
URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: April 21, 1999

TIME: 4.00 p.m.

PLACE: Committee Room #1, City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
Roger Hughes (Chair)
Patricia Campbell
Sheldon Chandler
James Cheng
Per Christoffersen
Paul Grant
Sean McEwan
Gilbert Raynard
Joe Werner

REGRETS: Joseph Hruda
Keith Ross
Norman Shearing

**RECORDING
SECRETARY:** Carol Hubbard

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING
1. 2450 West 2nd Avenue
2. 555 Great Northern Way

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| 1. Address: | 2450 West 2nd Avenue |
| Use: | Seniors Hospital (62 beds) |
| Zoning: | RM-4 to CD-1 |
| Application Status: | Rezoning |
| Architect: | Stuart Howard Arch. Inc. |
| Owner: | Braddan Private Hospital |
| Review: | First |
| Delegation: | Stuart Howard, Denis Arseneau |
| Staff: | Anita Molaro/Lynda Challis |
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EVALUATION: SUPPORT (8-0)

- **Introduction:** Lynda Challis, Rezoning Planner, introduced this application for rezoning from RM-4 to CD-1 to permit a two storey addition to an existing special needs residential facility. The site consists of two legal parcels located mid block and is bounded by West 2nd Avenue to the north and a lane to the south. The site currently includes a two storey multi-level care facility with 42 government funded care beds and surface parking for 11 vehicles. The surrounding area is zoned RM-4 and is developed with 3½ - 4-storey multiple dwelling buildings. Southeast of the site is an 11-storey apartment building built under previous RM-3 zoning. Immediately to the south are tennis courts and open space associated with the apartment building.

The proposed rezoning would permit the addition of two storeys above the existing two storey plus basement facility. The addition would allow an increase from 42 to 62 beds at a maximum density of 1.77 FSR. The additional 20 beds would be pay beds unless additional government funds become available. 17 parking spaces are proposed, 10 surface spaces at the rear and 7 spaces off site. Staff support the proposed use which would provide additional care beds for seniors on the west side of the city.

This application is being evaluated according to RM-4 regulations because it is located in the midst of an RM-4 district. The existing (non conforming) building has a density of 1.19 FSR. The rezoning proposes a total of 1.77 FSR, of which 0.3 FSR would be located below grade. Staff have calculated the FSR at 1.82, of which 1.52 FSR would be located above grade. The current RM-4 zoning permits special needs residential facilities at 0.75 FSR and multiple dwelling buildings at 1.45 FSR. While staff recognize the need for additional care beds and would be prepared to support a density of 1.45 FSR, support of greater density would depend on a public benefit rationale such as the addition of *affordable* beds, noting the proposal is for the additional beds to be private, pay beds. The Vancouver/Richmond Health Board has expressed interest in funding the beds if and when funding becomes available, but this cannot be secured through this rezoning application. RM-4 permits a maximum height of 35 ft. The proposed addition would increase the height to 38 ft. at the front of the building and up to 39.5 ft. at the rear. As well, the proposal includes elevator access to the roof deck, which increases the height to 52.5 ft. The increased height impacts some private views from properties to the south.

The proposed addition would be built over the existing building to minimize impact on the facilities' residents, and the addition would require structural columns that would reduce the front yard to 1 ft. below the required front yard setback. The west side yard would be reduced by about 1-1/4 ft. to provide a new exit stairs required by the building code. The reconfigured stairs at the rear of the

building increase the amount of the building that projects into the rear yard. The current angle of daylight is also non conforming and is not improved by the proposed addition.

The Panel's comments are sought on the density as well as the building's non-conformance with the RM-4 requirements for height, yards and angles of daylight. Anita Molaro, Development Planner, requested the Panel's response on the impact of the building height, the roof deck and rails, and the elevator access to the roof deck. The Panel's comments are also sought on the open stair at the rear of the building, and the landscaping.

- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Stuart Howard, Architect, explained the existing private hospital does include some funded beds. The goal of the project is to leave the existing beds intact during construction. Mr. Howard noted RM-4 zoning would allow a 4-storey apartment building with an FSR of 1.45, likely all above grade, and the proposal has an FSR of about 1.5 above grade. He stressed that the additional beds will be funded by the provincial government when funding is available, both the government and the Health Board having stated they wish to fund them. Thus there will be a subsidized public benefit to the proposal. The owner is prepared to build the facility without the guaranteed funding in place.

Mr. Howard briefly described the proposed extension and improvements to the existing facility, noting the building code issues also contribute to the increased FSR. He acknowledged there will be an impact on some views; however, the existing building has the benefit of a tennis court immediately to the south so there is no direct impact across the lane. A view analysis has been provided. The roof garden is a valuable resource in a facility such as this and provides more outdoor space on an otherwise somewhat tight site. In summary, they consider the proposal is a positive addition which gives the facility greater financial viability. It is a worthwhile project that will contribute to alleviating the severe shortage of beds on the west side of Vancouver.

- **Panel's Comments:** Following a review of the model and posted drawings, the Panel commented as follows:

The Panel unanimously supported this application for rezoning. The use is a very appropriate response to a growing need in this part of the city. The use is also appropriate in this RM-4 neighbourhood, and the building probably addresses the context better than the existing building.

The Panel supported the proposed density and height, and thought the requested increases represented very minor variations from the RM-4 regulations. The view analysis indicates minimal impact.

In the design of the roof garden attention should be given to ensuring its maximum usability for the residents. A higher, transparent railing system was recommended to provide an efficient wind screen, perhaps with landscaped beds in front of the railing for the security of the users. Special attention should be paid to improving the appearance of the elevator shaft. It appears somewhat bulky and intrusive on the east elevation.

The Panel supported the footprint of the building in terms of the containing daylight angles. The gardens and setbacks were supported as proposed and it was felt the new landscape will likely be an amenity to the street. The addition of weather protection over the stair was recommended.

In general, the Panel thought the detailed design of the building will be very important to its ultimate success. The 'exo-skeleton' solution and the addition of brick on the existing structure will add a lot

of richness to the building. There was one suggestion to consider extending the framework to the top of the building, to reduce the perception of the addition being in two parts.

The Panel looks forward to seeing the project at the DP stage.

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| 2. Address: | 555 Great Northern Way |
| Use: | High Tech Industry - Master Plan |
| Zoning: | M-2 & I-2 to CD-1 and/or I-3 |
| Application Status: | Rezoning (Pending) |
| Architect: | Busby & Associates |
| Owner: | Finning Inc. |
| Review: | Second (first as Workshop) |
| Delegation: | Peter Busby, Jim Huffman |
| Staff: | Ian Smith/Michael Naylor |

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (7-1)

- **Introduction:** Ian Smith, Central Area Planner, presented this application, last reviewed by the Panel on March 10, 1999, in a workshop. The proposal is now at the end of its initial public review. When the Public Hearing on the I-3 District is completed at the end of April, a decision will be made as to how to proceed with this proposal. It is likely that the Planning Department will be proposing a CD-1 Zoning over the entire site, which provides control for securing public benefits such as greenways, open spaces, setbacks, and building heights. A CD-1 zoning would also allow for design guidelines to be established. With respect to use, in the debate over the I-3 lands concern has been expressed that it might develop into an office district in competition with the Downtown. However, while the subject Finning site is included in the I-3 initiative, it was identified in the False Creek Flats Preliminary Concept Plan of 1996 as an area that would be suitable for high-tech industries.
- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Peter Busby, Architect, noted the proposed density averages 3.0 FSR across the site, lower on the easterly portion where soils are poor, higher on the westerly portion. A mixture of use is proposed: high-tech industrial type uses are permitted throughout the site, a small live/work component, possibly a small hotel, support retail along the main circulation routes, and a small amount of office support for the high tech industries. Mr. Busby briefly reviewed the Panel's comments at the workshop review and explained how they have responded.

Michael Naylor, Central Area Planner, reviewed the revised proposal for the western end of the site. He noted they have been working with a number of interested groups including the Brewery Creek Historical Society. Response to feedback on the park has been to open it up more to the local neighbourhood and provide facilities for use of the area residents. The commemoration of Brewery Creek has also been an important issue. The park incorporates an outdoor amphitheatre, and provision has been made for active sports. There is also the possibility of opening up the park at St. George street-end which will encourage use of the park by local residents.

Mr. Busby described the proposed building heights across the site, arrived at after consulting with local residents who are concerned about view blockage. While no designs have been provided for the buildings, the intent is there will be about 25 percent void within the envelope to ensure permeability. The void can be expressed as a courtyard either internally or penetrating through the site. With

respect to the park, Mr. Busby noted it is nearly 2 acres in size and will provide a breathing space in a fairly intense, urban design proposal.

- **Panel's Comments:** Following a review of the model and posted materials, the Panel commented as follows:

The Panel supported this application and congratulated the applicant on a very well thought out scheme. The Panel also appreciated the thorough response to its previous comments.

There were some concerns that the massing along Great Northern Way seems somewhat unrelenting, notwithstanding the proposed 25 percent void. One Panel member was concerned that the plan fails to reflect the ability to accommodate the very small companies that exist in the high tech industry, noting that what is shown appears to be very large corporate style buildings.

A suggestion was made to make the Great Northern Way intersection wider to give more breathing room and provide greater visibility and focus on the central plaza. There was support for turning the grid at the central spine.

With respect to height, one suggestion was to consider shifting the mass northwards, with the south building at 45 ft. and increasing it to 60 ft. on the north. This would allow more light into the main spine and make it seem less overwhelming. There was support for bringing the buildings to the property line but it was also suggested that the design guidelines provide for some buffer, in places, next to the sidewalk, to make it more pedestrian friendly.

There was a recommendation for the live/work tower to be at 150 ft. so that it becomes a focus which anchors and announces the park, with the buildings next to it stepping down to 100 ft. As well, at the east end of the site it was suggested the south building at the entry could be lower, with the buildings at the rear going higher to serve as a visual marker and balancing the mass of the building across the street.

The Panel generally supported this application going forward as a CD-1 rezoning with design guidelines. It was stressed the regulations will need to reinforce the intent of this site being a truly urban place, quite unlike a typical suburban industrial park. Applicants should be encouraged to bring the massing up to the guideline maximum, then promoting the innovation with some other overlapping formula which allows variations in how the buildings are massed within the envelope.

It was recommended that, in keeping with this very urban, high tech development, the approach to the landscaping should be similarly technologically advanced. The widened places with the grasses and reference to the mud flats are devoid of trees and have the appearance of suburban front lawns, whereas these places are more suitable for tree planting. Further, if the intent is for Brewery Creek to reflect the ecological health of the area it should be connected in some way so that it is ultimately allowed to merge to the other major green spaces.

With the exception of one Panel member, the size of the park was considered to be adequate.

- **Applicant's Response:** Responding to a comment about the large blocks being illustrated, Mr. Busby stressed they do have an understanding of the marketplace and envisage a lot of subdivision and different architectural teams being involved. It will ultimately have the necessary fine grain.