

URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: April 23, 2008

TIME: 4.00 pm

PLACE: Committee Room No. 1, City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
John Wall, Chair
Walter Francl
Tom Bunting
Maurice Pez
Douglas Watts
Bill Harrison
Albert Bicol
Martin Nielsen
Mark Ostry
Gerry Eckford

REGRETS: Richard Henry
Bob Ransford

**RECORDING
SECRETARY:** Lorna Harvey

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING	
1.	1098 Richards Street
2.	277 Thurlow Street
3.	1237 Howe Street

BUSINESS MEETING

Chair Wall called the meeting to order at 4:15 p.m. and noted the presence of a quorum. There being no New Business the meeting considered applications as scheduled for presentation.

Business meeting at the end of the meeting -

1. Address: 1098 Richards Street
 DE: 411788
 Description: To construct an 18 storey tower and 8 storey residential building on this site. Two heritage houses will be relocated and restored onto the corner at Helmcken & Richards Streets.
 Zoning: DD
 Application Status: Complete
 Architect: LDA + Architects
 Owner: Aquilini Investment Group
 Review: Second (1st Review Feb 13/08)
 Delegation: Larry Doyle, LDA+ Architects
 Brian Sim, LDA+ Architects
 Stu Lyon, GBL Architects
 Gerry Eckford, Eckford + Associates
 David Negrin, Tri Power Development
 Staff: Ralph Segal/Sailen Black/James Boldt

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (7-0)

- **Introduction:** Sailen Black, Development Planner, introduced the project which had been seen earlier by the Panel and was not supported. Some of the concerns that were identified included the overall massing, the podium façade and its connection to the tower, the tower entry and lane treatment, the cap of the tower, the treatment of the heritage houses and sustainability. The applicant has made the following changes in response to the Panel's comments: the connection between the tower and base has been modified, the tower entry and lower cornices facing Richards Street have been revised, the penthouse facing Richards Street now expresses as two full stories, the lanescape has been improved with new planters which break up the parkade wall differently, the area of brick on the lane elevation as been increased and the shading devices have been modified.

There are some issues that are not resolved at this point and the applicants have identified them in the booklet. They include a broader design to reduce building energy consumption (although a LEED™ Checklist is posted); and the design and layout of the heritage houses. Mr. Black asked the Panel to comment on whether there are opportunities to deal with the potential privacy impacts between the new tower and houses on Helmcken Street. Mr. Black noted that there is strong Planning support for the retention of the heritage houses.

James Boldt, Heritage Planner, also noted that the heritage houses had not been modified to address the issues addressed at the last review. These include the orientation of the stairs, the main floor to grade height, the basement layout, the interface with Richards Street, the front yard setbacks and optimizing outdoor living space. Mr. Boldt asked the Panel to comment on the interface between the Helmcken Street houses and the tower in terms of privacy and the outdoor open spaces.

Mr. Black and Mr. Boldt took questions from the Panel.

- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** Stuart Lyon, Architect, further described the changes made since the last review. Mr. Lyon presented the Panel with nine architectural points that have been resolved. These included the resolution to the top of the tower, clarified the connection and articulation between the tower and the base, the south tower elevation has had more brick and a punched wall added, the south side solar shading has been revised, the main entrance to the tower has been widened as well as some material changes, the interior units on the lane have been regularized and will be more liveable, the façades on the 7th and 8th floor have been pulled back, the townhouse frames on Richards Street have been regularized and the colour of brick has been lightened on the tower component with the darker colour within the three storey base. Mr. Lyon noted that they are still working on the heritage houses.

Gerry Eckford, Landscape Architect, noted the changes since the last review. They are working with the Park Board and Engineering to retain an existing large cedar tree along Richards Street. Additional seating has been added to the entry with some large urns. On the south corridor, the heritage houses will retain their back yards. The corridor also has fenced and enclosed elements at each end for security. On the east lane the planting materials have been upgraded with a green screen treatment on the concrete wall of the terrace. The public open space has a more accessible patio area with a private rear garden for the unit located in the area. On the 3rd and 7th level, there will be larger planters to divide up the spaces. The 9th level will include a space for urban agriculture as well as a children's play area. Regarding sustainability, a cistern will be located in the parking area for the collection of potable water.

Brian Sim, Architect, noted that the project will be designed and constructed at the LEED™ Silver level. He further described other sustainable measures that will be incorporated into the project.

The applicant team took questions from the Panel.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - Further design development to the interface between the heritage houses and the new development;
 - Consider screening or fencing for privacy on the heritage house siding Richards Street;
 - Consider removing the extension from the back of the heritage house; and
 - further design development of the tower penthouse with attention to the lane elevation and a stronger expression of the tower cornice line.
 - Consider design development of the Richards Street tower entry to better align the portal with the tower massing above and recommend using brick or masonry for the portal frame.
- **Related Commentary:** The Panel unanimously supported the proposal and thought the design was much improved since the last review and commended the applicant for addressing the concerns of the Panel.

The Panel also felt there was still room for subtle improvements. A couple of Panel members preferred the two storey penthouse expression on the on the Richards Street side of the building and suggested retaining some of this expression on the lane. One member suggested creating a stronger line two levels down. Another Panel member suggested moving some of the mass from the penthouse to the typical floor of the tower. Another Panel member suggested that if the tower base came up to that height of the first cornice line of the low rise building it might help reduce the apparent bulkiness of the tower.

The Panel thought the low rise facades on Richards Street were much improved and had a cleaner, more regular expression. They also thought the front entry was improved but needed to align itself with the façade above. Most of the Panel thought there was an improvement to the eight storey component and that it was clearly articulated making for a better relationship to the tower.

Most of the Panel encouraged the applicant to use masonry on the entry portal and not Alucobond panels.

One Panel member had some privacy concerns with the location of the unit adjacent to the terrace on the roof and thought their patios should be separated. Another Panel member suggested eliminating the overhead arbour.

A couple of Panel members were concerned with the separation between the heritage buildings and the development as there is only two or three foot between them and thought a fence should be added to enhance the privacy. The Panel suggested removing the extension from the back of the heritage house which sides on Richards Street to strengthen the relationship with the new development. Also, a couple of Panel member thought screening or fencing for privacy needed to be added to the face of the house that sides onto Richards Street.

One Panel member preferred the tower window expression with only an expressed sill as it calms the building down a bit and makes a simpler expression. The Panel commended the applicant for adding solar shading on the south-east and south-west sides.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Lyon thanked the Panel for their comments. He added that he thought all the recommendations were doable and would move forward with them on the next design review. Mr. Negrin, Property Owner, said that they were committed to making the heritage houses liveable and that all the changes are attainable.

2. Address:	277 Thurlow Street
DE:	411944
Description:	To develop this site with a 32-storey residential tower containing 82 dwelling units, over four levels of underground parking for 223 vehicles.
Zoning:	CD-1
Application Status:	Complete
Architect:	IBI/HB Architects
Owner:	Hillsboro Investment Ltd.
Review:	First
Delegation:	Andrew Emmerson, GBL Architects Pawel Gradowski, Durante Kreuk Landscape Architects
Staff:	Ralph Segal

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (6-3)

- **Introduction:** Ralph Segal, Development Planner, introduced the proposal for a development application for the third tower in Harbour Green which will front onto Harbour Green Park. It is CD-1 zoning and part of the Coal Harbour neighbourhood. Also there is a set of guidelines that set out a distinct vision for the six towers fronting onto the park, 5 of which are built.

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

1. Lower level building scale, orientation and "engagement" at public realm edges:
 - a) Cordova
 - b) Thurlow & Convention Centre Plaza
 - c) Harbour Green Park
 2. The tower design, completing the Harbour Green Neighbourhood at this junction with the Downtown.
 3. Interface with Harbour Green 2 porte-cochere.
 4. Overall landscape treatment.
- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** Jim Hancock, Architect, further described the project. He noted the materials and colour palette which will be different from the other two towers. He also described the massing noting the two storey townhouses and the interface between the project and Harbour Green 2.

Blair Guppy, Landscape Architect described the landscaping plans for the site. The interface with the public realm has been a challenge due to the grade changes. It has been resolved in a variety of different ways including a series of natural and texture urban filters, layering of plant material and configuration of space with a balance between public and private space. Another challenge was the access to the building. The drive entrance was a challenge and they are still working on improving the design.

The applicant team took questions from the Panel.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - relationship of the tower base to Thurlow plaza and the landscape steps to the north of the project needs further design development;
 - further design consideration for passive energy design elements on the south and west sides of the tower;

- improve the landscaping and the public realm interface of the townhouse units on Cordova and Thurlow; and
 - the interface between the project and Harbour Green 2 requires more design development.
- **Related Commentary:** The Panel supported the proposal noting that it was a beautifully designed tower.

The Panel agreed that it was a well designed building but were disappointed with the passive design elements and had some real concerns regarding solar exposure. Several Panel members commented that it would be a challenge to achieve LEED™ Silver with a big, all glass wall tower. Panel members thought that all the glass didn't need to be clear vision glass and could include some spandrel glass or shadow box spandrel. Another Panel member suggested using geothermal and designing the building with environmentally responsive techniques such as overhangs, shading and other architectural devices. One Panel member suggested eliminating the air conditioning and putting the money saved in to the façade.

The Panel commended the applicant for having a great idea for a tower that addresses the city, park and waterfront differently. They note the project has a strong conceptual basis with the idea of a two sided tower that relates to the east side of the city while the more articulated side of the tower relates to the west side of the city, Harbour Green Park and Stanley Park. Several Panel members thought the base of the building needed further refinement and could relate better to the rest of the tower as it seemed to be missing the rigor that is in the rest of the building. A couple of Panel members were surprised that the three towers did not have a relationship to each other. Some Panel members thought the Cordova Street townhouses appeared weak and felt like they were left over although another Panel member commented that they had good terraces. Another Panel member liked the stepped massing of these townhouses and thought it was interesting how the townhouse base integrated with the tower. Most Panel members liked the way the Park-fronting townhouses are stepped up and mass into the tower which creates a kind of terrace and a strong relationship to the Park.

Regarding the landscaping, the Panel was concerned with the entrance to the site and the double curb cut on Cordova although they did like the landscape treatment of the entry plaza and the choice of paving materials. Along Cordova and Thurlow Streets the liveability of the townhouse units would benefit from more planting to soften the edge around a high traffic area. They liked the interface with the Park but thought more work was required on the interface at the plaza level as it will be an important space between the Convention Centre and the Park. One Panel member thought the landscaping on Cordova Street at the corner could be improved, perhaps giving back more to the Public Realm.

The Panel had a lot of concern with the interface between the project and Harbour Green 2 and thought the applicant needed to look at the experience in that space particularly with the extent of high blank walls. They thought it was unfortunate that the two separate driveways could not have been integrated into one common entry plaza or conversely that there was not enough of a landscape separation between the two projects. One Panel member suggested adding more greenery to separate the two porte-cocheres. One Panel member noted that usually garage doors in large buildings become holes beside the entry lobby and suggested a beautifully designed garage door would be more successful. A few panel members suggested reducing the size of the tall landscape wall at the Northwest corner of the site, and another panel member suggested that the Northwest corner townhouse turn the corner and address the view to the park and the Harbour Green 2.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Hancock thanked the Panel and noted that they had been doing an informal survey on west facing facades. He added that the doors and windows when opened would offer cross ventilation, although not a cure was a bit of an offsetting with respect to passive concerns.

3. Address:	1237 Howe Street
DE:	412037
Description:	To develop this site with a 12-storey multiple dwelling (Social and Supportive Housing Project) with one level of parking.
Zoning:	DD
Application Status:	Complete
Architect:	GBL Architects
Owner:	McLaren Housing Society
Review:	First
Delegation:	Andrew Emmerson, GBL Architects Pawel Gradowski, Durante Kreuk Landscape Architects
Staff:	Anita Molaro

EVALUATION:

- **Introduction:** Anita Molaro, Development Planner, introduced the proposal for a Social Housing Development on Howe Street which is one of twelve sites recently identified by Council. The site is located mid block between Davie and Drake Streets. The proposal is for a 12-storey non-market residential with a total of 110 units, three of which are two storey, two bedroom townhouses along the Howe Street frontage. Ms. Molaro described the existing and potential developments in the surrounding area. This site has a view cone that spans across it which is one of the reasons the building is not higher. The building being proposed is over 120 ft. at the front of the site. The building has been shaped to address the relationship to the existing and future buildings. Ms. Molaro described the primary orientation of the suites. The unit sizes vary between the townhouse units of 1160 square feet down to 330 in the units. The outdoor space for the residents has been provided off the amenity space at the back as well as an outdoor deck off the 8th floor level. There is further landscaping treatments in the front with the townhouses and the 10 foot setback along the lane. Ms. Molaro described the material treatment for the proposal. The proposal is to achieve a LEED™ Gold Standard.

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

Urban design response including:

- massing response including height and side yard relaxations, and relationship to adjacent buildings
- overall building design/character including resolution of the elevations and their various orientations
- Liveability of the units
- Design of open space
- Use and quality of the proposed materials.

Ms. Molaro took questions from the Panel.

Applicant's Introductory Comments: Mr. Emmerson, Architect, further described the proposal. He noted the main lobby will have a double height lounge area with a security desk and a light well to give natural light to the back of the lobby. There will be a single level basement area with storage space and service rooms. All of the parking and bicycle storage is at grade off the lane. Mr. Emmerson added that they wanted to make sure functionally the building was very simple and worked well in terms in layout and access for the tenants. He also noted the building will have exterior solar panels for the heat gain and will be used as louvers for the elevator lobby to help mitigate some of the solar gain.

Pawel Gradowski, Landscape Architect, described the landscaping plans for the project. He noted the landscape plans for the front entry will include different paving as well as a bench and bike rack. The second level will have a trellis over the parking entry. The water feature will use recycled water that will be collected in a cistern. The 8th level amenity space will have space for urban agriculture as it gets the best sun exposure.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**

The Panel had no substantial concerns with this proposal.

- **Related Commentary:** The Panel unanimously supported the proposal and thought it was an exciting project.

The Panel commended the applicant for a refreshing design and a high quality project. The Panel hoped it could be built on budget and said they hoped value engineering wouldn't reduce any of the design elements.

The Panel thought the material palette and some of the architectural details were lavish and could be toned down a bit.

The Panel commented that the project set a high standard for non-market and market development and they thought a lot of lessons could be learned for some market developers. Also they thought it was a high quality and very liveable project.

The Panel liked the massing response and the way the building genuflects to the neighbour's view.

Most of the Panel members would like to see some covered space in the outdoor open space but as a whole the Panel liked the landscaping and suggested more whimsy could be added to the landscaping design especially on the rear terrace. One Panel member suggested adding more of an expression of the water feature on the terrace to make it a focal element. One Panel member suggested having a privacy screen on Howe Street in front of the townhouses' living room windows for added privacy.

A couple of Panel member suggested that the building could go to the full height allowed in the zoning which would give the project another nine units.

One Panel member noted that this was a perfect example how sustainability could be incorporated into the design of a building.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Emmerson thanked the Panel for their comments.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.