

URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: August 12, 2020

TIME: 4:00 pm

PLACE: WebEx

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:

Alan Davies

Walter Francl

Sydney Schwartz

Margot Long

Adrien Rahbar

Angela Enman

Muneesh Sharma

Jennifer Stamp

Karenn Krangle

Marie-Odile Marceau

REGRETS: Matt Younger

Michael Henderson

Brittany Coughlin

RECORDING SECRETARY: K. Cermeno

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING

1. 208-232 W 41st Ave
2. 1535-1557 Grant Street

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1. Address: 208-232 W 41st Ave
Permit No. RZ-2020-00019
Description: To develop a 15-storey mixed-use residential building with 156 secured market rental units and commercial retail space at grade: all over three levels of underground parking consisting of 95 vehicle spaces and 290 bicycle spaces. The maximum building height is 50.78 m (166.6 ft.), the proposed floor area is 12,291 sq. m (132,299 sq. ft.), and the floor space ratio (FSR) is 5.84. This application is being considered under the Cambie Corridor Plan.
- Zoning: RS-1 to CD-1
Application Status: Rezoning Application
Review: First
Architect: GBL Architects – Amela Budar, Chris Huxtable
Landscape Architect: Enns Gauthier – Bryce Gauthier
Staff: Tess Munro & Omar Aljebouri
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EVALUATION: Support with Recommendations 10/0

Introduction:

Rezoning Planner, Tess Munro, began by noting the existing context of this rezoning application, followed by a general overview of expected development under the Cambie Corridor Plan - Phase 3. She concluded with a brief description of the proposal's height, density, use and amenities.

Development Planner, Omar Aljebouri began by describing the overall build out vision of the Oakridge Municipal Town Centre relative to its regional significance. He then highlighted the relevant design principles of the Plan's Built Form Guidelines, which specifically speak to mixed-use buildings; the vision for tower form; and the expected highly-active commercial public realm. He then described the emerging and anticipated context of built forms, as well as the proposal relative to the Plan's direction.

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

Staff acknowledged that the Cambie Corridor Plan is prescriptive in terms of height and density.

1. Public realm and pedestrian experience. Please consider factors such as retail frontage; residential patios; arrangement and functionality of the rear courtyard.
2. Proposed sustainability strategy and any areas for potential design development.
3. Any preliminary advice for consideration at the DP stage. Please consider factors such as balcony articulation and added bulk; building elevations, especially the side elevations; massing of the tower top.

The planning team then took questions from the panel.

Applicant's Introductory Comments:

The intent was to create a strong building form while breaking it up. The applicant noted that the Plan permits additional height and density along West 41st for the provision of rental or social housing with at-grade commercial.

The applicant described the following attributes of the proposal:

- There is a six storey podium.
- The building entrance is along Columbia.
- There is an amenity space at the rooftop, at the east corner.
- The applicant noted they wanted to create functional spaces that opened up to the amenity space.
- There is quite a bit of outdoor space.
- The project consists of a singular material palette.
- The accessible stall and loading bay are at the back-of-house, at grade. The parkade access is also at the back-of-house. Along 41st there are some generous setbacks. This has allowed for the opportunity for planting that has created an improved commercial pedestrian realm. There is seating along the edges. Each retail unit has some generous space for pedestrians to walk through.
- The balconies can be tight but are surrounded by some greenery. There is a green roof.

The planning and applicant team then took questions from the panel.

Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:

Having reviewed the project it was moved by **MR. FRANCL** and seconded by **MS. LONG** and was the decision of the Urban Design Panel:

THAT the Panel SUPPORT of the project with the following recommendations to be reviewed by City Staff:

- Design development to the treatment of the commercial frontage.
- Consider an extensive green roof at the tower top.
- Design development mitigates the impact of the service area at grade and considers relocating this area to the underground.

Related Commentary

The panel was supportive of the project. The panel noted that the architecture is well considered. The concerns at a rezoning application are well addressed and the landscape is well handled.

Massing:

The overall massing is well resolved and supportable. It was noted that the balcony framing elements contribute to the apparent width and bulk of the building and could be reduced to slim down the tower – consider adding some windows. West elevation is very solid-looking and seems incongruous with the rest of the building. The tower top is a bit heavy on the east. The most successful elevation is the north one where the tower appears slender. Attempt to bring the same elegance of the north to the other elevations, particularly the east and the west elevations to mitigate their bulk. The large continuous

balconies are undifferentiated and unbroken. Some panel members felt that no articulation is needed for the balconies. There is perhaps a way to maintain a continuous expression while breaking the balconies. The Panel noted that the balconies are ideal for external shading.

Public Realm:

The panel supported the commercial frontage along 41st and noted to consider breaking up the long glazing line with some recessing and a landscape that responds to it. This would help with a better read of the building relative to the public realm. The paving pattern could extend over the property line into the public realm. As the commercial turns the corner, consider a corner café or opening it up to the street with some sliding “garage” doors. It would be good to bring in some distinguishing between the commercial and the residential (lobby) with insets. The residential entries are a bit difficult to read, it is unclear if there is a canopy.

Rear Courtyard:

Most comments noted concerns about the courtyard at the lane as not being a very usable amenity – and represented a missed opportunity for the project when used for servicing. There will be noise and odour issues that would detract from that area. This is very impactful for the two units facing the loading as they do not have much buffer space. The panel noted to consider relocating the loading, waste pickup and accessible parking stalls below grade (and adding an elevator for commercial access).

Amenity:

The project presented great amenity spaces and play for all ages. The amenity space on level seven will create a buffer with outdoor decks for the units for privacy mitigation.

Sustainability:

The Panel noted the opportunity for an extensive green roof at the tower top and recommended thermally-broken balconies, as well as orienting the building for solar heat gain. Vancouver is going from a heating mode to a cooling one. The balconies are appropriate for that. External shading devices would be ideal.

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

2. Address: 1535-1557 Grant Street
Permit No. RZ-2020-00317
Description: To develop a 15-storey mixed-use residential building with 156 secured market rental units and commercial retail space at grade: all over three levels of underground parking consisting of 95 vehicle spaces and 290 bicycle spaces. The maximum building height is 50.78 m (166.6 ft.), the proposed floor area is 12,291 sq. m (132,299 sq. ft.), and the floor space ratio (FSR) is 5.84. This application is being considered under the Cambie Corridor Plan.
- Zoning: CD-1
Application Status: Complete Development Application
Review: Second (First as DP)
Architect: Stuart Howard Architects – Neil Robertson
Landscape Architect: Damon Oriente Landscape Inc. - Ruchir Dhall
Staff: Ryan Dinh
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EVALUATION: Support with Recommendations 8/2

Introduction:

Development Planner, Ryan Dinh, presented this development permit application at 1535-1557 Grant Street under the Grandview Woodland Community Plan policy. Council approved the rezoning application for a 5 storey building at 2.19 FSR in September 2019, noting the Grandview Woodland Community Plan that anticipated up to 6 storeys and 2.5 FSR for secured rental development.

Ryan provided an overview of the site, its challenges, and surrounding context, as well as key urban design principles for this area. This mid-block site is shallow at 99 feet in length and has a significant cross fall of 17 ft. to the northwest corner. It has no lane but there is a 10 ft. lane dedication along with the 20 ft. rear yard required. The surrounding zoning is RM-4 which allows apartments up to 4 storeys. The nearby blocks have been developed with apartment buildings (shown in red) however, this block is occupied predominantly by houses with one apartment at the northwest corner of the block. The proposed front yard was relaxed to 12' from the 20' consistent with the front yards of the neighbouring properties. Otherwise the setbacks are generally conforming including the RM-4 containment angle as shown by the stepped side yards. The key urban design principle for this area is to allow for a variety of building heights and scale within multi-family residential areas.

Ryan noted this is a third review by Panel. The Panel last reviewed this application in Nov. 2018 and recommended resubmission. There were no recommendations provided in terms of key aspects needing improvement. Panel members appreciated that the revision had addressed previous comments and the project aligned with the Plan, however, given the challenging site constraints, contextual fit remained a concern.

To address the contextual fit and after the second review, the proposal was resubmitted with height lowered from 6 to 5 storeys (17.3m / 56.7 ft.) and the third UDP review deferred to Development Permit Stage. The key change since the last review is the reduced height. The proposal presents a 4 story streetwall with the fifth storey setback from the building face. The building steps to align with the sloping topography. The building expressions has been simplified with framing element deleted

and a more vertical expression provided. The submitted shadow studies note shadowing has been minimized from the allowable six storey form and the base RM-4 zone.

Materials proposed are fibre cement board cladding, Aluminum composite material (ACM) and architectural concrete. Access and entry is from the street as well as a children's outdoor play area at the northwest corner. Amenity room is located at the fifth level with a shared outdoor space.

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

1. Does the proposed design address neighborhood fit as identified by Panel?
2. Please comment on the architectural expression, and relationship to the existing streetscape character.

Applicant's Introductory Comments:

The applicant reiterated the site challenges in a contentious neighborhood. One floor was reduced from the allowable 6 storey building to address the concerns from the public and staff. The building massing is broken up into modules, and allows for ground oriented units. The site is surrounded by a lot of trees, which contributes to the public realm. The livability of the dwelling units are enhanced with landscape design, planters and trees. A main focus of the sustainability is an extensive reuse system.

The planning and applicant team then took questions from the panel.

Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:

Having reviewed the project it was moved by **MR. FRANCL** and seconded by **MS. SHWARTZ** and was the decision of the Urban Design Panel:

THAT the Panel SUPPORT of the project with the following recommendations to be reviewed by City Staff:

- Consider a more diverse programming for the indoor and outdoor amenity;
- Further simplification and refinement of the material palette and façade expression;
- Explore the backyard character and more diverse uses of the north landscape area.

Related Commentary

There was general support from the panel.

The panel acknowledged the amount of work and patience from the applicant's team.

There have been a lot of improvements since the previous application such as reducing the proposal by one floor, simplification to the façade and subtle changes to the massing. The panel noted that further simplification of the façade and material choices would help with neighborhood fit. The panel also encouraged the applicant to reconsider the horizontal expression, and the wood at the ends of the

building. The vertical expression is the most successful. Wood siding in the neighbourhood works well – consider exploring it as part of a simplified material palette.

A few of the panel members noted concern with the size of the building, neighborhood fit and the shadow that it creates. The reduction of one floor has created more bulk on the east façade.

Regarding the architectural expression, the panel recommended improvements to the vertical expression and how it integrates to the overall building form. Consider aligning the canopy and balcony over.

A lot of thought went into the livability of the units. The panel noted well laid out units.

Considerations to explore a more diverse program for the outdoor amenity space on the 5th level.

The rear yard could be improved and refined to provide more “backyard feel”. Consider increasing the size of the kids play area. Consider whether the space for the walkway along the north could be better utilized. Also consider temporary use of SRW.

Consider frit on the north balconies to mitigate overlook issues.

Front entry could be more strongly defined; perhaps further enhance the canopy projection.

The proposal has a lot of paving. The panel recommended finding ways to further green the project – this too will help with neighbourhood fit.

The panel recommended using lower height plants on the upper levels (3 ft. tall instead of 6 ft.) while still providing screening to the West and North side. Continuous planter doesn’t need to be all green. Planters need to come up to guardrail height.

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