

URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: Oct 13, 2021

TIME: 3:00 pm

PLACE: Townhall, City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:

Michael Henderson
Brittany Coughlin
Alan Boniface
Walter Francl
Jennifer Stamp
Alyssa Koehn
Jane Vorbrodt

Robin Williams Item 1, Guest Panelist
Karen Marler Item 1, Guest Panelist
Laura Jimenez Item 1, Guest Panelist

RECORDING

SECRETARY: K. Cermeno

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING

1. 2336-2366 Charles Street
2. 601 Beach Crescent

Chair Henderson called the meeting to order at 4:05pm and noted the presence of a quorum. The panel then considered applications as scheduled for presentation.

1. Address: 2336-2366 Charles Street
Permit No. RZ-2020-00872
Description: The proposal consists of a six-storey mixed-use building within Grandview-Woodland area with 67 residential rental units; all over an underground parking. The floor space ratio (FSR) is 3.20, and the maximum building height is 23.45 m [21m permitted].
Zoning: CD-1
Application Status: Complete Development Application
Review: Third
Architect: Human Studio Architecture & Urban Design Ltd.
Staff: Susan Chang

EVALUATION: Support with Recommendations (6/0)

- **Introduction:**

Development Planner, Susan Chang, began by noting this is a DP application following a rezoning per the Grandview Woodland Plan. The proposal is a 6 storied rental development (52 % of which are family units) with commercial at grade. The panel supported the previous review with recommendations however, this is a third Panel review due to revisions made since the rezoning application was approved. Site is a 4 lot assembly located at the corner of Nanaimo and Charles St. with lane at south face. Southeast corner is the high point sloping down approximately 4.5' to other corners. Existing context is single family typology and up to 3 storeys mixed use on Nanaimo. Since the rezoning application was submitted, amendments have been made to the Plan to allow modest expansion of this commercial node and to offer better transitioning between arterial and off-arterial areas. Amendments include:

- Lots south of the site (across the lane), was rezoned from RT-5 to C-2 zone. (4 storeys)
- 3 lots directly west have been rezoned to RM-8A allowing 3 storey townhomes as well as lots across the lane.

Per the Plan, this site is located within one of the Nanaimo shopping nodes. Intersections at Charles, E. 1st Ave, and Broadway are intended to be enhanced with new mixed-use development with higher 6 storeys at the intersections and at Charles, stepping down to 4 storey C-2 and RM-8a 3 storey townhouses. C-1 sites across Nanaimo and Charles are also eligible for 6 storey mixed use and rental tenure is not required. The plan anticipates public realm improvements, deeper corner sites to wrap around to frame both streets, and 4 storey street wall with limits to upper storey floor plates noting zoning changes to nearby properties.

A courtyard typology was approved at rezoning. Previous Panel review was supported with the following recommendations.

- Increasing the floor to floor height to provide a more viable retail height, reconsidering the saw tooth roof at the Nanaimo building as a means to potentially increase the floor to floor height to the 10ft;

- Consider simplification of form, material palette and fenestration;
- Explore opportunities to widen the courtyard at the upper two levels.

Since rezoning, the proposal has been revised due mainly to tenure change (from strata to rental) at a late stage of the rezoning. The most notable changes include massing, courtyard, architectural expression, and residential entry location from Charles Street to Nanaimo. Outdoor space is provided at courtyard level 2 and common amenity room at level 6 with co-located rooftop outdoor space. Proposed cladding materials include brick, anodized aluminum panels, fibre cement horizontal lap siding, fibre cement panels and exposed concrete base.

Advice from the Panel on this application is sought on:

Taking into consideration Grandview Woodland Plan's anticipated form of development and surrounding zoning changes, has the revised proposal addressed Panel recommendations?

- a. Simplification of form, material palette and fenestration
- b. Courtyard configuration

Comments on other aspects of the architectural and landscape design are also welcome.

The planning team then took questions from the panel.

- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:**

The applicant noted this is a major redesign. The intent is to improve Nanaimo Street while respecting the neighbours, provide housing that promotes inclusion, expand the mix and quality of the housing availability and provide 52 percent family units. The applicant noted they are striving for design excellence and context will be different in a few years. The applicant noted they have been requested by the City of Vancouver to provide continuous canopy however wanted to express individualization with the retail units. The applicant worked with public health agencies to develop a software to assess how people inhabit the building, how to interact with neighbours and potential uses of the building.

The courtyard is an L shaped design. There is a window opening at the end of the corridor and at the elevator to orient circulation and enhance relationship with the courtyard. There is a rooftop amenity room designed as a glass box to provide amazing views. Materials include brick along Charles Street, the lane, and along Nanaimo. The Charles street elevation has Hardi plank. Guardrail is prefinished metal. Colour provides unit identity.

The Landscape has been designed to provide areas of respite. The public realm includes some simple street frontage with trees. There is a patio frontage articulating the walk around. The ground level is an infiltration area, the courtyard maximizes the soil volumes and trees and space for cohabitation. There is a simple articulated roof deck space. The applicant noted more than half of the building footprint has been dedicated to the outdoor space.

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 **Mr. FRANCL** and **MR. DAVIES** and was the decision of the Urban Design Panel:

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

- Consider reducing complexity of materiality texture and colour;
- Design development to the residential entry to improve sequence, spatial quality and legibility;
- Address privacy issues at the elevated lobbies while maintaining overlook to courtyards;
- Design exploration for continuity of street canopies while maintaining individual design expression.

Related Commentary:

There was general support for the proposal. Massing is more preferable with courtyard oriented to south and west and approach to social spaces. The Panel appreciated the windows from elevator lobbies with views to courtyard from all levels. The changes to outdoor amenity space and solar orientation are good.

The panel noted the cladding materials appear the same in the renderings, and could differentiate the materials more, consider the proportions of materiality and color as the project develops especially along Nanaimo. A panelist noted the project lost uniqueness since rezoning with roof expression. There were concerns regarding the entry sequence, it is cramped and confusing. Residential units at grade looks like a storefront.

Regarding the floor elevations of the ground level, loft units there are pros and cons. Units are accessible from street grade but does not feel separated from public and semi- public areas. Continuous canopy is beneficial while still expressing individualism.

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

2. Address:	601 Beach Crescent
Permit No.	DP-2021-00162
Description:	To develop a 53-storey mixed-use residential building with 303 market residential units, 152 social housing units, and 11 commercial units at grade; all over one level of bicycle parking and three levels of underground parking consisting of 453 vehicle spaces and 911 bicycle spaces. The proposed building height is 163 m (535 ft.), the floor area is 43,660 sq. m (469,956 sq.ft.), and the floor space ratio (FSR) is 7.56
Zoning:	CD-1
Application Status:	Complete Development Application
Review:	Third
Architect:	GBL Architects
Staff:	Miguel Castillo Ureña

EVALUATION: Resubmission Recommended (6/0)

• Introduction:

Development Planner, Miguel Castillo Ureña, began by noting this is a development permit application following rezoning for a 53-storey or 535ft mixed-use building on 601 Beach Crescent.

Council approved this rezoning application in September 2020, subject to a number of rezoning conditions, under the general policy for higher buildings which anticipated the following urban design objectives for the Panel's consideration:

- Mark the entry into downtown from the Burrard and Granville Bridges.
- Establish a significant and recognizable new benchmark for architectural creativity and excellence, while making a significant contribution to the beauty and visual power of the city's skyline;
- Provide on-site open space that represents a significant contribution to the downtown network of green and plaza space;
- The building should not contribute to adverse microclimate effects;
- Demonstrate leadership and advances in sustainable design and energy consumption.
- The building should include activities and uses of community significance such as public observation decks or other public amenity;
- Careful consideration should be given to minimize adverse shadowing and view impacts on public realm including key streets, parks and plazas, as well as neighbouring buildings;

The Panel saw this DP application back in May 26, 2021. At that time, the Panel recommended resubmission with four broad recommendations, as follows:

- Design development to the tower podium expression interface;
 - Design development to the relationship between the podium and Seymour mews addressing the ramp and unique character of the Seymour mews;
 - Design development to the urban realm to promote a more vibrant public space. Improve legibility, accessibility and sustainability features. Ensure further resolution of grading at the west corner;
-

- Design development to the podium to be more responsive to the context and residential character.

The triangle site is bounded by Beach Crescent to the south, the pedestrian Seymour Mews to the east, Rolston Street and Seymour ramp to the west and Pacific Ave to the north. Significant developments around are mostly under several CD-1, such as the 497 feet tall Vancouver House and its associated two 6-storey buildings to the west or the adjacent 31 and 24 storey towers with 2-storey townhouses across the Seymour Mews to the east. A 24-storey building is located to the south adjacent to a vacant site.

The site is quite steep and has a difference of grade of about 7.4 m along Rolston and the Mews. It is crossed by the View Cone from Queen Elizabeth Park on the north side, however it is not affecting neither the podium height nor tower.

Other significant site-specific policies worth mentioning are:

- Bridgehead Guidelines (1997);
- Under the Granville Bridge Neighbourhood Commercial Centre Policies and Guidelines (2007);
- Beach Neighbourhood CD-1 Guidelines (1999, amended up to 2002);

As a result of the Panel's recommendations, some of the changes include how the tower meets the podium to the east and west as well as modifications in the podium opening patterns and treatments. No changes in the tower are proposed.

Similarly, on the Seymour Ramp side the tower is brought down to the first storey of the podium, which seems to have become more opaque.

The interface with the Seymour mews have been modified as shown, with two volumes of 2 storey embedded into the podium. These are closer views of the pedestrian mews and two schematic sections showing this interface. Further, a comparison between previous and proposed elevation facing the mews. The composition and treatment of the podium have changed, showing the proposed palette of materials on the right hand side.

As for the public realm, the biggest updates appear to be at the west corner and south corner with a shorter driveway and a small space between both driveways. As shown, updates in the west corner are formalized with the relocation of the corner ramp further up north.

Advice from the Panel is sought on the following:

Does the Panel consider that the project has successfully satisfied all expectations for a higher building, including the UDP's previous recommendations?

The planning team then took questions from the panel.

- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:**

The revised project responds to the directives and concerns from the May 26, 2021 UDP. These concerns include the Seymour Mews, the main entrance, the public realm and tower and podium.

Regarding the Mews there is now the addition to the ground oriented units. The intentional landscape compliments the project to create a multi-layered presence. The driveway has been naturally shield from the site while still adding a natural entry to the site from the driveway.

The main entrance has been relocated to the corner of the building at Beach Crescent, this helped resolve the corner. The mews now has a much better presence it is no so linear. There is a parkette at the base of the mews which is wheel chair accessible and helps get people to the street.

Tower and podium has been revised in how it interfaces the project. The building now reads as one gesture throughout. The extension of lines is from top to the ground. The podium relates directly to the massing. The materiality unites the façade better; the material breaks down the scale for a better façade response.

The rounded corners of the building allows for better view around the other buildings
The material pallet is a few tones but with more textures and distinguishing difference zones.

There is highly insulated and triple glazed. There are high-density cement panels
There is wood composite that highlight the undersides. Material also includes aluminum panel and fritted glass.

The Public Realm is divided into two parts the corner at Beach/Rolston and the ramp. There are steps up to the Amphitheatre. There are great opportunities to plant. The rest of the mews is at 4 percent grade which compliments the corners. The idea is social engagement; all corners are anchored by spaces for individuals.

The retails will have opportunity for their own identity. The retail frontage has been revised to integrate more with the podium design and the transition from residential to retail its improved.

Landscape includes hierarchy in trees and planting, lots of textures and furniture. The streetscape is very walkable with lots of rich greenery. There is a kids play area, vegetable gardening and lots of space providing community to come together.

The street front treatment is integrated with the façade. There is seating integrated with green walls connected to the amenity plaza.

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 **MS. COUGHLIN** and seconded by **MS. VORBRODT** and was the decision of the Urban Design Panel:

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

- Resolution of the tower and podium intersection/relationship to provide clear conceptual continuity and approach to all sides of the building;

- Design development to the public realm to demonstrate best practices and accessibility and public safety;
 - Architectural and landscape approach to the Seymour Mews to reflect consistently with the overall project concept and also reflect uniqueness to neighbours;
 - Clear understanding of the materials proposed; and
 - Design development to demonstrate leadership in sustainability.
- **Related Commentary:**

The Panel noted there was some development trending in the right direction, however, significant work with the tower and podium is needed at the Seymour mews and where the tower hits the podium and around Rolston Avenue.

The tower and podium interface/relationship has not been addressed; a panelist noted this was raised back in rezoning. Currently, the tower cuts abruptly into both sides of the podium and there is no flow, integration nor one identity as described, especially on the Seymour Mews side on top of the townhouses. The way how the tower lands on the box frames of the town homes is problematic. The Seymour Mews approach and formalization suffer from mirroring the existing condition. It could be a matter of articulating the façade better. The townhomes are reading more as residential although the entry to each townhouse needs further design development especially regarding privacy and accessibility. The northern end units at the mews could have accessible units. Consider privacy to the terraces.

There was an overall sentiment of uncertainty in the proposal due to the lack of information, definition and details. Ambiguity cannot be showed at this level in the DP application package, such as for materials or landscape.

Building Expression

In terms of the building expression, the articulation and fenestration on the podium changes a lot. There is a lot fragmentation. The Beach Avenue side feels fragmented, consider continuing the horizontally, no need to break up. More consistency and unifying language is needed.

A panelist noted the solid curtain wall masses at levels 7 & 8 feel more like an office expression and this needs further work. The two blocks of townhouses at the mews are not successfully integrated.

Materials are problematic, including their curvature. There needs to be a commitment of robust and high-quality materials, especially for this location. A panelist noted to consider brick as an appropriate material. Faceted panels are not an option and consider materiality that would allow for curvature.

Public Realm

The Panel noted there were some improvements with the public realm around the building. Such as the amendments to the corner of Beach Crescent and the Seymour Mews. The addition of the amphitheater approach is a better solution in dealing with this topography. However, the corners feel undefined; consider a stronger delivery to the corner to help unifying Beach Crescent and Rolston Street.

There were areas of deep concern regarding inequity and accessibility of the public realm, particularly to the mews and ramp areas. The viability and appropriateness of the ramp is not resolved. A panelist noted accessibility to the sites for those with mobility issues was not indicated in drawings and indicated to make path fully accessible while enabling people to walk down smoothly. A panelist suggested to involve people with disabilities.

The treatment of the retail and entry of lobby have improved, in terms of materiality and differentiation, however the base needs better transition, vibrant uses and animation and more rain protection, particularly the facades against the bridge.

A panelist noted the landscape appears stronger, however, it is still not resolved. The parkette at the base of the mews needs to be reconsidered currently as a dead-end. This dead-end parkette in combination with lobby and ramp create conflicts and is not good.

A panelist noted the steps and planters appear to be outside of the property line. A panelist noted that the expression / shape at Pacific Avenue could improve to facilitate mews access.

Sustainability

There are some good sustainable strategies, however, some other elements of leadership in the technology and strategies to go further in the sustainability should be considered. For a project of this size and scale, it needs to be more innovative and that push the boundaries further and be exemplary.

- **Applicant's Response:** The applicant team thanked the panel for their comments and will take the comments into consideration for further improvement.