

URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: August 2, 2006

TIME: 4.00 pm

PLACE: Committee Room No. 1, City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
Margot Long, Chair (Item 1)
Walter Francl, Chair (Items 2 and 3)
Nigel Baldwin (excused Item 2)
Shahla Bozorgzadeh
Tom Bunting
Eileen Keenan
Bill Harrison
John Wall
C.C. Yao

REGRETS: Albert Bicol
James Cheng
Peter Wreglesworth

RECORDING SECRETARY: Carol Hubbard

Note: The Recorder was not present at the meeting. These minutes were composed from the audio recording and some notes.

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING	
1.	1409-1477 West Pender Street
2.	1808 West 1st Avenue
3.	1100 Granville Street (Chateau Granville)

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| 1. Address: | 1409-1477 West Pender Street |
| DE: | Rezoning |
| Use: | Residential, Retail, Live/Work, Restaurant |
| Zoning: | DD to CD-1 |
| Application Status: | Rezoning |
| Architect: | Martin Bruckner of HB/IBI |
| Owner: | Reliance Properties Ltd. |
| Review: | First |
| Delegation: | Jim Hancock, Jennifer Stamp, Jon Stovell |
| Staff: | Phil Mondor, Ralph Segal |
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EVALUATION: SUPPORT (3-2)

- **Introduction:** Phil Mondor, Rezoning Planner, provided a brief overview of the context and background of the rezoning application and noted the applicant sought public input at an open house held in mid June. The site is located within the "Triangle West" precinct of the Downtown District. In January 2005, the applicant applied to rezone 1409 West Pender Street to allow a 20-storey tower with access to parking below grade from Broughton Street. However, the site was small with difficult access arrangements and it proved to be unworkable. The development site has now been expanded and encompasses the entire block.

The application seeks two residential towers on the site, which was anticipated when Council approved guidelines for the block. The proposal is for a 30-storey (340 ft.) tower at the westerly end, and a 15-storey (160 ft.) tower at the easterly end, joined by a podium of live/work uses with retail at grade. Requested density is 10.6 FSR. 6.0 FSR is the maximum allowable in this district. The earlier rezoning application sought 13.6 FSR. With respect to public benefit to be derived from this application, Mr. Mondor noted the applicant owns a property in Gastown (55 Water Street) which has a significant amount of heritage density available for transfer to this site. Heritage density transfer is identified as a major community amenity among the rezoning recommendations for consideration by Council.

Ralph Segal, Development Planner, referring to the model, conducted a review of the proposal and discussed the various options that might be considered within the zoning and the guidelines. He identified the surrounding buildings and described how the area has been developed to date. He sought the advise of the Panel in the following areas:

- whether the massing (tower positions, proportions, street relationship) achieves an appropriate fit with the surrounding context while minimizing impacts of views, shadowing, privacy, etc.;
- whether the proposed height relaxation from 300 ft. to 340 ft. is appropriate;
- whether the proposed zero street setback street edges are acceptable, noting the guidelines call for 2 m. street setbacks;
- whether the proposed additional density (from zoned maximum of 6.6 to 10.6 FSR) is satisfactorily accommodated on this site;
- appropriateness of the public realm interface.

Mr. Segal responded to questions from the Panel and noted that, in general, staff consider the massing to be a very interesting form with a number of positive aspects.

- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** Jim Hancock, Architect, noted they considered five different schemes for the site but determined this option caused less view obstruction and shadowing. Jon Stovell, Developer, explained the heritage density is proposed to be transferred from two sites, 55 Water Street and 210 Carrall Street, both of which provide rental accommodation and live/work uses in accordance with Council policy for Gastown and the Downtown Eastside. He said they believe the design guidelines for the block allow for a significant amount of density on the site and a large heritage density transfer, in a way that is respectful of the neighbourhood. Jennifer Stamp, Landscape Architect, provided a brief overview of landscape plan and the applicant team responded to questions from the Panel.
- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - Mixed reaction to the height;
 - Major concern with the separation between taller tower and the neighbouring Dockside building although the smaller tower works quite well in its context;
 - Concerns that the density is quite tight, with some suggestions that this could be mitigated by reallocating some of the density around the site;
 - Mixed opinions as to whether the requested density is demonstrated to be earned, although given this is a very challenging site it has the potential to be earned by the architecture;
 - Strong support for the live/work component on West Pender Street which could contribute to alleviating ongoing concerns about the loss of commercial space in the area.
- **Related Commentary:**

The Panel supported this application.

It was acknowledged that the scheme has some interesting sculptural qualities and that the applicant has clearly worked hard to find a good fit for the density on this very tight site. However, the Panel considered that a lot more work and fine-tuning is needed to make it work successfully. A comment was made that for a project that achieves the requested density on a very narrow, challenging site, it is extremely well done.

The majority of Panel members thought the proposed height of the westerly tower was supportable although some Panel members found it difficult to assess because of the overriding concern about the tight relationship to the Dockside building which the Panel found unacceptable. Compared to typical tower relationships throughout the downtown, the separation from Dockside seems too constricted and is the main detriment to making this project a good fit in the neighbourhood. One Panel member found the interface of the middle section to Dockside to appear "forced" and not fitting well.

Most Panel members thought the 2 m setback requirement should be met, notwithstanding the challenges of this very tight site. One Panel member suggested it might be worth exploring robotic parking which would provide greater freedom to move the core to the centre of the site and avoid the high blank concrete wall on West Pender Street.

There were no concerns about the lower, easterly tower which was thought to work well in its context. A comment was made that at the pedestrian level this tower has a very nice relationship to the park and its prow over the park is an interesting and compelling form. The applicant was encouraged to highlight these good qualities of the scheme. The relationship to the pumphouse plaza was also supported and it was thought that the restaurant will help to animate and create an active street corner. More work on the Pender/Nicola corner was also recommended, not as a major public open space but as an important intersection in the city that includes a large tower.

The live/work use units were strongly supported and it was noted they seem to be genuine live/work with the potential for retail space at ground level and an authentic townhouse above. This will contribute well to street level animation. There was one suggestion to explore making the townhouses more interesting by providing private internal courtyards which allow good southerly light access and make them more permeable from the street.

There was some concern about the loss of commercial space in the area. While the increased residential use may be good for the neighbourhood, the loss of commercial space is a challenge and affects the potential for retail to work successfully. In this respect, the live/work component of the project on West Pender Street is a very positive aspect of the project.

One Panel member expressed concern about the livability of the units on the north side of the westerly tower.

Although it was acknowledged that architecture is not generally a major issue at the rezoning stage, the Panel thought it was an important consideration for this site and this context. The requested density should be tied to design excellence and more details and information are needed to demonstrate to how the height, density and subtle relationship issues are resolved and made to work architecturally. While the Panel thought the architecture as shown could work, it is not yet proven out. There was a comment that the pure form of the towers seems somewhat unrelenting. One Panel member also found the architectural expression to be somewhat commercial, albeit that the geometric strategy is very good.

The Panel was concerned about the requested density which seems to be too much for the site. There was a suggestion to consider redistributing some density from the taller to the lower tower while maintaining some height variation.

A comment was made that while the Panel considers the project on the basis of its architecture and urban design, the difficult issue of the impact of the requested density on the surrounding neighbourhood must rest with City Council. While public shadowing impacts are well handled by this scheme, it does undoubtedly create greater private view blockage than would occur without the bonus density.

- **Applicant's Response:** Commenting on the loss of commercial space, Mr. Hancock noted the scheme proposes 26,000 sq.ft. compared to 43,000 sq.ft. prior to rezoning. He said the suggestion of earning the additional density through the architecture is well taken and noted there is opportunity to refine it at the next stage of development. Mr. Stovell added, they recognize the livability issues with respect to the north end of the westerly tower and are working with their interior designers to shift the amenity space to that location.

2. Address:	1808 West 1st Avenue
DE:	DE410458
Use:	Mixed Use
Zoning:	C-3A
Application Status:	Complete
Architect:	Nigel Baldwin Architects
Owner:	Wedgewood Ventures Ltd.
Review:	First
Delegation:	Nigel Baldwin, Ken Williams, Joy Rackley, Gerry Eckford
Staff:	Mary Beth Rondeau (for Dale Morgan/Vicki Potter)

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (5-1)

- **Introduction:** Mary Beth Rondeau, Development Planner, presented this application in the C-3A zone at 1st Avenue and Burrard Street. The proposal contains retail use on the ground floor on both streets with five storeys of residential use above. There are two levels of underground parking. An amenity room is proposed on the second floor with a small associated outdoor space on the parking podium.

Careful consideration has been given to this site given its important location in the city. Ms. Rondeau noted that a recently approved development at 3rd Avenue and Burrard Street begins to provide a strong streetwall along this prominent portion of Burrard Street and, at 5-1/2 storeys, is higher than the 45 ft. suggested by the guidelines. The five storey penthouse height of the subject proposal relates to the previously approved development and seeks a similar height relaxation to a maximum of 65 ft. at the lane. This is supported by staff. The proposed massing also responds to the City's long term goal to create an "urban room" around the "formal green" of Seaforth Park.

All roofs are actively or passively landscaped.

The advice of the Panel is sought on the requested height of 65 ft., noting the by-law indicates an outright maximum of 30 ft. to an unspecified maximum and the guidelines suggest 45 ft.

- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** Nigel Baldwin, Architect, reviewed the project in greater detail and responded to questions from the Panel. He stressed the importance of the site and noted the proposal is for a modest, six-storey brick frame building. The lane elevation will be a visible façade and will have an east-west orientation. The east elevation has punched openings, the south has overhangs and the north elevation has balconies. The roofs are greened and/or provide outdoor spaces.

Gerry Eckford, Landscape Architect, advised that a band of Japanese Cherry Trees is proposed along 1st Avenue and some new trees will be added on the Burrard Street frontage. The top of the building is a green roof, fully functioning with all storage capacity and paver bands for articulation. There are a number of roof top terraces with landscaped elements to minimize structural screening between the units.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects:**
 - Support for the height, density and massing. The building will create a good end to the park;

- Good massing transition to neighbouring C2B buildings and good prominence on Burrard Street; and
- The residential entry could be emphasized more.

- **Related Commentary:**

The Panel strongly supported this application and thought it was very well handled. The proposed height and density were supported.

The Panel was very pleased to see this part of Burrard Street being redeveloped and noted there is the potential for it to be a great pedestrian-oriented street. As a gateway to the downtown the building makes for a good, strong corner. It also fits with the character of the neighbourhood.

The project was thought to be very well handled in terms of its transition from 1st Avenue to Burrard Street. The six-storey massing and masonry frame on Burrard Street is a very appropriate response to the aim of making it a more ceremonial street and it provides a good transition from the three-storey forms on 1st Avenue with the use of glass elements to separate and define the north and east elevations. There was strong support for the horizontal expression of the south façade with the more modern vocabulary overlooking the lane.

One Panel member had a concern about the relationship of the building to the future character of Burrard Street. The applicant and the City were urged to consider increasing the height by another three or four feet in order to provide more generous ceiling heights in the CRUs at ground level. It would also help the proportion of the building and provide greater presence in response to the goal of making it a more ceremonial street.

The Panel was pleased to see the building providing a good relationship to Seaforth Park. There was a suggestion to make it more playful, although another opinion was that it was nice to see a subtle building among the disparate mix of buildings that surround it.

The Panel found the sustainability issues to be well addressed.

There was a concern from one or two members that the residential entrance may be too subtle. It may be dark and unsafe at night. A canopy was one suggestion put forward as an option to strengthen the entrance.

One Panel member expressed disappointment that the standard City street treatment of concrete and concrete tree surrounds has not yet been revisited, noting the latter does not encourage healthy tree growth. The typical concrete material is also counter to the goal of making this a pleasant, pedestrian-oriented street.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Baldwin thanked the Panel for its input.

3. Address:	1100 Granville Street (Chateau Granville)
DE:	DE410542
Use:	Modifications to ground and second levels of existing 14-storey hotel
Zoning:	DD - K3
Application Status:	Complete
Architect:	Relative Form Architecture Studio
Owner:	Best Western
Review:	First
Delegation:	Abdallah Jamal, Chris Sterry
Staff:	Mary Beth Rondeau

EVALUATION: NON-SUPPORT (3-4)

- **Introduction:** Mary Beth Rondeau, Development Planner, presented this application to modify the existing Chateau Granville Hotel in the DD zone. The hotel is built to the maximum allowable 5.0 FSR. The proposal seeks to transfer heritage density to the site to enable the open space at the corner to be improved with the addition of a restaurant on the Helmcken Street frontage, with outdoor seating on Helmcken and Granville Streets. The upper level conference area will also be slightly increased.
- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** Abdallah Jamal, Architect, briefly described the area context and the proposed additions to the hotel. The Landscape Architect, Chris Sterry, briefly reviewed the landscape plan and the applicant team responded to questions from the Panel.
- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - Retail for the ground floor is the preferred use but restaurant, if well handled, is also supported as appropriate;
 - Concerns about the compositional strategy and material selections in relation to the existing building; the finer scale of the frame on the Granville Street frontage may be at odds with the more massive scale of the existing hotel;
 - Recommendations to simplify the composition to relate to the larger scale of the existing building.
- **Related Commentary:**

The Panel did not support this application.

The Panel was very pleased to see this rather barren corner being improved to introduce some much needed animation. There were no concerns about reducing the existing plaza in order to bring some life to the corner.

Some Panel members thought the proposal was moving in the right direction and supported the proposed restaurant spilling out onto the street. Retail was thought to be a better choice but the Panel thought restaurant could also be appropriate, if handled well. It was thought that more work was needed on the indoor/outdoor interface of the restaurant on Helmcken Street.

The treatment on Helmcken Street was generally supported. There was one question about a possible CPTED issue relating to the indented Helmcken entry which might provide unwanted refuge at night.

There were concerns about the Granville Street façade which was generally thought to lack an appropriate scale in relation to the hotel. The secondary entries to the restaurant and lounge seem to be somewhat haphazardly located along Granville Street and further thought needs to be given to the canopy, either underplayed or emphasized. In general, the Granville Street façade was thought to demand a much bolder statement to create a bigger presence on the street. It was also suggested that the materials might not be congruent with the existing building.

The main concerns of the Panel related to the lack of a clear strategy in the composition and how it relates to the existing building. There seem to be two different vocabularies in the additions. There were concerns about the material choices, e.g., the limestone is at odds with the existing hotel, albeit not a great building. It was also suggested that a more asymmetrical composition for the restaurant would be more appropriate. The applicant was strongly urged to look at the expression and materials and try to make it more sympathetic with the original building. The hotel has a very strong geometry that should be responded to in form, scale, detail and materials.

The proposal for the upper meeting rooms to overlook the atrium space was strongly supported.

It was noted by one Panel member that the bus stop on Granville Street seems to be a long distance from the check-in. It was also suggested that the hotel entry on Granville could be improved by removing the existing stair.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Jamal noted the location of the bus stop on Granville Street is a City requirement.