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## URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

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**DATE:** August 9, 2000

**TIME:** 4.00 p.m.

**PLACE:** Committee Room #1, City Hall

**PRESENT:** MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:  
Paul Grant (Chair)  
Lance Berelowitz  
James Cheng  
Bruce Hemstock (excused Item #2)  
Roger Hughes (excused Item #1)  
Jack Lutsky  
Sorin Tatomir

**REGRETS:** Tom Bunting  
Alan Endall  
Brian Palmquist  
Gilbert Raynard  
Keith Ross

**RECORDING SECRETARY:** Carol Hubbard

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ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING	
1.	498 Pacific Boulevard
2.	1499 Homer Street
3.	1175 Broughton Street

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|----|---------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. | Address:            | 498 Pacific Blvd.                     |
|    | DA:                 | 405201                                |
|    | Use:                | Residential                           |
|    | Zoning:             | CD-1                                  |
|    | Application Status: | Complete                              |
|    | Architect:          | Roger Hughes & Partners               |
|    | Owner:              | Concord Pacific                       |
|    | Review:             | First                                 |
|    | Delegation:         | Roger Hughes, Don Wuori, David Negrin |
|    | Staff:              | Michael Gordon                        |
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#### EVALUATION: SUPPORT (5-0)

- **Introduction:** Senior Planner, Michael Gordon, presented this application for the first of two towers proposed for the Beach Neighbourhood which form part of a “family” of towers extending along Pacific Boulevard and wrapping around Homer Street to Beach Avenue. Particular areas in which the advice of the Panel is sought relate to the massing and design of the façades of the townhouses that will wrap around the northerly edges of Beach Crescent, noting that whatever design is approved for this development will be repeated for the remainder of the crescent. The Panel’s comments are also sought on the design of the open space, ie., access to the parking and the relationship to pedestrian routes in the provision of semi private open space. At 32 storeys, the proposal does not exceed the maximum height indicated in the CD-1 by-law. The Panel’s comments are also requested on the location and viability of the proposed retail use at the westerly end of the townhouses.
- **Applicant’s Opening Comments:** Roger Hughes, Architect, noted the height is within the overall height limit of 91 m. There is a high ground floor of 5 m for common spaces, and one unit was deleted from the second floor to create a double height space over the entrance and a large-scale entry lobby. The proposed tower is one of a pair intended to create a gateway to the Beach Neighbourhood at the end of Richards Street. The intent is that the façades facing each other across Richards Street will be glass, backed up by heavy brick massing behind. The townhouses facing the park are ground oriented with front and rear entries. The upper storey has a terrace which is set back to create a continuous upper roof line, below which each townhouse has a two-storey bay window and a vertical chimney, and a lattice screen above the entry. Materials are buff brick on the back of the building and clear glass with silver mullions. The townhouse roofs are metal in consideration of their overview from the tower.

Don Wuori, Landscape Architect, briefly reviewed the landscape plan, noting his firm was involved in the overall landscape in terms of the ODP, the design principles of which have been adhered to on this site. The ground plane treatment also complies with the Downtown South Guidelines which have been extended to include this neighbourhood.

- **Panel’s Comments:** After reviewing the model and posted materials, the Panel provided the following comments:

*(Bruce Hemstock noted that while his firm was involved in the overall landscape plan for the Beach Neighbourhood the landscape design for this site was contracted to another firm. The Chairman agreed there was no conflict of interest but suggested Mr. Hemstock refrain from commenting on the master plan.)*

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The Panel enthusiastically endorsed this application. It is a very elegant design and a first class project that sets a very high standard for the continuation of the master plan for this neighbourhood.

There were no concerns whatsoever about the height. Some Panel members commented that building height should not be quantified by the number of storeys but rather how a building fits in its context and relates to neighbouring buildings.

There were some concerns expressed about the space between the townhouses and the tower. The Panel stressed that this will be a very important space with a lot of pedestrian activity. For this reason, special attention needs to be given to the quality of materials at the ground plane. It was recommended the quality of materials be enhanced from that being shown currently, in particular with respect to the amount of coloured concrete proposed. The applicant was encouraged to look at other successful Concord projects where ground plane materials are high quality, e.g. the Roundhouse Neighbourhood.

The massing and design of the façade of the townhouses on Beach Crescent was found to be quite handsome and leading to the creation of a somewhat unique street in Vancouver which is interesting and appropriate for this neighbourhood. The Panel strongly supported the double-fronting townhouses which will help to enliven and provide “eyes on the street”. Given that this project will establish the ground rules for what happens on the other side, one Panel member thought the design should be taken a little further in terms of creating a presence on the scale and space of the open area in front of it.

In general, the Panel found the circulation on the site at the ground plane to be very well resolved, notwithstanding it is a tight space with a number of unusual things happening. There was appreciation for not having the parking access off the street, and the turnaround was thought to be well conceived.

The Panel had no problem with the proposed retail location. The space may not be successful in the short term but it should work out eventually provided the use is appropriate for the neighbourhood.

Overall, the Panel found this to be a very positive scheme. It was stressed, however, that the ultimate success of this neighbourhood will depend on how each project addresses the open space between the buildings. Greater dialogue between neighbouring architects was recommended.

- **Applicant’s Response:** Mr. Hughes thanked the Panel for its comments.

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2.	Address:	1499 Homer Street
	DA:	405202
	Use:	Residential (28 storeys, 124 units)
	Zoning:	CD-1
	Application Status:	Complete
	Architect:	Hewitt & Kwasnicky
	Owner:	Concord Pacific
	Review:	First
	Delegation:	Dave Hewitt, Don Wuori, David Negrin
	Staff:	Michael Gordon

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#### EVALUATION: NON-SUPPORT (0-5)

- **Introduction:** Michael Gordon, Senior Planner, introduced this application. Most of the issues identified by Planning relate to the ground plane. Firstly, the residential character of the townhouse units, noting the stairs orient at a right angle rather than directly to the street, which may reduce the effectiveness of the units providing “eyes on the street”. With respect to the mews, the Panel’s comments are sought on whether the impact of the retaining wall might be mitigated. The orientation of the loading space is also questioned.
- **Applicant’s Opening Comments:** Dave Hewitt, Architect, noted the building was originally designed to address Beach Avenue. However, it was felt the tower was too far back on the site so the main entry is now off Homer Street and the vehicle entrance at the back is secondary. The loading space is intended to be integrated with the entire landscape and will be treated as a landscaped area. Mr. Hewitt explained the model is inaccurate with respect to the pathway stepping down to the townhouses. The townhouses are actually raised 1.5 m. He noted the master plan did not have the townhouses wrapping around to Beach Avenue but this was done at the direction of the Planning Department.
- **Panel’s Comments:** After reviewing the model and posted drawings the Panel provided the following comments:

The Panel was unable to support this application. While it was thought some aspects of the townhouses were well designed there was little support for how the whole project fits together on this very tight site.

Serious concerns were raised about the narrowness and the relationship of the mews to the building, as well as the relationship of the mews to the rest of the precinct. There was also concern about the relationship of the building entries to the streets. A suggestion was made that the entry off Homer Street, which will be difficult to see at a glance, might be improved if one of the townhouses were relocated to create some transparency in this area.

Concerns were expressed about the location and orientation of the tower. It may be too close to the mews which should have more “eyes on the street”. There seem to be mixed messages with respect to its orientation, with the form addressing False Creek, yet the front entrance, which is punctured through the townhouses, addresses Homer Street, and the drive court addresses Beach Avenue. The auto access is prominent and yet the front entrance for the tower seems almost like an afterthought, slotted through the townhouses. The result is very unsettling for the whole project at the ground plane.

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Other comments were that the roofscape has not been adequately addressed given the large expanse of townhouse roofs that will be seen from the tower; the loading space is awkward and may be unworkable; the townhouses fail to express their individual character. Rotating the stairs at 90 degrees was thought to be a clever move by two Panel members who generally liked the way the stairs and terraces have been handled.

In general, the Panel thought there were some fundamental issues with the site planning that need to be addressed. The proposal illustrates the concern about the building not addressing the major pedestrian mews that has been established in the master plan for this neighbourhood. A project of this scale and urban significance requires a detailed and resolved site plan in its context. In discussion, it was noted that many of the elements of this site have been mandated by the Planning Department and the neighbourhood master plan. Given the difficulties of this site, it was suggested that further discussions with the Planning Department be pursued to explore, for example, a height relaxation to provide some flexibility for relocating some of the massing off the ground plane. It was noted the townhouses will be very difficult in terms of light and shadowing because they are all facing north, and perhaps some compromise in this area can also be explored with Planning.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Hewitt pointed out that wrapping the townhouses along the mews was a direction from the Planning Department. As well, the location of the tower was somewhat dictated by the overall master plan. David Negrin, Concord Pacific, added they originally wanted the entrance to be off Beach Avenue but they were led by Planning to have the entry off Homer Street. The project began as a 6-storey townhome site, which has now been reduced to 3 storeys but it is still very tight. He agreed the townhomes can be improved. They would have preferred to move the tower to the corner but were directed by Planning not to do so. Mr. Negrin said he will pursue some of the Panel's suggestions with Planning.

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3.     Address:             1175 Broughton Street  
       Use:                Congregate Housing  
       Zoning:             RM-5 to CD-1  
       Application Status: Rezoning  
       Architect:         Studio One  
       Owner:             Columbus Charities Association  
       Review:            Second  
       Delegation:        Tomas Wolf, Mary Chan-Yip  
       Staff:             Bob Adair
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#### EVALUATION: NON-SUPPORT (0-6)

- **Introduction:** Bob Adair, Development Planner, introduced this application, first reviewed by the Panel on April 19, 2000. At that time, the Panel supported the use, density and height but did not support the form of development, in particular the perceived bulk of the building. The Panel was also concerned about the building's relationship to the surrounding West End neighbourhood, its lack of residential expression, and the approach to open space and landscaping both on the site and with respect to its relationship with the public realm along Davie and Broughton Streets. The applicant has responded by reworking the design both internally and externally to achieve a lighter, more vertical expression. The central core of the building is expressed in a concrete frame with lighter, glazed elements at the corners. Canopies have been added and there is a somewhat more residential window expression at the ground floor. The retaining wall has been pulled back about 5 ft. to allow more landscaping and room for a second row of trees along Davie Street. The height is unchanged from the previous submission but FSR has increased slightly from 2.68 to 2.75. The unit count has also increased from 90 to 99.

Planning staff generally support the direction taken by the application, but note it will still be a very large addition to the fabric of the neighbourhood. The Panel's comments are sought in the following areas:

- compatibility of the revised form and expression with the surrounding urban context;
  - the expression of the ground floor given the high pedestrian volume in this neighbourhood;
  - quality of materials;
  - treatment of the ground plane around the building and its transition to the public realm;
  - treatment of the Davie/Broughton corner.
- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Tomas Wolf, Architect, briefly described the revisions made to the scheme since the previous submission and Mary Chan, Landscape Architect, described the rationale for the open space.
  - **Panel's Comments:** Following a review of the model and posted drawings, the Panel commented as follows:

The Panel did not support this submission. It was felt there needed to be much more work on the architectural language, and a total reassessment of the intent of the project in terms of fitting all the pieces together on the site.

With respect to the general form and expression, there was some support for the simplicity of the form; however, this revised scheme was considered to be much weaker than the earlier submission,

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in particular the sense of expression that has been lost by eliminating the stepping at the top of the building. The applicant was encouraged to revisit what was considered to be the awkward and heavy cornice and flat roof slab expression. There was also a comment that the parapet condition is not being helped by its colour, which adds to the heavy appearance. There was no opposition to the use of concrete, which it was thought can work well if handled properly.

The Panel thought there should be a much simpler approach, both to the architecture and the landscape, particularly the ground plane. Notwithstanding the very demanding program requirements, the Panel felt much more could and should be done to approach the project from the point of view of how it relates to its context. It does not have a West End expression. It also looks more commercial than residential, particularly the Davie Street elevation, e.g., the canopies look like retail canopies. The base of the building is still very heavy. One Panel member suggested there was a structural solution that would not require the 18 ft. high base which is contributing to a certain institutional quality as opposed to residential.

Panel members thought a simple treatment of the ground plane would work much better, and the integration of the outdoor space to the building face needs closer attention. There is the opportunity to create much more garden space, which is more in keeping with the West End. For congregate housing, it would be better to have the entrance straight into the building off the street. The stone wall along Davie Street should be continuous from the neighbouring properties, and the 5 ft. width may be insufficient to create the kind of lush landscaping that is typical along this part of Davie Street. It was thought the benches on Davie Street won't work; rather, any interaction with the street would be better from the patio area. The Panel questioned the merits of the small plaza at the corner of Davie and Broughton which doesn't relate well to the sidewalk. Some garden space might be better in this location. It was thought the addition of the small water feature and sloped glass at the southeast corner does little for the project and should be reconsidered.

Noting this is a very constrained site, one Panel member suggested the setbacks are determining to a large extent how things work. It was suggested the applicant explore switching the setbacks, to have the front yard on Broughton and the side yard on Davie, giving the building more presence on Davie Street.

Given this is a rezoning application, it was stressed that this proposal is not being judged as a piece of architecture. However, the Panel needs to be convinced that the major moves are logical and correct. Resolution of all the other issues is not being sought at this stage. It was noted that much more information has been provided than is normally required for a rezoning. The applicant was urged to rethink and clarify the major issues on the site in order to satisfy the form of development requirements for rezoning.

**Applicant's Response:** Mr. Wolf said he felt squeezed between direction from Planning staff and the comments of the Panel. He agreed they can raise the building although it will be a little harsh for the building to the west. He stressed the form of the building is very simple.