
URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: August 26, 2009

TIME: 4.00 pm

PLACE: Committee Room No. 1, City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
Martin Nielsen, Chair
Gerry Eckford
David Godin
Richard Henry
Oliver Lang
Steve McFarlane
Maurice Pez
Douglas Watts

REGRETS:
Jane Durante
Bruce Haden
Vladimir Mikler
Mark Ostry

**RECORDING
SECRETARY:** Lorna Harvey

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING	
1.	NEFC High Level Review Workshop
2.	East Fraser Lands Phase 2

BUSINESS MEETING

Chair Nielsen called the meeting to order at 4:15 p.m. and noted the presence of a quorum. There being no New Business the meeting considered applications as scheduled for presentation.

1. Address: NEFC High Level Review Workshop
DE: N/A
Description: Policy Directions for land uses, development densities and amenities in North East False Creek
Zoning: N/A
Application Status: N/A
Architect: N/A
Review: N/A
Delegation: N/A
Staff: Ralph Segal/Michael Gordon

EVALUATION: NON-VOTING WORKSHOP

- **Introduction:** Michael Gordon, Planner, gave an introduction for the North East False Creek High Level Review. The site is 50 acres of the original 200 acres originally owned by the Canadian Pacific Railway. The review is being done to provide guidance for the submission of rezoning applications that are expected from the four property owners (B.C. Pavilion Corporation [Pavco], Concord Pacific, Canadian Metropolitan Properties and Aquilini Developments). The owners are interested in developing their sites and the City is looking at a mix of uses. Council rezoned the Pavco lands for 700,000 square feet of commercial in order to provide more additional job space in the downtown. Public space will include a new civic plaza to replace the Plaza of Nations. As well residential units will be developed that are compatible with this “entertainment” area. It is also planned that the general structure will extend the city grid into the area. Planning is taking a fresh look at the area and will be doing a public review. At the moment the future of the Vancouver Art Gallery isn’t decided as they are also looking at relocating to the old bus depot at the corner Beatty and Georgia Streets as well as this area. The review will go to council in late October.
- Ralph Segal, Senior Architect/Development Planner, noted that the Panel’s feedback should be on the design principles that could affectively guide applicants in terms of perusing application on their sites. Mr. Segal noted that the area is lacking in public realm and that the City is taking an aggressive attitude around density and the range of uses for the site. They are also concerned about residential livability and the population that will make up this high density neighbourhood. As well they are taking a more aggressive attitude on the commercial side. They are looking at developing an active area that focuses on sports and entertainment including festivals, The Sun Run and other special events. This could be a new hub for the city with a distinctive form and structure that emphasizes connectivity which will bring the downtown to the water in False Creek. A visual focus should take place as an accent along Georgia Street that creates a meaningful eastern terminus. Mr. Segal noted that there are some barriers and challenges to overcome including changes in grade and the Georgia Street viaduct. Mr. Segal stated that there was some discussion that the Vancouver Art Gallery (VAG) would move to the site and more of a focus was given to the area to create a distinctive precinct. There was even some discussion that there was to be a performance space at the foot of Georgia Street. He noted that there is a possibility that the VAG won’t be moving to the area and as well there is some possibility that Enterprise Hall will not be retained although it might be restructured as a more open public facility. Mr. Segal asked the Panel to look at how much

density the area could support within the confines of the view cone heights. He said that they would be encouraging forms of development other than tower forms as the architecture would be the making of the precinct. He added that he hoped that expressive architecture would find its way into the precinct. Mr. Segal added that a street car system is planned for Pacific Boulevard, along with other elements in the public realm and the completion of the waterfront walkway.

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

Use & Density:

1. Can the proposed mix of uses and density support the objective of creating a distinctive, active destination at this location?

Urban Structure:

2. Does the evolving urban structure:
 - a) address the precinct's present lack of legibility?
 - b) Overcome present barriers to pedestrian access from the downtown to the waterfront and other future area attractions; and
 - c) Set out the framework to achieve the desired connectivity?
3. Is the foot of Georgia Street, configured as public plaza, creating a fitting eastern terminus to Vancouver's Ceremonial Boulevard?

Open Space:

4. Is the network of linked open spaces achieving a more diverse, animated Public Realm?

Urban Design Principles:

5. What is missing from the set of Urban Design Principles that would help guide Rezoning proposals.

Mr. Gordon and Mr. Segal took questions from the Panel.

- **Related Commentary:** The Panel felt the design principles were well done but thought there was an opportunity to do something different with the area and not use the same response that is seen around the city. They also said they would like to see other activities on the waterfront. Although the Panel thought the design principles with the VAG being located was exciting, they found the response without the VAG more engaging. They felt the site wasn't really the right place for the gallery and wondered how successful it would be that area.

The Panel felt the principles hadn't been met regarding the planning and massing noting that the principles were asking for a different built form than the table top response to the view cone. They agreed that in order to achieve a different built form there needs to be some flexibility on the heights and in the zoning. Several Panel members noted that when South East False Creek was being designed the principles were explicit from the outset as to the type of architecture and they felt that needed to be the first principle for this precinct. One Panel member suggested finding new topologies mainly because the site has so many unique characteristics and could be a catalyst for those new topologies. Another Panel member noted that this site could support more interesting shapes than any other place in the city.

The Panel liked the idea of having a plaza at the end of Georgia Street with one Panel member suggesting adding a winter garden that would help anchor the plaza in the absence or presence of the VAG. The Panel was also concerned about how the foreshore would be treated with one Panel member suggesting having restaurants that were outside the water's edge. A couple of Panel members noted that redeveloping the current Plaza of Nations would be the loss of a very important public open space. They suggested that it was important to develop a semi-protected area for outdoor events. One Panel member suggesting added a fun or novel element like a funicular or some other novel form of transportation to the area. A couple of Panel member thought more activity and more

events happening along Georgia Street and at this location would be a hard sell. They were worried that there was only one destination and thought there needed to be a focal element with more effort to get people from the SkyTrain station and from GM Place to the site.

The Panel felt it was a challenging site to connect. Pacific Boulevard is like a freeway and needs to be calmed. Also there needs to be something that connects to Georgia Street and they thought the Georgia Steps project might be the solution. The Panel agreed that connecting the area to Robson Street was a more practical solution because it was a more active street. The Panel felt there wasn't anything to draw the downtown grid through the site. One Panel member noted that it needs to fight the grid rather than adding a secondary grid to prevent ending up with an illegible street form.

The Panel was also concerned with the idea of having commercial or retail units to activate the street. They noted that the further away from Pacific Boulevard the less viable the commercial would become and maybe this was an opportunity to look at other residential ways to activate the street.

2. Address:	East Fraser Lands Phase 2
DE:	Rezoning
Description:	35 acres Phase 2 rezoning of the Western Neighbourhood (between Kerr Street and the Town Centre)
Zoning:	CD-1
Application Status:	Rezoning
Architect:	James K.M. Cheng Architects Inc
Review:	First
Delegation:	James Cheng, James K.M. Cheng Architects Inc Joyce Drohan, James K.M. Cheng Architects Inc Chris Sterry, PWL Partnership Norm Shearing, Parklane Homes
Staff:	Kirsten Robinson/Matt Shillito

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (7-0)

- **Introduction:** Kirsten Robinson, Project Planner, introduced the proposal for the rezoning application for the East Fraser Lands Area 2. The site is 126 areas located in the south-east corner of the city, bounded by the Fraser River and Marine Way, Boundary Road and Kerr Street. The site is bisected east-west by a CP Rail Line and Parklane Homes is the primary landowner. Planning for the East Fraserlands has been underway since 2002. In 2004 the Policy Statement was approved establishing the vision of a complete community which is environmentally sustainable, providing a range of housing types and a variety of supporting services and amenities. The Official Development Plan (ODP) was supported by the Panel and subsequently approved by Council in 2006. The ODP organized the East Fraser Lands into three distinct neighbourhoods, defined and connected by a continuous riverfront walkway/bikeway system, and two park corridors that extend north from the river, connecting with the Champlain Heights neighbourhood. Ms. Robinson described the context for the Central Neighbourhood (Area 1) noting that it is a high density mixed-use neighbourhood centre with pedestrian oriented retail focused on a high street. She also described the Eastern Neighbourhood context noting that it will be primarily residential with some light industrial live-work organized around a neighbourhood green and is subject to a future rezoning.

The Western Neighbourhood (Area 2) is described in the ODP as being primarily residential, less dense than the central neighbourhood, with a variety of housing forms such as townhouses, stacked townhouses, low-rise apartments and small towers. West of Kerr Street, are three undeveloped parcels owned by the city. They were rezoned in 1989, as part of the West Fraser Lands development to provide for two storey commercial uses. The parcels were not included in the ODP but are part of this rezoning application. A small 5,000 square foot stand alone retail building is proposed at the waters edge, along with four storey townhouses. Townhouses and apartments up to four storeys are proposed on the other two parcels north of the tracks.

The western neighbourhood contains two important ecological, linear park systems - the riverfront and Kinross Corridor. The ODP calls for enhancing the riverfront and establishing an ecological corridor which will include wetlands, an inaccessible island sanctuary, and site-wide rainwater management strategy. A third linear park parallels the Kinross Corridor, providing pedestrian access from Marine Way to the riverfront if a rail crossing can be secured.

Ms. Robinson updated the Panel on some material that was not included in their package. She noted that the park area along the riverfront had been increased. As well the northern sections of the Kinross Park Corridor have been widened and are more natural in character

as described in the ODP Plan and the southern end of the Linear Park Corridor has been widened to provide more useable park area between the buildings.

Ms. Robinson highlighted some of the sustainability features that are proposed noting the buildings will connect to a Neighbourhood Energy Utility and will be designed to LEED™ Gold and BuiltGreen Gold standards. Also a site-wide rainwater management strategy will be implemented.

East Fraser Lands had been envisioned as a complete community, with shopping and services not just for new residents, but also to serve the residents of West Fraser Lands. It was intended that the neighbourhood centre (Area 1) would be constructed first providing the shopping and services for the entire development to make a complete community. However, given the downturn in the economy and complexities around financing concrete and mixed-use construction, the Applicant proposes to develop at least some of Area 2 in advance of Area 1. A phasing plan will be determined through the rezoning process that will blend phasing of Area 1 and Area 2 development so that the current market challenges and the objectives of a complete community in the early stages can be reconciled.

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

- Proposed range of building heights and massing;
- Proposals for the Kerr Street-end.

Ms. Robinson and Mr. Shillito took questions from the Panel.

Applicant's Introductory Comments: Mr. Cheng, Architect, further described the project noting the total project is 7.6 million square feet and will take between fifteen to twenty years to realize. In order to build the project they would like to have every block done by different architects and have a different character to maintain the vibrancy and diversity in the project which was started in Phase 1. Mr. Cheng added that because of the economy they have had to rethink the project. They will not be building the town centre first. Mr. Cheng described the architect plans including the heights for the proposed buildings.

Mr. Cheng thought it was important to create a termination to Kerr Street and also to make a connection to the existing neighbourhood. They are planning to have some commercial with a small gathering place with the creation of a look out at the waterfront.

Chris Sterry, Landscape Architect, described the proposed plans for the parks, streets and walkways. In terms of the roads in Phase 2, the primary roads will connect the development to the surrounding neighbourhoods. There will be a mews along the south side of the rail line. There are two parks planned with Kinross Park being an ecological corridor which is intended to have a water element based on rain water collection. The neighbourhood park is a series of smaller parks that are more urban in character. All of the parks as well as the streets will contribute to the rain water management strategy. There is a streetscape master plan for tree planting as well as a lighting strategy. The foreshore park is protected and they will be retaining and conserving the existing shoreline and vegetation.

Joyce Drohan, Architect, gave an overview on the built form strategy. One of the key aims throughout the East Fraser Lands project is to enhance the public realm framework. She noted that they are planning to use a four to six storey form to define the public realm but there could be some locations where more height would be introduced. The locations where height could be accommodated will be along side the open spaces with the heights transitioning down to the water.

The applicant team took questions from the Panel.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - Consider retail around the plaza on Kerr Street;
 - Create nodes along the water front to accommodate pedestrians;
 - Explore new ideas for wood frame construction.
- **Related Commentary:** The Panel supported the strategies and the ideas that were put forward by the applicant team.

The Panel supported the revised massing strategy although they thought the differences were quiet subtle between the two strategies. The Panel thought it was a good idea to have different land uses including retail as well as residential build into the plan. The Panel didn't have any issues with the height along the waterfront and thought it could be either four or six stories. One Panel member suggested terracing the massing towards the waterfront. Not all the Panel was in favor of adding height on the towers around the playing fields as they felt there would be an impact on the park. Several Panel members thought that Kerr Street needed to mirror the retail precinct on the other side of the street.

The Panel thought the Kerr Street edge was the more critical part of the scheme especially in the near future and that there needed to be some meaningful retail around the plaza as a gathering space. The Panel thought this part of the plan needed further development. They thought the strategy was moving in the right direction but needed some retail that is flexible and that could be either a large space or proportioned spaces. One Panel member suggested smaller retail could be considered that would combine with a grocery store.

The Panel supported the idea of developing the plaza with an icon piece that will help move people towards the water and annunciate the water front. They felt there should be some nodes along the water to pull people along the water's edge. The Panel liked the idea of an outlook with one Panel member suggesting the tower needed to go out to the edge.

Regarding the issue of wood construction, the Panel had some concerns about the six floor construction and suggested the applicant explore possible funding from the wood industry as there are some important programs available for exploring new ideas for wood frame as well as the use of wood in construction.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Cheng thanked the Panel for their insightful comments. He also thanked city staff for their support. Mr. Shearing of Parklane Homes said he thought the applicant team had done a spectacular job.

ADJOURNMENT

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