

URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: July 10, 2024

TIME: 3:00 pm

PLACE: Webex

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:

Craig Taylor (Chair)
Stefan Aepli
Kai Hotson
Helen Besharat
Michele Cloghesy
Reza Mousakhani
Federica Piccone
Kai Hotson
Jon Stovell

REGRETS:

RECORDING SECRETARY: M. Sem

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING

1. 1780 E Broadway

Craig Taylor, Chair called the meeting to order at 3:00pm and noted the presence of quorum. The panel then considered applications as scheduled for presentation.

EVALUATION: Support with Recommendations (6/1)

Planner's Introduction:

Kent McDougall, Rezoning Planner, introduced the project with a brief description of the existing site context, followed by an overview of the existing policy framework as well as the anticipated urban context being considered under the Grandview-Woodland Community Plan. Kent concluded with a description of the site and a summary of the rezoning proposal.

Carl Stanford, Development Planner then gave an overview of the neighbourhood context in relation to the proposal, followed by the expectations of the built form guidelines for this project. Carl then gave a brief description of the proposed project before concluding with Staff questions for the Panel.

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

1) Does the proposal satisfy the overall principles of the Plan regarding appropriate density, height and a high-quality built form for the site? Include consideration of the below:

- The contextual fit, & siting of the towers;
- The articulation, shaping & expression of massing in the design; and,
- The impact from larger floor plates, additional height and additional density.

2) Does the proposal meets the intent of the plan to create high-quality civic character, pedestrian engagement, provision of amenity and responsiveness of the public realm considering the:

- The impact of shadowing on public spaces;
- The quality of and relationship between the lower & upper grade public spaces; and,
- The extent of amenity in the scheme.

Applicant's Introductory Comments:

The applicant Mahbod Biazzi, and the Architect Alex Buss of Perkins & Will, noted the objectives of the project and gave a general overview of the scope. Ben Matthews, Landscape Architect than gave a presentation on the landscape strategy.

Staff and the applicant team then took questions from the panel.

Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:

Having reviewed the project, it was moved by **JON STOVELL** and seconded by **HELEN BESHARAT** and was the decision of the Urban Design Panel:

THAT the Panel recommends **Support with recommendations** with the following recommendations:

THAT the applicant team carefully review the summary of panel consensus comments, as reflected in the meeting minutes.

Summary of Panel Consensus Comments:

Recommend a greater differentiation in the height between the three towers and to potentially increase the clarity of the apertures, the visibility, and the ease of access to the upper-level public plazas, particularly off West 10th Avenue.

Recommend applicant improve and reconsider the location of the thermal towers.

Recommend further development of the Broadway Street at grade façade to increase animation and improve the interface with the public realm in that area.

General support for the emerging contextual fit but with further development to be considered in relationship to the existing cultural context and grain of Commercial Drive.

General support for the proposed additional height, density, shadow impact mitigation, and increase in the floor plate size.

General support for the overall quality of the public realm and amenity spaces at ground plane and podium level.

Panel Commentary:

General commentary in support of the thermal tank idea in the L2 garden courtyard area but could be celebrated more as a central feature.

Panel members noted there's a lot of focus on public vs private spaces. Somewhat unclear on where things land. More attention should be paid to draw people from the ground level plaza up into the garden courtyard (Level 2). Current Level 2 space feels twisty and long, appears more as circulation particularly from West 10th Avenue into Level 2.

A Panelist suggested combining the thermal energy towers as it is impacting the privacy of some of the immediate units and over crowds the northeast area of the site.

A Panelist noted concern with the base and podium space, in many areas there are high amount of glazing with no shading devices.

A Panelist noted the public realm and upper landscape area is crowded and would encourage more shaded area, and further animate the public realm by potentially adding more fabric canopies, a good tool for people to interact.

A panelist noted the curvilinear lattice piece in the plaza. Noted it being too linear potentially, could be interrupted and/improved. Perhaps interrupt with activity and the plaza is proposed as a long space, potential room for more than just one universal feature.

Panel members noted the grand stairs and amphitheater in ground-level plaza works including the aperture into the second level space; however, encouraged that internal L2 courtyard is mostly public. Limit resident only space. The space as designed wants to be public.

A panelist questioned if enough commercial density is included? Perhaps more commercial floor area

could benefit the project at courtyard level? Strengthen the L2 garden courtyard space.

A Panelist is not convinced that the childcare location and its outdoor space is successful adjacent to the SkyTrain and to consider re-locating it to the east side. Another Panelist noted the daycare at the northwest corner is noisy and gets the most shadow, consider relocating to southeast corner.

A Panelist encouraged a thorough acoustic and wind analysis.

A Panelist encouraged proper designation and celebration of the bike area, to be further accentuated with lighting and protection.

A Panelist acknowledged it is an incredible project with 1000 rental units in the region with daycare and grocery store is remarkable.

Panelists noted that the proposal struggles to connect to the surrounding area. Lacks connection to the feel of Commercial Drive. Commercial Drive is the life of the area.

A Panelist encouraged this project “fit” Commercial Drive with more of the “quirkiness” in the public realm, it feels quite “well behaved” right now. Another Panelist concurred with keeping public realm’s quirkiness as it feels too corporate.

Panel members highlighted support for inclusion of finer grain retail elements along E 10th Avenue.

A panelist noted that the Broadway frontage should not only be Safeway advertising. Noted potential to bring small scale retail to the area. Possible to connect elements of the towers to the ground level. As proposed Broadway frontage reads more as blank façade.

Panel members commented on the articulation, shaping and expression of the towers with a noted lack of articulation; however, the ‘grid’ expression works (Tower A). The simplicity of the tower expressions was highlighted as a positive as well.

Panel members raised the potential for a direct SkyTrain connection to be considered if technically possible.

A panelist highlighted the adjacency to the eastern neighbor (existing building) needing work. Abrupt interface currently proposed.

Panel members noted this is a large, complex project with lots of ambition related to sustainability.

Applicant’s Response: The applicant team thanked the panel for their comments.