
URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: August 22, 2001

TIME: 4.00 p.m.

PLACE: Committee Room No. 1, City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
Tom Bunting, Chair
Jeffrey Corbett
Lance Berelowitz
Gerry Eckford
Walter Francl (present for Item 2. only)
Bruce Hemstock
Richard Henry
Maurice Pez
Sorin Tatomir

REGRETS: Alan Endall
Joseph Hruda
Jack Lutsky

**RECORDING
SECRETARY:** Carol Hubbard

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING	
1.	1281 West Cordova Street (Tower 2A)
2.	600 Granville Street

1. Address:	1281 West Cordova Street (Tower 2A)
DA:	404757
Use:	Residential
Zoning:	CD-1
Application Status:	Complete after Preliminary
Architect:	Hancock Bruckner Eng & Wright
Owner:	Delta Land Development Ltd.
Review:	Second
Delegation:	Jim Hancock, Martin Bruckner, Chris Keatley
Staff:	Ralph Segal

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (7-0)

- **Introduction:** The Development Planner, Ralph Segal, presented this application. The preliminary application for Towers 2A and 2B was supported by the Panel in January 2000. The complete application for Tower 2B was supported by the Panel in August 2000 and subsequently approved by the Development Permit Board. The subject application for Tower 2A is the second phase of the project. Mr. Segal advised staff have no concerns with the proposal, noting it has evolved as expected and meets or exceeds the design guidelines.
- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Jim Hancock, Architect, noted the attempt has been to keep this phase in the same spirit as phase one. He briefly reviewed the amenities in the building.
- **Panel's Comments:** The Panel unanimously supported this application and complimented the applicant on a very elegant, exciting and beautifully designed building.

Much of the Panel's commentary had to do with the urban design of the five buildings as an ensemble. It was acknowledged that while it may not be possible to totally fulfill the promise of the evocative images of the preliminary sketches for Harbour Green, it is hoped that subsequent phases will continue in the same vein in the attempt to live up to the overall concept. The five towers have the potential to become an important city landmark as an ensemble as much as in their individual design, possibly as significant as the Canada Place sails.

There were no concerns about the design of the tower. The Panel supported its form as a contrast to the more typical tower design with tapering at the top, and liked the nautical imagery that generated the forms, together with the mechanistic quality of the materials and the details. The two buildings together will make a very positive contribution to Coal Harbour. Some disappointment was expressed, however, that the strength and promise of the tower may have fallen short somewhat in the townhouses. While their facades are modest and acceptable, it was felt they could be stronger to make a much more dramatic edge, being the first wall of the city in the approach from the water. It was suggested that this prominent location is the one place where the urban design aspirations for the front wall of the city could be taken a step further, and if the towers are a metaphor for a series of yachts, then the base might be considered the yacht's hull.

With respect to parking access, it was noted the previous scheme had split access to the underground parkade which resulted in a positive view from the street as well as from the park, whereas this proposal addresses the front to the street but the view from the park side is less than desirable.

Some comments were made about the overall open space planning in terms of the connections between

private and public spaces. The applicant, the developer and the Park Board were encouraged to continue in the route being shown, with designated access points as part of the park development, respecting what is public and what is private and not allowing the private spaces to begin to erode into the public areas. The walkway connecting the townhouses to the lookout in the park was seen as very positive.

A concern was expressed about the open space on the third level, noting a lot of space is being allocated to private terraces with no landscape development indicated. Given the rest of the development will be looking down on these terraces, the suggestion was that the future owners might be given some guidance as to how these spaces might be appropriately developed. It was also noted that wind shear is likely to be a problem for the third floor open spaces, including the children's play area.

The entry court and turnaround works well and provides a great sense of arrival. One comment was that the entry canopy might be a little understated, although it does provide a clear identity to the building. The floor plans are excellent.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Hancock thanked the Panel for its comments. He noted they have also debated the issues that were raised and said they will continue to make improvements wherever possible. He added, the public art component of the project will be gates to the townhouses and they have high expectations for this contribution to the development.

2. Address:	600 Granville Street
DA:	406058
Use:	Mixed
Zoning:	DD
Application Status:	Complete
Architect:	Architectura
Owner:	108 Investments Ltd.
Review:	First
Delegation:	Malcolm Elliot, Roman Czmerys
Staff:	Scot Hein

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (8-0)

- **Introduction:** Scot Hein, Development Planner, presented this complete application to develop the site at the southeast corner of Dunsmuir and Granville Streets, between The Bay department store and the BC Electric Building. The proposed 4-storey development will contain retail on the first two levels and a portion of the basement, office/retail on the upper two levels, and 2-1/2 levels of underground parking. As well, the application proposes to restore the BC Electric Building, a 1928 building listed “B” on the Vancouver Heritage Register. The remaining structures on the site (abandoned in 1990) are deteriorated beyond repair and will be demolished. The application proposes a height of 70 ft. and 3.6 FSR, well below the 450 ft. and 9.0 FSR permitted in the Downtown District. Mr. Hein briefly reviewed the urban design response, noting that no significant issues have been identified. The Panel’s advice is sought on the project generally as well as the detailing and materials of the new construction and their transition to the facades of the BC Electric Building and The Bay.
- **Applicant’s Opening Comments:** Malcolm Elliot, Architect, noted the floor-to-floor height above the second level is 19 ft., with the intent that it could either go to a high-end fitness club or office space. The upper level is intended primarily as an executive office. He explained, an important aspect of the design was to reinforce the streetwall along Granville Street. The forward portion of the new building matches the height of the BC Electric building, with the top floor set back so that the expression of the upper floor does not infringe on the existing massing of the BC Electric building. With respect to weather protection, Mr. Elliot noted the canopies are not continuous along Granville Street, with gaps at the two “slots” adjacent the BC Electric building and The Bay, in an attempt to reinforce the break where the new meets the old. The style of the canopy reflects that of the original BC Electric building canopy along Granville Street and it has been extended around Dunsmuir Street. Mr. Elliot noted that negotiations are continuing with the heritage planners with respect to the restoration of the BC Electric building. Roman Czmerys, Architect, added to the description of the design rationale.
- **Panel’s Comments:** The Panel unanimously supported this application. It was generally considered to be a very good design and a sound approach to infilling this important part of the downtown. The Panel was encouraged to see this part of Granville Street improved and thought it was an interesting way of resolving how to deal with this whole block.

With respect to the recesses at the juncture of the new building and its two older neighbours, the Panel strongly recommended emphasizing the breaks, suggesting the proposed foot or so is just not sufficient. One suggestion included exposing some of the original clinker brickwork of the heritage buildings. Removing the glass guardrail at the top as a differentiation of the central series of bays was

also suggested. The Panel was hopeful the existing security issues around recesses would be short term. As well as deepening the recesses, there are other ways to emphasize the breaks, for example, a different angle to the facade of the building at that point, or introducing an entrance to the corner retail store.

Panel opinion was split on the interrupted canopies. Some supported the discontinuity while others thought continuous canopies should be able to be achieved architecturally, noting it could help to emphasize the expression of the recess where new meets old, with the canopy doing something different in these two locations.

The Panel found the signage on the BC Electric building to be very appropriate in its historical reflection of the building's original signage. One recommendation was that the signage should also duplicate the original by being mounted proud off the face of the building as opposed to being directly on it. There was also a recommendation to involve a public artist to do something really spectacular on the corner. In addition to the sign, the applicant was encouraged to look at lighting the BC Electric building which it was felt would take architectural lighting very well. At this early stage in the development this could be achieved discreetly in conjunction with the canopy system.

The Panel liked the way the building comes to the street and has a strong streetwall. The thoroughly modern approach was also strongly supported, with suggestions that it could go even further in its contemporary expression. A comment was made that the glass railing along the top is almost too modest. Overall, the new building may be too reticent and too similar to the BCE building without having the innovation of its original architecture which, at the time, was at the forefront of a design aesthetic. It was noted the repetition of the rhythm of the pilasters of The Bay could be pulling it back to reflect the older building too much. As well, given the bays of the BC Electric building are set against a masonry plane, it was suggested the applicant might take a look at ways of enhancing the differentiation on the glass bays of the new building, perhaps using a different tinted glass. There was a comment that adding a cornice line would also be taking it in the wrong direction, suggesting the glass and steel motif should be even stronger. There were also comments that there might be too much emphasis on the vertical, with a suggestion to consider accentuating the horizontal as an analogy to reflecting a bridge between the two historical buildings. The Panel stressed there needs to be a strong sense of detail in the new building and it has to stand on its own between the two heritage structures. Adding that one more level of detail will make it more interesting building at the pedestrian level.

It was noted that while the juncture at the 4th floor of the new building with the BC Electric building will not be seen at street level, there is still a fair amount of overlook onto the roofscape so that joining the new building with the old at this point will need careful handling.

The Panel was pleased to see the sensitive handling of the BCE building and while the new building is very respectful of it, it could be taken a step further.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr Elliott thanked the Panel for its suggestions.