

URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: August 4, 2004

TIME: 4.00 pm

PLACE: Committee Room No. 1, City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
Mark Ostry, Chair
Larry Adams
Jeffrey Corbett (*excused 1455 Howe Street*)
Alan Endall
Marta Farevaag
Ronald Lea
Margot Long
Jennifer Marshall
Brian Martin (*present for 1455 Howe Street and 788 Richards Street only*)

REGRETS: Robert Barnes
Bruce Haden
Steven Keyes

**RECORDING
SECRETARY:** Carol Hubbard

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING	
1.	1455 Howe Street
2.	788 Richards Street
3.	811 Cambie Street
4.	2820 Bentall Street

1. Address:	1455 Howe Street
DE:	408522
Use:	Residential (29 storeys, 138 units)
Zoning:	CD-1
Applicant Status:	Complete
Architect:	Rafii/Brook Dev. Planning
Owner:	Qualex-Landmark Group
Review:	First
Delegation:	Foad Rafii, Robert Kleyn, Jane Durante
Staff:	Jonathan Barrett

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (7-0)

- **Introduction:** Jonathan Barrett, Development Planner, presented this complete application for a 30-storey residential building containing 151 dwelling units and four live/work units. The CD-1 zoning was approved in April 2004 and the Panel's recommendations on the rezoning application were incorporated into the rezoning conditions. The Panel supported the proposed height and location of the tower as well as the overall form of development.

Mr. Barrett briefly reviewed the main conditions of the CD-1 rezoning and sought the advice of the Panel on the applicant's response to the rezoning conditions as well as on the overall building character and exterior materials. The Panel was also asked to comment on the rhythm of the live/work units on Pacific Street, the overall landscape plan and sustainability aspects. Staff have identified no major issues with respect to the proposal.

- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Foad Rafii, Architect, briefly described the design rationale and noted they are working towards LEED certification. The Landscape Architect, Jane Durante, briefly reviewed the landscape plan, including the proposed sky garden, and the applicant team responded to questions from the Panel.
- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**

The Panel generally supported the project. Suggestions for improvement were seen to be refinements to occur in design development with respect to details and materiality, connections and relationships. The Panel was confident the project is moving in the right direction.

Suggestions for refinement included:

- Integrate the children's play area with the general outdoor space;
 - Consider making the corner water feature more dynamic;
 - Reconsider the large trees on the north and south edges;
 - Improve the light well to increase light, ventilation and texture;
 - Design development to the columns so that they have some influence on the form rather than appearing gratuitous.
- **Related Commentary:**

The Panel was satisfied that the rezoning design conditions had been well resolved. The form of development was strongly supported in terms of the overall massing and height. The project is suitably modest and fits well in its context. A comment was made that its direction will be a welcome relief from the predominant white and green of the neighbouring Beach Neighbourhood.

On a detailed level, the Panel had some suggestions with respect to the overall character and materials. The emerging architectural vocabulary for both the tower and the townhouses was considered to be very attractive with some interesting possibilities, but in general the Panel thought it needed to be taken further so that it comes together more successfully as a composition. There is currently too much happening and it needs to be simplified; perhaps the window rhythms could be simpler or more modest. The design of the base could also benefit from some rework. There was a recommendation to reconsider the palette of materials to provide more contrast, perhaps using some darker, "punchier" materials.

The Panel strongly supported the proposed sky gardens. They create interesting, inviting elements that help the massing of the tower. One Panel member questioned why one was not located on the opposite corner where it would be more visible from the approach to downtown over Granville Bridge and where it would also receive more sunlight. Another comment about the sky garden is that it would be more positive and usable if it was supported by the amenity room. With respect to the green roof, there was a suggestion that the very large trees associated with it may be detract from it and should be reconsidered. One Panel member questioned whether the location of the small sky garden on the east side of the building might be too arbitrary.

It was suggested that the plaza at the Pacific corner would be more interesting if the water feature was more dynamic; vertical rather than horizontal. Given this is a noisy corner it would be desirable to provide an opportunity to welcome the public into the plaza.

The Panel strongly recommended that the light well be larger, if possible. In addition to widening it, there was also a recommendation to consider canting and planting the wall to provide not only more light into the lower units but to add some texture to the wall.

One Panel member considered the sense of entry to the tower on Howe Street to be somewhat weak, and also urged the applicant to pay attention to the materiality of the inside courtyard walls, noting there will be a fair amount of overlook from the tower. Another concern expressed about the interior courtyard was not that does not invite use. The applicant was strongly urged to create an environment for the residents to interact, including seating, noting that this would be strengthened if the children's play area has a relationship to the courtyard.

It was noted that the patios of the live/work units on Pacific are very small and should be enlarged if at all possible, noting that the units on the lane will be quite private so may not need as much planting.

One Panel member had concerns about the large structural columns on the north and south face which obstruct views from some units and do not add anything to the building.

The Panel commended the applicant on a very competent and elegant project and expressed confidence that it will be a very successful building with further design development.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Rafii thanked the Panel for the suggestions which he said they will try to incorporate. He noted there is access from the main amenity room to the landscaped area and the intention is that it will be used.

2.	Address:	788 Richards Street
	DE:	408641
	Use:	Mixed (29 storeys)
	Zoning:	DD
	Applicant Status:	Complete
	Architect:	Gomberoff Bell Lyon
	Owner:	Millennium Robson Properties
	Review:	First
	Delegation:	Stu Lyon, Shahrn Malleck, Peter Kreuk
	Staff:	Scot Hein

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (8-0)

- **Introduction:** Scot Hein, Development Planner, presented this application in the Downtown District, Sub Area C, at the corner of Robson and Richards Streets. The site has a 300 ft. frontage on Richards Street. In consultation with City staff, the applicant has arrived at a strategy to replace the existing 43 units of Single Room Accommodation (SRA) on the site in exchange for bonus density. The proposal is for a mixed use development and includes a grocery store, hotel and residential uses, and 46 new SRA units expressed as a stand-alone building. In exchange for these SRA units, the application seeks a bonus density of approximately 2.1 FSR, for a total density of about 7.8 FSR (including 3.0 FSR residential; 2.0 FSR commercial). The proposed height of 285 ft. respects a view cone which traverses the site.

The advice of the Panel is sought on the following:

- The site's ability to accommodate the proposed density, particularly the bonus density of approx. 75,000 sq.ft. (2.0 FSR);
 - Massing: the arrangement and clarity of the uses and expectations for architectural and landscape quality;
 - Response to the proposed bridge connection to the existing Westin Grand across the lane.
- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Stu Lyon, Architect, briefly described the project, noting that separation from the existing Westin Grand Hotel is about 85 ft. The floorplate has been reduced as much as possible to about 6,500 sq.ft. The developer has undertaken to build new SRA to replace the existing rooming house on the site. The intent is to provide as much commercial space as possible to address the Robson Street shopping district and investigations are underway for a potential grocery store on the ground floor and a retail tenant on the second floor. Discussions are taking place with Engineering Services with respect to the required Class C loading space (15 ft.) and truck access in the lane. With respect to the hotel component, the Westin Grand has expressed interest in the 29 rooms on the upper floors of the tower, for which a linking bridge will be required. Mr. Lyon explained the approach has been to "bundle" the various pieces, with each of the tower components having its own identifiable cladding system. Landscape Architect, Peter Kreuk, briefly reviewed the landscape plan, and the applicant team responded to questions from the Panel.
- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - development and articulation on the lane façade of the tower;
 - design development to the lane, particularly the southern portion, taking into account how it relates to the Westin Grand and other neighbours including the theatre. The lane should be treated to encourage pedestrian activity;
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- access to the 9th floor roof deck should be provided to all residents and there should be better connection between this roof deck and the tower;
- design development to the SRA component in terms of improving the perceived quality of the design;
- design development to the south façade of the tower;
- the bridge over the lane, which was strongly supported, should be given greater emphasis.

- **Related Commentary:**

The Panel unanimously supported this application and thought the applicant had deftly handled the density and massing on a very challenging site. The Panel considered the application earned the density bonus for replacing the SRA units. While supporting the proposed FSR, one Panel member suggested that, if there is a requirement for a reduction in density, then the most appropriate location would be in the podium, at the second level commercial. The Panel supported the tower location on Richards Street as opposed to Robson.

The proposed bridge connection from the Westin Grand was unanimously supported but with recommendations for great resolution of its expression. For example, attention should be given to way-finding and clarity of the relationship between the two buildings, and to consider the sequence of movement from the Westin Grand to make the bridge more of an experience. There was also a suggestion that the bridge could be an opportunity to create a “piece” in the lane, possibly a beacon to shed light in the lane at nighttime and make it welcoming.

With respect to the lane, the Panel thought it was critical that a better interface be developed in collaboration with the neighbours, noting there is opportunity for a better response to the existing Westin Grand loading situation. Suggestions included reducing the amount of ground floor area directly across from the Westin to allow that area more breathing room. There was also a suggestion that this development provides an opportunity to fix the unfortunate loading situation related to the theatre. The Panel found the south side of the lane needed to be softened, including treatment of the back wall of the loading bay given it will likely be empty much of the time. High quality paving treatment in the lane was also recommended.

The Panel generally supported the architectural expression of the building and the clarity of uses, and encouraged the applicant to keep it simple and contemporary. There was a suggestion to consider extending the 4th floor hotel rooms out to the street and moving the balconies up to the 5th floor residential where they will be more usable. There was a recommendation for greater attention to the south (lane) elevation which is currently fairly flat and less articulated than the other facades. There was also a suggestion to consider reversing the brick and the concrete for a better response to the Westin Grand which has very robust punched openings. One Panel member found some of the lobbies and entries somewhat pinched and mean and thought there was opportunity with the proposed mix of uses to create more publicly oriented and generous spaces within the building. The Panel supported the retail on Robson Street, with one suggestion to make this façade a bit more exciting, in keeping with this high end retail area. There was also a suggestion to open up the corner to provide greater exposure of the lane entrance.

The Panel responded very positively to the proposed SRA component but expressed disappointment with its architectural treatment. The applicant was urged to give the same attention to this component as the rest of the development, noting it will not serve the marketing of the building to have it appear as the “poor cousin” of the scheme. It was stressed that it can still be quite distinct and could be a “little gem”.

Some Panel members commented that the City needs better streetscape guidelines for this part of Richards and Robson and found the proposed streetscape lacking. Continuity of the street trees is very important in this transitional area.

Several Panel members commented on the fact that the 9th floor roof deck appears to be very difficult to access and therefore not a true amenity. So that it does not become an outdoor space for just the two adjacent units, it was recommended that there is direct access off the tower and a better connection from a lobby or amenity space.

The applicant was commended for the initiative with respect to the SRA component, and for the high quality of the presentation materials.

3.	Address:	811 Cambie Street
	Use:	Mixed (22 storeys, 141 units)
	Zoning:	CD-1
	Applicant Status:	Rezoning
	Architect:	Hancock Bruckner Eng & Wright
	Owner:	Peak Performance
	Review:	First
	Delegation:	Jim McLean, Martin Buckner, Peter Kreuk
	Staff:	Scot Hein

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (7-0)

- **Introduction:** Scot Hein, Development Planner, presented this application for rezoning the site at the southwest corner of Cambie and Robson Streets. The developer proposes to make a financial contribution to the City's affordable housing fund in exchange for the increase in density on the site. The proposal is for a 22-storey (210 ft.) mixed use development containing 2.0 FSR retail (including a second level restaurant) and 3.5 FSR residential which includes a ten percent heritage density transfer, plus a density increase of about 2.0 FSR (approx. 40,000 sq.ft.) for a total density of 7.58 FSR.

The advice of the Panel is sought on:

- Use, noting the inclusion of live/work, office, and retail at grade on Robson Street
 - Density: whether this site can accommodate the increase in density being requested
 - Form of Development: general massing and sculpting of the tower, etc.
- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Martin Bruckner, Architect, briefly described the design rationale. The developer, Jim McLean, noted that negotiations with the City are underway with respect to the density increase for which a substantial cash payment (\$3 million plus) is proposed as a CAC. Peter Kreuk briefly reviewed the landscape plan and the applicant team responded to questions from the Panel.
- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - Attention to streetscape and lanescape;
 - Design development to the live/work use to ensure animated street life is maintained;
 - Greater articulation and refinement of the tower.
- **Related Commentary:**

The Panel supported the general direction of the project at this early stage and unanimously supported the application for rezoning. Use, density and form of development were considered appropriate. The Panel advised that it wished to see this application again at the development application stage.

The Panel unanimously supported the proposed density and considered the site large enough to accommodate it

The following suggestions and comments were made about the form of development for consideration at the development application stage:

- the treatment of the Robson Street elevation is a nice result of the tower placement to protect sun penetration;

- the project at this stage is more of a massing study than a design;
- the mid-rise and “sub tower” are the least successful components in terms of their relationship to the tower;
- the podium needs design development but is something that can be worked through at the next stage;
- the stand-alone retail elevator needs further consideration;
- the mid-rise component should be more neighbourly - it creates a wall for the lower level of the neighbouring Rosedale;
- reconsider the expression of the mid-rise, possibly bringing it to the ground and not looking as through it is planted on top of the podium;
- the concrete surface of the “sub tower” seems very foreign to all other aspects of the project;
- the extra density makes the building somewhat chunky, emphasizing its lack of height, so articulation will be critical;
- the lane needs design development;
- further consideration should be given to where the building fits within the city and its relationship to neighbouring buildings;
- the four distinct personalities of the building need to come together better;
- encourage places for people to interact in this mixed use building;
- encourage beautification of the lane, including glazing from the retail at the corner to provide “eyes on the lane”;
- attention should be given to the Robson frontage to deal carefully with building lines to express it in a way that it doesn’t look like an afterthought;
- the south elevation needs greater articulation and consideration given to solar heat gain;
- density could be relocated from the chunky mid section to the lower portion.

The live/work component paired with the retail was strongly supported but with concerns that it should not become purely residential on Robson Street. It was recommended that design development of this component allow for the articulation to be more retail in character to discourage later conversion to entirely residential. It was noted that it will be a challenge for the landscape architect to find a balance between the two functions on the street. There was a recommendation to consider paired entrances to the live/work units and to consider the area in front of them as a usable private space for the residents - more than just an entrance.

The Panel welcomed the many extensive usable roof decks.

The applicant was commended for providing parking in this development for Catholic Charities.

The Panel had some concerns about the streetscape and urged that there be City guidelines to ensure this end of Cambie and Robson works well, noting that all the edges will be important. With this end of Robson now maturing there is opportunity to effectively extend the street life and activity along this corridor. The applicant was encouraged, as the design develops, to take a more comprehensive look at what is happening to the street and what will be occurring in the area in the future.

4.	Address:	2820 Bentall Street
	Use:	Retail
	Zoning:	CD-1
	Applicant Status:	Rezoning
	Architect:	Kasian Kennedy
	Owner:	Canadian Tire Real Estate
	Review:	First
	Delegation:	Joanne Stich, Mary Chan-Yip, Nicole Wainwright, Jason Wexler
	Staff:	Lynda Challis, Scot Hein

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (6-1)

- **Introduction:** Lynda Challis, Rezoning Planner, introduced this rezoning application to permit highway oriented retail uses including a new Canadian Tire store at Bentall Street and Grandview Highway. She briefly described the immediate context and the proposed development and requested the Panel's advice on use, density and form of development. This section of Grandview Highway is guided by the Grandview/Boundary Industrial Area Plan which recognizes this site's potential for highway oriented retail use. The site is 2.3 hectares in size. The proposal would dedicate land to extend Cornett Street. Still Creek runs along the rear of the property and the proposal is to "daylight" and landscape the creek and relocate it to the north side of the new Cornett Street extension. Other "big box" retail exists in the area, including a Real Canadian Superstore, Danier Leather and Petcetera.

The application proposes a mixed use development containing retail and service uses: A Canadian Tire store and service centre, a grocery store, a retail unit and a restaurant on the south portion of the site. The centre of the site contains two levels of parking accessed from Cornett and Bentall Streets. Policies and Guidelines recommend a height of 40 ft. which may be relaxed up to 60 ft. for mixed use development. The proposed development has a maximum height of 70 ft. which is to accommodate the Canadian Tire tower feature. The overall height is 64 ft. The Guidelines also recommend a height of 30 ft. on Grandview Highway; the proposal seeks 41 ft. Policy supports a maximum density of 3.0 FSR overall, of which 0.6 can be for retail uses. The proposal seeks 1.6 FSR overall, including 0.75 FSR for retail. The application is seeking additional retail density and height in exchange for dedicating the lane and daylighting the creek.

Scot Hein, Development Planner, addressed the form of development issues and sought the Panel's comments in the following areas:

- Height and interface at Grandview Highway;
 - Streetscape of Bentall and Cornett Streets and Interface with the parking;
 - Scale and quality of the elevations viewed from the creek as well as the Skytrain Station;
 - Landscaping, including the potential for vertical landscape at the corner
- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Joanne Stich, Architect, briefly described the design rationale, Mary Chan-Yip reviewed the landscape plan and the applicant team responded to the Panel's questions.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**

The Panel had no concerns with the proposed use and density and strongly supported the application for rezoning. The Panel commended the applicant for the initiative to daylight Still Creek. It was noted that it will set a great precedent for the area and has the potential of creating a legacy that Canadian Tire can be proud of.

Most of the Panel's concerns related to the form of development and for this reason the Panel strongly urged that it be returned for further review at the development application stage. In particular, the Panel was concerned about the proposed Cornett Street extension because it was thought there was an opportunity on the creek side of the site which has been completely compromised by the new road.

- **Related Commentary:**

The applicant was commended for a very clear and detailed presentation for a rezoning application.

The Panel unanimously supported the proposed use and density. The majority of Panel members had no concerns with the height, noting the overheight relates mainly to the Canadian Tire tower advertising element. There were, however, some comments that, with some massaging and greater articulation, it should not be necessary for the project (with the exception of the tower feature) to exceed the height recommended by the guidelines.

The Panel had no serious concerns about the expression of the building as viewed from the Skytrain station. However, the Panel had strong concerns about the building's relationship to the proposed road extension and its impact on Still Creek.

The Panel was very enthusiastic about the proposal to daylight the creek and commended the applicant for this initiative. However, there was considerable disappointment expressed that the proposal to extend Cornett Street next to the creek seems counter to the daylighting initiative, as well as any potential daylighting of other sections of the creek. The Panel suggested that, if this roadway is required for fire access or other servicing, it should not be a typical city street but have an entirely different character and provide a much richer experience, in keeping with the creek running alongside it. There were concerns that the daylighted creek will be very "engineered" as opposed to what is suggested in the landscape drawings. The applicant was urged to consider exploring Cornett being narrower and reconsider its function as a more pedestrian oriented environment. One Panel member questioned whether it would be possible to have a pedestrian entrance into the site from the creek side so that the building responds better to the creek.

The Panel suggested that this application provides a great opportunity for Canadian Tire to consider other things that can be achieved in this industrial area in terms of sustainability initiatives, including overlook, drainage and stormwater, etc., noting the apparent contradiction in daylighting the creek at the same time as creating large amounts of hard surface. One suggestion was to make the whole roof structure at the creek edge a "green" roof and to consider an impermeable surface for the parking area. It was noted that if Canadian Tire takes on this challenge it will set the tone for other development in the area and provide a tremendous marketing tool for the company.

The Panel also recommended that more could be done with the proposed bike hub, with suggestions for it to interface more positively with the store.

The Panel supported the proposed double height parking in the centre of the project. In addition to giving greater consideration to the surface material, it was recommended introducing as much natural light as possible to the lower level by way of light wells or skylights. Consider bringing some of the creek landscape into the parking area. There was also a suggestion to explore planting some of the trees at the lower level and have them grow up through the second level. Another comment was that there may be an opportunity to express the parking separate from the buildings. Also, that the edge of the parking needs greater consideration next to the two side streets.

General comments and suggestions about the form of development included:

- the Grandview massing seems fine;
- it is not necessary for the materials to be all the same, e.g., the corner restaurant could have a different material expression;
- concern that the project is in danger of becoming a “decorated box”: this should be the basis for the architectural expression as opposed to trying to disguise it, e.g., work with the scale of the building in a more honest fashion;
- consider ways of slightly canting the roof to get more interest in the profile of the building - this can still be done while achieving mezzanines at the rear;
- suggest creating a portal on Grandview to be able to see through to the main Canadian Tire entrance;
- support the internal loading;
- the massing and architectural expression is where work has to be done;
- applaud some of the moves made to make an urban version of the big box form, including moving the building mass to the street edges and stacking the parking lot;
- moving the whole project closer to the creek would be desirable because it would benefit from being further from Grandview;
- relocating the restaurant to the southwest corner would allow more usable decks;
- the Canadian Tire expression is too mundane and doesn’t suit a two-storey structure - it’s too overpowering and needs a more contemporary expression;
- the shopping experience could benefit from bringing in daylight to the lower levels.

There was a request that, at the next stage, the applicant should show the design concepts that have been explored in arriving at the chosen scheme in terms of siting, massing and location of programming elements. In this way, the Panel will have a better understanding of why the proposal is the way that it is.

- **Applicant’s Response:** Ms. Stich thanked the Panel for the comments and said they look forward to working with staff on the resolution of the scheme.