

## URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

**DATE:** April 8, 2009

**TIME:** 4.00 pm

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

**PRESENT:** MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:  
Martin Nielsen, Chair  
Richard Henry  
Bruce Haden  
Steve McFarlane, Excused Item #3  
Maurice Pez  
Gerry Eckford  
Douglas Watts  
Vladimir Mikler, Excused Item #2  
David Godin

**REGRETS:**  
Mark Ostry  
Oliver Lang  
Jane Durante

**RECORDING SECRETARY:** Lorna Harvey

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ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING	
1.	2215 West 10 <sup>th</sup> Avenue (St. John's School)
2.	2665 Renfrew Street
3.	553 West 7 <sup>th</sup> Avenue

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**BUSINESS MEETING**

Chair Wall called the meeting to order at 4:10 p.m. and noted the presence of a quorum. There being no New Business the meeting considered applications as scheduled for presentation.

1. Address: 2215 West 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue (St. John's School)  
DE: 412688  
Description: to renovate the existing elementary/secondary school located at 2215 West 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue and to expand the school on the remainder of the site, with vehicle access from lane.  
  
Zoning: C-7  
Application Status: Complete  
Architect: Cornerstone Architecture  
Owner: St. John's School  
Review: First  
Delegation: Simon Richards, Cornerstone Architecture  
Peter Kreuk, Durante Kreuk Ltd.  
Brian Callahan, St. John's School  
Laurie Schmidt, Brook & Associates  
  
Staff: Dale Morgan

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

- **Introduction:** Dale Morgan introduced the proposal for an addition and renovations to an existing K-12 private school. The building program includes a new administration area, classrooms, gymnasium, theatre and underground parking. The site is located in the C-7 district and the school has been in its present location since 1993. The existing building is a conversion of 3 storey office building and is approximately 35 years old. Mr. Morgan described the context and zoning for the area. Mr. Morgan noted that an Open House was held in November. The turn out was modest and no issues of great concern were heard from the neighbourhood.

The new 3-storey addition has maintained a zero setback along the front property lines, consistent with the existing conditions along the front and side yards. The new construction will be separated from the existing building with a landscaped forecourt that also serves as a play area. The edge of this forecourt has an older existing screened bicycled storage area that is secured from street access. The second and third floor levels are contiguous with the existing floor levels, with the main floor two feet lower to meet the street grade and the gymnasium level which slopes to meet the grade at the sidewalk on West 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue. There will be one level of parking accessed from the lane, for a total number of 69 stalls based on staff population for the school which is estimated at 71 staff members. In addition there will be one covered class B loading space and two spaces for buses.

There is an east lobby entrance off Yew Street, a main entry plus three other entry points off West 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue, an additional two exits from the gym, and exits from the gym and corridor as well as stairs all exiting to the lane.

The existing wing will comprise the kindergarten, lunchroom, and meeting rooms on the first floor with classrooms on the second and third floors. The Junior School will retain its own entry. The existing gymnasium will be converted into a raked auditorium/theatre space with fixed seats and stage. It will have access from the first floor and balcony level on the second floor. Adjacent to it on the first level will be the new library with windows

of either glass block or obscured glass flush with the lane elevation. The new wing will have administration and the main entry to the school and a full size gymnasium with an art wing on the second floor.

Mr. Morgan described the materials and landscaping noting the existing mature trees along West 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue. There will be an additional two new trees added. The outer boulevard will be finished in permeable concrete and the existing street trees on Yew Street will remain.

Regarding sustainability, Mr. Morgan noted that although, the applicant had addressed sustainability in their written submission, it staff's understanding that it is not their intention to seek LEED™ accreditation or its equivalency.

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

**Architectural Expression:**

Does the building successfully address the Guideline requirement for smaller scale elements, with the massing broken down into smaller, finer grain elements, and a variety of material choices, while at the same maintaining an overall cohesiveness to the expression of the school?

**Entrance Identification**

Should the main entry be more strongly expressed and separated from secondary entry portals?

**Lane Treatment**

A two foot landscape setback, although not a requirement of the C-7 was requested by staff as part of the conditional earning. Comments are requested on the lane treatment and possible improvements.

**Privacy & Noise Impacts**

Have these been successfully resolved with the C-3A neighbour across the lane?

Mr. Morgan took questions from the Panel.

- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** Simon Richards, Architect, further described the proposal noting that the long façade will be broken up into four distinct pieces. The materials include brick, which defines the character of the neighbourhood. Mr. Richards noted that the community will be able to use the theatre and will use the Yew Street entrance. Above the entrance is spandrel glass in the school's colours. With the lane treatment, Mr. Richards noted that they tried to acknowledge the relationship with the neighbours and to allow for privacy and noise impacts. The roof will be developed and used by the school during recess and lunch hour. It will not be part of the athletics program. Regarding sustainability, Mr. Richards noted that the school has decided not to certify the building. The school has gone through a couple of workshops and has identified a number of strategies, including minimizing long term energy use.

Peter Kruek, Landscape Architect, described the landscaping plans for the upper roof deck adding that it will be a supervised space and only used during school hours. The streetscape on West 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue is dominated by the existing trees with a few trees new trees being added. A permeable surface will be used on the boulevard to deal with the amount of pedestrian traffic in the drop off area.

Applicant team took questions from the Panel.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
  - Consider some refinement to the architecture for a simpler and more dominant expression;
  - Design development, including architectural treatment, to the large party wall;
  - Design development to the entrances in order to provide stronger identity and shelter; and
  - Consider softening the lane edge with additional landscaping and more transparency into program elements.
- **Related Commentary:** The Panel supported the proposal and applauded the applicant for taking on the upgrading of an urban school.

The Panel supported this type of facility in the neighbourhood where there is a lot of family housing. They liked the use of brick and the contemporary quality of the proposal. However, they did feel that the design was trying to deal with a lot of issues and thought there should be some design development and a refinement of the architecture. Several Panel members suggested the design could have a more dominate theme and a simpler expression.

The Panel supported the massing but thought the new building lacked some transparency. Several Panel members thought it would help to integrate the buildings if the contrast between the old and new was not too strong.

They encouraged the applicant to continue with the theme of the precast concrete and brick in other areas of the building. They also thought the large party wall needed to be addressed as they thought it was a mistake to leave it exposed.

The Panel thought the entrances were not well expressed, and encouraged the applicant to reconsider there design to make them more welcoming. They also thought some shelter should be provided for students waiting to be picked up. They felt some design development needed to be done on the entrance on Yew Street since it will be used for more public access. The Panel thought a canopy or other gesture should be made to mark that entrance. Several Panel members applauded the applicant for using the old gym for a theatre that could be used by the community and for using the community park for school activities.

The Panel thought there were opportunities along the lane to soften the edge. One Panel member suggested changing the materials to help break up the façade more dramatically. Another Panel member thought there were some benefit in adding the two foot setback but felt that it didn't need to be along the whole lane but could be in select locations as a way to introduce landscape elements. However, a couple of Panel members suggested taking a larger bit out of one area to make for a more worthwhile space. There was also some concern regarding graffiti and thought having a CPTED approach was important.

The Panel supported the roof terrace and thought it would be a benefit for the building overlooking the space. Most of the Panel thought it was reasonable to have the sounds of children playing in an urban school setting.

Several Panel members noted that West 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue was a bike route and suggested having signage or painting strips on the street to delineate between the bikes and vehicles. They agreed that not allowing parking on the street was also helpful.

The Panel acknowledged the applicants sustainability strategy and thought it was refreshing to see a commitment to something other than the LEED™ Checklist. However, the applicant was encouraged to generate a list of measurable targets.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Richards said he was surprised with the comments about the front entry but he agreed that there was some work that could be done on the lane. He noted that transparency from the lane into the building may not be a good idea but will look for more transparency in the rest of the building.

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2. Address:	2665 Renfrew Street
DE:	N/A
Description:	Increase office use component and height to enable a phased development of office/retail uses in three buildings.
Zoning:	I-2
Application Status:	Rezoning
Architect:	Musson Cattell Mackey Partnership
Owner:	Renfrew Business Centre
Review:	First
Delegation:	Mark Thompson, Musson Cattell Mackey Partnership Chris Sterry, PWL Partnership Mark Shuparski, Pacific Capital Real Estate
Staff:	Sailen Black/Michael Naylor

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**EVALUATION: NON-SUPPORT (1-6)**

- **Introduction:** Michael Naylor, Rezoning Planner, introduced the proposal for a rezoning application at the corner of East 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Renfrew Street, immediately west of the Broadway Tech Centre site and north of the Renfrew SkyTrain Station. The site is zoned I-2 and the applicant is requesting a rezoning to a CD-1 (Comprehensive Development) District. The purpose of the rezoning is not to increase the overall density permitted, which is 3.0 FSR under I-2, but to increase the amount of General Office space permitted on the site, which under I-2 is restricted to a maximum of approximately 1/3 of the overall density allowed. The rezoning would also allow for an increase to the maximum allowable height, from 100 feet to approximately 163 feet for the tallest building proposed.

The Metro Core Jobs and Economy Land Use Plan recognized that the core area of the city cannot deliver all of the needed jobs and that sites outside the core need to be considered. Grandview Boundary Industrial Area Rezoning and Development Policies and Guidelines supports small scale retail and service uses within close proximity to transit stations, and further supports high-technology industry which have a high worker density close to transit. The Plan calls for heights up to 100 feet with streetwall buildings, underground parking and pedestrian amenities.

Mr. Naylor noted that the EcoDensity Action Items A-1 and A-2 both apply to this site, asked the applicant to speak to how the proposal responds to each of the Action Items.

Sailen Black, Development Planner, further described the proposal noting the site is bounded by Renfrew Street, Kaslo Street, East 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue and a lane. The site was formerly the Real Canadian Wholesale Club and is soon to include the Art Institute of Vancouver. Mr. Black described the context and zoning for the area. The site is currently I-2 and is intended to permit industrial and services uses which may be incompatible with the residential uses. General office use is allowed but is limited. The proposal is for a mixed-use development to include office, retail and a vocational school. The building on the site will be phased.

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

1. Relationship to nearby residential sites;
2. Distribution of massing across the site;
3. Urban design of the plaza level, e.g. relationship between pedestrian movement, vehicle routes and outdoor amenity space.

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

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- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** Mark Thompson, Architect, further described the proposal noting the site is about 109,000 square feet and slopes about 20 feet from one corner to the other. Mr. Thompson noted the plans to enhance the pedestrian connectivity through the site as well as the future plans to extend under the Skytrain guideway. He added that the proposed development will offer a series of open spaces with a pedestrian link to the Art Institute building. Mr. Thompson described the sustainability plans noting that the City's EcoDensity actions have been considered and will be incorporated into the project.

Chris Sterry, Landscape Architect, described the landscape plans for the proposal and noted the open spaces and pedestrian and vehicular circulation plans. Renfrew Street frontage will be wide enough for seating spaces. The mid-level roof terraces will provide landscaped amenity spaces with the larger terraces north of buildings 3 and 4 allowing for urban agriculture. Mr. Sterry described the plans for the sustainability strategy noting the use of native vegetation and green roofs.

The applicant team took questions from the Panel.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
  - Design development to better integrate the Art Institute building into the site;
  - Design development to better distribute the massing in relationship to the residential area;
  - Design development to increase the quality of the shared urban open space;
  - Design development to clarify pedestrian and vehicle access and internal circulation to the site.
- **Related Commentary:** The Panel did not support the proposal but did support the use, density and height.

The Panel supported the type of application and the reusing of the existing structure on the site for the Art Institute. The Panel supported the office use in particular and thought the proposal would provide the benefit of accommodating a number of high quality jobs for the area.

Although the Panel agreed that providing a building for the Art Institute was a good idea, they had concerns that the building was not integrated well with the rest of the design. They also thought the distribution of the mass in relationship to the residential was not well handled noting that it was not the usual zoning context. The Panel had some concerns with the way the three buildings came together and were also concerned with the height of the two buildings in Phase 2 and 4. One Panel member suggested the scheme would be more successful if the western most building was corrected to have the same height as its nearest neighbour. It was noted that the low density of the AI building compromised the massing of the rest of the site, with several Panel members suggesting that the scheme would be stronger if the density was redistributed to the Art Institute building. Several Panel members suggested the tower beside the SkyTrain station be taller as they supported additional density and office use in this location.

The Panel thought there was not enough shared public space that could be used by the office workers and the Art Institute, with a number of Panel members suggesting there needed to be an outside patio area. Furthermore the public space on the site seemed to be compromised and looked essentially to be a left over space between the three buildings. They also thought the raised plaza was not ideal and that the pedestrian circulation was unsuccessful in getting people from transit to the buildings. One Panel member suggested the upper and lower plaza should share the same level.

The Panel supported the sustainability strategy.

It was requested the application come back to the Panel at the development permit stage.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Thompson noted that there had been a public consultation with no objections from the neighbourhood. He added that the adjacent area would likely remain residential. The applicant plans to look at additional height near the SkyTrain station and thought the Panel had some good comments.



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3. Address:	553 West 7 <sup>th</sup> Avenue
DE:	412757
Description:	The development of a six-storey residential apartment with three levels of underground parking having vehicle access from the lane.
Zoning:	C3-A
Application Status:	Complete
Architect:	Matthew Cheng Architects
Owner:	Terry Lai
Review:	First
Delegation:	Matthew Cheng, Matthew Cheng Architects Allison Good, DMG Landscape Architects
Staff:	Bob Adair

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

- **Introduction:** Bob Adair, Development Planner, introduced the proposal situated on the north side of West 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue, one block west of Cambie Street in the Fairview Slopes Sub Area of the Central Broadway C3-A zoning district. Mr. Adair described the context for the area noting the heights in the surrounding buildings. There is no lane and the site is serviced by 20 foot right-of-way which comes all the way from Ash Street on the west. Mr. Adair noted that West 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue is a bike route. The proposal is for a six-storey multiple dwelling with 20 units and parking for 21 cars, located underground and accessed from the rear. Outright density is 1.0 FSR with a maximum conditional density of 3.0 FSR. The proposed FSR is 2.89, just under the maximum FSR but because of the increase in FSR, the application will go to the Development Permit Board. The proposed height is 68 feet which is above the 30 feet outright height permitted but is within the maximum 70 feet recommended by the C3-A Guidelines. The entry will be from West 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue with a floor level ramping up slightly inside the building so that ground floor units are a couple of feet above the level of the sidewalk. The main floor units are single storey flats with the westerly unit having an entry from the street. The western portion of the building in elevation has a front setback that matches the western neighbour. The exterior materials are primarily painted concrete with some metal panel systems. The east sidewall is concrete block with some textured block. There is an indoor amenity space in the basement level of the building. The Panel received information on the applicant's sustainability strategies at the beginning of the meeting. The proposed development is aiming at the LEED certified level and the applicant's approach will focus on five key areas. These include site selection, passive solar control, renewable energy and resource efficiency, construction materials and recycling and economic sustainability.

Mr. Adair described the criteria that the Development Permit Board is required to consider in granting discretionary increases in height and FSR.

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

- Commentary on the earning of the proposed increase in density and the height;
- Comments on the relationship between the ground floor units to the streets in terms of the unit types, relationship to the street and the livability of the units in terms of outlook and privacy;
- The massing of the upper floors of the building and the relationship to adjacent buildings in terms privacy and overview;
- The treatment of the exposed east wall; and
- The treatment of the public realm along West 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** Matthew Cheng, Architect, noted that the building was designed to respond to the neighbours. One neighbouring building is an eight storey building and the other is four storeys. The setback was designed with landscaping to mitigate the closeness to the street and to improve the livability of the two ground floor units on West 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue. The proposed six storey massing of the building is a transition between the eight storey mass and the four storey. There is a fair amount of fenestration on the building on the north and south facades.

Allison Good, Landscape Architect described the landscaping plans for the proposal noting the front façade will continue the streetscape from the adjacent property while also providing for bike parking. It is a fairly urban condition although texture has been added to the pedestrian edge. There is some landscaping planned for the laneway and as well some plantings are planned for the patio edge on the third floor for some privacy for those units from the adjacent property.

Staff and the applicant team took questions from the Panel.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
  - Design development to the ground level entry plaza and allocation of the bike space;
  - Design development to the third floor balcony regarding privacy issues;
  - Consider other treatments to the east blank wall; and
  - Stronger commitment to sustainable design strategies.
- **Related Commentary:** The Panel supported the proposal recognizing that it was a difficult site.

The Panel supported the height and density as well as the overall massing on the site. They felt the 2.9 FSR could be accommodated on the site and that the height worked well. The Panel also agreed that it would be a "background" building in the area. Several Panel members thought the building could be simplified as there were almost too many design responses. There was a concern from the Panel regarding the ground level entry condition and the relationship of the entry to the small plaza area and the allocation of the adjacent bike space.

The Panel thought the privacy issues were well handled with the exception of the third floor balcony screening. One Panel member pointed out that the grasses would die off in the winter months and would result in the loss of the screen and privacy. He suggested adding a physical screen as well as the landscaped one.

Regarding the treatment of the east wall, the Panel was not excited about the patterning which appeared to mimic punched windows and felt it needed further design development. However, the Panel did recognize that there was an effort to use a higher quality material on the blank wall.

A couple of Panel members were concerned with the lack of amenity space with one member suggesting there could be roof access. There was concern that the amenity space in the basement would not be used. It was suggested that a more meaningful amenity room could be created by taking space from the mechanical room with windows added for daylighting.

The Panel was disappointed with the sustainability strategies. They felt there could be more of a commitment to sustainability noting that a copy of the strategies had only been handed to the Panel before the presentation. It was noted that on such a tight site there was little opportunity to play with the orientation. The natural benefit to the site is that it

is shaded by the building to the east. The north and south sides of the building need to be handled properly and the applicant was encouraged to consider improving the envelope. The projecting floor slabs, while providing some shading in summer will also cause heat loss in the winter. One Panel member noted that the north and south face of the building was almost all glass and that it could be reduced without impacting the views from the building. The Panel encouraged the applicant to go beyond LEED™ requirements noting that the City had adopted the ASHRA standard.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Cheng had no additional comments.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.