
URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: April 7, 1999

TIME: 4.00 p.m.

PLACE: Committee Room #1, City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
Joseph Hruda (Chair) (Item #1 only)
Patricia Campbell
Sheldon Chandler
James Cheng
Per Christoffersen
Paul Grant
Roger Hughes (Chair, Item #2)
Sean McEwan
Gilbert Raynard
Keith Ross
Norman Shearing (present for #2 only)

REGRETS: Joe Werner

**RECORDING
SECRETARY:** Carol Hubbard

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING
1. 600 Nicola Street (1400 West Hastings Street)
2. 400 Great Northern Way

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| 1. Address: | 600 Nicola Street (<i>1400 West Hastings</i>) |
| Use: | Commercial and Residential |
| Zoning: | CWD to CD-1 |
| Application Status: | Rezoning |
| Architect: | Henriquez & Partners |
| Owner: | Marathon Development |
| Review: | First |
| Delegation: | Richard Henriquez |
| Staff: | Mike Kemble, Michael Gordon |
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EVALUATION: SUPPORT (9-0)

- **Introduction:** The Development Planner, Mike Kemble, reviewed this application. Although it was included in the original Coal Harbour Development Plan, this particular site (Lot 7) currently has no zoning attached to it. Situated at the southeast corner of West Hastings and Nicola Streets, the site is a long, narrow parcel, approximately 60 ft. x 300 ft. Consolidation with properties immediately to the south on Pender Street was considered earlier but not pursued. The proposal is for a 7-storey building with a mews between it and the upland buildings. Michael Gordon, Senior Planner, advised a primary concern of staff relates to the impact on the neighbouring Pender Street properties, i.e., whether the separation is acceptable and whether it compromises the development potential of the upland properties. The Panel's advice is sought on whether the proposed building should be re-shaped to respond to its neighbours. Mr. Gordon noted this is a demonstration project whereby the applicant has been asked to look at live/work uses for the building. Advice on this aspect of the proposal are also sought from the Panel in terms of any urban design implications, as well as comments on the ground plane treatment and setbacks. Mr. Gordon added, a major rationale for the proposed building configuration is that it offers some relief from the tower-on-podium form that is prevalent in the area.
- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Richard Henriquez, Architect, noted the Coal Harbour ODP states that the shape of Coal Harbour is a defining feature that should be used to develop a unique place. By the same token, they have attempted to utilize the long, skinny shape of this site to create a unique project. They have also attempted to provide a better interface with the adjacent buildings by creating a mews at the lane. Mr. Henriquez noted, the tower/podium alternative does not take advantage of the uniqueness of this site and results in an ungainly building. He briefly described the proposal.
- **Panel's Comments:** After reviewing the model and posted drawings, the Panel commented as follows:

The Panel unanimously supported this application for rezoning.

There was strong support for the proposed live/work concept which was seen as something that will add some diversity to the Coal Harbour neighbourhood in terms of housing types and commercial/retail opportunities. The Panel agreed with the applicant's massing solution for the site and welcomed the departure from the podium/tower pattern of development in this area. The reference to marine architecture in the building form was supported, although one Panel member considered it too literal.

The proposed mews was also positively received. The development of a mews/lane relationship in the city is a welcome initiative that will also add spatial diversity to this neighbourhood. There were some suggestions that perhaps the nature of the mews might be explored further at the next stage of development. It was recommended to consider including some covered areas in the space, done in such a way that it still allows light to reach the ground plane. The heavy reliance on trees was questioned by one Panel member who suggested they might not thrive in this shaded location. It was recommended to consider something other than planting to help support the mews in its structure. It was noted that the success of the mews will depend a lot of the uses that front on it. Some Panel members felt it was critical that the “other half” of the mews be developed when the upland properties are redeveloped, and that this proposal should set the context for this to occur. At the next stage of development, careful attention should be given to public safety and security aspects of the mews. Anything that can be done to increase the sense of visual transparency will be helpful in this respect.

The majority of Panel members supported the built form and density and felt the applicant had satisfactorily demonstrated the redevelopment potential of the upland properties on Pender Street. Some members felt strongly that the preservation of private views was not appropriate, beyond ensuring sufficient light access and giving some regard to the loss of views by manipulating and opening up the end a bit, which would also make it more welcoming to pedestrians. Some Panel members, however, expressed serious concerns about blocking the views of the uplands buildings and felt they deserved greater consideration in the scheme. In this respect, it was suggested there may be too much built form and density on this site.

2. Address:	400 Great Northern Way
Use:	School and Church
Zoning:	CD-1
Application Status:	Rezoning
Architect:	R. Y. Ching
Owner:	St. Francis Xavier Church
Review:	First
Delegation:	Raymond Ching, Joe Hruda, Doug Purdy
Staff:	Rob Whitlock/Anita Molaro

EVALUATION: NON-SUPPORT (0-9)

- **Introduction:** Rob Whitlock, Rezoning Planner, introduced this application. He stressed the context of the site is currently undergoing some change, in particular the Finning site to the north which is being considered for a high tech business park. The existing CD-1 zoning allows industrial uses only and for many years this site contained an industrial equipment rental business. The proposal is to change the use to institutional to allow the development of an elementary school (400 students), a 1,400-seat church with a basement hall and underground parking. The RM-4 neighbourhood to the south and east provides a considerable amount of affordable housing. It is, however, also a high crime area containing a number of “problem premises” which generate a high level of complaints relating to illicit drug activity and prostitution. For this reason, this application does not propose the integration of the site with the community at this time, but rather seeks to ensure the on-site safety and security of the students and church members. Proposed FSR is 0.86, and the height ranges between 28 ft. and 62 ft.

Anita Molaro, Development Planner, reviewed the aspects of the proposal on which the advice of the Panel is sought, namely, the organization of the uses on the site and the distribution of the mass on the site, including the building height and setbacks. The Panel’s comments are also sought on the Great Northern Way and 5th Avenue streetscape, the treatment of the street ends, the intersection of Brunswick Street and Great Northern Way, the orientation of the daycare play area and its relationship to the school, and the location of the small office use.

- **Applicant’s Opening Comments:** Joe Hruda reviewed the amendments that have been made to the scheme as a result of the changing context, noting the changes to the built form relate to preserving street end views. He described the proposal and the design rationale. Doug Purdy noted the public information meeting raised concerns about the intersection of Brunswick and 2nd Avenue and the traffic issues in the neighbourhood but there was strong support for the development.
- **Panel’s Comments:** After reviewing the model and posted drawings, the Panel commented as follows:

The Panel supported the proposed use and saw the proposal as an interesting opportunity both in terms of the design and as a means of improving the neighbourhood. Security of the site was acknowledged as a major issue and a challenge for this project

The Panel expressed serious concerns about the approach being taken with respect to the relationship of this development to the immediate neighbourhood. The Panel was unanimous in the opinion that

5th Avenue should not be closed off to the site, but that some effort should be made at integration with the neighbourhood. While negative conditions may exist currently, this area will undoubtedly evolve and improve over time. This should be acknowledged in this development with a more normalized approach, and ways found to deal with the security issues in the meantime.

The Panel did not agree with the need to preserve street end views in this location, noting the important street end views in the city relate to the water's edge and other established view cones. Views to the north will undoubtedly be affected by the evolving context across Great Northern Way in any event. The views down into the site, however, do provide an interesting urban design opportunity that should be taken advantage of. For example, more could be made of the City right-of-way at the end of St. George Street, perhaps creating a small park with stair access down to Great Northern Way.

Access to the site was a major issue for the Panel, the underground drop-off being of particular concern. The majority of Panel members thought the access should be off 5th Avenue to alleviate what was considered to be a confusing and unworkable drop-off and parking arrangement. Another suggestion was to integrate a layby on Great Northern Way with a courtyard created between the church and the school.

It was thought there should be more of a connection between the gymnasium and the church. With respect to site planning, the majority of Panel members thought the location of the school and the church should be reversed. It was felt that the church, as the more significant urban design element and landmark building, would be better at the west end of the site. The linear nature of the site makes it difficult to create useful open spaces and choices of play for the children. One Panel member thought it was a missed opportunity not to combine the programs of the school and the church so that more open space could be provided. Another suggestion was to have a smaller floorplate for the school and increase its height in order to create more room on the site for circulation.

The 5.0 m setback on Great Northern Way was supported because it would allow for substantial landscaping which would help to tame the harsh nature of this street.

The Panel was unable to support the rezoning application at this time and suggested a major rethinking with respect to the disposition of the elements on the site as well as the traffic access and circulation issues.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Hrudá noted that the integration of 5th Avenue is a real dilemma for this project because the residents have very serious concerns about its potential impact on their neighbourhood. He noted they have had considerable discussion about the positioning of the elements on the site and concluded that locating the church at the other end was not a friendly approach to the neighbourhood. They felt the library was much more sympathetic in terms of its scale to respond to the pedestrian nature of that corner. Doug Purdy noted the topography of the site was also a major influence in locating the elements and achieving the parking requirements. He said access has also been a major issue and they would be pleased to provide a layby if this was acceptable to Engineering. With respect to the traffic on Great Northern Way, he noted the traffic study indicates that the volume of traffic on Great Northern Way is far less than on other major routes in the city. Regarding the Panel's negative response to cordoning off the school from the neighbourhood, Mr. Purdy noted that any school (public or private) on a major street has the playground area cordoned off for safety reasons, and they have tried to make the fencing as sympathetic as possible. He reiterated that the neighbourhood has expressed strong concerns about the potential impact on 5th Avenue, especially relating to traffic. Raymond Ching, Architect, advised the project will be built in phases, the first of which will be the school.

