

URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: April 12, 2006

TIME: 4.00 pm

PLACE: Committee Room No. 1, City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
Walter Francl, Chair
Nigel Baldwin
Albert Bicol (excused Items 2 and 3)
Shahla Bozorgzadeh
Tom Bunting
Eileen Keenan
Margot Long
Bill Harrison
John Wall
Peter Wreglesworth (arrived 4.40 pm)
C.C. Yao (present for Items 1 and 2 only)

REGRETS: James Cheng

RECORDING SECRETARY: Carol Hubbard, Raincoast Ventures Ltd.

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING	
1.	2880 Venables Street (Notre Dame School)
2.	311 West 2nd Avenue
3.	360 West 1st Avenue
4.	68 West 2nd Avenue/29 East 1st Avenue/ 59 West 1st Avenue

1. Address:	2880 Venables Street (Notre Dame School)
DE:	410128
Use:	Secondary School
Zoning:	RS-1S
Application Status:	Complete
Architect:	Killick Metz Bowen Rose
Owner:	Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Vancouver
Review:	First
Delegation:	Cristina Marghetti, Lynne Varhol, Patricia Campbell
Staff:	Dale Morgan

EVALUATION: NON SUPPORT (0-9)

- **Introduction:** Dale Morgan, Development Planner, introduced this application to replace the existing Notre Dame Secondary School located on the site bounded by Renfrew, Venables, Kaslo and Parker Streets in the RS-1S zone, surrounded by single family housing. The new school will accommodate a student population of 800 (currently 665). The existing gymnasium and auditorium will be refurbished and retained and a new academic wing and infill block containing a cafeteria and chapel will be constructed in phases over a five year period. 79 surface parking spaces are proposed. The site is 4-1/2 acres in size with a moderate slope northward, dropping approximately 16 ft. across the site. There are existing Lombardy poplar trees around the north and western edges of the site.

School use is conditional in the RS-1S zone. The proposed height is below the maximum allowable 35 ft. and the sideyard requirements for schools are met. The site strategy is to maximize the amount of open space on the site in order to create a useful playing field, to minimize impact on northerly views and to integrate the two existing building elements with the addition. The intent is to maintain the existing school in operation during construction.

The form of development is a two-storey L-shaped massing with slab roof construction. Mr. Morgan briefly described the various components of the development, the proposed phasing program, and proposed materials. The playing field is intended to be dealt with in a future application and does not form part of the subject proposal. He noted the proposed 79 parking spaces exceed required parking by 16 spaces and bicycle spaces are fewer than recommended. Mr. Morgan reviewed the landscape plan noting it is intended to remove the existing Lombardy poplars at the start of construction and to eventually replace them with other perimeter trees. An arborist's report indicates the poplars are at approximately mid point of their relatively short life span. Sustainability has not been addressed except for screening devices for windows.

Areas in which the advice of the Panel is sought include:

- Site plan including location of entries, parking, and the proposed re-grading of the centre of the site and any associated CPTED issues;
 - Architectural treatment, general architectural character, façade treatment, and general cohesiveness of the scheme;
 - Material expression;
 - Landscaping, including whether it provides a sufficient buffer for the neighbours, and comments on the proposal to remove the existing Lombardy poplar trees.
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- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** The applicant team presented the scheme and responded to questions from the Panel. With respect to the existing Lombardy poplar trees, Patricia Campbell, Landscape Architect, said this is seen as an opportunity to uproot them and replace them with more appropriate urban trees that will last the life of the school.
- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - There needs to be a simpler approach to the architecture of the building, with design development recommended to the building massing which the Panel found quite jumbled. The architectural expression appears disjointed and the materials do not articulate themselves clearly;
 - More glass is needed in the circulation spaces;
 - There is a lack of outdoor gathering places;
 - The building entry lacks definition;
 - More landscaping is needed in the surface parking lot;
 - Removal of the Lombardy poplar trees is supported provided they are replaced immediately with sizeable trees;
 - Design development to the ramp to make it less convoluted.
- **Related Commentary:**

The Panel did not support this application and thought considerably more design development was required to make the scheme work.

The overall site planning was considered to be fairly well resolved and appropriate given the proposed phasing program. The "big moves" seem correct in locating the various elements but the Panel was concerned with the finer grain issues.

Not locating an entrance off Renfrew Street was questioned and in general it was thought that the entrances need to be announced more clearly. The Renfrew elevation appears quite fragmented, and a more significant entry and stronger expression of the chapel might give it more emphasis. There was also a recommendation to take advantage of the opportunity for the chapel to express the culture of the school. In general, greater simplification was recommended throughout in the material expression. There was a suggestion to consider a new base treatment or adding new material to the existing structures to improve overall cohesiveness. It was noted the existing chapel appears to be a stand-alone element which helps break up the school and relate it better to the texture of the neighbourhood and it was thought it might improve this scheme if the massing was broken up into a few more discrete elements. Notwithstanding the budget restraints on a project of this nature, the Panel had concerns about the choice of materials which seem very basic and a bit harsh. They should also be resistant to graffiti.

The public access to the grotto was questioned with suggestions that it would be better if this was truly a private garden with some views to the public. Its location on Renfrew was also

questioned given this is a busy thoroughfare, which seems inappropriate for a meditation garden. It is also in a circulation area.

Concerns were expressed about the proposed sunken playing field becoming waterlogged, noting its severe slope will inhibit growth. Drainage must be fully addressed, and a comment was made that the new classroom block might act as a dam. CPTED issues need to be reviewed to ensure visibility, e.g., tree canopies should be high.

The Panel thought it would be essential to incorporate more planting in the parking area in favour of extra parking spaces, both to soften its appearance for the neighbours and to break up the parking a bit. A permeable surface was also recommended for the parking area.

The fairly simple and minimalistic approach to the landscaping was supported but there was thought to be superfluous shrub planting in some areas. It was suggested better use could be made of the shrubs, and to resolve some the grading issues with retaining walls, providing a more urban approach to the landscaping.

The Panel was concerned about the lack of places where students can congregate, and a request to consider better paving materials in some areas noting that concrete provides no sense of permanence or character. A suggestion was made that the area along the auditorium seems to be a natural place for congregation and might be explored.

The Panel had no concerns about removing the Lombardy poplar trees noting their relatively short life span and maintenance difficulties. They also offer little shading. Replacing them with something more appropriate was supported. However, it was also strongly recommended that replacement trees should be large and installed immediately to soften the impact on the neighbours.

It was noted the shape of the building does not maximize potential for heating and cooling and the new scheme creates greater westerly exposure than the existing school. The most optimum shape would be a U-shape for maximizing daylighting. The school seems to be quite dark with few skylights and the glass on the north elevation is not maximized for daylight access. A lot more glass throughout was recommended. The grotto will be in shade for most of the day. The screening on the west side was supported although the short columns will still allow sun into the windows on that elevation. It was noted that natural ventilation appears not to have been considered and it was strongly recommended that this be investigated as early as possible. It was noted that, in general, schools are easily naturally ventilated.

It was stressed there needs to be an adequate drop-off area which does not inconvenience the neighbours. Because the existing entrance is on Parker Street, it was suggested that people may pull into the parking lot for drop-off.

There were concerns about the design of the handicap ramp which needs to be much better integrated.

In general, the Panel found the massing too complex and not relating well to the functions or hierarchy of the building.

2. Address:	311 West 2nd Avenue
Use:	Mixed
Zoning:	M-2 to CD-1
Application Status:	Rezoning - SEFC Private Lands
Architect:	Hancock Bruckner/IBI
Owner:	Crowe St. Ent. Ltd.
Review:	First
Delegation:	Laurie Schmidt, Jim Hancock, Robert Barnes, Hilde Haeverts
Staff:	John Madden, Grant Miller, Mary Beth Rondeau

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (9-0)

- **Introduction:** John Madden, Project Planner, referring to the context model, provided an overview of the Southeast False Creek area and briefly described the land use objectives of the ODP including anticipated building heights. Of particular interest is the response of the Panel to the interface between the public realm and the courtyard system on either side. It was noted the ODP also has strong objectives with respect to sustainability. Grant Miller, Rezoning Planner, briefly described the use and massing of the proposal and noted the proposed density of 3.5 FSR is consistent with the ODP.

The Development Planner, Mary Beth Rondeau, focused on the form of development. With respect to the lane edge landscape treatment the Panel is asked to consider pedestrianization of the lane and extent of the public realm onto the private property. The Panel is also asked to comment on the treatment of the penthouse and the height of the 9-storey building which is proposing a one storey increase from the ODP.

- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** The applicant team reviewed the project in greater detail and responded to questions from the Panel.
- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - The publicness of the lanes vs. private spaces should be clearly defined;
 - Concern about the relationship and proximity of the two tower masses;
 - Suggestion to separate the grade from the outdoor landscaping on the lower main floor units;
 - the north-south routes through should be reinforced and consideration should be given to making them more public.
- **Related Commentary:**

The Panel unanimously supported this application. It was noted that this is the first SEFC application which tests 3.5 FSR in this form and overall it is very successful. Clearly, there will be areas in which the orientation of spaces in terms of privacy and overlook are critical, but they can be solved.

There was a suggestion that there could be greater flexibility on height in this neighbourhood in order to make views, sun and light access work better. The ODP should be sculpted a bit to have the buildings speaking to each other and creating a strong courtyard.

The five-storey massing on West 2nd Avenue was thought to be very successful and there were no concerns about the proposed 9-storey building.

The applicant was commended for taking full advantage of building orientation in terms of energy conservation. The low rise building is very well considered for shading although it was noted the tower has full glass on the east and west elevations and not on the north.

It was stressed that there should be as many north-south mid block routes to the water as possible. They should be as public as possible and under no circumstances turned into gated places. While this does create a certain amount of intimacy between some suites and amenity spaces, it is in the spirit of this place.

With respect to the lane/courtyard interface it was thought there should be no sudden transition on the property line between the public and private space and there needs to be a transitional landscaped zone that feels public while respecting the concerns of the semi public space needs of the development. The coordination with the development across the lane was supported.

The Panel endorsed the environmental and sustainability initiatives indicated in the proposal and hoped they would be carried through to completion.

Some Panel members were concerned about livability issues created by the proximity of the towers.

The rooftop amenities were strongly supported.

One Panel member cautioned there is a large amount of private roof deck that will depend upon the efforts of individual owners for its success. A way must be found to ensure that every aspect of these projects is as rich and expressive as the whole vision for Southeast False Creek.

Other comments and suggestions for consideration at the next stage included:

- there was a question about the provision of affordable units in this scheme, with the suggestion that some could be provided in return for allowing the extra height;
- consider lightening the density of the low-rise somewhat at the back to reduce shadowing on the common open space;
- the parking ramps could be less intrusive to the common open spaces on both sides;
- there should be a subtle differentiation of public and private space and it should be done in a way that does not bisect the properties. In this case where there is opportunity for the two courtyards to bring a sense of grandness to how this precinct is defined;
- The City's guidelines for the public realm should be made available as soon as possible;
- Consider using less glass, not only for energy impacts but for personal comfort;
- Consider providing some grade separation for the live/work units given these units tend to be used mostly as live only;

Some Panel members voiced some concern about living up to the vision for this neighbourhood. It is a very different kind of community for Vancouver, not only in terms of sustainability but in social economic terms. The buildings should be very adventurous and aggressive in how they

express themselves in materiality, windows, and orientation. The design team was urged to ensure that the buildings are not just lower versions of the glass buildings seen elsewhere in the city. Something very different is anticipated for this area and the buildings and landscape must fully express sustainability and creativity in order for the vision to be realized.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Hancock thanked the Panel for its comments. He said he was confident that once the detailed analysis of the buildings has been carried out the development will start to take on a unique character.

3. Address:	360 West 1st Avenue
Use:	Residential
Zoning:	M-2 to CD-1
Application Status:	Rezoning - SEFC Private Lands
Architect:	Hancock Bruckner/IBI
Owner:	Polygon Dev. 103 Ltd.
Review:	First
Delegation:	Jim Hancock, Rob Barnes, Robert Brown, Scot Baldwin
Staff:	John Madden, Grant Miller, Mary Beth Rondeau

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (7-1)

- **Introduction:** Grant Miller, Rezoning Planner, briefly described the use and massing of the proposal and noted the proposed density of 3.5 FSR is consistent with the ODP. The built form comprises a 3-storey townhouse component, stepping up to a 13-storey tower which is also consistent with the ODP heights of 128 ft. maximum.

The Development Planner, Mary Beth Rondeau, discussed the form of development, noting the adjacent "Best" heritage site is currently under inquiry and the open space shown adjacent to this site proposed a building form. The Panel is asked to consider the public realm issues and particularly the lane interface noting that on this application there is heavier massing at the southwest corner on the lane.

- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** The applicant team reviewed the project in greater detail and responded to questions from the Panel.
- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - General concerns regarding the massing on the southwest corner. There were differing opinions for redistributing the massing including adding another floor to the tower and increasing the townhouse massing;
 - Design development to the indoor/outdoor relationship at grade;
 - The north-south routes through the site should be reinforced.
- **Related Commentary:**

The Panel strongly supported this application.

The Panel's main concern about the scheme related to the southwest corner of the tower. It was thought to be too bulky, overcrowding the adjacent development and detracting from the mews character. It was not unanimous, but some Panel members supported adding another floor to the tower if it allowed the corner to be chiseled back to be more sensitive to its neighbour. Several Panel members also recommended redistributing some of the massing to the townhouse element, while others liked the townhouse form as proposed and did not want to see its massing increased. There was also a suggestion for the applicant to explore creating some kind of tension between the low-rise and high-rise components.

Most Panel members stressed the importance of avoiding gating in this development noting that there is very good overview provided which lessened concerns about CPTED issues.

A general concern was voiced by some Panel members that the ODP may be too rigid, stating it would be very unfortunate if strict adherence to the prescribed envelope fails to allow for adjustments to be made that produce better relationships and overall better development as each proposal comes forward. It was stressed there needs to be greater flexibility to achieve the unique character that is envisioned for Southeast False Creek. A comment was also made that consideration for views should not override the goal of providing the exceptional livability and sense of community that is sought for this neighbourhood.

One Panel member did not agree more height was needed to make the project work, nor that the ODP was too prescriptive, noting it has produced true ground-oriented 3-storey townhouses with a good streetscape, which is very positive. Rather, the onus for addressing proximity issues should be on the tower, which can be proven out at the next stage of development.

There was a recommendation to improve the indoor/outdoor relationship at ground level, in particular for there to be a better relationship between the indoor amenity and the outdoor space. Consideration should also be given to expressing the indoor/outdoor relationship through the lobby so that there is a sense of the courtyard from the street.

The applicant was commended for the sustainability measures shown on the landscape plan but it was noted that the architectural plans do not provide the same level of detail with respect to issues such as solar heat gain. It was stressed that personal comfort needs to be seriously considered, noting the number of buildings in the city that neglect solar control on their westerly facades, to the detriment of the residents who are forced to live with their blinds down. The applicant was encouraged to incorporate solar gain strategies into future submissions.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Hancock thanked the Panel for its comments and noted they are already reconsidering the southwest corner.

4. Address:	68 West 2nd Avenue, 29 East 1st Avenue and 59 West 1st Avenue
Use:	Mixed
Zoning:	M-2 to CD-1
Application Status:	Rezoning - SEFC Private Lands
Architect:	Howard Bingham Hill
Owner:	Pinnacle Int. (West First) Plaza Inc.
Review:	First
Delegation:	John Bingham, Peter Kreuk, George Steeves, Brian Martin
Staff:	John Madden, Mary Beth Rondeau

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (5-4)

- **Introduction:** John Madden, Project Planner, introduced this application, referring to the context model. The site comprises three separate parcels as part of the same application and contains a mix of commercial, live/work and residential uses. Total density across the site is 37,363 m² or approximately 3.9 FSR. Permitted density is 3.5 FSR although additional FSR was contemplated in the ODP by allowing extra density to provide opportunities for heritage density transfer (approximately 3,900 m²). The proposed form is generally consistent with the ODP and includes a required dedication to allow for two options for the design of Manitoba Street. Maximum height is 15 storeys, 150 ft. One option with a road to the other as a plaza only.

Mary Beth Rondeau, Development Planner, noted that staff have identified no design issues at this stage. The response of the Panel is requested on realm issues and particularly the lane interface and the corner public plaza.

- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** John Bingham, Architect, described the design rationale and noted the drawings illustrate a variety of different styles throughout the project but with a unifying image. Peter Kreuk reviewed the landscape plan including treatment of the lane and the central open space. It was noted the pattern of the original shoreline has been interpreted throughout the site. The sustainability aspects were also reviewed, and the project team responded to questions from the Panel.
- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - Panel members were somewhat ambivalent about how the density is distributed over the site, in particular with respect to the tallest tower and its location;
 - Strong recommendations to open up as much as possible the realm of the lanes into the semi private space and not restrain the public component to the 20 ft. right-of-way down the centre of the property;
 - Greater permeability through the site is recommended; north-south routes through the site should be reinforced and be public; particularly on the easterly parcel;
 - The size of this development presents challenges for the applicant for creating sufficient differentiation and making it seem less like a project. Orientation of buildings and addressing solar heat gain are opportunities for providing some differentiation in character;
 - The angled building is a special piece and should be much more prominent than shown.

- **Related Commentary:**

The Panel supported this application and found the basic rezoning issues of use, form and density supportable, including the additional height and density, although there were some comments that it feels larger in scale than was envisioned for this neighbourhood.

Some Panel members questioned locating the residential lobbies off the mews which make them remote and giving no sense of address, although other members found this approach adventurous noting it breaks up the scale from the street and helps to animate the mews. It was also noted that while some of the mews work quite well, others seem a bit meagre and in need of further design development to ensure they are inviting spaces.

With respect to the treatment of the roofs, some Panel members thought it was a lost opportunity that they are not accessible for uses such as communal gardens. Another Panel member acknowledged the challenge of encouraging residents to use rooftop spaces although agreed gardens and plots might work. Portland was cited as a good example for providing accessible roofs and it was thought this neighbourhood should do likewise if it is to be a model for sustainability. Accessible green roofs also offer a great educational opportunity that should not be ignored.

The Panel acknowledged that architectural expression will be developed at the next stage but there were concerns expressed about the lack of architectural interest, including the lack of differentiation between the retail base and the residential or live/work uses above and the commercial appearance of the third and fourth floors in the 1st Avenue mid-block. One Panel member was troubled by a sense of traditional ordinariness about the scheme that must not persist at the development permit stage. There was an observation made that, if it is fundamentally the same family of materials for all the projects, there is a risk that the sheer size of it will work against the grain potential for Southeast False Creek and it could start to look like a project as opposed to a series of buildings that talk to each other. This was seen as a critical challenge for this whole area. It was noted the model and the elevations suggest different directions for architectural expression. In general, the Panel preferred to the direction indicated on the elevations.

The loading and parking access was considered to be well located, under the towers and away from the open space. This allows for enhancing the open space between the buildings, including the lane, to be quite a rich and attractive environment.

One Panel member had a concern about the mews between the 7-storey building to the east and the live/work units. While CPTED issues need to be taken into account, this is one area where public access to the lane would be beneficial. Noting the future development of the neighbouring property is currently unknown, having this as semi private space essentially forces the neighbouring property to do the same.

Concern was expressed about the lane interface and how it has to be integrated into the community. While the CPTED issues need to be addressed there are some creative solutions that can be explored.

The environmental and sustainability features look very exciting and the Panel looks forward to seeing them developed in greater detail at the next stage of development. It was noted that the sustainability features could be used as a springboard for producing an iconic building that expresses the sustainable character of this neighbourhood.

Other comments and suggestions included:

- the amenity space in the 2nd Avenue building overlooks the penthouse open spaces and should be reviewed to address privacy issues;
- the towers should be reversed noting the taller tower on Ontario Street is shadowing the park;
- the north-south mews offers a great opportunity to follow through on the ODP concept for north-south penetration through the site; there is opportunity for three mid block routes through the mews; there should be no enter phones and gating;
- although affordability is no longer mandated, it should still be considered because to be fully sustainable the neighbourhood must accommodate mixed incomes;
- the live/work units should be at grade to encourage this use on the busy street;
- the angle piece was thought to be a very good opportunity for providing a truly iconic building;
- there seems to be a rigid adherence to symmetrical buildings, e.g., the elevator in the midblock building does not have to be down the middle;
- the formality of the roof landscaping seems out of the spirit of this neighbourhood.

The Panel had serious questions about the street right-of-way and corner public plaza, albeit they do not form part of this application. The proposed new road cuts off the plaza and compromises its use. It separates the retail from the plaza whereas if it was tied together with the site the CRUs could animate and activate the space. Staff was strongly encouraged to delete the proposed new road which seems heavy handed and unnecessary.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Bingham said they did not wish to present a more refined scheme in order to draw out some of the issues to work on and move forward. He assured the Panel the architectural expression will be much clearer at the next stage of the design.