Additional work also needs to be done on the front entry to make it legible. More refined weather protection is needed and the 'water wall' blocks the entry too much.

The rooftop space will be fantastic if the exterior planter block is broken up somehow and more rain screening provided.

The triple glazing is great, but consideration should be given to increasing the reflectivity of the glass as it currently looks quite dull.

- **Applicant's Response:** The applicant team thought that the comments were interesting and intelligent.

---

4. Address:	131 Water Street
Permit No.	DE420246
Description:	To develop a new seven-storey mixed-use commercial/residential building on this site while retaining three existing heritage buildings.
Zoning:	HA-2
Application Status:	Complete Development Application
Review:	First
Architect:	Rositch Hemphill Architects (Bryce Rositch)
Owner:	FDG Property Management Ltd.
Delegation:	Bryce Rositch, Rositch Hemphill Architects Carl Humphrey, Rositch Hemphill Architects Jonathan Losee, J. L. Ltd.
Staff:	Paul Cheng

---

#### EVALUATION: NON-SUPPORT (4-5)

- **Introduction:** Paul Cheng, Development Planner, introduced the site as existing on one of the most character-defining blocks of historical Gastown. The site itself is dimensioned approximately 198 x 132 ft. Proposed Uses for the site include ground floor retail, three storeys of office space and three storeys of residential, all within maximum height limit of 75 ft.

There are three historical buildings being retained on this site. These include a two-storey building at 113 Water built in 1919, and two two-storey buildings at 131 Water which are part of the redevelopment done in 1975. The remainder of the site is currently occupied by “Gaslight Square”, built in 1975. This portion of the site is not on the Heritage inventory and is proposed to be demolished and rebuilt to read as two different new buildings.

Single storeys of addition can be considered for the historical buildings on the condition that this addition would be inconspicuous. Given the height limit of 75 ft., it is only the middle 1975 portion that is being demolished and redeveloped. The other three buildings are being retained to an acceptable amount with one or two-storey additions being added on.

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

1. Does the proposal achieve an overall compatibility with the historical character of the Gastown neighbourhood, with respect to height, form and massing?
  2. Do the proposed front facades achieve compatibility with historic Gastown buildings in architectural character?
  3. Please provide commentary for the proposed rear elevation.
- **Applicant’s Introductory Comments:** The applicant team started by noting that the current courtyard doesn’t work. It has all the things which *should* make it work, but it does not welcome people in for some reason. As well, the current façade is on concrete columns and it does not work seismically.

A number of iterations have been worked through with planning, and special attention was paid to being respectful of the finely grained Gastown facades. The façade and storefront is being restored, and the front portion of the previous scheme is being retained. The new portion replacing the courtyard is reflective of Gastown but with less nuance. The gap into the courtyard now goes up to a 3<sup>rd</sup> floor atrium with a three-sided glass box on top. While privately owned, it is meant to be a public-oriented gathering space with a nice opportunity for the area.

---

There are rental apartments above the storefronts, and at the top is a rooftop gathering space for the residents. At the south a more aggressive approach was taken. There is a larger façade and texture layers with glass panels, and the ground plain with the Gastown cobblestones is being retained.

The aim at the roof was to create something memorable. There are a lot of linear things happening down below, so an attempt was made to create something punchy with the landscaped patterns. There are also little courtyards to the side and planters with urban agriculture.

The applicant team then took questions from the panel.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**

- The heritage elements should be dialed back a bit - restrained modernism can be used to create an interpretation of a Gastown building;
- The setbacks should have a purpose, not just be there to be sawtooth;
- Design development of the back is needed;
- Expand the green roof to create an oasis;
- Consider design implications of maintenance on the glass roof;
- Consideration to structural upgrade (seismic) should be strongly considered.

- **Related Commentary:** The panel noted that more attention should be paid to telling a story with the package and presentation as the ideas were hard to follow.

There is a nice texturing along the streets and the variation in massing is good. A good job has been done with the height, form and massing but the building could be more vertically determined. The right solution is a strong and proud building, but with restraint to be respectful towards the neighbours. A lot of direction was provided by the City, and this is a good response to that direction.

The Water Street façade doesn't appear to be an authentic expression of the area, and more Gastown character needs to be brought into it. The taller building has gone a bit too far in trying to express everything, and does not need to be cut in half with office below and residential on top. Try going for one expression and maintaining the rhythm. As well, the setbacks seem to be 'just because' and there needs to be more of a purpose to this area. More consideration should also be given to the maintenance of the glass roof.

On the lower levels the railway tracks are adjacent, so the area next to it should be cognizant of this and have a bit more base expression. While the back addresses the port and railway nicely, consideration should be given to extending the contemporary grid pattern around to provide a dichotomy and add interest. Overall the two sides could be tied together more.

The glass pavilion will collect leaves and be hard for maintenance. As well, develop the seismic structure requirements as they will affect the spaces quite a lot.

The rooftop could really be a lush oasis of a garden, and a rare jewel in the City if it is done right.

- **Applicant's Response:** The applicant team thanked the panel and noted that some great points were made. The previous iterations were much more contemporary, and the original plan was to have a stronger balance of old and new. This current proposal is a product of multiple interests, and each piece has a role to play.

### Adjournment

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 7:55 p.m.