
URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: April 3, 2002

TIME: 4.00 p.m.

PLACE: Committee Room No. 1, City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
Walter Francl, Chair
Helen Besharat
Jeffrey Corbett
Gerry Eckford
Reena Lazar
Stuart Lyon
Kim Perry
Maurice Pez
Sorin Tatomir
Ken Terris (not present for vote on Item 3, and Item 4)

REGRETS: Richard Henry
Joseph Hruda

RECORDING SECRETARY: Carol Hubbard

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING	
1.	550 Pacific Street
2.	400 Beach Crescent
3.	1399 Chess Street
4.	2137 West 10th Avenue

1. Address:	550 Pacific Street
DA:	406577
Use:	Residential - 23-storeys, 146 units
Zoning:	CD-1
Application Status:	Complete
Architect:	IBI Group
Owner:	Concord Pacific Group Inc.
Review:	First
Delegation:	Peter Lang, David Negrin, Bruce Hemstock
Staff:	Jonathan Barrett

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (8-1)

- **Introduction:** Jonathan Barrett, Senior Development Planner, presented this application and briefly reviewed the site context. The Beach Neighbourhood has fairly specific guidelines with respect to the heights and locations of towers and townhouses. For this site, the Guidelines call for a 23-storey tower, a maximum of six storeys along Pacific, and four-storey development along the mews, which are intended to be lined with townhouses. Other guidelines include a 2.65 m setback from Pacific and a 1.5 m setback from the mews.

No significant issues have been identified on this application. In addition to any comments on the overall character of the project, the advice of the Panel is sought on the following minor concerns:

- livability, ie., the tightness of tower separation at 77-78 ft. While the Beach Neighbourhood Guidelines do not recommend a separation distance, a separation of about 80 ft. is generally sought throughout the city;
 - the mews: the row of townhouses is broken by the vehicular access and drop-off and the concern is that the townhouses have become rather minimal;
 - amenity functions are proposed at grade which may not fulfill the desire for activity and visual interest on the street;
 - interface with neighbouring towers and whether it provides a good presentation to the public realm;
 - appropriateness of the courtyard entry and public viewpoint and whether it is a worthy trade-off for a more enclosed function.
- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Peter Lang, Architect, described the design rationale. Regarding the townhouses, he said they concluded Pacific would not be a good location from the point of view of livability. They therefore combined amenity spaces in the podium facing onto the street, with sufficient permeability for pedestrians to be able to see through. The end of the podium has an enclosed "zen" garden off the amenity functions, with stairs up from the street to allow pedestrians a view through the garden and beyond. With respect to the mews, Mr. Lang said the proposal is consistent with what was envisaged at the rezoning stage, including the parking access. Following the architect's description of the project, Bruce Hemstock, Landscape Architect, briefly reviewed the landscape plan and the applicant team responded to the Panel's questions.
 - **Panel's Comments:** The Panel strongly supported this application. It is a very high standard of design and the quality of materials is very good. Most Panel members liked the dark brick.

The Panel had no concerns about the separation between the towers, noting this is a very urban area and the suites have been oriented to reduce the impact. It was thought that taking two feet off the east side and adding it to the south would make no real difference to livability.

The Panel supported the townhouses on the mews and most Panel members saw no need to provide more than the three townhouses proposed. Fewer townhouses also allows for more landscaping. A suggestion was made that there is room for some improvement where the tower meets the townhouses - something to visually strengthen the corner to avoid the appearance that the townhouses are holding up the tower. Another comment about the townhouses is that they fail to acknowledge the future non-market housing across the street.

The Panel had some reservations about the mews related to the autocourt, although it was agreed there is nowhere else to locate the parkade entry, and in general it was thought to be quite well handled. The materials in the mews will be important to ensure it is viewed as predominantly pedestrian territory. The Panel liked the curved parkade entry, to avoid seeing straight down the ramp. There were concerns about the lack of animation of the back wall, given it will be the first experience that visitors will have when entering the mews next to the autocourt. As proposed, the three service doors are the primary focus. One Panel member suggested the space could be enlivened if there was a glazed wall which lets people to see into a lobby space.

Most Panel members had no concerns about locating the amenity spaces along the Pacific frontage. Considering the current nature and scale of this street, it was agreed that it would not make sense to put townhouses there. However, reference was made to the Panel's recent workshop review of a proposed upgrade of Pacific Boulevard which plans to drastically alter the character of the street by reducing its width. It was recommended that this potential change to Pacific Boulevard should be investigated by this applicant.

The Panel liked the zen garden, although some Panel members were not convinced that many people would actually go up the stairs and look through. One Panel member thought the opening itself as proposed was a lost opportunity to provide something more beautiful and reflective of the zen garden beyond. Another comment was made that more work is needed on the garden to ensure all the spaces within it are functional. As well, the long, narrow townhouse patios have little articulation and character.

With respect to the relationship with neighbouring buildings, while the Pacific facade is quite handsome in itself it makes a poor transition with Tower L and other buildings along Pacific and adds little to the streetscape.

A recommendation was made to consider the whole route down to the spa, including the stair, to ensure it becomes part of the whole spa experience rather than just an exit stair.

2. Address:	400 Beach Crescent
DA:	406387
Use:	Residential, 18 & 24-storeys
Zoning:	CD-1
Application Status:	Complete
Architect:	James K.M. Cheng Architects
Owner:	Concord Pacific Group Inc.
Review:	Second
Delegation:	James Cheng, Terry Mott, Chris Philips, David Negrin
Staff:	Jonathan Barrett

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (9-0)

- **Introduction:** Jonathan Barrett, Senior Development Planner, presented this application. The project was reviewed by the Panel on January 23, 2002 and not supported at that time. The major issues related to the request for transfer of additional density which the Panel did not believe this site could take. There were also concerns about the massing along the waterfront which the Panel found too high in response to the guideline which suggests three and a half to four storeys. The Panel supported the openings through into the site. The revised submission has reduced the floorplates, although still slightly over the guideline recommendation. The massing has been reduced along the waterfront. Tower heights remain unchanged and meet the guideline recommendation.
- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** James Cheng, Architect, briefly reviewed the design rationale and described the refinements that have been made to the project in response to the Panel's previous comments. Chris Philips, Landscape Architect, reviewed the landscape plan.
- **Panel's Comments:** The Panel unanimously supported this application. The applicant was commended for carefully considering the Panel's previous comments and coming up with a resolution that has dramatically improved the project. The reductions in size were considered very appropriate. It was thought that cutting back the townhouses facing the seawall provides a much more pleasant experience.

Some minor suggestions for improvement were made, including:

- while the entry plaza is working better than the previous submission there seems to be some ambiguity between pedestrian and vehicular territory. There was a recommendation to add adding another couple of steps to make it a real belvedere;
- the portal as viewed from the park might be strengthened;
- the secret garden, which the Panel quite liked, could be even more secret by reducing the size of the openings to create an element of surprise;
- the entry to the taller tower should be strengthened so that it is not identified by signage alone;
- the base of the bridge building is weak and should be brought up to the strong vocabulary of the rest of the project;

- something should be shown to indicate the treatment of the roofs, given they will be overlooked by a lot of people. It is not sufficient to leave it to individual owners without providing something basic which they can then embellish;

One Panel member thought there was too much water on the project and suggested there could be a better balance between usable and viewed spaces in the courtyard.

Finally, some comments were made about the attitude of the Park Board regarding access onto park property. It was noted the park is public property and the people who will be living next to it will be providing useful surveillance.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Cheng thanked the Panel for its earlier thoughtful comments which helped them focus on the issues and make improvements. They will continue to refine the project.

3. Address:	1399 Chess Street
DA:	406382
Use:	City Works Yard
Zoning:	I-2
Application Status:	Complete
Architect:	Omicron
Owner:	City of Vancouver
Review:	First
Delegation:	Tim Loo, Patricia Campbell, Scott Kemp, Peter Bremner
Staff:	Eric Fiss

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (7-1)

- **Introduction:** Eric Fiss, Development Planner, introduced this application for a new City Works Yard to replace the existing Cambie Works Yard. The site is in the I-2 industrial zone in False Creek Flats and is approximately 5 hectares (over 12 acres) in size. Mr. Fiss briefly described the site context, noting this site has been identified for the proposed use in a number of City policy documents. The intent is to predominantly retain the Flats for industrial uses, including a conditionally permitted City works yard. Further road development is proposed within the site. Street “A” will separate the site from the future park in the neighbouring tech park development. Street “B”, to the south of the site, is an east-west street running parallel to the CN rail and connecting through to Main Street and Glen Drive.

The functional planning of the site was under review for over a year before arriving at the proposed scheme. The City Works Yard will serve eight engineering branches and most of the facilities are works sheds. The most significant structure is a two-storey general building containing locker rooms, offices and other works facilities, located along the major new Street “B”. The works yard will also contain a 24-hour, full-service gas station at the eastern edge of the site, serving a variety of City vehicles including the Police Department.

The advice of the Panel is sought in the following areas:

- appropriateness of the works yard use, noting it is a conditional use in this zone;
 - the relationship of the works yard to the proposed new streets and the articulation of the landscape edge;
 - design of the general building, noting the intent is achieve LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification for sustainable design and development.
- **Applicant’s Opening Comments:** The applicant team reviewed the proposal in greater detail.
 - **Panel’s Comments:** The Panel strongly supported this application and agreed it is a challenging project. The proposed use was considered to be very appropriate for this site.

The Panel liked the style of the main buildings and found them well detailed and appropriate. It was hoped the same vocabulary would be carried through on some of the other buildings as well.

Much of the Panel’s comments concerned the perimeter wall and included:

- concerns about permeability and providing opportunities for seeing into the site;
- the wall is largely all that is seen at the pedestrian level and needs to be carefully designed;

- the classical treatment is at odds with the modern design of the buildings; it looks somewhat over-designed;
- the wall should be pushed back where it parallels the building on Street B, to allow more exposure of the building;
- the wall should engage some of the other elements of the site as well as the two buildings, to become a strong unifying feature of the whole site;
- the wall does not need to be of uniform height.

The Panel strongly supported the proposed LEEDS certification and urged that sustainability be considered in all aspects of the development. As well, there should be some method in place to monitor and evaluate the best practice initiatives in order to arrive at some benchmarks, even in those areas of the site where LEEDS certification is not being sought. This area of the False Creek Flats is undergoing significant change and this site could be a model for how other industries develop. The City was commended for pursuing this sustainable approach to industrial development in the centre of the city. The potential re-use of surplus materials was also commended. One Panel member had concerns that no firm commitment had been made to some of the sustainability initiatives. A recommendation was made to reduce the number of parking spaces and encourage greater use of transit, in keeping with the sustainable approach to the development.

There were concerns expressed about the traffic impacts of this development, noting there will be a significant change in traffic patterns in and around the site. There were concerns that vehicles would cut through the neighbourhood to avoid bottlenecks.

One Panel member would like to see better connections to the surrounding areas, including some kind of visual connection with the park across the street. The applicant was also urged to pay close attention to the public realm in the phasing of the project, in particular to ensure that the trees are planted early. As well, the public realm details of Tech Park should be carried through into the new streets A and B.

With respect to the landscape, the applicant was urged to consider providing some very large trees in the parking lot. Another recommendation was to concentrate some landscape effort in the centre of the site so that it is a recognizable feature that can be seen from the far ends of the site.

One Panel member found the logic behind the on-site pedestrian links to be unclear.

4. Address:	2137 West 10th Avenue
DA:	406553
Use:	Residential (7 storeys)
Zoning:	C-7
Application Status:	Complete
Architect:	Kasian Kennedy Architects
Owner:	Adera Equities
Review:	First
Delegation:	Gerry Kennedy, Norm Couttie, Chris Gowing, Masa Ito
Staff:	Anita Molaro

EVALUATION: NON-SUPPORT (4-5)

- **Introduction:** Anita Molaro, Development Planner, presented this application, noting it is located in an area that is undergoing significant change, to a mixed use community with a strong residential component. The site is on West 10th Avenue between Arbutus and Yew Streets and has a frontage of 200 ft. The C-7 guidelines recognize the challenge of this block and suggest some flexibility in height, up to 60 ft. from the outright permitted 40 ft. Relaxation of the 25 ft. rear yard setback is also suggested, to allow more flexibility in the massing arrangements on the site. Consideration of these relaxations needs to take into account the impacts on the street character, overall building bulk, open space, view impacts, and livability of the residential units. The proposal is for a 7-storey residential building containing 75 dwelling units, comprising a two-storey streetwall element facing West 10th Avenue and five storeys above. Proposed materials include brick and cementitious panel. The proposal also includes a two-storey volume parking garage.

The advice of the Panel is sought on whether the proposed form of development - the livability, response to the streetscape, view impacts, overall building bulk and open space - has earned the height relaxation requested, or whether there is a more appropriate alternative form of development that takes greater advantage of the southerly oriented views to the park and a relaxation of the rear yard which shifts the scale more towards the lane.

- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** The applicant team responded to questions from the Panel. Gerry Kennedy, Architect, reviewed the project in greater detail and explained the design rationale. Masa Ito reviewed the landscape plan.
- **Panel's Comments:** The Panel was unable to support the application at this time.

The overall massing and general positioning on the site were considered appropriate. The Panel had no problem with the proposed height on this site.

The Panel also supported the approach taken at the rear and thought it positive to provide a greater setback on the lane. It also allows the upper units to benefit from the landscaping below.

The Panel's main concerns related to the architectural expression. Issues raised included:

- the height of the podium and its relationship to what is above it, ie., how the upper storeys sit on the podium and the resulting awkward relationships over balconies;
- consider stepping back the upper portion of the building above the base;

- the lobby entrance does not appear to have been considered as a celebration of the entry into the building, rather it is derived from the extraction of one unit;
- the architectural expression, particularly the upper floor, does not earn the height relaxation;
- the grade level units do not contribute to the streetscape;
- the streetscape is monolithic;
- repeating the upper units at ground level, with a side door, does not provide real street oriented units;
- street-level units may not be the right solution on this block of West 10th Avenue;
- livability of the end units is compromised;
- the end facing the potential development site compromises the livability of this building as well as any future neighbouring building;
- the building form fails to acknowledge the park across the street;
- the building base does not relate to the Arbutus context which has a strong three and four storey reference line;
- the doors should face the street; even if it is not their front address, it should be made to feel like it because it will be the primary access;
- the typical one-bedroom units appear to be very difficult to furnish;
- consider abandoning the “townhouse” base and make it a straight forward apartment building;

Concerns were expressed about the use of cementitious material on such a large building. It may not weather well. Some other material would be preferable in this neighbourhood which generally has high quality of materials.

A recommendation was made to add some more street trees to fill in the current void on the street.

Comments about raising the parking area were that it provides better sun angles to the rear terraces, and allows a generous planting depth for the landscaping. A question was raised about the value of the rear walkway against the lane, suggesting it might be better to provide larger terraces and bring the landscape buffer out to the lane edge.

The garbage enclosure area is quite small and there does not appear to be anywhere for recycling.