
URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: December 13, 2000

TIME: 4.00 p.m.

PLACE: Committee Room #1, City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
Tom Bunting, Chair
Lance Berelowitz
Alan Endall
Bruce Hemstock (late arrival)
Jack Lutsky
Gilbert Raynard
Keith Ross
Sorin Tatomir

REGRETS: Roger Hughes
James Cheng
Brian Palmquist
Paul Grant

**ACTING
RECORDING
SECRETARY:** Louise Christie

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING	
1.	1133 Seymour Street
2.	1001 Hornby Street (Wall Centre Plaza)
3.	601 West 10 th Avenue (B.C. Cancer Institute)
4.	1250 Homer Street (1275 Hamilton)

1.	Address:	1133 Seymour Street
	DA:	405395
	Use:	2 residential towers (22 & 33 storeys) with retail and the Vancouver Film Society facility
	Zoning:	DD
	Application Status:	Preliminary
	Architect:	Hewitt & Kwasnicky
	Owner:	Amacon-Omni Management
	Review:	First
	Delegation:	Dave Hewitt, Don DeCotis
	Staff:	Ralph Segal, Laurie Schmidt, Anita Molaro

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (6 - 0)

- **Introduction:** Ralph Segal, Development Planner, introduced this preliminary proposal. The site is located in Downtown South on the corner of Seymour and Davie Streets. The nearly completed Dance Centre across the lane faces Granville Street. Through the City's acquisition process, most of the block across Seymour Street has been acquired for the Downtown South Park.

An amenity of 17,000 sq. ft. to house the Vancouver International Film Festival is being proposed in exchange for an FSR bonus of 100,000 sq. ft. This will require Council's approval for the increase in density to 7.8 FSR, a bonus of 2.8 FSR. Retail is required on Davie Street. The Film Society space with café, library and gallery is oriented to Seymour Street. The two towers have a separation of 90 ft. with floorplates within the 6500 sq. ft. recommended in the guidelines. The tower at the corner of Seymour and Davie Streets is the taller at 300 ft.; the easterly is shorter at 215 ft. with three townhouses at its base. The towers have been rotated off the street-grid but with some orthogonal elements. There is some encroachment to the 40 ft. side-yard setback of the shorter tower but it is not significant because of the limitations to the development potential of the adjacent 150 ft. wide site. This proposal is, generally, a good response to the guidelines. The issues for the panel to comment on are:

- The density and whether the site can accept the bonus.
- The quality of the public realm interface on ground level, facing the park, and the spaces generated in the film society for activity and eyes- on-the-street.
- The 325 ft. site's accommodation of the two towers as the guideline's cutoff of lot width to generate two towers is 375 ft. The proposed accommodation of the bonus density is pushing the guidelines.
- On-site open space as the proposal, with its second tower, falls short of guideline expectations. At the rear of the property, the parking ramp should be covered to provide a landscaped area.
- The geometry of the towers in response to guidelines calling for orthogonal massing.
- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Dave Hewitt, Architect, began by describing the finishes of glass and punched concrete, also reflected in the glazed gallery of the film centre. There are two options for viewing films, to or from the park. From the centre, films could be projected across the street into the park, or a screen can be dropped on the glazed area and viewed from across the street, with a back

projection booth on the second floor above the level of trees and wires. Because of the black box nature of the film theatre, the centre wanted to animate the street so the theatre space is pushed to the back. To enter the theatre or use the extensive archives, a membership in the Vancouver Film Festival Society must be purchased. The curved area with the structural glazing pulls the entrance away into the interior. When you are driving down one-way Seymour Street, because of the skewed angles of the tower entries, there is a view through lobbies to the main drop-off in the lane. The retail on Davie Street is in a structure designed to address the corner. The film centre is also distinct.

The guidelines call for a separation of 80 ft. and actually 90 ft. is provided. Looking at the development of the adjacent site which is limited to 3.0 FSR and a height of 70 ft. the main tower mass complies with the 40 ft. setback but orthogonal elements have pushed its edges closer. The two facades of the towers are not looking at each other as the towers are skewed. Though similar, they are not identical. The roof of the film centre will be landscaped around an outdoor swimming pool, especially to benefit the over view from surrounding towers. On the sidewalk level, three retail units at the base anchor the tower. To accent the film centre entrance it is set back in a 75 ft. enclave with a diagonal wall that lets in sunshine, allowing for a covered, sidewalk café. The three townhouses have separate entries and a heavily landscaped area because of the adjacent property that is planted.

The Panel reviewed the model and posted materials.

- **Panel's Comments:** The Panel supported this project, commenting that the Film Society use is quite exciting in a very appropriate part of town, provided it animates year round. It also could go further in how it addresses the street by coming forward, although the protected area in the middle of the block is effective. A suggestion was made for big and small scale elements of public art to be considered to make it outstanding. The Panel supported the overall form of development.

The majority of the Panel felt that the rotation of the towers was energetic and appealing but the 3D resolution of the overall forms was chaotic and needed clarification and bringing together, particularly on the Seymour facing podium which appeared too fragmented. Another said that, when the towers are viewed from and beyond the park, it will be interesting architecture. The site was considered like the 'hole in the donut' of the area and caution was advised as what is approved will establish a bench mark in terms of density and height.

The Panel said that the entrance to the film society should be given priority, pushed out to establish territory of public activity that could, in future, give clues to the design of the park. This open space which has the basic moves now needs to push to an outstanding design. Ultimately, a theme could be extended into the park. A suggestion was made that all the landscaping on the ground plane should be reconsidered in a whimsical light, to integrate the whole from the lane with its lobby entrance through to the front streetscape and even over to the park. The lane development was thought to be weak and needed more attention to contribute more to the public nature of the open space. The lengthy drive-aisle and entrance to the underground parking was questioned as it appeared to be duplicating the lane.

2.	Address:	1001 Hornby Street (Wall Centre Plaza)
	DA:	403708
	Use:	Volunteer Park
	Zoning:	DD
	Application Status:	Minor Amendment
	Architect:	Busby & Associates
	Owner:	Wall Financial Corp.
	Review:	Third
	Delegation:	Peter Busby, Chris Phillips, Bruno Wall
	Staff:	Ralph Segal

EVALUATION: Support (7 - 0)

- **Introduction:** Ralph Segal, Development Planner, introduced this Minor Amendment for a very important corner in the City at Burrard and Nelson Streets. He explained that there had been a space envisioned for Volunteer Vancouver to utilize a large plaza with audiences of up to 1000 or more but various changes in administration and vision have provoked a redesign. There is now a need for a more passive plaza and an opportunity for more intimate space with the introduction of new elements and patterns.

To highlight a couple of changes, there is an attempt to improve the pedestrian access along the Burrard Street frontage, and to enhance the detail to the Nelson Street edge, previously a pool, now a moss garden with a misting effect on the wall-face of black granite stones, picking up on the porte cochere feature to the south. There will be a water feature, canopy elements, more greenery, and a removable stage, with facilities like electricity for programming to activate the plaza space. In the warmer seasons, a kiosk for coffee and food service from the hotel, along with chairs, will be put out for the public.

- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Peter Busby, Architect, explained that the plaza is seen as part of the composition of the larger buildings, and also includes the passive garden. To animate it as much as possible, the plan has to be flexible. There will be seating and staging for groups of 50 to 300 people which will be supported by Wall Financial, in terms of active space. Most important is the enhancement of the space in recognition that events may not happen too many days a year. The focus is around the significant water feature, a fountain to mask noise, and permanent, informal seating with the surrounding parterres where the plantings will change colour throughout the seasons.

The plaza is now more accessible from Burrard Street for the public to move through more easily. There will be a strong 3-D element with white 'umbrellas' with removable fabric canopies supported on permanent white masts. Four umbrellas relate to the fountain, and the other four to the programmable space. Each also has up-lighting and a track for banners and flags to be used for events to add colour to the plaza. Chairs will be brought out to be arranged under the umbrellas in suitable weather. There are grassy areas for people to sit and eat their lunches.

Chris Phillips, Landscape Architect, described the landscape concept which plays on the Zen garden, darker on the north side with the misting wall and moss garden being a linking the element between the two. The black and white granite makes a continuous link, incorporating the forecourt of the hotel right through with the old wall which fronts on Nelson Street. The fountain will be solid white water

to make a statement along Burrard and will be lit from underneath. Also, the lighting is along the water edges and low in the trees which are all deciduous. The honey locusts, maples and horse chestnuts are closely spaced to go with the previous scheme, along with the details, colour schemes, marble and glass stairwells. The developer has entered into discussion with Buschlen-Mowatt Fine Arts Ltd. to include the Wall Centre Plaza as part of the venue for installation of sculptural artworks. Every effort will be made to ensure the space is safe from skateboarders, both through design execution and 24 hour security.

Mr. Segal was asked to clarify public/private interactions on the plaza. He explained that the property is private with a public right-of-way. Security cannot keep the general public off as long as appropriate behaviour is maintained, not disturbing others. An agreement with the City is being negotiated in terms of performance activities providing for a minimum number of events that have to occur.

Bruno Wall, Developer, said that if there were more submissions than bookings, a choice would be made between applicants. They were sure the animation from the performances would be beneficial to the hotel. Putting out of the food kiosk will be market driven and there is no obligation on part of the owner to do so.

The Panel reviewed the model and posted materials

- **Panel's Comments:** The Panel saw the application as an improvement from the previous scheme, especially as there are bold statements in a clear rectangular shape. They liked the overall programming nature of the space, the improved usability for the public and the easy access for pedestrians to cross diagonally. It is a difficult space with the scale of the buildings and their functions, yet the plaza has some complete zones to it and still manages to be configured for people moving through. Relating to the geometry, the entrance to the ballroom was perceived as weak. The vertical up and down in the plan was seen by one Panel member to work well with the curved building. Another suggested a more whimsical approach, with over-laying pedestrian desire lines and consideration of a way to tie the two plaza areas together more. The black and white checkerboard patterning was considered cold by one member, but others suggested reconfiguring the tiles adjacent the fountain so chess could be played. Changeable art on a temporary basis was encouraged, especially large scale pieces. The fountain and its sculptural nature was commended with a suggestion that the seating edge be sloped to avoid puddles. Another comment was to change the focus of the seating arrangement from looking outward to inward, by putting permanent seating under the umbrellas. The Panel liked the concept of the umbrellas and encouraged them to be larger to make more of a statement and to leave them out year round. The moss garden with the misting wall was considered a brilliant idea, enhancing a west coast feel and especially effective in greening the winter months, but others noted that the challenge will be to get it to work. The removal of the three trees at the corner of Burrard and Nelson Streets to open the view of the plaza to motorists was suggested, as was an alternative of pruning them and changing the lower plantings to improve visibility. Overall, the bold moves were seen as good but the plaza would be enhanced by some fine tuning. Support was unanimous.

Applicant's Response: Mr. Busby explained that the concept of permanent seating under the umbrellas had been considered but, because of the concept of the changeable feasts, they replaced the hard seating with chairs that can be grouped. The idea of the large chess board had also been considered, as had the connection between the two similar but different 'rooms' and there was no

alternative to the existing stairs. Previously, a trellis had been incorporated to link the entrance to the ballroom with Burrard Street but that had been eliminated.

3.	Address:	601 West 10 th Avenue
	Use:	Hospital
	Zoning:	C-3A to CD-1
	Application Status:	Rezoning
	Architect:	Henriques & Partners
	Owner:	BC Cancer Foundation
	Review:	First
	Delegation:	Richard Henriques, Ivo Taller
	Staff:	Ralph Segal, Tom Phipps

EVALUATION: Support (6 - 1)

- Introduction:** Tom Phipps, Development Planner, spoke about the Policy Statement for the Vancouver General Hospital (VGH) Precinct Area that was approved by Council in June, 2000, as background context. The area will benefit from the development of a five acre open space, south of 10th Avenue between Heather and Willow Streets, diagonally opposite this site. This will significantly change the context for development of the cancer research centre site by increasing its public visibility. This application by the BC Cancer Foundation requires a dramatic increase from 3.0 FSR to 6.0 FSR for the site. The location is considered appropriate for the use with the application being for a change in zoning from C3-A to CD-1. With the floor-to-floor heights of 6.2 m being unusual, the density of a conventional building of this size would be about 9.0 FSR. The VGH Precinct Policy statement directs that attention be paid to the massing of the upper stories, requiring the north/south orientation of upper stories and mechanical penthouses. The cumulative impact will exceed the visual dominance of the Fairmont Medical building, exceeding the Policy Statement height recommendation by approximately 15 m, and with its breadth and depth, it will be a very imposing form. Staff would like feed back on the proposed use for the easterly end of the lot for surface parking.

Ralph Segal, Development Planner, requested feedback on massing issues and clarified two points. Technically, the BC Cancer subject site is within the VGH Precinct but not within the VGH district of CD-1 zoning. Also, there are two phases. The first is the construction of the westerly building, with a portion of the required parking proposed to be surface parking on the easterly half of the lot. The second larger building will later cover the parking lot and incorporate the parking requirements underground. There is no designated time line for the phasing.

Mr. Segal described the proposal to the Panel while gathered around the context model, noting that the results from the research facility will benefit the public. While laboratory uses are permitted under the existing C-3A designation, the proposed density, height and massing significantly exceed the allowable. The maximum height in the VGH Precinct Policy Statement is 38.4 m. The proposed height for Phase 1 is 56 m in this area of existing C-3A zoning where the guidelines allow a maximum of 9.2 m and the building could extend over 40 % of the site. In comparison to the existing Fairmont Medical building, it is much deeper. The phase II building is proposed to be 36 m in height. The massive bulk is created by the quantity of the interstitial space which is presumably justifiable because of its necessity to the research facilities. On the model, the white building masses are speculative and in actuality would be scaled down because of the view corridor requisite in C-3A, which addresses the views from City Hall and also from the Granville Bridge up to City Hall. It also stipulates that City Hall remain the dominant building. This is a rezoning application and the Panel is asked to comment if this massing is justifiable from an urban design standpoint in context of the existing and contemplated family of buildings or will it be overwhelming. Do the requested use, density and

height translate into the necessity of the general massing proposed here.

Applicant's Opening Comments: Richard Henriquez, Architect, explained that this proposed building is part of a Centre of Excellence that has been brought to Vancouver - scientists doing cutting edge research supported by federal money. Currently, research is taking place in the Michael Smith facility at UBC and in the former bakery building on this site. Extensive consideration was given to making the building lower and wider but the difficulty is to accommodate the move of the 'designer' mice from the adjacent building into an animal care facility underground in the new one, and the necessity for phasing the transfer. This is an extremely expensive undertaking and the top lab consultant in the world, Earl Walls Associates, was hired. The \$95 million facility will be set back 3.0 m to widen the boulevard. The floorplate is still workable for the cutting-edge lab. This location is important because across 10th Avenue is the Cancer Treatment Centre and, with a pedestrian bridge, interaction would be facilitated - 'bench to bedside' accessibility is necessary.

Scientists prefer no public functions on such a site but the lab consultant recommended that libraries and auditoriums are important for a world class facility, incorporating them on the main floor, along with coffee shops and retail for street activity. The two buildings are not yet designed in detail. They will not be one long solid block but have different treatments and be connected by an atrium to be built in Phase 2. The research will be done on the upper floors. The lab concept will be modular and flexible because of the height of the 6.2 m floors for interstitial space, with offices on two levels on the exterior in phase 1. The land slopes to the north by about 6 m.

The public response to two open houses and a mailing to 2,000 addresses in the area was positive as the facility was perceived as needed. With public transportation nearby and in future an LRT station, possibly at Ash Street, parking was not seen as a problem. In phase 1, the requirement of the present Parking By-law is being provided with underground parking on two levels and 80 to 90 spaces proposed as surface parking. The second building will have a bigger footprint and more underground parking. Of the research staff, statistically 40% are on low budget and 25% walk to work. There will be further discussion with engineering about appropriate parking consistent with other I-3 area guidelines. Input is requested from the Panel who represent the public, as in this area the public is important.

The Panel reviewed the model and posted materials.

- **Panel's Comments:** The Panel said there was considerable information in the panels, model and reports, almost an overload. They were generally supportive of the use, mass and density as the whole notion of what the facility is doing, medical research in the hospital area, is positive. The Chair commented that architects rarely say a building is too bulky for a site, but in this case the size of the building seemed out of scale with the surrounding context and a balance has to be struck with the guidelines for the area. Several members thought that the buildings were not out of keeping with other large massings in the area, like City Square and the Fairview Medical building but not all members agreed. **It was mentioned that height comparisons were missing, especially in relation to 12th Avenue.** There was no problem in principle with the interim parking, but the bigger policy issue of an appropriate ratio of parking in this part of town with major public transit nearby had to be considered. A member suggested the pedestrian bridge go underground as most people would take the elevator anyway. There was a caution expressed about the potential development impacts on projects redeveloped to the north on Broadway across the 23 ft. lane.

The Chair concluded by saying he hoped the building would be of an exceptional architectural quality to bring value to the university-style precinct and compensate for urban design concessions. Members of the Panel had expressed confidence in the design team. In this instance, the humanitarian concerns were seen to outweigh the urban design concerns.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Henriquez said he heard what was being said and that cancer research has to be weighed against heritage and open space, and the research itself should be viewed as a kind of very beneficial amenity.
7. Address: 1250 Homer Street (1275 Hamilton)
 DA: 405366
 Use: Mixed (6 storeys)
 Zoning: HA-3
 Application Status: Complete
 Architect: Raffi
 Owner: Tibron Landmark Projects Corp.
 Review: First
 Delegation: Foad Raffi
 Staff: Bob Adair

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (7 - 0)

- **Introduction:** Bob Adair, Development Planner, presented this application on a mid-block site in Yaletown, double facing on both Hamilton and Homer Streets. The zoning is HA-3. The one building is designed as two to fit in with the streetscape. There are two levels of underground parking. The proposal is a commercial and residential mixture. Across Homer Street to the north, the zoning changes to DD. In the southerly 100 ft. there are five residential floors above retail at ground level and the sixth floor is set back from Homer Street and 10 ft. from Hamilton. The northerly 50 ft. has a different facade and four stories of office above the retail on the ground floor.

The building is brick and concrete with sheet metal cornices, with cloth awnings on Homer Street and steel and glass canopies elsewhere. The uses are outright. The regulations for the area are fairly detailed and have been followed. The Panel is asked to comment on the treatment of the upper floor and if it is setback enough to give prominence, and also if the expression of that top floor is being handled as well as it could be.

- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Foad Raffi, Architect, said the plan was to stay within guidelines and follow rules of successful buildings that have been done in the area before. The same setback as the neighbouring buildings was followed exactly. In considering the surrounding few blocks of Yaletown, there was no building of 150 ft. in width and, though the underground parking is the full width, the facade presents two different buildings. The patterned roof is to create interest for the surrounding towers. The private roofdecks are kept away from the edges. They are separated and given distance from each other by landscaping with trees and screens. The windows are aluminum or steel but the framing has the same properties as wood.

The Panel reviewed the model and posted materials

- **Panel's Comments:** This project was seen as a really handsome project that fits in well with Yaletown district with the strong expression of two separate buildings on the one site. The treatment and setback of the upper floors fits in well. There is good attention detail, colour and materials so the project received the Panel's full support. A suggestion was to extend the canopy further onto Hamilton Street but to also vary the canopy to visually differentiate the brick building from the other. Another was to look at some other other projects in the area and to see if a lobby through from both streets would be possible and also treatment to the parking entrance to make it more comfortable.

One Panel member expressed an opinion that was reflected by others that, upon entering the new millenium, the City of Vancouver is still employing guidelines for contextual infill that insist todays buildings try to look just like those built in the 1920's. Other cities have shown it is possible to be respectful of the streetscape, rhythm, colour, texture, etc. and still design a contemporary building. The Chair echoed the comments saying that you can travel to any major city in the world, most of which are considerably older than Vancouver, to see wonderful modern infill buildings harmonizing with the existing enviroment. As Vancouverites, we consider ourselves head and shoulders above other cities in certain urban design concepts, yet we may have our head in the sand to others.
