

URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: August 27, 2008

TIME: 4.00 pm

PLACE: Committee Room No. 1, City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
John Wall, Chair
Douglas Watts (Excused Item #1)
Bill Harrison
Martin Nielsen
Mark Ostry
Walter Francl
Richard Henry
Gerry Eckford

REGRETS:
Albert Bicol
David Godin
Tom Bunting
Maurice Pez

**RECORDING
SECRETARY:** Lorna Harvey

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING	
1.	800 Robson Street (Robson Square Complex)
2.	2300 Kingsway
3.	4550 Fraser Street

BUSINESS MEETING

Chair Wall 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: 800 Robson Street (Robson Square Complex)
DE: 412241
Description: To alter the existing Robson Square Skating Rink Plaza with new domes and two new access stairs, as well as to replace the waterproofing membrane, ice plant and mechanical systems related to the rink.

Zoning: CD-1
Application Status: Complete
Architect: Clive Grout Architect Inc.
Owner: Province of BC
Review: First
Delegation: Clive Grout, Clive Grout Architect Inc.
Nick Milkovich, Nick Milkovich Architects
Staff: Ralph Segal

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (without Stairs) (5-0) NON-SUPPORT (with Stairs) (1-0)

- **Introduction:** Ralph Segal, Development Planner, introduced the proposal for a modest rehabilitation of the lower plaza area at Robson Square which had previously contained a skating rink. The skating rink will be enlarged and in addition the existing dark domes are going to be replaced by more oval shaped and clear glass domes with stainless steel frames and mullions. There is an addition of two new stair cases in addition to the existing stairs are proposed. Mr. Segal noted that there are two versions of the new stairs.

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

- Is the proposal in keeping with the architecture and quality of Robson Square?

Mr. Segal took questions from the Panel.

- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** Clive Grout, Architect, mentioned that the proposal is the first component of what will be a long term revitalization of the whole area. They will be replacing all the membranes on the lower level. The ice rink is being replaced with new refrigeration that will be more energy efficient and as well they are adding 20 feet on each end. Mr. Clout noted that they want to increase the vitality of the lower plaza particularly the visibility at that inner connection between Robson Street and the lower area. One of the problems is that under the rink it is very dark. The proposal is to add a new lighting system to get a luminous ceiling. They will also be adding significant theatrical lighting systems for coloured light wave projections. The idea is to make it a lively public space. The existing dark domes will be removed and replaced with larger domes for full coverage of the ice rink. The last component is the addition of new stairs from Robson Street. In their DP submission the stairs were a straight run and subsequently they have come to the conclusion that the stairs would be better if they had a gentle curve to them that follows the radius of the domes. Mr. Grout added that they will be proceeding with some public consultation in the fall which will look at the remaining aspects of the plaza.

Mr. Grout described the landscape plans noting that the trees in the planter boxes have outgrown them and are not healthy. They are proposing to remove all the trees and not replace them. The other landscape change is the yew hedge around the top of the plaza which will be taken out, the membranes will be redone and a glass rail will be introduced.

The applicant team took questions from the Panel.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - Delete the two new stairs from Robson Street to the plaza level.
 - Design development is recommended to improve the quality of the existing stairs to Robson Street as well as a redesign of the existing canopies and lighting over the stairs.
- **Related Commentary:** The Panel supported the proposal without the addition of the two new stairs and did not support the proposal for the addition of the new stairs.

The Panel thought that for the most part the design being proposed was in keeping with the plaza, the original design and quality of the space. They thought the addition of the new domes was well considered noting that the change of glazing material of the domes will improve the amount of light that comes into the plaza.

The Panel was also supportive of the improvements to the plaza area although they had a bit of an issue with the GE signage and hoped it would be temporary. They thought the new ceiling treatment and improved lighting above the ice rink would be one of the most important improvements to the space in terms of creating a bright environment and making the space more welcoming.

The Panel had some major concerns with the addition of the new stairs noting they would not solve the problem of access. They felt they would be an intrusion into the plaza and would take away from the significance of the large stairs at both the north and south ends of the plaza. They suggested taking the money for the new stairs and improving the current stairs by redoing the upper stair cover elements and making them more contemporary and incorporating some lighting. The Panel also noted that improving the edge conditions and having something to draw people down into the plaza should be a consideration. A couple of Panel members noted that a food service function in the plaza was vital to revitalizing the space and would improve its function year round.

The Panel supported lowering the hedge and getting rid of the trees in the plaza although one Panel member noted that there might be some challenges in the summer with no shade in the plaza.

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

2. Address:	2300 Kingsway
DE:	412217
Description:	To construct a mixed use commercial and residential project with a total of 276 housing units, a 37 space childcare facility, a temporary community garden all over 5 levels of underground parking (Eldorado Hotel site).
Zoning:	CD-1
Application Status:	Complete
Architect:	Hotson Bakker Boniface Haden Architects
Owner:	Holburn Developments (Kingsway) Ltd.
Review:	Second (1st Review - July 2nd - Non-Support)
Delegation:	Norm Hotson, Hotson Bakker Boniface Haden Architects David Mitchell, DMG Landscape Architects Eesmyal Santos-Brault, Recollective Sheryl Lim, Holburn Developments (Kingsway) Ltd.
Staff:	Ralph Segal

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (7-0)

- **Introduction:** Ralph Segal, Senior Architect/Development Planner introduced the proposal for a complete development application after a rezoning. He noted that the proposal was not supported by the Panel at the review. The principle areas of concern did not relate to density or the overall form or height but had to do with the treatment of public realm; the context or lack of context; the lane concerns regarding the liveability of the live/work units; and the lack sustainability measures in the project. Mr. Segal noted that four panels were included from the previous submission for the Panel to review.

Mr. Segal described the changes since the previous review noting that the reduction in the number of garden plots in the southwest guardant and the introduction of a communal green space. The mews treatment has been amplified with additional bench seating. The live-work units along the lane have been deleted and a multi-storey amenity space component has been added.

Mr. Segal took questions from the Panel.

- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** Norm Hotson, Architect, further described the proposal. Mr. Hotson noted that there were three primary areas of concern from the last Panel's review. He stated that they had retained a sustainability consultant; the landscape requirements have been strengthened; and they have studied in greater detail the ground plane. Mr. Hotson noted that there has been an adjustment to the slab elevations and they have eliminated the wall condition that occurred along Nanaimo Street against the patio. They eliminated all the steel and glass canopies as they want to introduce more colour and texture and will be using a fabric canopy system instead. They have also made a few adjustments to the material treatment of the lane and the mews to get greater continuity. Mr. Hotson added that they had changed the accent colour from maroon to green. Mr. Hotson described the redesign of the amenity space noting that it was now a three storey space with an elevator from the parking garage, a games room at lane level, a fitness facility on the second floor and the top floor will have a meeting/lounge space with access to the green roof.

Eesmyal Santos-Brault, Sustainability Consultant, noted that they have looked at an integrated energy system and the developer has decided to go with a geothermal system. He described the changes since the last review noting that the amount of glass had been reduced on the tower with some eyebrows and larger extensions added on the west façade.

Some thermal comfort modeling will be done to make sure the suite temperatures are in the expectable range. The project will be LEED™ Gold certified for the daycare and LEED™ Silver for the residential and the retail. Sustainable measures include storm water management, pervious paving, the use of green walls, and composting and a community tool shed in the urban gardens. Mr. Santos-Braut noted that as much as possible they will be making sustainability visible and are investigating the use of energy metering in the buildings.

David Mitchell, Landscape Architect, highlighted some of the landscape changes. He noted the street tree treatment along Kingsway had been improved. The Nanaimo Street frontage will have a planted buffer between the sidewalk and the curb. There will be additional site furniture along Nanaimo Street. The Mews paving has been unified and the laneway will have asphalt paving with angled banding to tie in with the orientation of the Mews. In terms of sustainability, there will be green walls, a green roof on top of the daycare, permeable pavers in the Mews and rainwater collection for the raised planters.

The applicant team took questions from the Panel.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - Design development to the base of the tower to create a large scale two storey architectural expression ;
 - Design development to add more fine grained architectural details to the retail base of the tower;
 - Consider further improvements to the landscaping on Kingsway;
 - Consider a more adventurous and playful landscaping strategy for the temporary open green space;
 - Consider continuing the mews paving material across the laneway;
 - Design development to the main body of the tower to add more animation through colour or architectural details ; and
 - Consider other sustainable strategies for the project.
- **Related Commentary:** The Panel supported the proposal noting that there had been enormous improvements since the previous review. They thought this was an important site and was leading the way for future development in the neighbourhood.

The Panel was pleased with the form of the massing and the disposition of the pieces. However, several Panel members noted that the retail elevation under the tower was less robust than the mid-rise building and encouraged the applicant to increase the scale and architectural expression of the building base. The biggest concern was the interface of the building to the ground plane as they felt there wasn't enough happening to make for a prominent commercial ground oriented development. They suggested looking for opportunities to break up a very big building and bring some richness and texture that would make the project fit into the neighbourhood. Those opportunities for adding a richness of texture could include lighting, signage, basic wall treatment, fenestration, etc.

The Panel had a general appreciation for the outdoor space near the pub as they felt there was an improvement but had some concern with the drawing elevations as they felt it was still hard to tell what that space was and encouraged the applicant to make sure that prominent corner on Kingsway and Nanaimo Street was well considered from a pedestrian point of view.

The Panel thought the public realm has been improved. However, several Panel members thought there were still some challenges with the grade on Kingsway and had some concerns regarding the landscaping. They encouraged the applicant to make sure the pots

were vandal proof and that irrigation was considered as well as using more robust plantings in the planter boxes and pots.

The Panel liked the changes to the community garden with the addition of more open green space. Several Panel members suggested the applicant take more risks with the gardens as they seemed too calm. Since the garden would only be temporary they thought there could be more whimsy in the landscaping.

Several Panel members thought the mews material should extend all the way across the lane to make for a much stronger public realm treatment. One Panel member was still concerned with the interface between the townhouse and the daycare noting that the backyard of the townhouses will be the play area of the daycare and will need more than a fence.

The Panel supported moving the amenity space to the laneway as they felt it was a good location for the amenity and added a benefit to the mews and the project.

The Panel applauded the applicant for putting colour on the building but had some concerns with the colour noting that painted concrete has a tendency to fade and look dirty over time. One Panel member noted that the glass body and the canopy colours seemed subdued and suggested having more animation in the rest of the tower rather than relying on colour. The Panel recommended looking at the body of the tower to find opportunities for adding detail or layering colour. That adding complimentary colours would add to the dominant colour and tie the signature element to the body of the tower. They noted that adding colour to the soffits under the balconies or adding colour with the use of spandrel glass or to the balcony guards could enhance the massing.

The Panel felt that the sustainability issues had been somewhat addressed but encouraged the applicant to continue looking for sustainable strategies and that the roof on the low rise should be an extensive green roof.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Hotson noted that they had looked at different expressions for the ground plane. They will be breaking up the canopies into a number of sections to represent bays and are looking at varying the colour as a way to respond to the character of Kingsway. He noted that the developer will require retail tenants to design their storefronts and this will provide the diversity that the panel is recommending. They will also coordinate the tower colour with the canopy colours. Mr. Hotson added that he agreed with the comments regarding the tower base and will be looking at ways to strengthen the retail as well as the tower.

3. Address:	4550 Fraser Street
DE:	412286
Description:	To construct a 4-storey mixed-use building over two-levels of underground parking. 48 of the dwelling units will be the replacement rental units for the 48 units currently located on the adjacent CD-1 site (4545 Prince Albert).
Zoning:	C-2
Application Status:	Complete
Architect:	Raymond Letkeman Architects Inc.
Owner:	LM Century Homes Limited
Review:	First
Delegation:	Paul Faibish, Ledingham McAllister Ray Letkeman, Raymond Letkeman Architects Inc. Margot Long, PWL Partnership
Staff:	Anita Molaro

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (4-3)

- **Introduction:** Anita Molaro, Development Planner, introduced the proposal located on Fraser Street between East 29th and 30th Avenues. Ms. Molaro described the zoning surrounding the site noting the CD-1 zoning across the lane that will come in as a separate application allowing for 48 units with a FSR of .75 and a maximum height of 25 feet or two storeys. The rental units on the adjacent site are to be relocated to this C-2 site and will be secured through a housing agreement. Ms. Molaro described the site dimensions.

The proposal contains commercial/retail along the Fraser Street frontage and will include a grocery store and drug store with 3 storeys of residential above. A four storey residential block is planned behind the entry to the residential components. The residential units at the back of the project are single storey flats but do have separate entries to animate both the street and the lane.

Ms. Molaro noted that the proposal meets the FSR, setback and height requirements of the C-2 By-law except for the height of the back of the retail use along East 30th Avenue and the rear yard at the lane. A stepped massing is required at the fourth floor setback.

Loading for the commercial is off the lane at the inside corner and parking access for the residential is also just off the lane.

The proposal intends to use brick, accent masonry, window wall glazing and hardy panel siding and trims for both components.

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

- Overall massing response
- Overall building design/character
- Resolution of the elevations and their various orientations and response to their context
- Resolution of the ground plane and its interface with the public realm
- Liveability of the units
- Design of open space
- Use and quality of the proposed materials

Ms. Molaro took questions from the Panel.

- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** Paul Faibish, Ledingham McAllister, gave a brief background on how they came up with the proposal. They started looking at the site over a year ago. He noted that they had talked to the neighbours who did not want to see higher building forms and higher densities. The neighbours wanted to see a physical improvement to the area and if possible an improvement to the services in the area and as a result they have found a food store tenant.

Ray Letkeman, Architect, further described the proposal. He noted that it was a large and difficult site especially because of the grades across the site. They attempted to break the scale down on Fraser Street with the introduction of terrace areas that are set back to make three building components with a substantial recess. They are introducing window walls to get a more urban expression along Fraser Street. The building behind is similar in character but they wanted a softer look and have introduced a more built up expression with beams, lattice and timber work but still retaining the module that is seen on the front of the building. There are three residential cores including an elevator core from the underground parking to the grocery store. The loading bay services the food store using freight elevators because of the change in floor elevation.

Margot Long, Landscape Architect, noted that the landscape responds to the architecture with a typical streetscape on Fraser Street with street trees and saw-cut concrete and pavers on the property line. That urban edge treatment carries around the corner to East 29th Avenue where it changes to a lower scale residential where there are townhouse entries that have their own private courtyards. That character carries around both sides of the lane to create some animation on the lane. The courtyard has an amenity space at the lower level. Rental housing is on the lower deck and they each have outdoor patios. Ms. Long noted that they had created four separate garden rooms. One is for play, one for sitting on the grass, one for urban agriculture and another area with a big barbeque area with over scale picnic tables and a built-in barbeque. On the commercial edge of the wall there will be a tile mosaic and green walls to soften that wall. There will also be a gated entrance off of East 29th Avenue and large scale upper patios on the Fraser Street side of the proposal.

The applicant team took questions from the Panel.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - Design development to address the length of the circulation corridors in both buildings;
 - Design development to resolve the issue of loading and parking access;
 - Design development to the large blank wall on the lane off East 30th Avenue; and
 - Resolve the grade transitions around the 'c' shaped building; may require breaking the building into two buildings.
 - Improve access to the indoor amenity space from the Fraser Street residential units.
- **Related Commentary:** The Panel supported the proposal noting that it was well handled for a large C-2 site.

The Panel thought the three building massing was nicely proportioned and gave a rhythm and modulation along Fraser Street. One Panel member suggested that the Fraser Street frontage could benefit from a slight relaxation of the height at the residential entry. In terms of the resolution of the elevations the Panel thought the elevations were well considered and well proposed. Their orientation to the various neighbourhoods and site conditions was thoughtful and well executed and worked well with the context of the neighbourhood.

Regarding the types of material and detailing, the Panel thought it tied together well and had enough variety.

The resolution of the ground plane and its interface with the public realm was generally done very well. The Panel thought the one major exception was how the grade changes were handled around the site especially with respect to the 'c' shaped building. The Panel thought the issue could be resolved with several Panel members suggesting the building could step down along East 29th Avenue while other Panel members thought it could also be resolved by having townhouses instead of flats in that area. One Panel member noted that there is a 10 foot grade separation between the East 29th Avenue upper corner and the bottom corner where the two lanes meet. The Panel member suggested that if the building was raised up slightly another unit could be added underneath those units on the lane which would actually resolve a lot of the grade challenges.

The Panel agreed that the liveability of the units was well done and thought the penthouses units worked well. Several Panel members noted that the one unit in the corner beside the loading bay was not livable. The Panel had a major issue with the length of the interior corridor along Fraser Street. Most of the Panel members suggested that the Fraser Street building should be broken up into two buildings as they thought it would reduce the apparent scale and that the 'c' shaped building should be broken into more buildings to address the grade issues along with the long corridor.

The Panel thought the spaces were nicely handled in the courtyard and liked the green wall on the garage. They liked the idea of having a more urban quality on Fraser Street with a more residential quality at the back of the project. The Panel thought the landscaping was appropriate and worked well to relive some of the walls. One Panel member suggested combining the seating area and the barrier planting area.

The Panel thought the vertical circulation between the parking and the major tenants needed some work. They noted that the grocery store and the pharmacy were going to need access to the parking. One Panel member suggested that given the scale of the site it was worth splitting the parking and having the commercial separate from the residential parking entrance.

The panel was concerned with the length of the corridors on the residential floors. The thought the applicant should add natural light, vary the width or add some jogs to the corridors to make them seem less relentless.

The Panel thought the blank wall on the corner of the lane at East 30th Avenue was harsh and would be an imposition to the neighbouring house. They thought this was an opportunity to find a way to animate the wall and enliven it including the possibility of bringing daylight into the back of the units along that edge. Another Panel member suggested there could be an art piece or landscape piece to soften the wall. The Panel also thought the amount of traffic that would be going down the lane to and from the underground garage past the residential home was going to be a problem. One Panel member suggested the commercial parking entrance could be relocated to East 30th Avenue. Several panel members had concerns about the neighbourliness of the loading bays in relation to the adjacent residential properties.

The Panel thought the indoor amenity was hard to access from the Fraser Street residential units and was not acceptable to have an amenity space that was hard to get to from many of the units and suggested the applicant find another way to make the connection work.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Letkeman said he appreciated the comments from the Panel as they had highlighted the issues they have struggled with and will continue to work with City staff for a better resolution. Mr. Letkeman said he agreed with the Panel regarding the blank wall and will look for a better treatment. He added that they will also look at some creative ways to change the perceived length of the circulation corridors. As for improving the grade at the 'c' shaped building, he said they would look at adding some townhouses or splitting the elevator core.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.