

URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: August 20, 2003

TIME: 4.00 pm

PLACE: Committee Room No. 1, City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
Stuart Lyon, Chair
Brian Martin
Kim Perry
Ken Terriss
Mark Ostry
Jennifer Marshall
Eva Lee

REGRETS: Helen Besharat
Jeffrey Corbett
Bruce Haden
Reena Lazar
Sorin Tatomir

**RECORDING
SECRETARY:** Carol Hubbard

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING	
1.	1299 Seymour Street (Liberty Building)
2.	1030 West Broadway
3.	854 West 6th Avenue
4.	SOUTHEAST FALSE CREEK - Workshop only (no minutes)

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1. Address: 1299 Seymour Street (Liberty Building)
DA: 407723
Use: Residential/Retail
Zoning: DD
Application Status: Preliminary
Architect: Paul Merrick
Owner: Cressey Seymour Dev. Ltd.
Review: First
Delegation: Roger Bayley, Greg Borowski, Chris Turcotte, James Patillo,
Patricia Campbell
Staff: Anita Molaro
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EVALUATION: SUPPORT (6-0)

Introduction: Development Planner, Anita Molaro, presented this application to develop the site at the corner of Drake and Seymour Streets with a 34-storey residential tower (300ft.). The site is bisected by a view corridor. The proposed development includes the existing two-storey Liberty Building, for which a Heritage Revitalization Agreement will be pursued. A heritage density bonus of 6,350 sq.ft. is requested for retention of the Liberty Building. Stepped townhouses, from two to 4½ storeys, provide transitional massing between the Liberty Building and the base of the tower. Tower floorplates have been minimized to about 5,800 sq.ft., noting that for a site of this size, having a frontage of 325ft. (including the Liberty Building), a maximum floorplate of 6,500 sq.ft. would typically be sought (5,500 sq.ft. without the Liberty Building). The tower shape attempts to maintain existing views for neighbours, having a very slim building frontage of 55 ft. While the tower has been sited up against the view corridor it results in a horizontal overlap between it and the Space building across the street. As well, the massaging of the building mass to address view impacts will require a rear yard setback relaxation from 30 ft. to 18.5 ft.

The principal issue for this proposal is the form of development and subsequent view impacts. The applicant has provided a comparative view analysis for the Space building which indicates that above the 12th floor (135 ft.) there is a five degree view improvement between the proposal and a typical tower form, and a variety of view improvements and view impacts generated with a two-tower arrangement.

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

- the appropriateness of the proposed form
- whether the tower should be further massaged to improve views for residents of Space;
- whether the existing non-conforming excess retail floor area in the Liberty Building should be maintained;
- treatment of the heritage party wall.

Applicant's Opening Comments: Greg Borowski, Architect, reviewed the various options that were considered for the site and explained how they concluded that the single tower scheme was optimal in terms of interface with neighbouring buildings, including the Liberty Building. Following a description of the design rationale, Patricia Campbell briefly described the landscape plan, and the design team responded to the Panel's questions.

Panel's Comments: The Panel unanimously supported this application and commended the applicant for the exhaustive analysis of the massing on the site. The Panel thought the applicant had been very thorough in getting the best out of the site as well as giving

careful consideration to adjacent buildings. The Panel agreed unanimously that the single tower massing is the right solution, and that it is appropriately located on the site.

There was strong support for retention of the Liberty Building. While this building may not be a "gem" on the heritage register its loss would be regrettable because it does add to the fabric of this part of the downtown and is very visible from Granville Bridge.

The Panel strongly supported retention of the existing excess retail space in the Liberty Building. As well, one Panel expressed a general concern about the impact of the lack of retail once this neighbourhood is fully built out and suggested the regulations in this respect should be revisited.

With respect to the heritage party wall, the Panel agreed that everything possible should be done to open it up, including further exploration to enhance it. A comment was also made that the City should make every effort to facilitate the best possible solution within the legal constraints of the site.

With respect to the relationship between the townhouses and the Liberty Building, one Panel member cautioned that careful attention should be given to ensure the Liberty Building is clearly distinct from the new development. For example, while it is important to acknowledge the building in the design of the windows there should also be a departure to make sure it feels separate.

The Panel acknowledged that some of the units in the Space building will be compromised with this development. However, it was considered that impacts are an inevitable part of downtown living, noting also the constraints of the view corridor on this site. In terms of improving the relationship with Space, one Panel member suggested there might be opportunity to further decrease the typical tower floorplate size, and supported a taller tower to achieve this. Better livability for both Space and this building might also be achieved if the building is not exactly parallel with the street. The Panel did not believe that symmetry on Seymour Street was essential to the tower design.

The Panel strongly supported the positive edge treatment on Seymour Street. It was thought that the activation of the urban edges was a very positive contribution to the community. A suggestion was made that the base of the lane elevation might benefit from the successful treatment that has been applied to the base of Seymour Street.

Several Panel members expressed concern about the treatment of the 10 ft. setback in the lane. There was a recommendation that the best solution might be lawn and trees, both in terms of maintenance and CPTED considerations. It was felt the trees could successfully co-exist with the existing hydro poles in the lane. However, there is a need for the City to ensure appropriate maintenance programs in Downtown South lanes given their increasing importance as major entries for residents. Unless maintenance responsibility is established there is a danger of the 10 ft. setback becoming a no-mans-land. It was also recommended that treatment of the lanes should be included in the guidelines.

In general, the Panel found it to be a very handsome building and thought the project was going in the right direction. The Panel liked the general shape and style of the tower and the applicant was complimented for producing a tower that is more interesting than many other recent developments in Downtown South.

Applicant's Response: Mr. Borowski thanked the Panel for the comments. They will be taken into consideration, particularly the relationship with the Liberty Building.

2.	Address:	1030 West Broadway
	DA:	407719
	Use:	Mixed
	Zoning:	C-3A
	Application Status:	Preliminary
	Architect:	W. T. Leung
	Owner:	Tom Peng
	Review:	First
	Delegation:	Wing Ting Leung, Lena Chorobik
	Staff:	Mary Beth Rondeau

EVALUATION: NON-SUPPORT (0-6)

Introduction: Mary Beth Rondeau, Development Planner, presented this preliminary application in the Central Broadway C-3A zone which permits 1.0 FSR outright and up to 3.0 FSR conditionally. This is a very important area in terms of its proximity to a future rapid transit station and the VGH precinct redevelopment. It is also two blocks east of the highest point along Broadway where the guidelines suggest a massing with a solid 30 ft. high podium across the frontage, a mid-rise section and a high-rise section. The mid-rise section of this proposal is slimmer than suggested in the guidelines, which could be beneficial. The site slopes 17 ft. from Broadway to the lane. Nevertheless, the applicant has achieved vehicular access from the lane, with the advantage of eliminating two crossings on Broadway. The proposed 12-storey development contains commercial use on the ground floor, a dance studio on the second floor, and residential above.

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

- whether the conditional height and density have been earned;
- whether appropriate consideration has been given to the acoustic separation of the dance studio and residential units;
- the exterior entrance area and whether the gate should be moved back;
- second floor residential expression on Broadway.

Applicant's Opening Comments: Wing Ting Leung, Architect, described the project in greater detail, Lena Chorobik briefly reviewed the landscape plan, and the design team responded to the Panel's questions.

Panel's Comments: The Panel did not support this application.

The Panel generally found the project to be very awkward with respect to the transition between uses and the resulting open spaces. It was suggested that the incorporation of the tower and the dance studio is not successful and results in poor residential units and confused identify for the building. It was strongly suggested that the expression of the dance studio, which the Panel thought was a potentially very exciting part of the scheme and a big asset to the development, might be used as a guide to massing up the whole project. Several Panel members thought the dance studio would benefit from being more distinct from the residential component, which would also alleviate concerns about adequate acoustic separation. As well, while the dance studio is an inward use, more could be done to provide a much stronger expression and celebration of its entrance.

The Panel was confident that the issue of acoustic separation could be resolved.

The Panel had a number of concerns about the outdoor spaces. The upper level terrace is accessible only by a stair from the lower level, and the units facing onto this terrace are not provided with any private open space. As well, the outdoor space for the dance studio at the rear is not being used to its best advantage to create a purely people space. It would also be beneficial if the indoor amenity space could more successfully engage with the outdoor spaces adjacent to it.

It was thought that the Broadway frontage could benefit by a lot of detail resolution to provide a more interesting pedestrian experience along this edge.

The Panel appreciated the use of good quality materials.

The Panel thought the mechanical penthouse could be better integrated into the building.

One Panel member commented on the importance of the side elevations on Broadway. It was recommended that greater attention be given to window proportions and detailing to enhance these very visible facades. With respect to the Broadway elevation, a comment was made that the vertical bands seem arbitrary and unnecessary.

A Panel member questioned whether the treatment at the corner raises CPTED issues, particularly at night.

The Panel found the parking access to be quite skillfully handled.

There was a lot of commentary concerning the zoning regulations and the fact that it is generally believed in the architectural community that the Central Broadway C-3A Guidelines are overdue for review and improvement. Nevertheless, the Panel acknowledged that the applicant must work with the zoning as it currently exists and concluded that more work on the project is necessary, regardless of the constraints. It was considered that many of the issues would resolve themselves in a complete rethinking the project.

In response to a question raised by the architect, the Panel indicated it had no objection to the investigation of a higher form that may cause further shadowing to the north side of Broadway.

Applicant's Response: Mr. Leung acknowledged that they are struggling with the form of the building within the existing guidelines. He said he did not believe buildings such as this should be stepped but that taller buildings should come to the ground and reveal themselves. Mr. Leung commented it is very challenging to put the various uses of this building together and he agreed that designing the dance studio as a separate volume, with its own identity, is very appealing. He said he appreciated the Panel's comments about achieving a finer grain at the pedestrian level, and with better integrating the elevator penthouse. He noted it would help this project considerably if there could be a relaxation of the requirement to avoid shadowing the far sidewalk on Broadway. In this way, they could achieve a taller, slimmer tower, without a podium, and create a separate volume and identity for the dance studio.

3.	Address:	854 West 6th Avenue
	DA:	407717
	Use:	Residential
	Zoning:	FM-1
	Application Status:	Complete
	Architect:	W. T. Leung
	Owner:	Jack McIver
	Review:	First
	Delegation:	Wing Ting Leung, Barry Krause, Jennifer Stamp
	Staff:	Mary Beth Rondeau

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (6-0)

Introduction: Mary Beth Rondeau, Development Planner, presented this complete application in the Fairview Slopes FM-1 zone. The lane at the rear of the site, currently closed, will be opened with this development which achieves broader City objectives. The proposal is for four separate blocks of townhouses, with an interior east-west courtyard. A previous approved application for this site which did not proceed, proposed ground floor commercial use with residential above in two buildings oriented north-south. The main issue arising from this application relates to the view slots through the site from the south. The Panel's comments are also sought with respect to the exposed wall of the existing development to the west.

Applicant's Opening Comments: Wing Ting Leung, Architect, provided some background information on the previous approved scheme for this site. He noted the current proposal provides a better environment on 6th Avenue with a 12ft. setback and individual front door entrances. A double row of street trees is also proposed, and two one-way vehicular crossings to make it more pedestrian friendly. Mr. Leung noted the neighbourhood response at a public information meeting was positive. Following Mr. Leung's description of the design rationale, the design team responded to the Panel's questions.

Panel's Comments: The Panel unanimously supported this application and considered the townhouse scheme to be a good solution for this site and the right choice of use for this neighbourhood.

The Panel strongly supported the east-west orientation of the courtyard, with only one Panel member suggesting the north-south orientation might be preferable. The Panel had no concerns about preserving the view slots that were achieved in the earlier scheme, with one suggestion to consider aligning the slot between Building A and B with Building C and D. It was noted the proposed east-west courtyard configuration effectively shelters the units facing onto 6th Avenue by virtue of their double frontage. These units would otherwise not be as livable. A comment was also made that the north-south courtyard orientation lent itself better to the previous mixed-use scheme but is not as appropriate for this all-residential proposal.

There were no concerns about the building character on West 6th Avenue; diversity of building types can be quite successful and add a nice small texture to the street. With respect to the 6th Avenue street edge, the Panel acknowledged the noisy, somewhat hostile nature of this street and hoped the proposed 12 ft. setback would provide a successful transition for the street-facing units. There was a recommendation to cram as many broad-leaved trees as possible into this frontage to help ameliorate the harsh conditions. Another suggestion was to make it plain and simple as opposed to varied.

With respect to the blank wall on the west side, the Panel agreed it would be better to build up against it. There was one comment that keeping the gap could provide the opportunity to introduce more daylight into some of the units with the use of obscured glass.

Some Panel members questioned the design of the entrance pediments. In general, simplification was recommended; choosing one or two complementary forms.

There was a recommendation to carefully consider the landscaping and quality of the edges in the courtyard. Hedging should be kept low to encourage social interaction.

There was no consensus with regard to the proposed two crossings on West 6th Avenue. One suggestion was to incorporate an arbour over the top to create an extension of the edge.

There was a recommendation to reconsider the use of metal panels for the bay windows in favour of a better quality material more in keeping with the overall character of the building.

In general, the Panel thought the buildings could benefit from simplification but thought the proposal was a good start.

Applicant's Response: Mr. Leung thanked the Panel for its comments.