

## URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

**DATE:** April 27, 2005

**TIME:** 4.00 pm

**PLACE:** Committee Room No. 1, City Hall

**PRESENT:** MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:  
Alan Endall, Chair  
Larry Adams (excused Item #4)  
Nigel Baldwin  
Shahla Bozorgzadeh  
James Cheng  
Marta Farevaag (excused Item #1)  
Ronald Lea  
Margot Long  
Peter Wreglesworth  
C.C. Yao

**REGRETS:** Robert Barnes  
Edward Smith

**RECORDING  
SECRETARY:** Carol Hubbard

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ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING	
1.	1277 Melville Street (1280 West Pender)
2.	1133 Homer Street
3.	3599 Foster Street
4.	4479 West 10th Avenue

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1. Address:	1277 Melville Street (1280 West Pender)
DE:	409236
Use:	Mixed (25 storeys)
Zoning:	DD
Application Status:	Complete
Architect:	Busby/Perkins/Will
Owner:	No. 249 Cathedral Ventures Ltd.
Review:	First
Delegation:	Peter Busby, Martin Nielson, Chris Phillips
Staff:	Ralph Segal

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**EVALUATION: SUPPORT (7-0)**

- **Introduction:** Ralph Segal, Development Planner, presented this application. A previous application for this site (previously 1280 West Pender Street) was reviewed and unanimously supported by the Panel in September 2004. That application was subsequently approved by the Development Permit Board but its decision was overturned by the Board of Variance as a result of a third party appeal.

The current submission complies with the Development Permit Board's direction to limit the height to 270 ft. Requested density is 6.6 FSR, which includes a ten percent heritage density transfer, as was approved in the earlier submission. However, the tower has now been located further to the east of the site, back from the Jervis Street corner, in direct response to neighbouring view impacts, in particular from the Pointe Claire.

Staff have no concerns about the current submission and note that it has improved since the earlier scheme, particularly at the ground floor which provides for a restaurant to replace the current popular "Crime Lab" restaurant on this site.

- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Peter Busby, Architect, briefly described the project noting the range of view opportunities has been increased for Pointe Claire residents. He said he believed there have been improvements to the design since the previous submission, e.g., the base treatment of the townhouses is more elegantly resolved and the public space at the corner and the restaurant is a good addition to the scheme. Chris Phillips briefly reviewed the landscape plan.
- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
  - The scheme has improved, notwithstanding the arduous process that has been undergone;
  - General improvements have been made to the commercial base and the ground plane, particularly at the corner;
  - Special attention should be given to the relationship to the neighbour to the east;
  - Some regret at the slight loss of the flatiron expression and erosion of the opportunity for a strong angular response to the corner.

- **Related Commentary:**

The Panel unanimously supported this application. While the previous Panel had also unanimously supported the earlier scheme, the Panel commented that in many ways it has improved even more. The project is very elegant and has been handled in a simple way with good quality materials. There was some disappointment that the true flatiron response has been lost but the gains of the current scheme were also noted.

The Panel preferred the revised commercial base which is considered more appropriate and beneficial for the city. The restaurant will be a great addition to the scheme. The improvements to the ground plane treatment were strongly supported, including the residential entrance and the approach to the townhouse courtyards as well as the relationship of the townhouses to the street. The addition of the green roofs was also strongly endorsed.

With respect to placement of the tower, it was felt the Development Permit Board was probably correct in its direction to move it slightly to the east and in some ways it is unfortunate it has been necessary to move it even further, which may not be as good a scheme as it could be in terms of consideration of overall private views and proximity of buildings. Nevertheless, it is still fully supportable as shown.

The only area of concern related to the relationship to the adjacent building to the east, although it was noted the onus will be on that development to respond to this one, which is the correct response.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Busby thanked the Panel for its comments.

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2. Address:	1133 Homer Street
DE:	409193
Use:	Residential (15 storeys, 197 units)
Zoning:	DD
Application Status:	Preliminary
Architect:	Hancock Bruckner Eng & Wright
Owner:	Imperial Oil Ltd.
Review:	First
Delegation:	Martin Bruckner, Julian Ward, James Hancock
Staff:	Ralph Segal

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**EVALUATION: NON-SUPPORT (0-8)**

- **Introduction:** Ralph Segal, Development Planner, presented this preliminary application. The site, 250 ft. x 120 ft., is at the corner of Homer and Helmcken Streets in the Downtown South. The application seeks the maximum 5.0 FSR plus a ten percent heritage density transfer of 15,000 sq.ft. for a total density of 5.5 FSR. The site is affected by a view corridor to "The Lions" which limits the height and is generating a squatter than typical building form. A strong streetwall is proposed with two storey townhouses and a third storey rendered in brick wrapping around the site. The podium extends to the 9th floor, stepping down to seven floors on Helmcken. The main building component extends to the maximum view corridor height of 146 ft.

The areas in which the advice of the Panel is sought relate to the overall massing and whether the podium up to nine storeys is appropriate, noting the Downtown South Guidelines suggest a streetwall height of 30 ft., up to a maximum of 70 ft. Comments are requested on the various edges of the development including the relationship to the development across the lane in terms of shadow impacts, whether this site can accept the requested ten percent heritage density transfer, and general comments on the public realm treatment.

- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Martin Bruckner, Architect, described the design rationale and responded to questions from the Panel.
- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
  - Concerns about the overall massing and recommendation to give further consideration to a clearer definition between the higher building mass, the podium and streetwall;
  - Recommendation for simplification of the overall architectural expression;
  - The Panel questioned whether the project can handle the additional heritage density in the massing proposed;
  - Further design development recommended at the edges, particularly on the lane and the northeast corner where additional openings and fenestration is recommended;
  - General support for the public realm treatment;
  - The amount of semi private open space could be more generous, and locating the indoor amenity space next to the outdoor amenity area is recommended.

- **Related Commentary:**

The Panel recognized that this is a challenging site but found the overall massing to be too massive and horizontal in appearance, lacking the elegance of a typical tower and podium development. There were comments that it looks more like a Toronto development than Vancouver and is not very sympathetic to what has been established in the Downtown South. Concerns were expressed about the proportions of the building elements, particularly the higher building mass and its relationship to the rest of the project. There was a suggestion that it might be better to spread the mass across the site rather than including a "tower" which looks truncated. Most Panel members thought the site could probably take the ten percent heritage density transfer but that it had not been demonstrated in the form proposed.

Comments on the massing included:

- the entry of the "tower" seems jammed in and should probably be a two storey rather than single storey expression;
- it feels like the "tower" is too close to the street and the "girdling" of the brick is not helping to provide its own expression;
- the curve shapes in the front seem foreign to the rest of the building;
- there are too many ideas going on;
- the lower three floors expressed in brick is a good response to Yaletown but the two other treatments in the upper floors seems too much;
- not convinced the 70 ft. datum is meaningful in relation to neighbouring buildings;
- the higher building mass looks like it's trying to express itself as a tower but it doesn't have sufficient height;
- there could be a CPTED issue with the row of planting in the lane;
- there are good opportunities for corner windows in the living room or small obscure windows in the kitchen;
- it is disappointing that the long view down the length of the rear open space is given over to an exit stair;
- the two-bedroom unit is adding to the feeling of massiveness by having the projected living room treated the same as the main building plane;
- not convinced a slab approach would work because it will be at least eleven storeys which will be challenging to simplify;
- the two-storey penthouse on the higher building mass adds to its truncated appearance.

The Panel had major concerns about the lane elevation and found it quite unsympathetic and unfriendly to its neighbour. Despite what the sun angle diagrams may indicate, it feels very oppressive and very much like the back of a building. The northeast corner is also unsatisfactory and needs further design development.

It was noted the trees proposed on the roof have the potential to exacerbate shadowing issues.

The Panel strongly recommended locating some indoor amenity space adjacent to the landscaped roof deck to make it more usable for the residents.

There were no concerns about the public realm treatment. It was thought to be an appropriate urban response that relates well to the streetscape.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Bruckner said he appreciated the Panel's comments.

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3. Address:	3599 Foster Avenue
DE:	409127
Use:	Residential; Buildings K & L (4 storeys)
Zoning:	CD-1
Application Status:	Complete
Architect:	Rafii
Owner:	Emerson Homes Collingwood Ltd.
Review:	First
Delegation:	Foad Rafii, Douglas Rennich, David Bird
Staff:	Bob Adair

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**EVALUATION: SUPPORT (6-2)**

- **Introduction:** Bob Adair, Development Planner, presented this application for the last two buildings of the Collingwood Village neighbourhood. The proposal is for two four-storey buildings containing a total of 130 dwelling units with a single level of underground parking for both buildings, with access off Foster Street to the south. The project generally conforms to the zoning regulations.

The advice of the Panel is sought on the following:

- **Setbacks.** The guidelines call for 23 ft. along Ormidale and Foster Avenues and the applicant is proposing setbacks of between 17 to 19.5 ft. on Foster and 16 to 18.5 ft. on Ormidale;
- **Relationship of the ground floor level to the surrounding grade all around the project,** being about 3 ft. lower than adjacent grade on the east side and about 3 ft. higher on the west side.
- **General expression and scale of the elevations and compatibility with the surrounding context,** both buildings and the park to the west.
- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Foad Rafii, Architect, briefly reviewed the project and Douglas Rennich, Landscape Architect, described the landscape plan. The project team then responded to questions from the Panel.
- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
  - Given the setback relaxation on the east side of the building is exacerbated by the grade differential, the Panel was concerned that the setback relaxations were not being earned in terms of other benefits derived from that setback. The applicant was encouraged to examine opportunities for fine-tuning of the floor elevations, particularly on the Ormidale elevation, to find ways the floor slab can relate more directly to grade and alleviate concern over the setback reduction. This also applies to the park elevation but to a lesser degree;
  - Further design development of the architectural expression is recommended, e.g., the expression of the dormers, the height of the roof, the definition and legibility of the entrances as well as the sequence of entry in terms of circulation and wayfinding;
  - Consider a somewhat more contemporary architectural expression that relates more deliberately to other buildings in Collingwood Village, notwithstanding the guideline to respond to the residential character across the street;

- Design development to the landscape plan to reinforce the definition of entries and ensure the continuity of street trees;
- Adjustments to the setbacks and floor elevations should not be at the expense of reducing or significantly altering the treatment and separation between the buildings.
- **Related Commentary:**

The Panel strongly supported this application and acknowledged the budgetary restraints but had a number of concerns and suggestions for improvement.

Most Panel members did not support relaxing the setbacks. It was noted the patios along Ormidale are 3 ft. below grade and their sunken appearance is exacerbated by shortening the setback. The extent of the relaxation was thought to be quite significant in relationship to the surrounding neighbourhood. There were suggestions to massage the building to address some of the issues arising from the grade differential, possibly raising the building slightly or altering the roof pitch in order to raise some of the sunken areas. There were no concerns about the ground floor on the west side being 3 ft. above grade, which was considered to be a good response. It was recommended that if the guideline setbacks are adhered to on Ormidale it is important that it not result in a reduction of the public walkway between the buildings at the rear. Given there is a generous amount of public open space nearby, reducing the amount of semi public open space would be acceptable.

There were a number of comments about the architectural expression and concerns that it lacks any relationship to neighbouring projects. Several Panel members questioned the corner tower elements which seem foreign and inappropriate, particularly at the corner of Ormidale and Foster. There was a recommendation for further design development with respect to the relationship between the entrances and entrance canopies and the balconies at the entries which are offset from each other, creating a feeling of being tacked on. The large scale of the dormers facing the residential neighbours was questioned, and some Panel members expressed disappointment that the architectural expression fails to recognize the more contemporary expression of Collingwood Village. One Panel member noted the north elevation of Building L is quite blank compared to the other elevations.

There were concerns that the project fails to encourage and welcome the public to go through the inner walkway and treats them as leftover space between buildings rather than celebrating the public entrance. It was strongly recommended that the landscape design give some recognition to the major pedestrian thoroughfares in the neighbourhood. It was suggested that further thought be given to the park edge, with a concern expressed about the relationship of the setback to the park where it doesn't seem to relate to the park or the building's amenity space. The project also fails to respond somewhat to the guideline calling for attention to entries off the street or the park.

Concern was expressed about the treatment of the entrances where the lobbies and small amenity spaces seem uninviting and lack a sense of arrival. There was also a concern about residents having to walk past front doors to get the elevator. In addition, there was a comment that the landscape fails to respond to the entrances or contribute to wayfinding.

It was noted there seem to be some street trees missing from the scheme; the number of street trees should be maximized and a gap in the street trees to emphasize the entries is not recommended.

- **Applicant's Response:** David Bird, Developer, noted that Planning directed that buildings facing the residential neighbourhood should look residential. With respect to the corner treatment, the guidelines specifically recommend an architectural feature, although Mr. Bird agreed it can be reduced in size. He explained that when they purchased the property there was already a design in place with even smaller setbacks which had been accepted by Planning. With respect to the sunken ground floor units, Mr. Bird said they would be pleased to raise the building. The relationship at the edge of the park has been reviewed by the Park Board. He agreed that attention can be given to the entrances.

Mr. Rafii thanked the Panel for some good ideas that they will try to incorporate. He noted that individual access to units from walkways is not in the guidelines. With respect to the setbacks, Mr. Rafii noted the guidelines also refer to the setback between the buildings which has been increased significantly and this was supported by Planning. This in turn resulted in the reduced setback on Ormidale.



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4. Address:	4479 West 10th Avenue
DE:	409156
Use:	Mixed (4 storeys)
Zoning:	C-2
Application Status:	Complete
Architect:	Allan Diamond
Owner:	Tri-Core
Review:	First
Delegation:	Peter McGill
Staff:	James Boldt

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#### EVALUATION: SUPPORT (6-1)

- **Introduction:** James Boldt presented this application to develop a small 66 ft. x 115 ft. C-2 site at 10<sup>th</sup> and Sasamat. The site has a significant cross slope to the northeast. The site context includes single-family residences at the rear to the north. The proposal is for a mixed-use building comprising three floors of residential above a retail base. Both the height and square footage have been maximized and the proposal responds to the C-2 regulations which have prescribed setbacks and require the fourth storey to be set back. Materials include a composite panel system.

The areas in which the advice of the Panel is sought are:

- Building expression;
- Use of materials to achieve a high level of finishes and durability;
- Livability, in particular the provision of outdoor open space and terraces.

Street trees and the provision of appropriate sidewalk treatment will be sought.

- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Peter McGill said they have met the intent of the C-2 zoning and appreciate the need to be sensitive to the residential neighbours at the rear. He briefly described the scheme and noted the ground floor commercial has been kept at a scale to relate to the neighbourhood.
  - **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
    - The Panel was satisfied with the architectural expression and treatment and had no issues with the materials;
    - Concerns about livability, particularly for the second floor units;
    - Major concerns about the lane elevation and regret that the loading and parking spaces are exposed to the lane. The lane elevation is a fairly unattractive elevation to present to the residential neighbours, particularly the second floor deck above the lane which is on spindly posts. Recommendations to consider either enclosing with garage doors or turning the two end parking spaces parallel to the lane at the entrance aisle rather than perpendicular and open to it. Consideration should be given indirect lighting in the lane to alleviate glare.
    - Recommendation to improve the treatment of the concrete block side walls, even as an interim measure, by providing some openings to the stairwell for natural light access;
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- Clarification is required with respect to the details of the landscape treatment of the terraces, including materials, planting and paving, and a recommendation to introduce trees in the planter at the rear as well as more detailed consideration of the treatment of the rooftop terraces.

- **Related Commentary:**

The Panel strongly supported this application.

The architectural expression was strongly supported, particularly the street façade which was thought to be very appropriate for the neighbourhood. It was thought to be a very nice, simple building that will also set a good precedent for future development in the neighbourhood. One Panel member suggested it would be more interesting with a simpler and larger overhang at the top level. The expression of the carriage lamps and the railway station canopy supports was also questioned as being somewhat out of context.

The Panel had no concerns about the materials. Few Panel members had direct experience with the proposed composite panel but liked its appearance and hoped it would meet durability objectives.

The Panel liked the variety of unit type in the building but livability was a serious issue, particularly the second storey units facing the street. One Panel member questioned whether making them studio units might reduce the amount of compromises on the space. There were suggestions to reconsider the kitchen layouts or reduce the number of units. The small balconies were generally thought to be acceptable.

The Panel's main concern related to the lane elevation and the relationship to the neighbouring single-family homes which was thought to be quite severe and obtrusive. There was a suggestion to increase the size of the decks and add a trellis. The introduction of some windows at the exit stair was strongly recommended to relieve the concrete block facing the neighbours. Lighting in the parking and loading area will also need to be carefully considered to avoid glare.

Design development to the landscape plan was strongly recommended, noting a number of items are unclear, including the material used for the planters and the type of planting. In general it was thought the landscape design does not reflect how the patios would be used. Attention should be given to the size of the plants relative to the size of the containers. It was also recommended to add trees in the rear of the building. Design development is needed to the top floor deck where the placement of the planters seems random and creating some awkward spaces.

Finally, one Panel member questioned whether it is appropriate for the Panel to continue to review C-2 projects given the fairly prescriptive nature of the revised guidelines. The City should also consider a policy relating to the provision of private open space for each unit so that all applicants are treated fairly.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. McGill explained the units at the front of the second floor were included to respond to a demand for young people who would choose these types of unit next to the street activity. He noted the parking and loading on the lane is difficult to deal with and agreed they can rotate the two end parking spaces as suggested, and add a small planter for screening.