

URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: February 20, 2019
TIME: 3:00 pm
PLACE: Town Hall Meeting Room, City Hall
PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:

Amela Brudar
Helen Avini Besharat
Colette Parsons
Derek Neale
Jim Huffman
Jennifer Stamp
Matt Younger
Grant Newfield
Susan Ockwell
Yinjin Wen
Jennifer Marshall
Derek Neale
Muneesh Sharma

Laura Jimenez
Karen Marler
Robin Williams

REGRETS: Jennifer Marshall

**RECORDING
SECRETARY:** K. Cermeno

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING

1. 601 Beach Crescent
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BUSINESS MEETING

Chair Jim Huffman called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. and noted the presence of a quorum. The panel then considered applications as scheduled for presentation.

1. Address: 601 Beach Crescent
 Permit No. RZ-2018-00034
 Description: Proposed application is to allow for a 54-storey mixed use building with a total of 455 dwelling units (152 social housing units). The proposed total area is 41,755 sq.m (449,444 sq. ft), including 2,094 sq.m of retail and 39,661 sq.m of residential, floor space ratio of 7.23 and height of 163 m (535 ft).
 Zoning: CD-1 (366) to CD-1 (new)
 Application Status: Rezoning Application
 Review: First
 Architect: GBL Architects
 JYOM Architecture
 Owner: Mike Decoh, Pinnacle
 Delegation: Kandice Kwok, Architect, JYOM Architecture
 Stu Moon, Architect, GBC Architecture
 Cory Gram, Landscape Architect, Janet Rosenberg and Studio
 Staff: Patrick O'Sullivan and Leifka Vissers

EVALUATION: Support with Recommendations

- Introduction:

Rezoning planner Leifka Vissers introduced the project located at the intersection of Beach Crescent and Rolston Street adjacent to the Granville Bridge off-ramp.

The application proposes a Comprehensive Development (CD-1) district to permit a 54-storey mixed-use building, with a 6-storey podium to include:

- 303 market residential units and 152 social housing units;
- commercial retail space at grade;
- A total FSR of 7.23;
- A building height of 535ft or 163m.

This application is being considered under the Higher Buildings policy which was adopted in 1997 and amended in 2011, which allows for the consideration of buildings exceeding existing height limits, up to 425 feet, at designated locations provided they achieve the following:

- Establish a significant and recognizable benchmark for architectural creativity and excellence while making a significant contribution to the beauty and visual power of the city's skyline
- Demonstrate and advance the city's objective for carbon neutrality for new buildings
- Provide lasting meaningful public legacy to Vancouver, including consideration of provisions of significant community benefits, on site activities, and uses of community significance
- Minimizing shadowing and view impacts on the public realm including key streets, plazas and parks as well as neighbouring buildings.

This policy identifies two sites at the Granville Bridge Gateway to mark entry into downtown. The first is Vancouver House, currently under construction. 601 Beach Crescent is the second site.

Under the False creek North Official Development Plan (ODP), enacted in 1990 and amended in 2013, the subject site is within sub-area 1a, a 5-block residential area where retail uses are permitted.

The subject site is further zoned Beach Neighborhood CD-1 (366) under the ODP. The Beach Neighborhood CD-1 Guidelines were established in 1996 and last amended in 2003. They specify the amount of residential units and total residential floor area permitted in the CD-1 district, as well as requirements for:

- Social housing units
- Market housing units
- Family housing mix
- They establish guidelines for each of the precincts within Beach Neighborhood

Green Buildings Policy (2009 updated 2017)

Requires that all rezoning projects achieve either near zero emissions buildings or low emissions green buildings

Bridgehead Guidelines (1997)

Guide development of buildings proposed on the North Granville Bridgehead - East Side - and specifies design requirements for this site including a 20m setback, a positively articulated floor as a visible elevation and if the development addresses livability issues.

Under the Granville Bridge Neighborhood Commercial Centre Policies and Guidelines (2007)

Guides the development of a locally-serving commercial node under the Granville Bridge - development should improve and enhance the quality of the public realm through high quality architectural expressions, careful site planning and appropriate vehicular and pedestrian circulation.

View Protection Guidelines

Adopted in 1989 protect selected threatened public views, including View Cone 3.2.1 (Queen Elizabeth Park View) which crosses a small portion of this site at the north end limiting building height at that point to 444ft.

City Invitation to Offer

The city issued an invitation to offer for this site, which was previously City owned, was issued in 2016. The Invitation to offer laid out conditions on which the site would be sold, including specifying the requirement for 152 social housing units to achieve the social housing targets laid out in the False Creek North ODP.

This application is being considered under the Higher Buildings Policy, as a Granville Bridge Gateway Site.

Development Planner, Patrick O'Sullivan, described the context buildings and provided the tower separation distances between the proposed development and nearby residential towers.

Program wise, The CRU fronting at grade level wraps along Pacific street, down to Rolston and all along the corner onto Beach Crescent. The relationship between the CRU, pedestrian and public realm is meant to be very clear.

There is social housing, podium, and CRU located on levels 1 to 6. There is an amenity space and residential entry adjacent to the vehicle entry. The podium ranges from 4 storeys to 6 storeys at Pacific and Beach Street.

Levels 7 through 54 are strata residential. The provided amenity spaces including outdoor spaces, gym, amenity lounge, indoor play area, outdoor play area, function room, pool, and garden. Every unit in the proposal includes a balcony.

Although originally envisioned to permit vehicle access to both properties, Seymour Mews is a private walking street fully on the adjacent property. It has a public access ROW for pedestrians, but no shared-access-agreement in place for vehicles.

The Queen Elizabeth View Cone intersects the site at 410 ft. Given the proposed tower siting Shadows would impact May and Lorne Brown Park on the equinox between 10:30 and 11:20 am. The proposed height is 535 ft. to the parapet. For reference, Vancouver House is 497 ft. to the top of the roof slab.

For reference, the maximum floorplate as per the beach neighborhood GL's is: 6,500 sq. ft. The proposed floor plate at the base of the tower is 8,400 sq. ft. and narrows to 5,370 sq. ft, widens to 6,300 sq. ft. and tapers to 3600 sq. ft. at the very top.

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

1. Public Realm:

- Is the public realm design along Rolston Street sufficiently permeable for pedestrian access to the proposal's CRU frontages?
- Is the design of the outdoor space at the southwest corner of the site suitable for this large area - consider landscape, seating, pedestrian desire lines and sun access?

2. Podium and Base:

- Is the 6-storey height and massing of the east side of the podium a suitable scale to be fronting onto the Mew's pedestrian and low-rise ground-oriented townhouse context? (Guidelines recommend maximum 4 stories.)
- Is the 33 ft. separation between the proposed podium at the north and south ends of Rolston Street and the Seymour off-ramp sufficient to maintain views from the bridge and to ensure livability of residential use? (Guidelines recommend that portions of buildings east of the off-ramp that project above the height of the bridge deck be set back 65 ft. from the bridge dripline.)

3. Tower:

- Does the design of the proposed tower respond well to/ and work well with the Vancouver House tower in meeting the Higher Building Policy's experiential intent of a gateway to mark the entry into Downtown?
- Is the scale of the tower floorplate acceptable (8524 sq. ft. at its broadest on level 14; and; and 134 ft. at its longest dimension)?
- Does the proposed architectural excellence and sustainable performance meet the criteria to earn the height to 425 feet?
- Further, is the proposed height of 535 feet supportable, as per the Higher Building Policies and criteria, and does it make "a significant contribution to the beauty and the visual power of the city's skyline"?
- Please comment on Equinox Shadow impacts onto May and Lorne Brown Park.
- Can view impacts to nearby residential uses be improved?

The planning team then took questions from the panel.

• **Applicant's Introductory Comments:**

Kandice Kwok, the co-founder of JYOM Architecture, introduced herself and her firm, JYOM Architects, based in Shanghai..

Ms. Kwok began by noting the challenging site slope, geometry and configuration.

The proposed tower siting intends to limit view impacts to nearby towers and also create an offsetting relationship to the Vancouver House tower which is further north. , By offsetting this, views to the park have been gained.

The tower form is slender to reduce view impacts and the tower expression is defined by movement. By having a twist we have created a conversation between the two gateway towers such that each has its individual identity.

We wanted to carve out more space from the podium to provide relief from the off-ramp. The three sides to the podium are mostly meant to be CRUs.

The main entrances for both residential areas are through Beach Crescent. We have created a garden level and an amenity where individuals will have visuals to the street. By having a buffer zone we were able to create interesting landscape.

This site needs three dimensional landscapes. The green edge divides the faster moving traffic from the slower one. The simple graphic elements have been stepped up throughout the building. By adding repeating elements it allows for depth in the landscape. Improvements include lighting up the bridge to make it a stand out feature. Additional elements like furniture, bike parking, and benches for social engagement have been added and can be used by all individuals.

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. Sharma and seconded by Ms. Besharat 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:

- Reduce the vehicular entry crossings at Beach Crescent ;
- Develop a friendlier character that is more integrated with the Seymour Mews;
- Design development of the retail facades to enhance the pedestrian experience;
- Develop ground plane landscape treatment;
- Design development to minimize shadowing of the roof amenity areas;
- Design development to improve the livability of the units facing the bridge;
- Design Develop of the podium to be less relentless and have a stronger base;
- Design development of the tower connection to grade and podium;
- Development of tower glazing and cladding;
- Review tower height to further differentiate from Vancouver House;
- Design development to enhance the architectural elegance of the design.

- **Related Commentary:**

The panel agreed that this is a challenging site that will receive recommendations from both sides.

In general the panel supported the application at the rezoning stage however look forwards to seeing needed design development at the DP stage. A panelist noted the architectural excellence is not quite there yet and next level design process will include fleshing out the general elements of the proposal with specific design elements.

The majority of the panel's comments were organized to address each of the three main elements; the podium, tower and public realm.

The podium, along the built form facing the muse is very flat compared to the buildings on the other side which have a lot of texture. The podium and base is not the right response to the muse.

A number of panelists raised concerns regarding shading of the rooftop amenity space. The applicant was encouraged to consider orienting the amenities towards the water side instead of facing the bridge deck. Step back the higher sides of the podium, or move the tower further north so the amenity could be shifted towards the southwest side and away from the shadows.

There are challenges with the podium and base. The podium expression should be in line and relate to the tower expression. The units facing the bridge are not livable; by design you can provide privacy and re orient the units.

There is a vertical green element at the south west corner and carries on, it is relentless. This creates an aesthetic of the base being separate and robust. The tower shape is sculptural meanwhile the base design is confusing.

The slope of the site has not been taken advantage of; it's a flat podium on a sloped site. The project does not address the grade at all; it's not just how the building hits the ground but the massing as well.

In general, the panel enjoyed the form of the building, the twist is lovely, and agreed it was an important gateway contribution. It has a nice yin and yang and fits the requirements within the the Green Building Policy.

The city of Vancouver skyline is the first thing we think of when looking at extra height. The city skyline is dominated by Trump Tower and Shangri-La and this project will also have a significant presence. It is important that these towers soften the blow in the skyline especially when there are views that have not been shown. Panelists noted that it would have been nice to see the rendering from alternate points throughout the City.

A panelist noted the Vancouver House is dominant from the sky and it blocks out a lot of the views to the mountain, the project building softens this.

Some panelists noted the tower floorplate is a good proportion for the building and justifies the height. The towers are a good contribution to the city skylight; however, feel the residential view can still be improved.

Others noted there is uncomfortable relationship with the height of Vancouver House and the proposal at 601 Beach Crescent. There needs to be a difference. Don't feel reasoning was justified for the little extra height. A panelist noted the heights really has to do with the massing of the building and needs to be higher or lower than the Vancouver house.

The Vancouver house is a remarkable building that presents a unique opportunity to this site; however, the proposal should have a stronger distinction from Vancouver House.

The image of the tower really needs to represent the future of Vancouver.

The buildings should be more aligned with the east side, there would be more sun and livability of the social housing sites. There is a 33 ft separation and the towers were pulled up north and not so much in

the view cone. A panelist noted keep in mind being a “good neighbor” when considering shifts of the tower.

It was noted the reasoning for why office space could not be accommodated in this area was not clear and this should be considered.

There was mixed opinion in regards to the public realm along Rolston Street, some found it to be sufficiently permeable others did not.

There is opportunity to do something engaging at Rolston St and southwest corner of the site, engage the community, presently it is a big open space. On a pedestrian level this corner can highlight the building however right now not noticeable. The frontage on Rolston St needs to be super textured, engaging, detailed and inviting.

More thought is needed to the use of the plaza. It was noted the available seating and sun access is a plus however additional seating and planting around the plaza would be beneficial. It is a small urban space but it can be a jewel.

A panelist noted the use of unique lightings and pavers was nice and noted the additional seating will also make it look more like a pedestrian gateway.

For further programming sculpture elements or public art could positively contribute to the project.

The entry to the court in the south east corner is a very important entry.

The soffit of the parking entry needs further design development. A panelist noted the southwest corner provides car access, resist having only car access for pedestrian and bicycle access should be a priority. There needs to be more of a blur with what is car and what is vehicular. Due to the curve cut on the turnabout not convinced parking is the right location currently, it abandons the pedestrian, if parking could move it would benefit the edge.

Be aware of the open space by the bridge deck so that it does not become an uninviting space.

Additional comments include the addition of social housing is a positive. There is not enough sun along the landscape and be aware of creating lots of issues with the mechanical systems. Building a straight wall may not be the best dialogue from the other side and simplify the shadow studies.

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