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URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

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**DATE:** December 11, 2002

**TIME:** 4.00 p.m.

**PLACE:** Committee Room No. 1, City Hall

**PRESENT:** MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:  
Walter Francl, Chair  
Helen Besharat (Items 2 and 3 only)  
Jeffrey Corbett  
Gerry Eckford  
Richard Henry  
Reena Lazar (Items 2 and 3 only)  
Stuart Lyon  
Kim Perry  
Maurice Pez (Items 1 and 2 only)  
Sorin Tatomir  
Ken Terriss

**REGRETS:** Joseph Hruda

**RECORDING SECRETARY:** Carol Hubbard

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ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING	
1.	550 Bute Street
2.	6172 Fraser Street
3.	Burrard Street Bridge

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**Business**

**Outstanding Design Recognition**

Further to the Panel's discussions in June 2002, a seal has been prepared for projects that receive the Panel's Outstanding Design Recognition. The seal will be applied to the model and the recognition will be identified in the minutes. The seal will be kept by the UDP Planning Assistant.

Only projects that receive the unanimous support of the Panel will be eligible for the award. In discussion, it was agreed that nominations would be put forward in the Business period of the meeting following the project review.

Information on this recognition process will be included in the Chair's review of Panel procedures at the beginning of members' terms.

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1. Address:	550 Bute Street
DA:	407110
Use:	Mixed (40 storeys)
Zoning:	DD
Application Status:	Preliminary
Architect:	Hewitt Kwasnicky
Owner:	Amacon
Review:	First
Delegation:	David Hewitt, David Rose
Staff:	Ralph Segal/Anita Molaro

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### EVALUATION: SUPPORT (8-0)

- **Introduction:** Ralph Segal, Development Planner, presented this preliminary application for the site at the corner of Bute and Melville Streets. The site consists of two legal lots and contains the 10-storey Chartered Accountants Building which will be maintained. There will be a single site covenant for the two lots. The application proposes a new 40-storey residential tower, conversion of the top two floors of the 10-storey commercial/parkade building from residential to commercial use, a 12-storey boutique hotel and a small retail component. The application seeks the following density bonuses:
  - approx. 42,000 sq.ft. for providing 6,000 sq.ft. cultural amenity space for Volunteer Vancouver,
  - approx. 18,000 sq.ft. (10 percent) heritage density transfer,
  - 15 percent hotel bonus,

for a total density bonus of about 66,000 sq.ft.

The height of the tower is 400 ft. and this sub area of the DD permits a height of 300 ft. However, the 1997 Higher Buildings Policy identifies this site as being suitable for a tower up to 400 ft. As well, the Development Permit Board has the discretion to permit height up to 450 ft. on any site in the Downtown.

The application seeks a floor space ratio of approx. 8.1 (493,000 sq.ft.) This sub area of the DD permits 7.0 FSR. The tower dimensions are approx. 85 ft. x 85 ft. It was noted a 300 ft. tower would likely have a much larger floorplate. The 400 ft. tower causes no significant shadowing impact.

Following are the areas in which the advice of the Panel is sought:

- general massing and the relationships between all the components on the site;
  - whether this is an appropriate site to receive the additional density being sought;
  - whether the 400 ft. height is appropriate;
  - public realm treatment and the landscape plan;
  - the general “fit” of the project in its context;
  - impact on the skyline.
- **Applicant’s Opening Comments:** Dave Hewitt, Architect, stressed that this site is among those identified as being appropriate for a taller tower. He also noted that a taller, slimmer tower benefits the majority of people who are at the lower levels. He briefly described the project and the design rationale, and responded to the Panel’s questions.

- **Panel's Comments:** The Panel was very enthusiastic about this proposal and it was unanimously supported.

The Panel had no problem with the proposed height and thought 400 ft. was achievable on this site. Several Panel members commented there is little difference in terms of shadowing and view impact beyond the 300 ft. mark. It also fits with the long term goal of the city skyline doming from the centre. The Panel strongly supported a taller, slimmer tower as opposed to a bulkier form at 300 ft.

While supporting the proposed height, several Panel members cautioned that since this will be a very prominent building on the city skyline the architecture will need to be very polished and of a very high standard. It was stressed that, at the complete application stage, such overheight buildings will be scrutinized very carefully by the Panel in terms of quality of architectural expression and materials. As the buildings get higher, so the bar is raised for what is supportable.

A comment was made by one Panel member that in considering higher buildings in the downtown it is important to keep in mind that we have a very restricted land base and it is becoming increasingly difficult to make things work. It is therefore necessary for buildings to go higher and to be creative in arriving at formulas for density bonuses in return for amenity packages. The Panel was very supportive of this project providing space for Volunteer Vancouver.

With respect to the sculpting of the tower form itself, several Panel members recommended introducing some breaks in the middle to give it more interest. It was noted the cornice line at just below the 300 ft. mark does not seem to relate very strongly to the floor plan. It was also suggested the building need not be symmetrical, noting that some stepping in the tower might be better achieved in an asymmetrical building without compromising the FSR. Another observation was that there are potentially two different grids to respond to in this location and the floors above 300 ft. could respond to the other grid.

Comments were made that this project appears rather "shoe horned" into the site, noting that acquisition of the northernmost parcel would have resulted in a more interesting and comfortable fit. While there was strong support for the density bonus in return for space for Volunteer Vancouver, as well as support for the hotel bonus and the heritage density transfer, one Panel member questioned the inclusion of the parking structure in the density transfer equation.

Most of the Panel's concerns related to the base of the project, particularly the piece between the hotel and the tower and the way it meets grade. Suggestions were made that it is an unnecessary intrusion on the street and an awkward massing between the buildings. Some Panel members found the 3-storey base too weak for a tower of 400 ft. As well, the way the hotel tower meets grade could benefit from more work.

With respect to the landscape, the Panel supported the 30 ft. setback along Bute Street. Suggestions were made to make it more inviting for the public to use. Enhancing the lane treatment was recommended and the porte cochere off the lane was considered appropriate.

- **Applicant's Response:** The applicant had no further comments.

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2. Address:	6172 Fraser Street
DA:	407034
Use:	Mixed (16 units)
Zoning:	C-2
Application Status:	Complete
Architect:	Cornerstone
Owner:	Ken Mason
Review:	First
Delegation:	Scott Kennedy, John Verchomin, Ken Mason
Staff:	Anita Molaro

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### EVALUATION: SUPPORT (10-0)

- **Introduction:** Anita Molaro, Development Planner, presented this application for a mixed retail/residential development in the C-2 zone. The site is located mid block on Fraser Street at East 46<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Ms. Molaro reviewed the site context and described the proposal, noting the fairly high retail frontage on Fraser Street. The building contains two storeys of rental residential (16 units) on the upper two floors. The proposal is within the 40 ft. height limit in the C-2 zone. The proposed materials are a combination of brick and concrete. The setback at the lane introduces an area of landscaping, and an alternative approach is proposed for the loading bay at the rear. The density is approx. 2.49 FSR.

The Panel's comments are sought on the architectural quality, proposed materials, massing response, landscape treatment at the lane, and the proposed strategy for the loading area.

- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Scot Kennedy, Architect, described their approach to the project, noting the intent of the high retail is to ensure its viability by creating a high retail space. He stressed the owner has a long term commitment to this neighbourhood, having operated his sewing machine business on this site for 54 years. The applicant team responded to the Panel's questions.
- **Panel's Comments:** The Panel unanimously supported this application. It is a simple, well executed, modern building that will be a good addition to this neighbourhood. The Panel expressed the hope that it will become a catalyst for other improvements in the area.

The treatment of the loading bay at the rear was strongly supported. The lane treatment is excellent.

Minor comments and suggestions were as follows:

- the sign panel could be a very interesting part of the composition of the facade of the building;
- suggest enlarging the concrete band above the retail at the roof line to give a bit more shadow;
- question the livability of some of the east-facing units in terms of light access;
- suggest adding a canopy at the residential entry off the street to bring down the scale;
- consider some light shafts for natural light on the west elevation;
- the columns on the west elevation may be a little bit flimsy in relation to the proportion of the building;
- the 20 ft. wide drive ramp seems very wide for such a small building;
- concern that the parking regulations may be limiting the amount of housing on this site, noting that not all residents in this neighbourhood will own a vehicle.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Kennedy noted that most of the Panel's criticisms are areas they have already discussed. Regarding the density/parking issue, he said they wanted to do a 45 ft. building but elected to conform to the existing regulations. He noted there is a lot of diversity of use in the residential and retail parking and he agreed the residential parking allocation may be more than is needed for a building of this nature.

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3. Address:	Burrard Street Bridge
Use:	Pedestrian/Cyclist Sidewalk Study
Application Status:	Inquiry
Architect:	Busby & Assoc.
Owner:	City of Vancouver
Review:	Third
Delegation:	David Dove, Robert Lemon
Staff:	Scot Hein/Yardley McNeill/David Rawsthorne

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- **Introduction:** Scot Hein, Development Planner, briefly reviewed the previous Panel discussions on the various options for the Burrard Street Bridge upgrade. The remaining options were presented: A1, A2 and A3 as well as another version of A1 (A1B). David Rawsthorne explained that option A1B has an architectural treatment that is more sympathetic to the original architecture of the bridge.

David Dove, Busby & Associates, briefly reviewed the four options. Robert Lemon noted the heritage criteria were the main elements of the bridge, the centre span, the towers and the Juliette balconies. He described the heritage issues in each of the options. From a heritage perspective, the preference is for option A3. Yardley McNeill, Heritage Planner, briefly described the reviews conducted by the heritage groups. In general, the heritage community believes that any change to the bridge will irrevocably damage its heritage value. Some of the heritage stakeholders have indicated to Council that, if some change to the bridge is a given, then their preference is for option A2.

- **Panel's Comments:** The breakdown of the Panel preferences for the options was as follows:

Option A3: 6 votes                      Option A1B: 3 votes                      Option A2: 1 vote

Following are some of the comments/questions:

- painting the edge of the sidewalk will not discourage cyclists and rollerbladers;
  - the concept of placing lamp standards in the one metre space will contribute greatly to keeping cyclists away from the edge;
  - question whether the drawings are realistic in that they do not show the chain link fencing if that is to remain;
  - any of the options would be difficult to pull off without compromising the bridge;
  - appreciate the very thorough analysis and high quality graphics;
  - if we are spending ten million dollars to upgrade the bridge we have to be practical as well as respond to heritage issues;
  - the "pinch point" option fails to accomplish the goal of increasing capacity and comfort for cyclists and pedestrians;
  - the separated lanes seem a bit contrived and the stairs in between are "busy" and present obstacles;
  - concern about overview - do not think the cyclists should be on the upper deck and pedestrians on the outside deck;
  - cyclists should be on the outside lane;
  - with the cyclists above, the balconies are wasted since they are places where pedestrians would linger;
  - appreciate the arguments about the connections at the bridge ends but think a way can be found to address the issue;
  - A3 will be the most pleasant crossing for pedestrians;
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- prefer A3 because it leaves the bridge as is and adds a modern appendage that reflects the change of use and provides some juxtaposition between the old and the new;
- agree it makes more sense for the cyclists to be on the outside lane and think the problems can be overcome;
- prefer the same level arrangement for pedestrians and cyclists without any interruption between;
- more should be made of the viewing balcony;
- replicating the existing railing in A1B can be achieved successfully;
- extending the juliette balconies is great;
- from a heritage standpoint option A3 leaves the bridge the least damaged and most able to be brought back to its original condition in the future;
- option A1B would dramatically change our perception of the bridge from both pedestrian and vehicular points of view; it adds the equivalent of a lane of traffic outside the driving lane; there will be a loss of view out to False Creek;
- A3 creates the city's favourite balcony set down below the road level; benches can be added to create a very attractive pedestrian environment;
- re pedestrian safety, pedestrians will likely use the cyclists path in the early hours of the morning;
- A3 provides a good opportunity for cyclists to stop and enjoy the view;
- can see the merits of A3 because it retains the existing rail and reconstructs the new element at a different elevation;
- the routes for cyclists and pedestrians should be reversed and a way found to resolve the conflict at the bridge ends;
- A1 has very little merit;
- the pinch point scheme could improve safety by forcing cyclists to slow down;
- the first option should be do nothing;
- A2 is the only option that does no damage to the appearance of the bridge;
- the Art Deco qualities of the bridge should be preserved, maintained and as little disturbed as possible;
- any change must be a modern element, with no pinching or replication;
- not convinced 4 ft. is the right number for the separation height;
- concerned about safety but with modern technology this should be able to be resolved;
- the objective is to increase safety and capacity, which eliminates option A2 because it would be more dangerous;
- A3 is interesting but it goes too far - a contemporary architectural embellishment can become overpowering and diminish the heritage significance of the original structure;
- would prefer a more minor intervention;
- at the bridge piers there is an opportunity to create what would have been created at the time the bridge was built to meet the same functional requirements;
- option A1B is the least intrusive;
- the safety concern in A3 is a perception only - once it's built it won't be a problem;
- the height difference of 4 ft. is probably greater than it has to be, so that the stairs can be reduced in size and be less intrusive;
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