

URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: Sept 16, 2020

TIME: 4:00 pm

PLACE: WebX

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:

Walter Franci
Sydney Schwartz
Margot Long
Michael Henderson
Muneesh Sharma
Jennifer Stamp
Karenn Krangle
Marie-Odile Marceau – absent item 2

REGRETS:

Angela Enman
Alan Davies
Adrien Rahbar
Matt Younger
Brittany Coughlin

RECORDING SECRETARY: K. Cermeno

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING

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| 1. | 1766 Frances Street |
| 2. | 1166 W Pender Street |

1. Address: 1766 Frances Street
Permit No. RZ-2020-00022
Description: To develop a 9-storey social housing building with 84 units over one level of underground parking consisting of 25 vehicle spaces and 96 bicycle spaces. The proposed building height is 26.7 m (87.6 ft.), the total floor area is 7,847.7 sq. m (84,472 sq. ft.), and the floor space ratio (FSR) is 4.06. This application is being considered under the Grandview Woodland Community Plan
- Zoning: RM-4 to CD-1
Application Status: Rezoning Application
Review: First
Architect: GBL Architects – Achim Charisius
Landscape Arch: PFS Studio – Kelty McKinnon
Owner Rep: Vancouver Native Housing Society - David Eddy
Staff: Carly Rosenblat & Brenda Clark
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EVALUATION: Support with Recommendations (8/0)

Introduction:

Rezoning Planner, Carly Rosenblat, began by noting this is a rezoning application to develop one lot at 1766 Frances Street from RM-4 to CD-1. This is a joint project between Vancouver Native Housing Society and BC Housing to create social housing for Vancouver's urban Indigenous population. The site is located on the south side of Frances Street, one block east of Commercial Drive and one lot west of Salsbury Street. The site is located in the Grandview Woodland Community Plan (2016).

There is an existing 4 storey building with 27 units of affordable housing for low income Indigenous people that was damaged by a fire in 2017 and is currently vacant. This rectangular shaped lot has a frontage of 40.2 m (132ft) and a depth of 37.2m (122ft) with a total site area of approximately 1,498 sq.m (16,122 sq.ft.)

The development site is zoned RM-4, multi-family dwelling, which permits density up to 1.45 FSR and building heights up to 10.7m (35.1 ft.). To the North is a 3 storey residential building zoned RM-4. To the East is a 2 storey building and across the street are ground oriented detached housing zoned RM-4, with 2 of the 4 buildings on the heritage register (b rank). To the South is a 4 storey residential building and to the West is a 4 storey residential building.

Grandview Woodlands Community Plan

Rezoning potential for the site is guided by the Grandview Woodlands Community Plan, which permits the proposed social housing use.

The proposal falls within the Grandview North-West Residential Apartment area, which is composed of 3-4 storey apartments and pre-1940 character buildings. Under the Plan, a 6 storey building is anticipated at a density of 2.4 FSR.

Section 7 of the Plan allows for consideration for modest increase in height and density to assist with project viability where new social housing is proposed.

Neighbourhood context is an important consideration, and all projects must consider and respect transitions to surrounding areas. Pat will speak to the details of the form of development later in this presentation.

This project will meet the City's definition of Social Housing with a minimum of 30% of the units rented to households with incomes which fall under the BC Housing Income Limits

levels (HILS); the housing will be owned by a non-profit corporation; and a section 219 covenant will be registered on title. Should the rezoning be approved by Council, a Housing Agreement will secure the units as Social Housing for 60 years and the life of the building.

Through BC Housing Indigenous Housing Fund, this development can offer additional depth of affordability beyond basic minimum required to meet City's definition of social housing.

This proposal is to rezone from RM-4 to CD-1 to permit:

- 9 storey social housing building with a height of 87.6 ft.
- 84 social housing units that range from studios to 4 bedroom units;
- A floor area of 65,474 sq.ft.; and
- Density of 4.06 FSR. and 25 vehicle parking spaces and 96 bicycle parking spaces in underground parking accessed from the lane.

The project has ground level outdoor amenity area that includes a ceremonial sweat lodge and an outdoor amenity area on the 7th level that includes a children's play area. It is proposed to be built using mass timber and achieve Passive House certification.

Development Planner Patrick Chan began by reviewing the *Grandview Woodlands Plan's* First Planning Principle, which is to "support the goals of Reconciliation in partnership with the Aboriginal Community." This may entail working with Indigenous representatives to acknowledge and celebrate the historic and current presence of Indigenous people in the neighbourhood; and to integrate First Nations and Urban Aboriginal histories and cultures in placemaking. Indigeneity should underpin all new developments, and be the "ground" from which projects spring from, rather than simply a design overlay.

Chan then notes that Staff recognise the project exceeds the current parameters set in the *Grandview Woodlands Plan*, which in this case is a six-storey extruded form. However, this project is an exercise in addressing:

- Housing needs for a vulnerable Indigenous population;
- Passive-House Requirements which feature more co-planar wall-faces as opposed to the more-articulated approach to massing-façade treatment typical in Vancouver;
- Tree-Retention and more at-grade outdoor spaces; and,
- Contemporary Indigenous approaches to architecture and place-making thus celebrate Indigenous presence in the neighbourhood.

Taking these factors into consideration, one might evaluate this project in terms of the housing benefits and sociocultural innovations it can bring to the neighbourhood, and the actual spatial relations the building expresses with the existing and future context, instead of simply gauging how closely the project approximates a prescribed massing envelope.

Considering the proposed form, Chan its side yard setbacks of 1 ft. and 16 ft. are much wider than the *Grandview Woodland Plan's* 7 ft. setback. This is to offset the increased height, ensure some degree of privacy, and generally provide more volumetric and spatial relief between the new building and its neighbours. Furthermore, with the increased side yard setbacks, the shadows cast, though longer, may be narrower than a six-storey building with just 7 ft. side yard setbacks. Chan illustrated these points through a series of slides comparing the *Grandview Woodland Plan's* proposed envelope and the proposed building. The 7th to 9th floors are then further setback 10 ft. to reduce upper-storey bulk; and this deeper setback better expresses the bottom six floors as the primary volume and the top three floors as a secondary volume perched on top. Lastly, Chan mentioned the "weave basket" motif, fashioned from aluminum panels with wood-grain patterns, wrap the entire building. A subtle Indigenous art-piece is engraved over the main entrance as an identity and wayfinding measure.

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

Siting + Height + Massing:

- Increased height's impacts on its surroundings (e.g. shadowing)
- Footprint / Yards' relation to adjacencies (e.g. sense of openness)
- Relation of the lower-base volume to the top volume (e.g. Is there sufficient distinction to lessen appearance of upper-storey bulk?)

Public Realm Interface:

- Landscape Treatment's relation to the public realm (This should include the lane-side where the sweat lodge is.)

Indigenous Placemaking + Identity:

- Development of Contemporary Indigenous Expression in relation to the Grandview Woodland.
- Wayfinding to shared entrance and private patios.

General Livability:

- Private + Shared Outdoor Spaces (e.g. equity for solar access, etc.)
- Privacy for future residents and neighbours

The planning team then took questions from the panel.

Applicant's Introductory Comments:

The goal of the project is to provide affordable housing based on indigenous cultures. Design intent is to include items of cedar that are significant to the indigenous culture. There is a diversity of typology; hope design will provide a sense of belonging. The applicant noted they are working towards a warm entry experience. On Frances street the design provides cultural references at different levels. The applicant noted they are hoping to have a public art piece commissioned. The project is aiming to be built by mass timber.

The lane interface is softening by the landscape of the adjacent cultural space. The cultural space will provide a long table and sweat lodge. The level 7 amenity opens to a patio and deck. Level 8 and 9 have accessible units. There will be a space for gardening and children's play. Along the alleyway there is an outdoor amenity space which has a rich buffer area of planting and paving that is being brought in various areas. There are generous setbacks. The patios on Frances St step down and follow the natural slope. The project is accommodating existing trees. There is a parkade, parking harmonizes with the existing frame.

The overall strategy for the landscape is community gathering space with robust native planting, massing and indigenous art.

The project is aiming for passive house certification. This project will provide cooling windows strategically placed to provide wider cooling cells.

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 **MS. LONG** and seconded by **MR. FRANCL** 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 strengthen the building entry off Frances Street;
- Consider relocating the amenity room and adjacent outdoor amenity to the south, and consider increasing size of both;
- Consider increasing the size of the indoor amenity at level 1.

Related Commentary

There was support from the panel.

The panel noted the massing and height feel supportable however can be increased in density.

There was overall support for the height. The panel noted was mindful that the increase in height should not set a precedent for future buildings. The increase is supportable in part because of the need for this project, but mostly on the merits of the high bar that the project is setting as a landmark building and the high level of sustainability (passive house + mass timber).

The panel was supportive overall of the massing and felt that there is a good relationship between the top and the base of the building.

Some panel members were concerned with the impact of the increased height on the neighbour to the west and potential overlook.

The panel was appreciative of the increase setback.

The panel noted that it is difficult to find a language that is indigenous, and that it is done very well here. The building is beautiful and impressive. The panel strongly supported the Indigenous identity. It provides a strong identity for the neighbourhood and is instantly recognizable.

The panel supported the livability of the suites layout and the nice unit layouts.

There are a good mix of unit types and the panel was very supportive of the inclusion of 4 bedroom units.

There were some concerns over the 4 bedroom units having no balcony or patio, and 1 bedroom units having large patios. The panel asked if these could be reapportioned.

The orientation of the living spaces do a good job of minimizing the overlook to the east and the west.

The tilt and slide windows are great.

Overall the landscape is very well handled. The tree retention helps with privacy at the ground floor.

Regarding the public realm interface many were appreciative of the privacy, buffering and the effort to bring a human scale of the landscape treatment. The streetscape is successful and attractive.

The panel noted concern with some of the bathroom locations and suggested a second look.

A panelist noted the top three floors read like it should be something different because it's so far setback, possibly it should be a different material as presently it appears as stacked blocks.

Public realm interface many were appreciative of the privacy and buffering. There were some concerns with the size of the patios on the east and whether the proposed screening was sufficient given the building to the east has a zero lot line or near zero lot line condition.

The panel liked the inclusion of the aspen trees and the reference to fire.

The ground floor common patio will be a good amenity for residents and the sweat lodge is great, however the overall amount of amenity space is small. Given the number of studio units the applicant is encouraged to consider increasing the amount of indoor and outdoor amenity. Furthermore the panel asked if the roof top indoor and outdoor amenity spaces could be increased in size and located at the south side, and if the child play urban space can be placed outside.

The panel was appreciative of the green roofs.

A panel member suggested reviewing the adjacency of the laundry room to the garbage room.

A panelist noted to take a look of the tree retention to the rooftop

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

2. Address: 1166 W Pender Street
Permit No. DP-2020-00345
Description: To develop a 32-storey mixed-use office building with commercial retail at grade all over six levels of underground parking consisting of 130 vehicle spaces, 12 loading bays, and 242 bicycle spaces. The proposed building height is 112.4 m (395.83 ft.), the total floor area is 33,568 sq. m (361,329 sq. ft.), and the floor space ratio (FSR) 19.40.
- Zoning: CD-1
Application Status: Complete Development Application
Review: Second (First as DP)
Architect: IBI Group – Martin Bruckner
Hariri Pontarini Architect – David Pontarini
Landscape Arch: Perry + Associates - Robert Barns
Owner: Reliance Properties – Joanna Kwan
Sustainability: Kevin Walsh - Integral
Staff: Kevin Spaans
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EVALUATION: Support with Recommendations (7/0)

Introduction:

Development Planner, Kevin Spaans, reminded the Panel that the proposal under review is a Development Permit following Rezoning. The proposal received the unanimous support of the Panel without recommendations at the time of the Rezoning review.

The proposal has remained substantially the same between Rezoning and the Development Permit application, with changes concentrated primarily around the base of the building. Design development has effectively made the building more “real”, as can be expected as a building design matures, which is demonstrated by comparative renderings.

Changes at grade include provision of increased glazing areas and reconfiguration of interior spaces to maximize interior-exterior visual access. As was proposed at the time of the Rezoning application, the public realm includes a north-south pedestrian connector with a stair proposed to provide pedestrian access to the lane.

The Development Permit application provides staff and the Panel the first opportunity to review and comment on the proposed material palette of the building, here comprised of: SSG glazing with linear ceramic fritting aligning with the floor levels, metal panels at the lane, and architectural concrete.

The applicant is proposing to replace an existing retaining wall between the subject site public realm and the childcare facility to the east, and includes enhanced landscaping on both sides of the wall to mitigate security and privacy concerns.

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

Overall Design Development and Materiality

1. Please comment on the overall evolution of the proposed building design between rezoning and development permit, particularly at architecturally distinctive design elements such as the “fold” over the northeast corner of the site.
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2. Does the proposed material palette serve to enhance the overall design concept demonstrated at the time of the rezoning application?

Public Realm

1. Please provide feedback on the following:
 - a. The quality of the public realm and building interface at the lane;
 - b. The overall performance of the north-south through-block connector as an active and inviting pedestrian link;
 - c. The interface between the pedestrian link and the child care facility to the east.

Applicant's Introductory Comments:

The applicant noted it is a wedged shaped site.

The building top was further formed to limit shadowing to the north of the site.

The base is lifted up and carved at the entrances with a slope featured wall with a light one.

The energy model continues to track the performance of the building with low emission and green building levels and LEED Gold certification. A high-performance curtain wall is being proposed and, for the most part, the glazing units are triple glazed. Curved glass panels are featured at principle corners, rather than faceting.

Rainwater management is provided by way of planting at grade and along the east pedestrian route.

The proposed terraces have been further detailed following Rezoning, and green roofs at the top of the building. Sculpted planters are proposed at the terraces as well.

The public realm begins on West Pender with new street trees and hardscaping, and extends through site, up the site stairs, and connects through to the lane.

The public realm is fronted by an office lobby and two restaurant uses. There are canopies and roof overhangs providing weather protection at the public realm.

The wall along the east side of the through-site connector provides an opportunity for public art, and ensures privacy for the childcare facility.

A passenger drop-off area is provided at the lane, with two loading bays and parkade access further to the west. Planting areas are provided where parking and circulation permits. Functionality is an important consideration at the lane, as well as activation of the lane.

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:

- Design development to the midblock connector to create a more inclusive space and broaden the array of users;
- Design development to the lane interface to better address the pedestrian nature of the lane and consider enhancing the landscape features and mitigating views into the loading bays (#2 and 3).

Related Commentary

The panel noted no concerns with the changes of the project.

The panel felt that the design is consistent with what was shown at the rezoning and is supportive of the design evolution and materiality. Furthermore the curved glass and frit pattern are in keeping with what was shown at the rezoning.

The panel felt that it is an elegant building and will be a fine addition to the skyline.

The landscape design has been well handled and the panel appreciated the quality of material proposed for the public realm.

Connector/Pedestrian Link:

A majority of the comments regarding the ground plane focused on the design of the public connector/pedestrian link on the east side of the site and how it interfaces with the childcare. Many panel members felt that the stairway look steep (with no landings) and compressed and asked if there would be a way to stretch it out, add landings, make it feel more generous and make it more of a destination. The current scheme presents a lot of wall to the childcare. The panel asked the applicant to consider reducing the stair width and increasing the planter width.

The panel had varied comments about the accessibility of the connector/pedestrian link. Some felt that it should provide a barrier free connection between Pender Street and the lane, while others, particularly the landscape architects on the panel, indicated this would result in all ramp and no stairs. The panel concluded their comments on this issue to ask that the applicant team find ways to make the stair feel more inviting, more inclusive and treat it so that more people feel comfortable in the space, while not necessarily being wheelchair accessible. It was suggested that the base should be made more of a destination. It needs to be more transparent like the lobby and public realm.

Lane Interface:

While the connector/pedestrian link were thought to bring animation to what is a busy lane in terms of traffic volume and pedestrian use. There were concerns with programs adjacent to the lane such as the restaurant and the lack of adjacent outdoor space because of the provision of a vehicular drop off area. The panel questioned whether a vehicle drop off is needed, and if it is pursued then the applicant team should review the location of the parking exhaust shafts. The panel also had concerns with the visual impact of the loading bays (2 and 3) on the lane. So much effort has been made on the elevation of what is a very elegant building, however the lane feels like it has not been focused on. The lane would benefit greatly from tree planting and greenery in general. The panel also asked that the applicant improve the design and appearance of the loading door and bays at 2 and 3 (and the related building overhang), and to

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

