

URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: March 8, 2017

TIME: 3:00 pm

PLACE: Town Hall Meeting Room, City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
Helen Avini Besharat
Amela Brudar (excused for item #3)
James Cheng
Nell Gasiewicz
David Jerke
Karen Spoelstra (excused for item #3)
Meredith Anderson (excused for item #3)
Kim Smith
Yijin Wen
Neal LaMontagne (excused for item #3)
Renee Van Halm
Muneesh Sharma

REGRETS: Veronica Gillies

RECORDING SECRETARY: Lidia McLeod

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING

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| 1. | 1500 W Georgia Street |
| 2. | 2165-2195 W 45 th Avenue & 2205-2291 W 45 th Avenue |
| 3. | 1400 Robson Street |
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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: 1500 W Georgia Street
 Permit No. RZ-2016-00015
 Description: The proposal is to retain the Crown Life Place building, which has been evaluated as eligible for addition to the Vancouver Heritage Register in the "A" category, and develop a new 42-storey residential building with 220 dwelling units and a café at the corner of W Georgia and Nicola streets, with a total floor space ratio (FSR) of 10.82 for the entire site. This rezoning is being considered under the Rezoning Policy for the West End.
 Zoning: DD to CD-1
 Application Status: Rezoning Application
 Review: Second
 Architect: Büro Ole Scheeren (Ole Scheeren) & Francl Architecture Inc. (Stefan Aepli)
 Owner: Bosa Properties
 Delegation: Eric Chang, Büro Ole Scheeren
 Stefan Aepli, Francl Architecture Inc.
 Chris Phillips, PFS Studio
 Hermann Neussler, Bosa Properties
 Daniel Roberts, Kane Consulting
 Staff: Yan Zeng & Patrick O'Sullivan

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (11-0)

- **Introduction:** Yan Zeng, Rezoning Planner, introduced the project by noting that this is a revised rezoning application at 1500 W Georgia Street. The site is a whole city block bound by W Georgia Street to the north, Alberni Street to the south, Cardero Street to the west and Nicola Street to the east.

The surrounding area contains a variety of building types including residential high-rises and older, smaller-scaled commercial and office development. In addition, there are a few high-rise residential developments proposed in the surrounding area at various stages of the approval process.

The subject site is currently developed with an office tower on the western portion, a reflecting pool in the middle and a one-storey commercial building on the eastern portion. The complex, known as Crown Life Place, was built in 1978. The building, including the reflecting pool, was evaluated as "A" category heritage building with the potential to be added to the Heritage Register as a Recent Landmark. As part of this rezoning application the applicant is proposing to designate the Crown Life Place so that the building is protected as a heritage resource.

The application is being considered under the *West End Community Plan* and the *Rezoning Policy for the West End*. The current zoning is Downtown Official Development Plan, Area G, which allows a maximum conditional height of up to 450 ft. and a maximum density of 6.0 FSR.

Under the Rezoning Policy, for the Georgia Corridor area, an increased height of up to 500 ft. can be considered, subject to view cone, shadowing and other urban design considerations. Also under the Rezoning Policy, increased density achieved through rezoning would help provide community benefits as outlined in the *West End Community Plan Public Benefits Strategy*. These could include provisions of childcare facilities, community amenities such as a community centre or affordable housing.

The proposal is to demolish the one-storey building on the eastern portion of the site and replace it with a 42-storey market residential building with a commercial/retail unit at grade. Proposed is a height of approximately 440 ft. (42 floors) which include 220 strata-titled residential units. The proposed density for the entire site, including the existing office building, is 10.82 FSR.

This is a revised application submitted in response to comments heard from the public open house, Vancouver Heritage Commission and the Urban Design Panel. Key changes from the last submission include a reduction in the overall massing of the tower, including a reduction of the average tower floor plate from 603.7 m² (6,498 sq. ft.) to 547.1 m² (5,889 sq. ft.). This reduction resulted in the total floor area being reduced by approximately 2,600 m² (28,000 sq. ft.) and the FSR reduced from 11.47 to 10.82.

The separation between the existing office tower and the new tower has also increased by approximately 3.4 m (11 ft.). Redesign of the tower base and outdoor landscaping resulted in the re-establishment of the original reflecting pool design and reflecting pool frontage with its brick slope and waterfall feature along Georgia Street.

Patrick O'Sullivan, Development Planner, continued the introduction by noting that the West End Plan considers heights of up to 500 ft. Height on this site is restricted to 440 ft. by View Cone 3.2.1 from Queen Elizabeth Park. The proposal is for a height of 439.6 ft. (42 storeys).

Proposed density is 10.82 FSR. An averaging approach was used to create floorplates of 5,889 sq. ft. The standard plate size is 6,498 sq. ft. and the biggest plate is 7,392 sq. ft.

There has been an increase in usable public plaza space and an increased connectivity between the two buildings. Materiality of the plaza has changed, and there is now a café at Plaza level. There is also a gym on Level 2 and 3 on the east side of the building.

The distance between the towers has increased, and the tower has shifted towards Nicola Street. The main entry is off Alberni Street, and there is a secondary entry at the Plaza level towards the north end. Parking entry is proposed on Cardero Street with a proposed ramp out on Nicola Street.

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

1. Has the applicant resolved the above items raised by the Panel at the previous appearance?
- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** The applicant team started by noting their interest in the performance of the building as a residential tower. The module has been rotated horizontally which activates the skylines through the silhouette of the tower itself. Special attention was paid to the relationship between the new tower and the existing adjacent tower. Thus the tower has been shrunk and pushed back towards Nicola Street.

The new siting makes the tower sit better on the ground and gives more space to the plaza, which allows for the existing water feature to be retained at 96% of the size which it is currently. The building has a contemporary expression with steps at the corner of W Georgia Street. The base of the building is re-oriented and trimmed so that the main lobby faces the plaza.

The pool is being maintained in size and the edge detailing is to be retained. However, the bottom will be replaced with a darker material. The water depth is to be reduced and augmented with newer technology in order to reduce the amount of water used by the water feature each year.

The steps going into the plaza have been opened up to make the plaza more inviting. Trees are used to create cover and comfort within the space. There is a preliminary plan to combine public art funds from three development sites in the area (1445-1455 W Georgia Street, 1575 W Georgia Street/620 Cardero Street, and the subject site) in order to create a significant public art component at a location close to these sites.

The plan is to reduce the window/wall ratio and wrap the building with insulation in order to meet the energy code. Windows will use triple-glazing in spots with flush conditions, and a chiller retrofit is being proposed for the existing Crown Life Place to reduce the buildings' footprint and bring the energy consumption down. The new building will also be district energy ready.

The applicant team then took questions from the panel.

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

- Design development on the seismic design as the building has a bit of static overturn;
- Consider creating an accessible rooftop space;
- The water feature could be pulled in a bit more to add more space at the 10 ft. pinch point;
- More should be done to push the sustainability further;
- Consideration should be given to the impacts on views from Alberni Street;

- **Related Commentary:** The panel felt that the tower has an elegant design and a good contemporary feel, and that the applicant seems to have resolved the previous comments.

There is a lot of improvement to the public realm, and the changes to the plaza provide more open space. It may take a lot of effort to maintain the trees in the pool so trees may not be the best choice to slow people down in the plaza, but something is needed to fulfill this function. The form of the front sloped area is the key to the design of it. The red brick doesn't add anything, so feel free to explore other materials in this area.

The plan for substantial public art seems like it will be interesting and effective.

The amenity spaces could improve a bit. Consider adding an accessible rooftop in order to expand them.

Really consider seismic design as currently the building seems to have some static overturn. As well, explore opportunities to provide more accessibility to the site from Alberni Street.

Push the envelope on sustainability in order to set the bar high for green building and green infrastructure. However, with regards to the proposed green roofs on the cantilevered portions of the building, it may be costly and difficult to maintain them. Therefore, these green roofs may not be necessary.

Structural bracing should be shown and embraced as part of the building's architectural expression.

- **Applicant's Response:** The applicant team thanked the panel and noted that they are happy to receive the comments.

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| 2. Address: | 2165-2195 W 45 th Avenue & 2205-2291 W 45 th Avenue |
| Permit No. | RZ-2016-00043 |
| Description: | The proposal is for two sites: East Site: 8-storey market residential development (comprised of 40 dwelling units) with 2.5-storey townhouses along W 45th Avenue and a 4-storey podium along the adjacent lane to the north with a floor space ratio (FSR) of 2.47. West Site: restoration, preservation and heritage designation, and seismic upgrading of the church including improvements to the sanctuary; and a new 5-storey infill building with a new community activity centre and 32 units of rental housing for a total proposed floor space ratio (FSR) of 1.73 |
| Zoning: | RS-5 to CD-1 |
| Application Status: | Rezoning Application |
| Review: | First |
| Architect: | Endall Elliot (Malcolm Elliot) |
| Owner: | Trustees of Ryerson United CHurch |
| Delegation: | Alan Endall, Endall Elliot |
| Staff: | Bruce Hemstock, PWL Partnership Michelle McGuire & Marie Linehan |

EVALUATION: NON-SUPPORT (4-7)

- **Introduction:** Michelle McGuire, Rezoning Planner, introduced the project as a rezoning application for two sites at the corner of Yew Street and 45th Avenue. The west site currently includes the heritage “A”-listed Ryerson Dunbar United Church and three single-family houses. The east site includes the church hall, gym and one single-family house. Sites directly to the north across the lane are zoned RM-3 and are developed with a mix of low and mid-rise residential buildings up to 12 storeys. The rezoning application sites, and sites to the west, east and south, are zoned RS-5 and are developed with single-family houses. 45th Avenue is a bike route, and further to the east and north are the Kerrisdale shopping area and the Kerrisdale Community Centre.

The rezoning application proposes to rezone both sites from RS-5 to CD-1. The proposal for the west site includes seismic upgrading, rehabilitation and protection of the heritage church with a five-storey addition on the balance of the site. The five-storey addition includes a community activity centre with choral practice and performance space, as well as 32 units of social housing with a focus on seniors. The proposed FSR is 1.73 FSR.

The east site is proposed to be developed with an eight-storey market residential development with 2.5-storey townhouses extending along 45th Avenue and four storeys along the rear lane. Two levels of underground parking are proposed which are intended to provide parking for both sites. The total number of units proposed is 40, with a proposed FSR of 2.47.

The application is being considered under Citywide heritage policies and affordable housing policies that support heritage protection and delivery of affordable housing. The site is within the Arbutus Ridge/Kerrisdale/Shaghnessy Community Vision area which includes consideration of projects that include heritage retention, affordable housing, and reuse or expansion of institutional sites.

There is proposed parking for 140 vehicles, and proposed bicycle parking which includes 71 spaces.

Marie Linehan, Development Planner, continued the introduction by noting that the zoning boundary is at the lane, and to the north is an RM-3 neighbourhood which permits midrise tower development of up to 12 storeys (120 ft.). The RM-3 neighbourhood is currently a mix of three-storey apartments and midrise developments with densities of generally 1.5 to 2.0 FSR. The zoning south of the lane is single-family, RS 5.

For the west lot, the proposal is to retain, restore and designate the existing Heritage A-listed stone church. The restoration work includes seismic, envelope and acoustic upgrades as well as some internal re-planning. A five-storey addition is proposed at the west side of the church for community uses to be connected to, and affiliated with, the church. Also included are 32 units of social housing.

The entry to the rental housing component is from Vine Street, and an amenity room is provided at the ground floor along with urban agriculture plots at the site edge along Vine Street. The grade rises heading north along Vine Street, so the form reads as four storeys over a basement from the lane. The area around the front entry to the church currently serves as an informal gathering area before and after services or functions. It is proposed to extend the front porch as a kind of plinth along 45th Avenue with steps down to the sidewalk level, to provide additional porch space for church members and the public to gather.

For the east lot the proposal is to provide an eight-storey midrise at the corner, with six 2.5-storey townhouses along 45th Avenue. The townhouses are intended to pick up the rhythm of the adjacent 33 ft. single-family lots to the east. The front yard setbacks align generally with the front yards of the adjacent single-family sites.

A courtyard separation is provided to a four-storey stacked townhouse form at the rear. Ground floor units will have entry doors facing the lane and upper units accessed from a common corridor from the main core.

The entry to the midrise is from Yew Street, and common amenity space is provided at the ground level adjacent the courtyard. Pedestrian access to the underground parkade is located at the corner at Yew Street, and includes a small plaza. The treatment of the plaza is intended to reference the landscape treatment at the church site to provide a visual connection between the sites.

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

1. Does the Panel support the proposed form of development on each site including the:
 - a. Height (East lot: eight storeys; West lot: five storeys)
 - b. Density (East lot: 2.47 FSR; West lot: 1.73 FSR)
 - c. Setbacks
 2. Does the proposed form of development provide a suitable transition to the adjacent RS single-family sites and RM multifamily sites across the lane, particularly at the site edges at the lane and common property line at the east lot?
 3. Does the panel support the provision of outdoor amenity space at the Church site with the expanded porch along 45th Avenue as shown?
- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** The applicant team started by noting that the site is closing in on 100 years old, and will hopefully last for another 75.

The church is known for its acoustics, so special attention has been paid to maintaining this aspect. The activity centre proposed is a two-storey multi-purpose space with a glazed atrium on top. This space is intended to be flexible, and has a series of doors which can be opened or removed.

It is important to acknowledge that this is a very distinct neighbourhood and that this has influenced the height of the building. The affordable housing component has an L-shape and has been kept low. The plan is to keep a simple rectal-linear form with a pitched-roof element at the southern portion of the affordable housing to tie it in with the church. There is also a generous setback off the church which hosts bicycle parking.

An attempt has been made to maintain the single-family character along 45th Avenue in order to ease the transition to the higher forms. Trees and front-porch-like spaces are used to achieve this. An attempt has also been made to activate the lane with some protected outdoor amenity space.

This project is targeting LEED Gold.

The applicant team then took questions from the panel.

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

- Give the church more breathing room as the centrepiece of the urban realm;
- Design development to provide more distinction between the church and the connection/addition;
- Relocate the tower as currently it crowds the church too much, although there is no concern with tower height;
- Setbacks should match single-family setbacks at east side; and
- Design development to the west end of the expanded church porch to make it less imposing and more in scale with neighbourhood.

- **Related Commentary:** The panel expressed support for the height and the density, but had concerns with the form of development.

Some members felt that the proposed addition compromised the integrity of the church and suggested that the roof slope should not mimic the church roof. It was also suggested that the atrium connection to the church should be more open or wider. Some suggested creating a separation through a courtyard or colonnade. One member noted a six-storey height (with appropriate setbacks) could be considered for the activity centre and social housing addition at the lane to facilitate a wider break between the church and the addition.

Some members felt that the overall distribution of massing over the two sites should be reconsidered and that the tower should be relocated to the church site, as the highest element in the neighbourhood, and to keep a lower profile at the east block. Others noted that consideration could also be given to setting the tower further back on the east site to improve its relationship to the church. Some felt that support could be lent to a taller building (12 storeys). It was suggested to consider a lighter expression of the mass at the upper levels of the tower.

There were concerns about the transition on the east site to the adjacent single-family house. It was felt that the side setbacks should match the single-family requirements. The townhouses look like they jut out more than the residences as well. More space should be given the adjacent house, and the corridor could be softened with landscape.

There were concerns about the livability of studio units on the west site that only have sliding doors facing north; more consideration should be given to improving daylighting of these spaces.

One member suggested reducing the setback at the lane and widening the courtyard to provide more amenity for the east site. There were varying comments on the roof form of the townhouses, some suggested pitched roofs were not necessary and a modern form could also fit with the neighbourhood.

It was suggested that public art should be introduced, and that church-themed art should be considered in the restoration.

There were some concerns that the expanded church porch was too stark and could be softened with landscape.

It was suggested to review the sustainability plan and ensure it is achievable. As well, make sure that re-enforcing the masonry is a part of the seismic upgrade as that will be a key component to seismic success.

- **Applicant's Response:** The applicant team thanked the panel for their comments and consideration. The front porch can definitely use some relief, and along the front the intention is to have a continuous canopy.

The applicant noted that the other comments were understood and everything would be done in order to remain respectful to the single-family setbacks. The courtyard could possibly be widened, and a closer look will be taken at whether the slope of the roof of the addition should mimic the church roof slope. The applicant acknowledged that there is a lot going on with the sites, and they are working to balance all of these aspects. In regards to the tower position it would be nice to have more flexibility in terms of the siting, and options will be explored with regards to this.

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| 3. Address: | 1400 Robson Street |
| Permit No. | DP-2016-00376 |
| Description: | To construct a mixed-use building with a 31-storey and a 32-storey tower, over a three and four-storey podium with retail use on the ground floor, office uses on the second and third floors, and residential above (300 dwelling units, including 63 social housing units and 237 market units) over three levels of underground parking accessed from the lane with a building height of 299.5 ft. and a floor area of 394,287 sq. ft. |
| Zoning: | C-6 |
| Application Status: | Complete Development Application |
| Review: | Second |
| Architect: | MCM Partnership (Bill Reid) |
| Owner: | 1488 Robson Street Holdings Ltd. |
| Delegation: | Bill Reid, MCM Partnership Stephan Saarloos, PDP London Jeffery Staates, PFS Studio |
| Staff: | Paul Cheng |

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (4-3)

- **Introduction:** Paul Cheng, Development Planner, introduced the project as existing on the south side of Robson Street between Nicola Street and Broughton Street. Currently the site includes the 42-storey Empire Landmark Hotel and is 330 ft. by 124 ft. with a 30 ft. cross-slope.

This project is subject to the C-6 *District Schedule*. The Intent of which is to development compatible with the primarily residential character of the West End and to encourage external building design, the scale and function of which is oriented towards pedestrians. External Design also includes display windows, individualized tenancy unit design, building articulation. It also includes architectural features which facilitate pedestrian interest.

The West End Community Plan includes a ground-oriented focus in uses and public realm quality. New development needs to contribute to public realm vitality by contributing active uses towards pedestrian interest and related public realm design.

Policy for Lower Robson includes overall heights that are 60 ft. outright and up to 210 ft. conditionally with podium heights of up to three storeys. Density is up to 2.6 FSR, but can be relaxed to 8.75 FSR in connection with social housing. Built form is sculpted to maximize sunlight on the sidewalks, and there is provision of a 7 ft. setback from property line to enhance the pedestrian realm.

The proposal includes 20% social housing and a Social housing amenity space at Level 4. A market housing amenity space takes up most of Level 5.

The following consensus items were stated at the previous UDP review for this application. Please comment on how well this design iteration has responded to these concerns:

- The horizontal expression of the buildings was considered monotonous and did not work well with the context of the fine grain and slope of Robson Street;
- There were concerns about the massing and how the buildings do not stack to create a composition for a contextual fit that justifies the increased density;
- The lane elevation is problematic in terms of creating a pedestrian friendly walkable environment, perhaps because the saw tooth form of the building at this level makes it so irregular;

- The 2 foot setback in the lane was a concern with respect to livability of the units and the pedestrian environment;
 - The podium height and mass was questioned especially with respect to the grain on Robson Street;
 - There should be better resolution to the social housing entries;
 - The long hallway connecting the elevators for the social housing units needs access to daylight and relief from the length.
- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** The applicant team started by noting their focus on clean lines and reformed detail in order to fit into the existing context.

Since the previous panel the balconies have been moved and the floorplate has been made smaller. This caused a reduction in width of 10% as seen from Robson Street which results in a smaller, more slender appearing tower.

The podium have been split into two elements with one element on the higher part of Robson Street and one on the lower part. The intent is to have them step down with the slope of Robson Street. A proposed setback is intended to create a public plaza.

There is a more unified architectural expression. Material expression includes stone, concrete, charcoal metal framing and copper elements are used across the scheme.

Reduction in the height of the podium has reduced the horizontal emphasis on the towers. The towers have been rotated back onto the City grid, and the podium has been significantly reduced in height to provide a more urban fit.

In the new proposal the sawtooth element has been removed from the lane-side in favour of an expression of each housing unit to add a rhythm to the lane elevation. The entire setback of the façade has been increased to a 5 ft. setback.

The public plaza is created by the surround units and has a 50 ft. opening onto Robson Street which allows for a break in the street wall. The openings between the plants and seating have been opened and made more playful. Everything has direct street access and sticks to the Robson Street scale.

The applicant team then took questions from the panel.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - The buildings are too monotonous for Robson Street - they should be less urban and could have much more 'punch';
 - Consideration should be given to providing more differentiation between the towers;
 - The units at the back are too close to the active lanes and will suffer from noise impacts;
 - The play space separation is unnecessary and these spaces should either be combined or more distinctly separated;
 - More should be done to improve sustainability;
 - Move the planters and create a continuous canopy to improve the pedestrian realm.
- **Related Commentary:** The panel started by noting that the project seems to have addressed all the previous comments, but that the tower itself could be much more exciting considering the height of it. Having segmented weather protection does not respect the importance of the pedestrian experience. Planters should be moved outside of the rain cover to allow for increased access to that cover by people.

The horizontality of the proposed project makes the façade seem as monotonous as the previous proposal was. The towers need to meet the ground somehow, and the response along Robson Street seems like the wrong response. Consideration should be given to having different materials, more articulation, and less segmentation of the canopies. The top of the buildings are not well resolved and the copper material is too timid. It also does not seem appropriate to have two identical towers on this block. Pay more attention to creating diversity between the towers and to strengthening the lobbies through lighting or signage.

There is some great variety in amenity spaces, but it seems like the spaces are unsafe and more attention should be paid to crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED). While the art elements in the amenity space are nice, it would be better if the art were real and integrated with the landscape rather than decorative.

There is too much rubber surfacing and more natural materials should be considered instead. As well, having two barely-separated play areas seems cruel, and considering that one is linked with regular housing and one with social housing this sends a terrible message. Either integrate the two play areas into one big space, or provide much better separation between them.

Much more consideration should be given to sustainability in the buildings.

The units at the back are not livable considering the acoustic impacts of the active lane. This needs to be fixed through better mitigation or re-orientation of these units.

- **Applicant's Response:** The applicant team noted that the play spaces are segmented at the request of the City. They also noted that the glazing ratio has been reduced in an effort to acknowledge sustainability.

Adjournment

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 6:40 p.m.