

Date: Monday, April 26, 2004
Time: 3.00 p.m.
Place: Committee Room No. 1, City Hall

PRESENT:**Board**

F. Scobie Director of Development Services (Chair)
L. Beasley Co-Director of Planning
B. MacGregor Deputy City Manager
T. Timm Deputy City Engineer

Advisory Panel

B. Haden Representative of the Design Professions (Urban Design Panel)
J. McLean Representative of the Development Industry
E. Mah Representative of the Development Industry
D. Chung Representative of the General Public
K. McNaney Representative of the General Public
C. Henschel Representative of the General Public

Regrets

J. Hancock Representative of the Design Professions
G. Chung Representative of the General Public

ALSO PRESENT:**City Staff:**

R. Segal Development Planner
G. Thorne Project Facilitator
M. Thomson City Surveyor

1082 Seymour Street

L. Doyle Lawrence Doyle Architect Inc.
R. Henry Richard Henry Architect
R. Estey EI & EI Investments Ltd.
C. Sterry PWL Partnership Inc.

Clerk to the Board: C. Hubbard

1. MINUTES

It was moved by Mr. Beasley, seconded by Mr. Timm, and was the decision of the Board:

THAT the Minutes of the Development Permit Board and Advisory Panel Meeting of March 29, 2004 be approved with minor corrections on pages 4 and 5.

2. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

None.

**3. 1082 SEYMOUR STREET - DE408246 - ZONE DD
(COMPLETE APPLICATION)**

Applicant: Lawrence Doyle Architects

Request: To construct a 19-storey multiple dwelling containing 181 units, including six street-oriented townhouses, with retail space at grade, all over three levels of underground parking for a total of 192 vehicles.

Development Planner's Opening Comments

Ralph Segal, Development Planner, introduced this application. Referring to a context model, he briefly reviewed the buildings surrounding the development site which is at the corner of Seymour and Helmcken Streets with a 200 ft. frontage. The site is affected by a view corridor which has largely dictated the proposed massing comprising a lower tower than is more typical in Downtown South with a more substantive streetwall element. Staff support this response to the view corridor restriction. Mr. Segal advised there is a non-market residential tower with social services on the ground floor (youth drop-in) at 488 Helmcken Street, also fronting on Seymour Street and facing four of the proposed townhouses in this development, noting that staff encouraged the applicant to locate townhouses on the Seymour frontage as a means of creating a balance between the retail at the corner and the residential tower entry. However, in response to this condition staff are requesting design development to increase the security of the townhouses and enhance the interface between the townhouses and the public realm. Staff are generally satisfied with the level of livability achieved for the units, including the provision of on-site open space. Mr. Segal briefly reviewed the recommended conditions of approval.

Mr. Segal noted a response to notification from the Gathering Place (488 Helmcken Street) questions the proposed townhouses across the street from the youth drop-in centre which they operate. Staff recognize this may be a difficult condition for future residents but believe the townhouses achieve "eyes on the street" and will result in a better overall environment on Seymour Street.

The Staff Committee recommendation is for approval, subject to the conditions contained in the report dated March 31, 2004.

Questions/Discussion

Mr. Beasley noted the Urban Design Panel comments include a reference to extending brick to the inside of the lower building mass, which is not among the Staff Committee recommendations. Mr. Segal advised that in response to the applicant's concerns about the economics of this project, which is intended for affordable housing, Staff concluded the extension of brick was not essential.

With respect to the response from the Gathering Place, Mr. Beasley noted they do not oppose the inclusion of the townhouses but suggest their location might be better switched with the commercial space at the corner and along Helmcken Street. Mr. Segal advised that staff supported the rationale that the podium element should be solely residential, noting also a desire to achieve a good balance between a strong townhouse-street relationship on both Seymour and Helmcken Streets. Certainly, increasing the townhouse frontage on Helmcken, being much more of a residential street, is strongly encouraged. Mr. Beasley said he did not believe the guidelines specify that the retail space should be located at the corner; only that retail use is encouraged on corner sites. Mr. Beasley also advised it was his understanding that the youth drop-in is to be moved from this location and integrated with the proposed new Dusk-to-Dawn facility on Burrard Street, so the adjacency issue will likely not apply by the time this project is built.

Mr. Beasley sought clarification regarding the amount of commercial space proposed. In discussion, Mr. Segal advised the technical analysis in the report is not accurate and there is a much smaller discrepancy between what is proposed and the maximum permitted.

Mr. Henschel questioned the rationale for staff's support of the proposed heritage density transfer, noting the site is quite constrained and the application seeks a number of relaxations. Mr. Segal advised that staff concluded the project would not be more livable without the extra density and the floorplate would not be significantly reduced. Staff generally thought there was no detrimental impact from the heritage density transfer, noting also that accepting the heritage density is considered to be a public benefit in itself.

In response to a question from Mr. Scobie regarding the requested children's play area, Mr. Segal advised the best location would be identified in consultation with Social Planning. Mr. Scobie also questioned the impact of the heritage density transfer on the size of the floorplate. Mr. Segal agreed the floorplate could be reduced somewhat without the additional density; however, the current floorplate provides the greater efficiency necessary to achieve a larger number of smaller units for the intended market. The extra floor space resulting from the proposed heritage density transfer has essentially been located in the podium. Mr. Segal added that this site is one of the few Downtown South sites affected by the view corridor, which is the primary factor for a floorplate that is larger than that recommended in the guidelines. The Board has previously approved floor plates in excess of the recommended 6,500 sq.ft.

Applicant's Comments

Lawrence Doyle, Architect, advised they would be happy to work with staff to resolve the conditions contained in the Staff Committee Report. With respect to condition 1.5, he requested that the size of the balconies be less prescriptive, noting they will be pleased to work with staff to achieve the objectives. With respect to the request for more landscaping at the edge of the second floor terrace (1.2), Mr. Doyle explained they have kept hard surface at the edge to avoid an overheight railing. He briefly explained the rationale with respect to the use of brick on the project and the retail space, noting they believe it is very important for the

retail to be located at the corner. They intend to provide the maximum permissible 2,500 sq.ft. retail space to ensure its viability.

Richard Henry, Architect, noted the project began as a rental building, with a large number of fairly small units. The proposal is now for market residential (condominium) but with the intent of keeping the units affordable. Since the proposed floorplate accommodates approximately nine small units per floor, the allowable eight percent FSR excluded balcony area results in proportionately smaller balconies per unit. This is an inherent difficulty with buildings which attempt to target the affordable housing market. With respect to the project as a whole, Mr. Richard said they believe it will contribute to improving the current difficult conditions on Seymour Street.

With respect to condition 1.2, Chris Sterry, Landscape Architect, explained the rationale for avoiding a continuous landscaped edge and the attempt to achieve two, large, usable open space areas.

Prompted by a question from Mr. Haden regarding the maximum allowable balcony area, Mr. Segal agreed that distributing the allowable area among all the units results in smaller than average balcony sizes. However, Staff would prefer to see an alternative distribution of the balcony area so that those units that would benefit more from open balconies have balconies of usable size, where other units, facing Seymour Street, might have enclosed or French balconies. He noted that staff will be pleased to work with the applicant to achieve a good resolution and would have no objection to deleting the reference to a minimum depth of 5 ft.

Referencing the City's guidelines for high-density housing for families with children, Mr. McNaney noted the two bedroom (family) units are facing away from the recommended location for the children's play area, which precludes surveillance of the area. Mike Thomson, City Surveyor, advised that in addition to surveillance, the guideline calling for family units to be within the first eight floors also refers to the ability to quickly get to the play area. Social Planning staff have identified thirty such units in this building. Mr. Segal added that another important factor for the location of the play area is an associated amenity room where caregivers can oversee the children.

Comments from other Speakers

None.

Panel Opinion

Mr. Haden advised the Urban Design Panel unanimously supported this application which it considered to be a successful background development. The Panel had three concerns: the base/tower relationship; resolution of the rooftop element; and location of the residential entry. Mr. Haden supported approval, with the recommended conditions. He noted the extension of the brick along the back of the townhouses was not a strong concern of the Panel. He agreed that adding another exterior amenity space would be advantageous although noted the current location of the bicycle storage is very convenient. With respect to the children's play area, Mr. Haden agreed that having it closer to the building would be helpful. With respect to concerns about the proximity of this development to the Gathering Place, Mr. Haden commented that with the increase in population in the area it is important to find mechanisms to ensure that ongoing necessary social services are protected. He suggested there should be a requirement for purchasers to sign a waiver acknowledging their understanding of noise conditions in the area and foregoing the right to complain.

Mr. McLean said it is a very good development given the height limit imposed by the view corridor. He questioned whether the townhouses could be live/work use to allow professional offices, which works well with residential use. He agreed with the applicant that the maximum permitted 2,500 sq.ft. is necessary for the retail to be viable.

Mr. Mah supported staff's recommendation for addressing the distribution of allowable balcony area, having the flexibility for larger, more usable balconies for certain units and enclosed or "balconettes" for others. He supported adding height to the upper penthouse level to improve the roof expression. He did not support relocating some of the commercial space to the other side of the residential lobby, but would support adding more townhouses to Helmcken Street if possible. Mr. Mah did not support slimming the tower in favour of increasing the size of the podium, preferring the proposed arrangement. He supported the application.

Mr. Chung also supported the application. He concurred with Mr. Mah regarding the balconies and strongly supported the proposed garden plots which add some visual variety to the scheme.

Mr. McNaney supported the proposal and strongly endorsed the proposed smaller, more affordable units. He also strongly supported the garden plots. He had some concern about the recommendation to add additional communal space on the second floor, next to the amenity room, given it is only a couple of metres from a residential unit.

Mr. Henschel agreed it is a very supportable project and the proposed modifications to the north façade will improve it considerably. He strongly supported condition 1.9 to bring the tower expression down to the sidewalk which will provide a greater sense of slimness. He thought the treatment of the lane side of the townhouses should be in brick which will make the amenity area more pleasant and usable.

Board Discussion

Mr. Beasley said it is a good project. With respect to the townhouses, he noted that live/work use is now permitted on Seymour Street. He said he would prefer the use of brick on the back of the townhouses but would not impose a condition given it was not a strong recommendation from the Urban Design Panel. He suggested the applicant give it further consideration. Mr. Beasley strongly supported the proposed garden plots. Noting that Helmcken Street is the Downtown greenway, Mr. Beasley said he was disappointed to see only two townhouses proposed on Helmcken. He agreed, however, that the maximum floor area is necessary for viability of the retail space. He moved approval of the application, with minor amendments to the conditions.

Mr. Timm commented that the development of high density residential use in the downtown is generating issues for residents and the City with respect to noise, parking and traffic congestion complaints, and it will be an ongoing problem as long as incoming purchasers do not fully appreciate the very urban conditions into which they are moving. Mr. Timm said he found the proposal a good development in a difficult location. With respect to the proximity of the townhouses to the drop-in centre, he agreed it will likely be difficult for the townhouse residents but it will be a general benefit for the street.

Mr. MacGregor supported the motion of approval. He said it is worthwhile to note that having agreements registered on title does not preclude the generation of complaints.

In response to a question from the Chair, Mr. Doyle confirmed he saw no problem with the issues raised by Processing - Building and Fire & Rescue Services, in Appendix C.

Motion

It was moved by Mr. Beasley and seconded by Mr. Timm, and was the decision of the Board:

THAT the Board APPROVE Development Application No. 408246, in accordance with the Development Permit Staff Committee Report dated March 31, 2004, with the following amendments:

Amend 1.2 to delete: "and providing a landscaped edge to the level 2 deck";

Amend 1.5 to delete "by increasing their depth to a minimum of 5 ft.""

Delete the **Note to Applicant** in 1.7.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

4. OTHER BUSINESS

None.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4.30 p.m.

C. Hubbard
Clerk to the Board

F. Scobie
Chair