
URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: April 30, 2003

TIME: 4.00 p.m.

PLACE: Committee Room No. 1, City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
Stuart Lyon, Chair
Helen Besharat (Items 1 and 2)
Bruce Haden
Eva Lee (Items 3-5)
Jennifer Marshall (Items 1-4)
Brian Martin
Mark Ostry
Sorin Tatomir
Ken Terriss

REGRETS: Jeffrey Corbett
Reena Lazar
Kim Perry

**RECORDING
SECRETARY:** Rae Ratslef, Raincoast Ventures

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING
1. 1169 West Cordova Street
2. 651 Expo Boulevard (Costco)
3. 950 Quebec Street (939 Main Street)
4. 900 Main Street
5. Pacific Boulevard Streetscape Design

1. Address:	1169 West Cordova Street
DA:	407402
Use:	Residential (24 storeys, 57 units)
Zoning:	CD-1
Architect:	James K.M. Cheng
Owner:	Hillsboro Investment Ltd.
Review:	First
Delegation:	James Cheng, Joseph Fry, John Wall
Staff:	Ralph Segal

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (7-0)

Introduction: Ralph Segal, Senior Development Planner, referencing a display model, introduced the application in the context of the surrounding neighbourhood. The Panel was informed that the project was the first of the final three towers that would complete the Coal Harbour development. As well, design guidelines for the site were reviewed including those relating to townhouse unit entrances, tower height, and floorplate height and width.

The Panel was asked to comment on the following specific issues relative to the application:

- request for podium set-back relaxations;
- guideline relaxations sought on encroachments into view corridors on Bute and Cordova/Waterfront;
- request for 10% increase in the tower floorplate;
- incursion of 10 feet over the 70 metre height guideline;
- Cordova Street podium edge presenting only two townhouse eyes on the street; and
- general comments on architectural refinements and treatments.

In response to questions, the Panel was informed that floorplate relaxations were common in the area but that this was the most significant relaxation sought to date, and that the FSR maximum was predicated on the three towers combined. The Panel was also advised of neighbourhood rezonings and of planned improvements for remaining frontages along Cordova Street.

Applicant's Opening Comments: James Cheng, Joseph Fry and John Wall of James Cheng Architects, joined the meeting for consideration of this item.

Mr. Cheng prefaced his comments noting that the guidelines for the area had been created 20 years prior. Referencing posted drawings, Mr. Cheng compared the project's floorplate with the nearby "Carina" noting that the project was slimmer at the top and wider at the bottom. Regarding the townhouse entrances on Cordova, Mr. Cheng advised that the area's guidelines did not recognize nor accommodate the City's more recent policy for "eyes on the street" and presented a design challenge for developers, and noted that the project continued the face of the other projects bordering the park.

Concerning the mechanical penthouse access, Mr. Cheng indicated support for it from a neighbouring project given that the overall height of the project had been dramatically reduced from the first model, and discussed its unique design features.

Joseph Fry discussed the landscape treatment of the forecourt and on Cordova; discussed access from the townhouses to the collector's path; and commented on the materials that would be used in various locations.

In response to questions, Mr. Cheng commented on the red travertine that was proposed in the project noting that it was intended to provide some contrast with surrounding buildings coloured mostly grey, white and black, and to add colour to Vancouver's skyline. He also discussed anticipated plans for the design of neighbouring buildings.

Panel's Comments: With respect to the podium setback on the west front corner, there was mixed support for the requested relaxation, and two Panel members indicated their preference to see the Bute Street corridor maintained as a public view corridor. No concerns were raised regarding the proposed setbacks on the project's eastern side.

The majority of Panel members advised of their support for the requested relaxation for the tower's floorplate with several commenting on the floorplate's exceptional design that improved the livability of units and increased their marketability while accentuating the tower's slimness and elegance. However, one member did express concern that 10% might be too great a relaxation.

Concerning the tower height, Panel members indicated their unanimous support for the relaxation, with one member commenting that the design helped to reduce the impact of the solid element at the top of the building.

Several Panel members commented that Cordova podium was the project's weakest side. Suggested improvements included further articulation of the townhouse entries and creation of a visual link to the lobby through an additional architectural feature. Alternately, two members commented that the design was a nice variation of the traditional townhouse entry design with its language being modern and adding to the diversity of the neighbourhood.

General comments regarding the project included that:

- it would be an excellent tower and a wonderful contribution to the skyline;
- parking ramp is oddly located and the effectiveness of the parking garage/courtyard relationship is questionable;
- podium is weak for the tower design and should be reconsidered and more articulated;
- re: top of tower feature, light fixtures are a concern, voltage would have to be very low because of light pollution issues;
- could review the extent of the red travertine use;
- emergency driveway could be mitigated by having a small unlocked gate nicely landscaped;
- the south side looks like the back of a building and could benefit from softened edges and more planting on the podium; and
- consider replacing the water feature with a townhouse.

Applicant's Response: Mr. Cheng expressed his appreciation for the Panel's comments and advised that they would be taken into consideration.

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2. Address: 651 Expo Boulevard (Costco)
DA: 407454
Use: Mixed (Retail/Residential) (4 towers 22-33 storeys)
Zoning: CD-1
Architect: James K.M. Cheng
Owner: Crestmark Developments Ltd.
Review: First (previous rezoning)
Delegation: Peter Webb, James Cheng, David Rogers, Joseph Fry
Staff: Jonathan Barrett
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EVALUATION: NON-SUPPORT (1-6)

Introduction: Jonathan Barrett, Development Planner, referencing various project models, introduced the application in the context of the surrounding neighbourhood. Mr. Barrett noted that the application featured approximately 900 units above the viaduct level, a Costco level taking up the floorplate, vertical circulation, and new street system from viaduct to viaduct with a more private street to the heart of the residential.

Mr. Barrett then reviewed rezoning conditions applicable to the project and its responses to each. The Panel was advised that staff considered that many of the rezoning issues had been addressed and were encouraged with the new design. Notwithstanding this, the Panel was asked to comment concerning:

- relationship between towers in terms of livability, spacial separation and privacy;
- residential character along the project's internal street; and
- reinforcement of residential character along the base of the towers.

In response to questions, Mr. Barrett advised that a neighbouring tower had been approved 10 years prior but had not been built, and commented that the distance between the towers was approximately 75 feet as opposed to the 80 foot separation typically sought by the City.

Applicant's Opening Comments: James Cheng, Joseph Fry, Peter Webb, and David Rogers joined the meeting for consideration of this item.

Mr. Cheng advised that this application was to originally have been two office towers with a connection to the SkyTrain route but that it had been changed to residential given the low demand for office space in the area. Members were advised that the project's floor plate had become larger as a result of varying the height of the towers, and it was offered that the 80 foot minimum between towers would be maintained through design development. As well, Mr. Cheng offered that the lack of townhouses on the interior would be addressed as a prior to condition.

Joseph Fry discussed the project's landscape design, and advised of particulars relating to the frontage including: street trees in front of townhouses; screening adjacent to the loading areas; seating edge in front of the main entry to Costco; and opportunities for signage. Mr. Fry noted that planting adjacent to the SkyTrain edge and viaduct would be encouraged, and discussed plans for double rows of street trees, retaining walls with hedge planting and private gardens. The Panel was informed that a Water feature would be used to create a sense of entry into the vehicle port, and that greenspace by the Armoury would be dedicated to the public.

Panel's Comments: Concerning the relationship between towers, the majority of Panel members indicated a preference for taller, slimmer towers that would have covered less of the site and been less dense, and suggested that three instead of four towers would have been the best solution. However, one member did offer that the separation was not too tight for the project's urban setting.

A Panel member commented that the internal residential character was not very exciting, while others offered that it would be influenced by relationship between the towers; was a good way of bringing down the speed on the viaduct; and that lessening density and opening more spaces in the site would allow for building up the edges with a more protected semi-private space for residents.

With regard to the base of the towers, a member commented that the viaducts did not lend themselves to townhouses and that their livability could be improved drastically. Another member commented that they could not rationalize townhouses below the massive structure and offered that the entries could be emphasized instead with a 4-5 storey apartment tower at the base. Alternately, several members commented that the design brought more visibility to the site, was good from a security point of view, and that more townhouses and less open lobbies would be preferred.

A member commented that the site had been established as a "texture" rather than "signature" tower site, and that it should be the latter - to which several members indicated their agreement. He offered that Georgia viaduct was a gateway from the east with characteristics of scale and appropriateness that should be recognized. As well, it was offered that there were different scales of manipulation for vehicle vs. pedestrian uses and that this site was incorrectly reflected in the latter context.

Further general comments from the Panel included:

- nothing at grade has a flow - everything is linear;
- the project will work in this area and will bring density to the area;
- support introduction of colour and would support a stronger scheme, i.e. towers in different colours;
- project offers a negative context of privileged upper level and lower level in darkness, an - upstairs/downstairs condition with Expo Boulevard suffering;
- east edge needs to be more solid;
- Costco element is vibrant and a great use;
- need to study what the shadows of the towers do to internal spaces;
- suggestion to remove the three townhouses to the north of the new street to create a large public space anchored by four towers; and
- pedestrian access to Beatty should be re-emphasized.

Applicant's Response: Mr. Cheng thanked the Panel for its comments and spoke of the challenges facing the project at the first piece in the City's longer 20 year vision, and as a link between the divergent neighbourhoods of the international village, Chinatown and the waterfront.

3. Address:	950 Quebec Street (939 Main Street)
Use:	Residential (22 storeys)
Zoning:	M-1 to CD-1
Architect:	Perkins & Co.
Owner:	Bosa Development Corp.
Review:	First
Delegation:	John Perkins, Eric Martin, Larry Diamond
Staff:	Jonathan Barrett

EVALUATION: NON-SUPPORT (3-4)

Introduction: Jonathan Barrett, Development Planner, introduced the rezoning application for 950 Quebec Street, noting that the intent of the review was to consider its use and form of development.

Referencing the project display model, Mr. Barrett discussed features of the proposed rezoning form of development and its response to the City's bridgehead guidelines, and sought the Panel's comments regarding:

- appropriateness of tower location and height;
- proposed floorplates, including their livability and spacial separation;
- height, scale and character of the lower built form
- parking access;
- character of corridors; and
- overall landscape intentions on streetscape and internal courtyard.

Applicant's Opening Comments: John Perkins, Eric Martin and Larry Diamond joined the meeting for consideration of this item.

Mr. Perkins indicated that the Panel's support for the project's parking access off of Millross instead of the lane was being sought given related security considerations. He indicated that the design featured a lobby overview to the parking residential and visitor access to provide eyes on the street, and also noted that support for the tower's height was requested.

Mr. Diamond discussed the project's landscape features and amenities for the public and residents recognizing security issues of the City Gate area. He noted that proposed plant and hard surface materials were in keeping with the City Gate language.

Mr. Martin offered further comments regarding the need for support for the parking access design given security issues relative to the area, particularly for passenger pick up and drop off. As well, he noted that the project's rationale for rezoning had public benefits including secondary access, and clean up of a highly contaminated site.

Panel's Comments: There was mixed response to the requested extra tower height. One Panel member offered that the impact on view corridors should be considered, and another indicated that the tower should be as high as the tallest on the street. There was concern expressed that this last tower fit into the intended streetscape tower assemblage.

It was offered that the floorplate was well handled and did not appear out of context, and that the facade design was sparse and required high quality materials to be successful. As well, it was offered that the lane was a missed opportunity that could be turned into a greenway and offered as a place for pedestrians to flow through to Chinatown and the water with townhouse units facing onto it.

Concerning parking access, comments included support for gentrifying the parking; that it set up nicely to the project of the south; that it should be more clearly defined; that more activity in the lane would bring it more to life; and that there was not a substantial difference between the lane and Millross.

Members offered that the treatment of single loaded corridors could be reviewed, and that the courtyard should be used more by the development with more openness to the west to allow for double loaded corridors, better utilization of the space, and improved livability of the units. Landscaping opportunities for the roof of the low rise were also pointed out.

The majority of Panel members commented that flipping the site design to locate the tower closer to the viaduct and the lower building on Millross with strong edging on the lane would make the courtyard much more usable. It was commented that the present design shadowed the main interior public space and did not create a noise buffer to the viaduct.

Further Panel comments included:

- motel style corridor access is inappropriate;
- the "upper West end" apartment styles are the wrong context and should be redesigned "hip";
- project will be a good looking addition to City Gate - support use and built form;
- low rises on the west and south require further design development;
- spacing should match what is between phases 4 and 5;
- southeast corner will be visible from Main Street and should be acknowledged; and
- roofscape is important from viaduct and towers - one larger gesture would be more appropriate.

Applicant's Response

Mr. Perkins thanked the Panel for its comments and advised that these would be taken into consideration.

4. Address:	900 Main Street
DA:	407398
Use:	Mixed
Zoning:	FC-1
Architect:	Harvey Hatch
Owner:	Ballenas Project Management
Review:	First
Delegation:	Barry McGinn, Wayne Fung, Peter Newall
Staff:	Bob Adair

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (4-2)

Introduction: Bob Adair, Planner 2 Facilitator, Enquiry Counter, referencing a project display model, introduced the application in the context of the surrounding neighbourhood. Members were informed that the proposal was to maintain and restore a Heritage B project for restaurant use with residential above and at the corner of Station and Prior streets. Mr. Adair advised that the applicant was requesting a number of relaxations along with the proposed heritage revitalization and reviewed these.

Mr. Adair advised that staff supported the requested relaxations and intended heritage revitalization, and requested the Panel to comment regarding:

- requested increase in residential floorspace;
- requested height relaxation;
- possible parking relaxations;
- massing, expression and detailing of the two new elements in relationship to each other and to the heritage portion (the bank);
- handling of two facades overhanging the bank;
- height and set back of penthouse on larger structure;
- treatment of cornices; and
- handling of individual unit entries on Station Street.

In response to questions, the Panel was advised of the Heritage Planner's support for the heritage revitalization scheme. It was offered that the applicant proposed to treat the structure in the most respectful manner possible and that the heritage component had been well handled with compatibility issues having been dealt with. The Heritage Commission's general support was also noted.

Applicant's Opening Comments: Barry McGinn, Wayne Fung and Peter Newall joined the meeting for consideration of this item.

Mr. McGinn discussed the project's massing strategy focussing on creating a separation between the bank and the new construction through a neutral zone between the two. He commented on the attempt to develop a podium and to not be too liberal about cornice references, and advised of the intent for a separate locked gate for loading and unloading given safety considerations relative to Station Street.

In response to questions Mr. McGinn advised that landscaping on the bank rooftop had not been pursued given that it would require a major seismic upgrading to the roof, and clarified that the project was for market housing - 62 units with a mixture of townhouses, loft units and a double height unit - in an "urban hip" style.

Panel's Comments: Concerning the project's requested FSR and height relaxations, members expressed support and indicated that the project would not be harmed by even greater height.

With regard to the expression of detailing for newer construction in relationship to each other and to the bank, several members offered that the heritage building deserved more space and felt too crowded. It was suggested that the buildings behind the bank could be combined to make the project more marketable and to give definition to the bank and that this would be a more marketable solution.

As well, it was commented that the northeast corner building finish was weak and unfinished; that the reveal strategy was good but did not go far enough; and that it was an interesting approach to have three different facades. It was also suggested that extending the roofs to provide deck coverage would be useful.

A majority of Panel members indicated that the Prior street new facade should be moved back to give the building a real corner and a better appreciation of the heritage building. It was further offered that the lower cornice should be deleted and that treatment of the canopies was quite important.

With regard to the unit entries on Station Street, a member commented that they seemed deep and narrow and felt dangerous, and suggested that they should be more opened with doors to the street instead of recessed. Several members agreed with these comments and offered that going in at grade would not be quite as attractive as having steps up.

Further general comments of the Panel members included:

- retail along Main Street seems bashful - hiding behind planters - and should be brought to the forefront;
- entry on Main should be given a certain amount of prominence;
- support in principle this gutsy project;
- like that bike parking has been privileged;
- concerned about how the interior heritage space will be turned into a restaurant with suggestion that space in the new construction should be allocated to its kitchen, washrooms, etc.;
- two storey base façade treatment could be deleted completely and let the building come to the ground with a presence;
- suggestion that the overall form should have east-west direction as its primary orientation and should treat Prior Street as a "side" rather than "primary" street; and
- parking relaxation would also be supportable.

Applicant's Response: Mr. McGinn thanked the Panel for its comments noting that have received good commentary pertinent to what has been struggled with.

5. Address: Pacific Boulevard Streetscape Design
Architect: Stacy Moriarty Landscape
Owner: City of Vancouver
Review: First
Delegation: Stacy Moriarty
Staff: Michael Gordon

Introduction: Michael Gordon, Senior Planner, Central Area Major Developments Group, introduced staff and the design consultant in attendance. Referencing a distributed paper titled "Pacific Boulevard: Principles for Street Design (adopted by Council May 2, 2002)", Mr. Gordon introduced the design principles for the project.

Consultant's Comments: Stacy Moriarty, Design Consultant, referencing posted drawings, introduced the proposed Boulevard design, including its flexible amenity areas, that would be considered by Council later in the month. She noted that the plan:

- converted existing parking to make it at level with the sidewalk;
- utilized experimental ways of planting trees to create a "Paris" feel;
- reduced the number of left hand turnbays;
- provided more pedestrian lighting spaced closer together with reduced wattage;
- brought in new pavements using soft materials to absorb water and reduce sound; and
- tied to the streetcar line.

Panel Questions and Discussion: In response to questions, Ms. Moriarty displayed the east and west streetcar routes, noting that there would be stops at Davie and at the Plaza of Nations.

Concerning the flexible amenity zone offered by raised parking at level with the sidewalk, Ms. Moriarty noted that it could be cordoned off to accommodate temporary uses such as flower stalls, seating areas, magazine kiosks, farmer's market, etc. A member raised the related question of whether street vendor business licenses would be relaxed on this street, to which it was responded that this was being considered. It was noted that methods of regulation would be worked out, i.e. through signage, and that no parking metres would be installed in that area.

Members commented on the opportunity that the Boulevard offered as a test case for controlling all parts of the streetscape, and discussed the importance of the details (i.e. signage, traffic lights, etc) as well as amenities. The Panel was informed that the Boulevard would have a custom street furniture package with the City line only used at transit stops.

Concerning the street car line, the Panel was informed that it would run from Granville Island to Stanley Park with a spur line to the Boulevard. A member responded that the streetcar would be a huge undertaking that required a lot of maintenance, and suggested that it should instead be located on the Seawall.

Several members commented that they were unconvinced about the habitation of centre median thinking it would be a decorative attraction but hardly used, particularly given its proximity to the water's edge. Alternately, it was suggested that the median could be excellently used as a throughway at planned crossings.

Members were also informed that there would be a created space between Drake and Cambie for changing artwork and approaches that would be opened to performances and interpretation by the arts community.

A member commented that it would require twice the density to make the streetscape work. As well, it was noted that retailers would likely rather have people walking on their side of the street than in the median, and offered that the median could encourage jaywalking. Further comment was that the heights of canopies were challenging in terms of creating a sense of enclosure and intimacy and that lower canopies would be critical to creating a good street.

Ms. Moriarty and Mr. Gordon responded to further questions noting that:

- the project would be phased in with the bulk of it being done in the next two to four years;
- bollards would be aligned in the high street area to prevent cars from driving on the sidewalk and to reinforce the line of trees;
- boulders used would be local and of similar material - untreated for a rough, earthy feeling;
- paving in intersection would be zebra striped in paint with a higher safety standard;
- an urban design study of the area under the Granville Bridge was being undertaken to consider possible development opportunities.

Panel members expressed that it was great to see a City street receiving the same level of attention that had gone into the planning of Vancouver's buildings.

6. Other Business: The Panel was consulted regarding the schedule of a special presentation from two world renowned architects on highrises and a Panel meeting. Support was expressed for scheduling activities as follows:

Thursday, June 19, 2003
3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Workshop
5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. dinner break
7:00 p.m. evening lecture

Friday, June 20, 2003:
9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Urban Design Panel meeting

Members were also informed that Helen Basharat would chair the next meeting.

7. Adjournment

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 9:27 p.m.