
URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: August 8, 2001

TIME: 4.00 p.m.

PLACE: Committee Room No. 1, City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
Walter Francl, Chair
Lance Berelowitz
Alan Endall
Bruce Hemstock
Joseph Hruda
Sorin Tatomir
Maurice Pez

REGRETS: Tom Bunting
Jeffrey Corbett
Gerry Eckford
Richard Henry
Jack Lutsky

**RECORDING
SECRETARY:** Carol Hubbard

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING	
1.	1678 Kingsway
2.	546-576 West 7th Avenue

Prompted by a recent newspaper article describing the role of the Urban Design Panel in the City of Vancouver, Panel members discussed the Panel's mandate to review City engineering projects, noting that few if any of the significant civic works over the last several years have even been included on Panel agendas. It was noted that some of these projects have a much bigger impact on the public realm and urban design of the city than many of the private developments. It was agreed the Chair would bring the matter to the attention of Larry Beasley, Co-Director of Planning, possibly pursuing a report to Council

jointly with the Planning Commission which has raised similar concerns.



1. Address:	1678 Kingsway
DA:	405523
Use:	Mixed
Zoning:	C-2
Application Status:	Complete
Architect:	P.Y. & Associates
Owner:	Jas Binder Singh/Moham Singh Tamber
Review:	First
Delegation:	Charles Moorhead, Peter Yee
Staff:	Anita Molaro

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (5-1)

- **Introduction:** The Development Planner, Anita Molaro, presented this application in the C-2 zone, briefly describing the site and its immediate context. The proposal is located on Kingsway, mid-block between Welwyn and Perry and is for a 3-storey building comprising ground floor retail with residential on the second and third floors. It is within the 40 ft. height limit in the C-2 zone. Site dimensions are 30 ft. x 90 ft.-8 in. Proposed materials are a combination of articulated concrete block on the side elevations and hardiboard on the front elevation with metal cladding and glass canopy. The rear of the building has been stacked to respond to the angle of Kingsway, and the front elevation has been stacked in the same way. The Guidelines for Kingsway call for ground floor commercial to be located continuously at the street edge. Minor articulation is encouraged for interest provided street continuity is preserved. The advice of the Panel is sought on the architectural quality, materials and streetscape response.
- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Charles Moorhead, Architect, explained the intent of the stepping on both the front and rear elevations is to give an individual identity to the residential component. The stepping also allows for some corner windows in the residential suites on this long, narrow lot. Mr. Moorhead noted the front and rear elevations are the same language. The building is intended for rental accommodation.

Panel members reviewed the model and posted materials.

- **Panel's Comments:** The Panel strongly supported this application, noting it is a relatively simple project.

The Panel had no concerns with the architectural quality or the materials.

The Panel's main urban design issue is the way the building addresses the street. The stepping of the front façade was not supported because it fails to address the street and is out of context with anything else along Kingsway. Indenting the residential entry was considered appropriate but Panel members thought the retail should follow the angled property line. It will also help to make the retail function better. A suggestion was made to simplify the design by creating three equal bays across the width of the lot at ground level, with the middle bay coming right out to the property line. The upper storeys could remain in the stepped form, perhaps with more angular balconies to address the street in a more formal way.

One Panel member thought the building was being overly polite to its easterly neighbour, suggesting it

could be brought out more to better engage the street.

On the ground plane, a recommendation was made to recognize and reinforce the different uses in the building, for example by a change in colour of the concrete or exposed aggregate.

It was noted the weather protection will not function as such: it should be a continuous piece that does actually provide weather protection.

2. Address:	546-576 West 7th Avenue (2300 Ash Street)
DA:	406035
Use:	Office (Heritage)
Zoning:	C-3A
Application Status:	Complete
Architect:	Chernoff Thompson
Owner:	Mesa Chemical Corp.
Review:	First
Delegation:	Scott Cressey, Neil Godfrey, Russell Chernoff, Jane Durante
Staff:	Mary Beth Rondeau

EVALUATION: NON-SUPPORT (2-4)

- Introduction:** Mary Beth Rondeau, Development Planner, presented this application to develop a large site (323 ft.) at the corner of 7th Avenue and Ash Street. A previous application was approved for this site in 1997 but was not pursued. The site contains a Heritage B house on the corner which is not part of this application. However, there is another Heritage B house (the Shaw House) on the site which is considered restorable and is included in this scheme. The proposal contains some retail at grade facing the street, ~~a 3-storey podium of residential use~~, and a 6-storey tower for bio-tech uses. There is a public view slot through the open plaza to the south which has been respected by setting back this proposal to allow views through. Concerns with the previous residential proposal related to its proximity to the neighbouring autobody shop (an existing non-conforming use), which is not an issue with this proposal. The C-3A zone permits outright 1.0 FSR and 30 ft. height. The application seeks 3.0 FSR, plus the restored Shaw House, and a height relaxation to about 86 ft. The Planning Department supports the restoration, retention and relocation of the Shaw House on the site, noting the regulations permit relaxation of FSR for heritage conservation. Proposed materials are mostly brick, and glass. The Panel's advice is sought on the proposed massing variance from that recommended in the C-3A guidelines, and whether the proposal has earned its requested relaxations.
- Applicant's Opening Comments:** Russell Chernoff, Architect, explained it is necessary for the bio-tech tower to be flexible to be able to convert from office to laboratory and vice versa, as required. The building is intended to be constructed as a base building shell, ready for tenants. Mr. Chernoff described the project rationale and the criteria which have driven the design.

Panel members reviewed the model and posted materials.

- Panel's Comments:** The Panel was not persuaded that this proposal earns the additional height and density it seeks. The application was not supported.

The majority of Panel members were generally supportive of restoring and retaining the Shaw house and having it work with the other heritage house on the site but had a number of concerns associated with it in this scheme. One comment was that the interesting corner element provides a good demarcation for the entry but it encroaches on the house and works against creating its own place. There may be a better location for the lobby which would allow the space to become much more of a public amenity and relate to the house in a stronger way. One Panel member thought the proposal for the massing to take up 57 percent the site frontage was contributing to the crowding of the heritage houses. Greater thought needs to be given to how the bio-tech building functions as a backdrop for the heritage homes. One Panel member, while supporting the heritage retention as a worthwhile

exercise, questioned the strange looking situations that occur from this kind of restoration. One Panel member was unconvinced that this is the correct heritage strategy and recommended abandoning it in favour of more public amenity, e.g. by increasing the open space at the corner and programming it in a more meaningful way.

The Panel was also disappointed that the heritage house was not more of a public amenity as opposed to just a visual resource. Café or restaurant use that engaged the corner open space was thought to be a better contribution towards earning the requested relaxations.

The Panel did not find the view corridor to the south to be particularly valuable given the view is already obstructed and it provides only minor relief along West 8th Avenue. It was suggested there should be a positive architectural response to this building to enhance that view and a playing down of some of the negative elements. One Panel member questioned whether the view corridor should be respected, suggesting repositioning of the building might be considered. Another suggested an erosion into the part of the corridor which has no mountain view might be supported, which would allow the building to be pulled further away from the heritage house.

Some Panel members expressed concern about the general expression of the bio-tech building, in particular that the treatment of the northwest corner seems very arbitrary and out of place with the building next to it. Another comment was that the building could be handled in a lighter way with more of a high tech expression. There were suggestions that the roof stacks could be stronger and more permanent. They could be integrated more with the future flues on the roof so that they become more of an architectural element which would improve the overlook from neighbouring buildings.

It was noted the buildings in Fairview Slopes generally reflect the topography of the land and this table-top design destroys the sense of stepping. It was recommended that the top floor be terraced or sculpted in some way that responds to the character of the urban form of Fairview Slopes.

- **Applicant's Response:** Regarding the materials, Mr. Chernoff explained they felt the use of brick was appropriate in this transition area between the Fairview Slopes residential neighbourhood and the more commercial zone. The use of this building does not easily lend itself to terracing because it compromises its functionality. With respect to public access to the heritage building, Mr. Chernoff explained the proposal is to use it for conferencing, but with the option of a coffee shop or café if a suitable tenant expresses an interest. Scott Cressey expressed some frustration in dealing with the C-3A zone in terms of earning additional height and density. He noted the Planning Department has indicated the view corridor is not negotiable. He explained, stepping the building is not feasible because the efficiencies demanded by this sort of tenant cannot be accommodated. He stressed there is a large demand for bio-tech buildings. Mr. Cressey added, the Urban Design Panel is not at all in sync with the Planning Department and there needs to be a much simpler process so that developers and architects understand the rules when making applications in the C-3A zone.