

Date: Monday, May 9, 2005  
Time: 3.00 p.m.  
Place: Council Chamber, City Hall

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**PRESENT:****Board**

R. Scobie Director of Development Services (Chair)  
T. Timm General Manager of Engineering Services  
B. MacGregor Deputy City Manager  
L. Beasley Director of Current Planning

**Advisory Panel**

A. Endall Representative of the Design Professions (Urban Design Panel)  
R. Acton Representative of the Design Professions  
J. McLean Representative of the Development Industry  
J. Scott Representative of the Development Industry  
G. Chung Representative of the General Public  
C. Henschel Representative of the General Public  
K. Hung Representative of the General Public

**ALSO PRESENT:****City Staff:**

M. Thomson City Surveyor  
B. Adair Urban Design & Development Planning (Development Planner)  
J. Greer Development Services (Project Facilitator)

**1501 Robson Street**

H. Jones Hywel Jones Architect Ltd.

**Recording Secretary:**

K. Miller Raincoast Ventures Ltd.

**1. MINUTES**

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

THAT the Minutes of the Development Permit Board and Advisory Panel Meeting of April 25, 2005 be approved.

**2. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

None.

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3. 1501 ROBSON STREET - DE409145 - ZONE C-6  
(COMPLETE APPLICATION)

Applicant: Hywel Jones Architect Ltd.

Request: To construct a six-storey mixed-use building with retail on the ground floor and residential on the second through sixth storeys, and on two-storey townhouse at grade (total 23 dwelling units), all over two levels of underground parking with vehicular access from the lane at the rear. The proposal requests a transfer of heritage density (10 percent) for a total Floor Space Ratio (FSR) of 2.75.

**Development Planner's Opening Comments**

Mr. B. Adair, Development Planner, introduced the complete application in the context of the surrounding neighbourhood and noted adjacent properties included: to the east, a five-storey mixed use building, and to the north, a CD-1-zoned high rise, along with retail and office uses in the general vicinity along Robson Street. Mr. Adair acknowledged that the materials palette proposed included a brick and metal cladding system.

Mr. Adair advised that the proposal requested a transfer of heritage density for a total Floor Space Ratio (FSR) of 2.75. Additionally, some height relaxation was requested along the western and northern end of the top floor, and height angles on Robson, Nicola and the adjacent lane. Mr. Adair referenced posted drawings and acknowledged staff's belief that there would be no significant view or shadowing impacts. Shadow diagrams were reviewed and it was noted that the shadow would not extend north of the lane at 2:00 p.m. and would follow the westerly adjacent building's surface parking at 10:00 a.m.

With respect to notification, Mr. Adair advised that approximately 1,300 letters had been sent to neighbouring property owners advising them of the application. Four responses were received with comments relative to the potential for loss of views to the north from the adjacent office building to the west, and potential loss of visibility for commercial units at grade in the same office building. These issues were dealt with in the Response to Notification section of the Staff Committee's report dated April 27, 2005 on page 15.

It was acknowledged that staff had design concerns relative to the retail expression on Robson Street and had requested a more substantial weather protection system with special attention to the corner of Nicola Street in addition to an integrated signage system. Condition 1.2 relative to improvements to the public realm along Robson and Nicola Streets, and Condition 1.4 relative to improvements to the residential expression of the townhouse on Nicola Street were reviewed. Handling of the residential courtyard and residential lobby was also advanced as a concern relative to the narrowness of the courtyard and potential security issues. It was recognized that the Urban Design Panel shared staff concerns and Condition 1.3 required that the entry courtyard be made larger and more visible from the street, with commercial circulation also to be reworked.

Mr. Adair advised that conditions had been discussed with the applicant, that a new sketch had been reviewed, and that concerns were being addressed.

With respect to the townhouse included in the application, it was noted that Condition 1.4 recommended that a more residential expression be added for the townhouse. Additionally it was recommended that the entry to the townhouse be separated from the courtyard enabling it to have a stronger identity, and that landscaping treatment and additional glazing be

introduced to the townhouse on the Nicola Street elevation to give it a more residential feel. A green roof treatment to both buildings and adequate detailing of exterior finishes was also requested.

Mr. Adair advised that staff supported the application and recommended approval with conditions as set out in the Staff Committee's report. He offered that the additional 0.25 FSR heritage density transfer had been accomplished with little negative impact, and that the Urban Design Panel had supported the application.

#### Questions/Discussion

Mr. Beasley requested clarification regarding the effect of the proposed development on Robson Street pedestrian traffic and specifically on the adjacent retail premises to the west. It was acknowledged that an area that was currently grass would become public sidewalk and therefore pedestrians would be closer to the adjacent building. Mr. Adair clarified that a patio extending from the adjacent retail property would receive greater visibility as a result of the proposed standard sidewalk treatment and street trees. The potential for future heritage density transfer for additional development of the adjacent building were also noted.

With regard to conditions and notes to the applicant specific to the location of the loading bay and with consideration to the lower level windows in the adjacent building, Mr. Beasley referenced photos showing the adjacent building's lower level windows covered. It was acknowledged that the adjacent owner to the west was not taking advantage of any views as these north facing windows were blocked off. Additionally there was a one-storey wall treatment along the property line north and south. Mr. Beasley recognized that the situation created by the proposed design was not noticeably worse, and was actually better than what was currently on the site. Comment was offered that an outright development could build further back and impact more views than the current proposed development.

Mr. Beasley commented on the main mass of the proposed development, noting that the adjacent office building would retain the view to the north. Additionally it was acknowledged that light and views from 1455 Robson Street would not be materially affected except two floors of windows facing Nicola Street on units that also had principal windows facing Robson Street. In an outright scheme, it was suggested that the massing of the building could have pushed further north, however the massing of the proposed building would allow the adjacent buildings to maintain their views and have no impact on light.

Mr. Henschel queried whether the relaxation of the height angles allowed the massing closer to Robson and views to the north, and whether issues raised by the Urban Design Panel had been addressed. Mr. Adair responded in the affirmative. He noted that the Urban Design Panel had supported the application and that its main concerns had been with respect to the retail expression and entry and courtyard expression.

In response to a request for clarification, Mr. Jones, Architect, advised that the square footage of the townhouse was approximately 1500 sq. ft.

In response to Mr. Endall, Mr. Adair reviewed the condition requiring gates to the courtyard and confirmed a security enclosure was envisaged around the courtyard.

Mr. Scott requested clarification on the visual context of the entry. Mr. Adair advised that the townhouse would have its own strong entry, and that the courtyard would be widened and gates added at the front. Additionally, a hard surface drop-off area would be included on Nicola Street to ensure that there was a strong visual indication that it was an entry. The

condition asks for the courtyard to be widened and this would pull back the commercial area about three feet. Mr. Adair noted that a schematic diagram had been viewed which appeared to work. He added that the residential lobby entry doors themselves would also be visible from the street.

Mr. Beasley questioned whether the street trees would be saved and protected during construction. Mr. Adair advised that protection of the street trees would be included in the final landscape plan and that barriers would have to be shown. Mr. Timm advised that standard practice included protection of the street trees and that a condition would not be required to specifically request this.

Mr. Scobie referenced Appendix A of the April 27, 2005 staff report, Social Planning comment A.1.19, regarding provision of an indoor amenity multi-purpose room with flexible seating and resilient flooring. He questioned whether staff would be able to provide additional information. Although a specific size was not indicated for the requested resident amenity room, Mr. Adair noted that it should take into consideration the number of units and provide enough space for a strata council meeting.

Mr. Scobie questioned whether there was a condition specific to the relocation of an entrance from Robson Street. Mr. Adair responded that the area in question was included in condition 1.1 iv) "relocating the proposed Robson Street parking exit stair" as it would be better moved to the westerly end of the Robson Street facade to allow for continuous retail space.

In response to a request from Mr. Scobie, Mr. Adair traced out the building envelope on elevation drawings with respect to the height angles. It was noted that one corner protruded but that the majority was within the height envelope with the steeper angles coming off of Nicola and Robson Street and the shallower angles coming off of the lane. The most substantial angle was on the North elevation. The mass could have been distributed further on the site however bringing the mass further to the south was more beneficial as shown.

Mr. Scobie sought clarification of the drawings showing a walkway adjacent to the building to the west, and circulation to parking at the back of the building. It was noted that the building was not located right adjacent to the property line but was set back approximately seven feet.

Mr. Endall queried whether the applicant had considered including a green roof. Mr. Adair advised that a green roof treatment was included in condition 1.6.

#### **Applicant's Comments**

Mr. Hywel (Howie) Jones, architect and representative of the applicant, advised that the owner of the property at 1501 Robson Street was present in the audience.

Mr. Jones advised that all conditions indicated in the report would be complied with, adding that the height angles sprang from the property line and that this posed some difficulties as the site sloped quite steeply.

Mr. Scott requested clarification with respect to the canopies along Robson Street. Mr. Jones indicated that the design showed a light steel horizontal structure in-filled with glass, which stopped before it reached the corner given that the material changed. Mr. Jones recognized that the Urban Design Panel was looking for something that was bolder with a horizontal delineation and noted his willingness to comply.

Mr. Acton queried whether there had been some simplification of the materials palette. Mr. Jones responded that there had not, and that although some of the Urban Design Panel members did not agree with the brick and metal band in addressing the corner, it was not necessarily a majority view.

Mr. Acton questioned why stucco was introduced to the scheme at the northeast corner of building on the Robson Street side. Mr. Jones replied that the expression of the townhouse was meant to be a different idiom from the glazed grid of the commercial and residential building, and it was felt that the stucco provided more of a domestic expression. Mr. Jones added that he agreed the expression of the townhouse could be more responsive to the street.

Mr. McLean expressed concern relative to security in the area particularly with the outdoor pedestrian corridor along the side of the adjacent building, which was like an alleyway between the existing building to the west and the proposed building. He asked whether this concern had been raised by staff with respect to CPTED. Mr. Jones advised that the existing building included the alleyway to parking, that the building was set back from the street, and that the area was lit. The meeting acknowledged that the side yard area was not within the applicant's control.

Mr. Beasley requested the applicant to indicate on the posted drawings the stucco area on the buildings. Mr. Jones complied with this request and indicated the stucco within the expression of the townhouse.

Mr. Acton commented on the scale and grain of the project with respect to the stucco and human scale texture.

Mr. Beasley asked if a change from the proposed stucco material would be considered. Mr. Jones responded that while he liked the contrast between the brick and stucco, it could be changed to brick and metal panel. He indicated however, that it would be a challenge to justify upgrading the material on the side yard where there was only a seven foot gap between buildings as it would rarely be seen, although where the building was exposed at the lane and the northwest corner there was more of an expression. Mr. Beasley asked if metal panel detail could be used rather than stucco on the townhouse. Mr. Jones advised that he would consider this.

#### **Comments from other Speakers**

Margaret Amirault, resident of 1500 Alberni Street, addressed the meeting and advised that from her suite she would be looking directly down on the proposed building. She requested a green roof treatment be included. She commented that an eco roof would result in increased energy conservation with less heating and air conditioning being used, the roof itself would last longer, and an eco roof could act as a sponge and drainage would then be better controlled. Ms. Amirault added that the contractor would have additional selling points if access to a roof top green space were available to occupants. She suggested that the federal government could also provide some monetary incentive to implementing the Kyoto agreement.

Ms. Amirault requested that the Advisory Panel and Planning staff suggest to City Council that new developments include a green roof, and perhaps offer benefits or bonuses to retrofit old buildings.

It was noted that the cost was dependent on the actual roof, and the layers of a green roof were discussed. Ms. Amirault provided copies of articles titled "Cooling Down the Heat Island

Effect" and "The Anatomy of an Ecoroof" including a diagram and photographs relative to eco roof plans for implementation in a rainy climate.

Mr. Beasley queried whether Condition 1.6 would result in the inclusion of a green roof in the application. Mr. Jones advised that he had done two green roofs already and he would comply with the condition.

Mr. Beasley advised that City Council had asked staff to draft a green building policy for presentation within the next 18 months, and offered to put Ms. Amirault in touch with the staff involved so that she could monitor the work being done on the draft policy.

Mr. Scobie also acknowledged that an interim green building strategy drawing upon the LEED Standard was being developed to build on the City's initiative specific to City of Vancouver developments. It was anticipated that this would serve as the groundwork for a more permanent strategy for green buildings. Mr. Scobie also advised that the Development Permit Board did not make policy or recommend policy to City Council, and he suggested Ms. Amirault seek the appropriate channels to effect policy change.

Mr. Michael Tam, P. Eng. representative of Logan Faith Ltd. (property owner at 1517-1531 Robson Street), distributed copies of March 29, 2005 correspondence to the City of Vancouver citing concern and objection to the application. Mr. Tam provided an overview of the building requirements 20 and 30 years prior when the adjacent buildings to the west of the application site had been developed. He expressed concern that the proposed new building would block views of the office tenants on the second floor of the six-storey building, and detrimentally affect the visibility of existing ground floor businesses.

Mr. Tam indicated that he had no problem with any street trees being removed at the corner of Robson Street as they were often used as a cover for drug transactions.

Mr. Scobie and Mr. Adair commented on the zoning in effect today compared to 20 and 30 years prior. The promotion of strong retail and commercial expressions at the property line was included in the current zoning and staff did not feel that the application would negatively impact the adjacent building. By developing the sidewalk it was felt that pedestrian traffic would be closer to the six-storey building immediately west of the application, and that the sidewalk would align with his outdoor seating area, which would improve the retail health of the block.

Mr. Endall queried whether the proposed building was in alignment with the existing building on the site. Mr. Adair responded affirmatively. Mr. Jones advised that there would not be much difference and that the current building was aligned to where the new one would be.

#### **Panel Opinion**

Mr. Endall indicated that he was confident that all of the conditions listed in the report covered the bulk of the comments made by the Urban Design Panel. He advised that, in general, the Panel was supportive of the scheme with no real concerns over height or density. He further expressed that there had been a suggestion of additional horizontal screening for people looking down over the parking entry and surface loading bay.

The Urban Design Panel's consensus was that there should be some simplification of the materials palette, and it was felt that changing the material at the corner of the building was not necessary, but that the omission or deletion of one or more of the materials should be

considered. Mr. Jones commented on the C-6 guidelines. Mr. Endall noted that if the brick and metal panel were used then perhaps the metal panel could be in place of some of the stucco to simplify the overall expression. Additionally he noted that there was some mixed opinion over the expression of the townhouse, however it was felt that it could be developed as a "delightful" piece of architecture.

Mr. Endall stressed the need for an indoor amenity room. He also commented relative to extensive and intensive green roof detail. He noted the level of maintenance necessary for various green roof solutions and suggested a simple strategy of introducing limestone rock and gravel and promoting the use of a bed of green moss as a successful way to achieve a green finish to the roof.

Mr. Acton commended the architect on his willingness to make adjustments to the project as per City staff comments. He indicated support for the setbacks and general massing of the project including the sidewalk extension along Robson Street. Mr. Acton suggested that the form and massing of the townhouse was also very good, and that it would be a "delightful gem" to be discovered. The issue of materials could contribute to the success or failure of the project. He suggested that consideration be given to the incorporation of more masonry to contribute to the grain and texture of the area, and that the contemporary expression of the townhouse and dialogue with smaller scale residential was good.

Mr. McLean concurred with comments made by the Urban Design Panel. He also commented on the difference between painted concrete and stucco relative to the potential for graffiti on painted concrete being easier to fix. Mr. McLean advised that the height relaxations were earned and that what could be built outright could be far worse.

Mr. Scott expressed support for the UDP and staff comments and for the thorough review of the application. He noted that the architect had used a creative solution by including the townhouse, and had gone out of his way to respect existing views. He suggested that the addition of windows would add to the security around the courtyard in the back and that a few windows in the townhouse would help the profile elevation of the building.

Mr. Henschel advised that he felt this was a good solution for the site and that it created a better solution for the neighbors. He indicated support for the relaxation of angles and heights, noting that this building would not pose any disadvantage to the neighbours. He supported the conditions expressed, but advised that he did not have concerns about the courtyard area as a gate would provide a strong indication that it was an access to the entryway.

Mr. Henschel supported the inclusion of a green roof as the roof was rising through the zoning envelope and becoming more prominent to the neighbors. It was felt that a green roof requirement would not be unlike others which commonly seek to add quality building materials to a project, and as a separate concept it would address the sustainability issue. With respect to Condition 1.4 on the residential expression of the townhouse he indicated that it was an opportunity to create a small architectural gem in the area and suggested that the architect should be encouraged to bring his artistic expression to this part of the development as a piece of strongly designed architectural art.

Ms. Hung echoed the comments made by other Development Permit Board Advisory Panel members. She noted her agreement with the recommendation to relocate the exit stairway on Robson, and suggested that if it was treated as an attractive door with lighting it would minimize any negative activity, and would encourage being a good neighbor by adding lighting

to the alley. She commented on the courtyard area as a space for residents and increased surveillance and suggested that a gateway would establish this as a private space.

Ms. Hung added that the townhouse/coach house would be a desirable unit and suggested that the blank wall could benefit from more interest (e.g. window) in terms of its orientation to Nicola Street. She felt the project was compact and fit well with the adjacent uses.

Ms. Chung expressed concern over the slim alleyway on the adjacent property and queried whether this project could do anything to add to the security of the alleyway in terms of lighting. She expressed pleasure that the City was taking measures to establish policies on the integration of green roof treatments.

Mr. Scobie queried whether Mr. Jones had considered all Appendix C conditions, e.g. Fire and Rescue Services staff recommendations relative to the residential entrance way. He noted that the Processing Centre-Building concerns with respect to exiting appeared resolvable. Mr. Jones indicated a building code consultant had been engaged and resolution of the items noted would not fundamentally alter the proposal.

#### Board Discussion

Mr. Beasley offered that the proposed development would create a more urban frontage on Robson Street and that the scale and frontage on Robson Street were appropriate. The townhouse on Nicola was also a smart and interesting concept as this Nicola Street locale could be a little anonymous and adding domesticity through the addition of a townhouse was a good idea.

Mr. Beasley added that the proposed development was much better than what would occur according to the outright requirements for development on the site. The details of how this building related to the neighbors were good and there was little negative impact. The addition of the condition relative to the inclusion of a green roof spoke to the delegate on the impact of looking down on the building, and it was felt that this was a good neighbourly thing to do in the context of the discretion that came with the transfer of heritage density.

The need for an amenity space for residents was seen as important. Also, simplifying the palette and omitting the stucco was suggested, corner materials treatment was seen as fine, and it was suggested that consideration should be given to the front façade of the townhouse. Mr. Beasley suggested that conditions could be specified calling for refinements to be addressed between the architect and City staff. He concluded noting that the application would be a good addition to Robson Street.

#### 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. 409145, in accordance with the Development Permit Staff Committee Report dated April 27, 2005, with the following amendments:

- Condition 1.4 i), **consideration** to providing a more visible and distinct unit entry, separate from the main entry courtyard;
- Condition 1.4 iii), **consideration** to introducing additional glazing on the Nicola Street elevation;

- Condition 1.7, design development to provide adequate detailing **and final selection** of the proposed exterior materials to ensure a high quality appearance; and
- Condition 1.7, Note to Applicant, add the following sentence “Consideration should also be given to replacing stucco, especially on the townhouse, to one of the other materials already used on the building”.

Mr. Timm noted that the changes to “consider” rather than “require” were appropriate.

Mr. Scobie advised that the application was presented before the Board because only the Development Permit Board could approve the Heritage Density transfer.

Mr. MacGregor commented on the differences in design of green roof treatments noting some of the commentary had suggested a green roof for assembly on. He advised that the applicant and staff would have to come to an understanding and be in sync on this item. Mr. MacGregor commended Mr. Beasley for his comments relative to the “handy” design of the project and indicated support for comments made by other colleagues.

#### 4. OTHER BUSINESS

It was acknowledged that the next meeting would take place on June 6, 2005.

There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 4:42p.m.

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K. Miller  
Recording Secretary

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R. Scobie  
Chair