

URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: April 21, 2010

TIME: 4.00 pm

PLACE: Committee Room No. 1, City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
Bruce Haden (excused Item #1 & #2)
Robert Barnes
James Cheng
Jeff Corbett
Jane Durante
David Godin
Oliver Lang (Chair)
Maurice Pez
Scott Romses
Alan Storey

REGRETS:
Jim Huffman
Steve McFarlane
Vladimir Mikler

**RECORDING
SECRETARY:** Lorna Harvey

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING	
1.	1553-1577 Main Street
2.	4255 Arbutus Street (Arbutus Centre)

BUSINESS MEETING

Chair Lang called the meeting to order at 4:15 p.m. and noted the presence of a quorum. After New Business the meeting considered applications as scheduled for presentation.

1. Address: 1553-1577 Main Street
 DE: Rezoning
 Description: To rezone from FC-1 to CD-1 to construct an 18-storey mixed use retail/residential building.
 Zoning: FC-1 to CD-1
 Application Status: RZ
 Review: First
 Owner: Onni
 Architect: Hotson Bakker Boniface Haden
 Delegation: Bruce Haden, Hotson Bakker Boniface Haden
 Trevor Thimm, Hotson Bakker Boniface Haden
 David Stoyko, Sharp & Diamond Landscape Architecture
 Beau Jarvis, Onni
 Daniel Roberts, Kane Consulting
 Staff: Ian Cooper and Dale Morgan

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (8-0)

- **Introduction:** Ian Cooper, Rezoning Planner, introduced the application noting that the site is under the Southeast False Creek Official Development Plan (ODP). The Policy focuses on encouraging developments with a mixed -use neighbourhood focusing on a diversity of residential uses to accommodate all incomes, with an emphasis on a high degree of livability. Development needs to be predominantly residential with a diverse housing mix and a focus on families with children and supporting services. The proposal is in area 3C where the policy requires 25% of the residential units to be suitable for families with small children. The current zoning is FC-1, and although development is possible, the applicant is seeking CD-1 zoning in order to allow the proposed level of residential density (made possible in ODP, but not allowed in the FC-1 district). The ODP caps the site density at 3.5 FSR, but allows for consideration of additional bonuses for "heritage, cultural or other public amenities". The proposed height exceeds the ODP height limit of 50m. The proposal is for 53m, however a consequential ODP amendment is necessary to enable the additional height of 3m. Although the proposal is above the current maximum (50m), it is likely to be below the proposed maximum (56m) if the SEFC Height Review results in a two storey increase to the ODP height.

Dale Morgan, Development Planner, further described the proposal noting that the proposal is for a large site comprised of nine city lots between Main and Quebec Street, south of Terminal Avenue. The lot is vacant and was previously occupied by an auto dealership. The adjacent uses include fast food outlets, an art supply store and other related automotive uses. The proposed uses are for office/retail/restaurant and residential dwellings. Commercial is proposed for the ground floor on the building facing Main Street and also facing the middle courtyard and also includes six floors of office space. There will be ten floors of residential, two storeys of ground access townhouses will access on both sides of the units.

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

1. **Height & Density:** The existing FC-1 zone has maximum density of 5.0 FSR and 3.0 FSR for residential with a height limit of 22.9 m (75 ft). The proposal seeks to rezone to

- CD-1 to a density of 4.8 FSR (including 3.4 FSR residential) and a height of 53 m (174 ft). SEFC policy suggests a maximum density of 3.5 FSR and height limit for this site of 50 m (164 ft), 3 m lower than what is proposed. *Is the form of development, which relocates density from the ground plane skyward, supportable? Does the extra height undermine the urban design objectives for this part of SEFC?*
2. **Concept Feasibility:** The proposed innovative building proposes a eight-storey structure that spans over an open space 40 m wide (131.2 ft) with a mid span support of slender columns clustered together that preserves a sense of transparency and spatial fluidity of the open space. It is mentioned in the UDP rezoning application report (page 14, last paragraph) that the structural feasibility of this structural system is still under investigation. *If this proposed structural system proves to be unfeasible (either structurally or economically) would the basic concept still work with a more conventional (i.e. larger central core) approach? Should there be a more rigorous testing of the engineering aspects at this stage of the rezoning to lend more certainty to its outcome? What other solutions/recommendations may the Panel suggest?*
 3. **Open Space:** Retail in the eastern building face onto the large open space and ground oriented residential from the west building. There is a patio/seating area adjacent to the retail and a lawn amenity next to the residential. In the centre is a large water feature which divides and separates the public and private uses. In between there is a meandering pedestrian path that links the side streets through the site. No gates or enclosures are proposed. *Does the open space work both from a public realm and a functional programming point of view?*
 4. **Livability:** *The Panel is asked to comment on the livability impacts related to the bridge element and related shadowing and sky cover that affects units directly and adjacently underneath this structure.*

Mr. Cooper and Mr. Morgan took questions from the Panel.

- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** Bruce Haden, Architect, stated that they saw an opportunity to develop some public space and to develop design that was an alternative to the half podium model. The plan was to create two blocks that relate to one another through their orientation and materials. They also thought it was an opportunity to create a mixed-use building with both office and retail which has potential sustainability advantages. Mr. Haden noted that with respect to the columns they didn't see the design as absolutely central to the quality and character of the scheme. The issue is from a structural perspective as that the strength of the column will depend on how frequently it is braced. Mr. Haden noted that they took into considerations the importance of the retail and the orientation of the public space.

David Stoyko, Landscape Architecture, described the landscape as a simple plan with a reference to the former shore line of False Creek. The central space will be a nice private residential zone with a separate functional space with green space and hard-scape. The upper levels on the residential block will have some separate zones and on top of the office tower another zone to support residential amenities that allows some different functions from a community garden to sunny residential area. Mr. Stoyko described the materials that will support the architecture.

Daniel Roberts, Sustainability Consultant, described the design principles that will be built into the building. Primarily it focuses on storm water management, erosion control and even internal water use within the building. Mr. Roberts noted that because of the mixed use they will be able to share energy back and forth between the buildings and will be supplementing with the Neighbourhood Energy Utility which is a very efficient system.

The applicant team took questions from the Panel.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - Design development to the bridging element for better integration into the building;
 - Design development to the column element;
 - Review the viability of the retail units;
 - Design development to the plaza area to make for more privacy to the residential units;
 - Design development to the plaza to allow for more public interest;
 - Design of bridge building (inconsistent articulation);
 - Plaza should be more public and reflect clear design strategy.

- **Related Commentary:** The Panel supported the proposal noting that it was an exciting design.

The Panel supported the form of development, height and density. Some of the Panel thought the bridging element was still too conventional but liked the sculptural element. They suggested the applicant push the contrast and the vocabulary.

Several Panel members wondered if the column was essential to the structural system. They thought the building needed to push the idea of being a bridge. One Panel member suggested having the column pulled to one side while another Panel member suggested making the bridge element look like it was being carried by the columns. While a number of Panel members thought the applicant should work with the structural engineer to remove the columns all together. A couple of the Panel members suggested having an artist join the design team as soon as possible to help with the creative elements.

The Panel had some concerns regarding the retail facing the public space as they thought it might not be viable. They suggested having an anchor tenant that would face the plaza and Main Street to help support the retail.

A couple of Panel members thought the residential unit under the bridge spaces might not be livable and suggested it be an amenity space or exercise room. A couple of other Panel members thought the space would be unique and suggested making it a loft style unit and that being under the bridge it should be acknowledged in some way.

A couple of Panel members though the public space might be a challenge and would require proper separation between the public and private areas. One Panel member suggested adding lots of vegetation adjacent to the residential units to give some privacy. Another Panel member noted that the current landscape design was not taking the opportunity of the patio area and wanted to see the landscaping be more dynamic. It was suggested by one Panel member to have the water element be more interactive with the structure especially if the columns were being used in the design and to make it more reflective of the building. Another Panel member was not convinced that having the bottom of the columns come down into the water was the best idea and suggested that it would be better if people could actually touch the columns. Most of the Panel thought an interactive water movement was critical to the design and would offer some white noise to relieve the traffic noise from Main Street.

One Panel member thought the applicant should be striving for LEED™ Gold because the proposal will be close the SEFC.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Haden thanked the Panel noting all the comments were valid. He noted that one of the challenges was the value of the units as it is a transitional site.

He said they want to break the mould as much as makes sense financially. Regarding the columns, Mr. Haden stated that they should have had the structural engineer present at the review. He added that they will go back to the engineer and have a second look at the design.

2. Address:	4355 Arbutus Street (Arbutus Centre)
DE:	Rezoning
Description:	The application proposes a phased redevelopment of the existing shopping centre site. Proposed are 4 new building blocks including two new streets consisting of two floors of retail and office with residential development above.
Zoning:	CD-1
Application Status:	RZ
Review:	First
Owner:	Larco
Architect:	Hotson Bakker Boniface Haden
Delegation:	Norm Hotson, Hotson Bakker Boniface Haden Margot Long, PWL Partnership Art Phillips, Larco
Staff:	Dwayne Drobot and Dale Morgan

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (5-2)

- **Introduction:** Dwayne Drobot, Rezoning Planner, introduced the proposal noting and gave a brief background on the site. When it was first rezoned in 1978, it was the commercial core of the overall Arbutus Village Development. The shopping centre is situated on the northeast portion of the site, and is surrounded by 5 acres of surface parking. In 2007, at the developer's request, the City of Vancouver began a planning program to examine the future of the site. As it had already been identified as a Neighbourhood Centre in the ARKS vision document, the planning program led to the adoption of the Arbutus Centre Policy Statement in July of 2008. This policy statement is guiding the rezoning application for the site. Some of the major components of the statement are:
 - The built form for the shopping centre will be the four new building blocks with two new streets as shown on the plans and the model. The Blocks on the eastern portion on the site (fronting onto Arbutus Street) consist of two floors of retail and office, with residential development above. The blocks on the western portion on the site are primarily residential;
 - There shall be significant residential density on the site;
 - There shall be no decrease in the amount of commercial development on the site from what is already there; and
 - The heights on the site shall be dictated by a public view from Quilchena Park to Point Atkinson and Howe Sound. Concentrated, limited interruptions of the view would be allowed in the central portion of the site. Building heights are between 6 - 9 stories in height.

A new CD-1 rezoning proposes a phased redevelopment of the existing shopping centre site. Included within the development are food store and liquor stores, retail and restaurant uses, offices, financial institution, an underground self storage, and a community amenity space. Residential comprises 508 units with 64 for seniors' rental, 45 for market rental, and 46 as potential lock-off suites. As well, 2,694 m of community amenity space is proposed, 255 parking spaces for commercial and 553 for residential.

The site has had a contentious history with the surrounding community that dates back to the 1960's and has continued to the present day. The community has a myriad of concerns, many of which are separate from the Urban Design of the development, including traffic, increased density, flooding, amenities, and lack of retail space.

Advice from the Panel is sought on the following:

1. The size and massing adjacent to the public plaza. The size is a deviation from the ACPS, with a concern about the amount of shadow the plaza receives due to a lack of terracing and setbacks from the space.
2. While the ACPS contemplates a height of eight stories for Block A, the developer is showing a height of 9 stories, which provides a further intrusion into the Quilchena Park View

Dale Morgan, Development Planner, described the proposal noting the site is located in the Arbutus Ridge neighbourhood west of Arbutus Street and north of Nanton Avenue. The site was previously developed as an auto oriented mall in the 1970's in combination with adjacent multi-family dwellings of up to 6-storeys surrounding the mall to the north, west and south. To the east is the Arbutus Club, a private recreational club. Mr. Morgan describe the overall concept for the proposal noting there will be four development blocks: Blocks A & B on the two eastern blocks adjacent to Arbutus Street will be mixed use with commercial and community uses on the first two floors; Blocks C & D will be on the western portion of the site and will be mainly residential. It is expected that the redevelopment of Arbutus Center will be a phased development.

Mr. Morgan noted that there will be a mix of residential types and densities including housing for seniors, rental and a variety of market condominiums from oriented townhouses to flats. There will also be social amenities, recreation and seniors community services, office, commercial retail including restaurants and a large format grocery store. The proposal is expected to be a three to four multi phased redevelopment to enable the ongoing operation of the key commercial tenants including the grocery and liquor stores.

Mr. Morgan described the design for new streets and public realm treatment noting several key design elements that will include an enriched pedestrian realm, transparent retail frontages, street trees, pedestrian crossings, street furniture and on street parking and drop off. The applicant, because of site size, is required to contribute public art. A public square is proposed between Blocks C and D with an outdoor community space. He also described the parking and loading noting that special consideration will be given for pedestrian safety.

Mr. Morgan described the building heights noting that there will be a variety of residential building forms including mid-rise and rowhouse/townhouse forms up to six storeys. He added that seven or eight storeys may be possible in the centre of the site with appropriate terracing to mitigate scale and responses to potential view impacts. Block A will have the highest concentration of density due to the large floor plate of the grocery store. Block B will have south facing terraces to transition in scale to the townhouse developments across Nanton Avenue to the south. There will be two to three storey townhouse fronting Nanton Avenue. Mr. Morgan noted that there are no Council approved public vies in the area. Shadow impacts on Arbutus Village Park will be minimized due to the grade changes on the site and buildings designed with generous terraces and proper setbacks.

Mr. Morgan described the sustainable strategy noting that in addition to policy objectives, all rezonings prior to January 1, 2010 need to meet LEED™ Silver equivalent. The applicant has been asked to explore transportation and parking strategies regarding sustainability as well as green energy and waste systems as well as water usage. As well, opportunities for urban agriculture should be explored by the applicant team in the design of the outdoor amenity spaces and rooftops in the residential developments.

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

1. **Density, Height & Massing:** The total site density for the entire site is approximately 2.5 FSR as defined by the urban design objectives of the policy statement. The apparent density, subtracting the dedicated road, mews and service lane lends a denser experience. The proposal exceeds the recommended policy height by 1 floor (9 floors instead of 8) and penetrates a 57 m view datum by 2 floors. As recommended in the policy statement additional may be considered in the centre of the site with appropriate terracing to mitigate scale issues with the adjacent lower neighbouring context. Additionally, penetration above the view datum may be considered where views of English Bay are preserved. *Is the proposed height and density:*
 - *Supportable as is;*
 - *Supportable, subject to further terracing to mitigate scale and further redistribution of density;*
 - *Not supportable.*
2. **Public Realm Treatment:** Policy objectives are to ensure a safe, interesting and varied public realm experience, including continuous retail frontages along the east/west mews and Arbutus Street, street furniture and pedestrian lighting throughout and a special plaza area that serves as a central gathering and focus to the site plan. *Does the proposal meet the policy objectives for the public realm treatment?*
3. **Materiality and Expression:** The policy statement calls for a variety of expression with vertical articulation to break the horizontality and monolithic character of the buildings. Of notable concern was how the development presents itself to the neighbouring Arbutus Street. *Does the proposal meet the policy objectives for the materiality and expression?*
4. **Sustainability:** This rezoning application (submitted December 2009) is required to meet LEED™ Silver equivalent. *Has it done enough? In what manner could the Form of Development be enhanced or modified to improve its performance in this regard.*

Mr. Drobot and Mr. Morgan took questions from the Panel.

- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** Norm Hotson, Architect, further described the proposal and noted that the new Yew Street will be a fully signalized intersection. The mews is a private street and it will have retail edges and restaurants. There is a 10 metre drop across the site and has been challenging in planning the levels of the site. Mr. Hotson described the architecture and the building heights. Around the edges of the large open spaces will be two to three storey townhouses with big setbacks to preserve the views and sun access into the public park. A community centre is included on the site for the strata owners of Arbutus Village and the new owners on the site. The neighbourhood house and senior centre will be more like a city operated amenity. Mr. Hotson described the residential uses on the site. They are making use of roof spaces with courtyard on top of Safeway and above the parking is an internal courtyard and will be semi private spaces for the residents.

Margot Long, Landscape Architect, noted that the new street has been seen as a plaza. They will use pavers in the crosswalks. The idea of the plaza was to create edges for people to sit. The community centre will attract a number of people with restaurant use in the plaza. The water will be harvested from the roof and be circulated in a playful water system with lights to animate the plaza. The site will have a variety of different gardens and many of the roofs will be green roofs. There will be urban agriculture on some of the terraces and roofs. There are a number of trees currently on the site and the patios have been designed around keeping them. They are planning to use the boulevards as rain gardens and catchment areas.

The applicant team took questions from the Panel.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - Consider redistributing the density to allow for more openness and daylighting;
 - Design development to allow for more pedestrian access across the site;
 - Consider bringing the character of Arbutus Street into the site;
 - Design development to make for an extension of the neighbourhood and open up the site to make for a more of a social center.
- **Related Commentary:** The Panel supported the proposal and thought the redevelopment was taking some good steps but needed some further design development.

The Panel thought the height and density was supportable for the most part but felt that the site needed more terracing and that the interior spaces needed work. Several Panel members were not convinced that the massing worked with one Panel member suggesting more height be added to sculpt the building that will house Safeway. It was also suggested that the height could be stretched in order to redistribute the density and allow for more terracing, openness and more access to daylight.

It was also noted that the location was more residential and the Panel for the most part were not convinced that it fit into the neighbourhood. Several Panel members noted that Arbutus Street is a green corridor and felt there needed to be some recognition of that on the site. One Panel member noted that the northwest corner seemed abrupt but that the westerly portion was nicely terraced. Another Panel member noted that the seniors' residential entry seemed isolated in the corner and was sandwiched between the parking access and loading for Safeway. As well the relationship to the adjacent building to the north needed some work.

Although the Panel appreciated the moves for having less vehicle traffic on the site they wanted to see more consideration given to the pedestrian access. One Panel member noted that the lane way should be treated as part of the new street grid and asked the applicant to keep the bus stops and bike corridor in mind.

Most of the Panel felt the plans for the plaza weren't special enough and needed more work. One Panel member noted that it was being compromised by Block C and suggested the height be put on the south side of the building. It was also suggested that the key to the success of the plaza would be the edges and materiality. A couple of Panel members suggested adding another layer of circulation for a stronger connection to Arbutus Park. Another Panel member thought that there would be a lot of activity around the seniors' center and suggested relocating it to Block D or C which would improve the public open space. One Panel member noted that consideration needed to be given to seniors with walkers, scooters or wheelchairs.

Most of the Panel felt there wasn't much in the way of sustainable strategies and felt LEED™ Silver was not a high standard and would be achievable for the design team. One Panel member thought the applicant needed to raise the bar with a higher degree of energy performance. A couple of Panel members were reassured that the applicant was in conversation with BC Hydro regarding some form of district energy system. One Panel member suggested taking advantage of the large roof area for future solar panels.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Hotson thanked the Panel and said they appreciated the range of comments. They have been working on the site for four years and it has been challenging. He said he appreciated the support for the height and density. He noted that they had learned a lot from their involvement with Southeast False Creek regarding narrow

streets with tall edges as it makes for an exciting space. They are looking for softer interfaces along the edges and to heighten the animation on the south end of the plaza.

Adjournment

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 7:29 p.m.