

URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: December 5, 2007

TIME: 4.00 pm

PLACE: Committee Room No. 1, City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
John Wall, Chair
Tom Bunting
Maurice Pez
Douglas Watts
Richard Henry
Martin Nielsen
Mark Ostry
Bob Ransford

REGRETS: Walter Francl
Bill Harrison
Gerry Eckford
Albert Bicol

**RECORDING
SECRETARY:** Lorna Harvey

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING	
1.	800 Griffiths Way
2.	1304 Howe Street

BUSINESS MEETING

Chair Wall called the meeting to order at 4:15 p.m. and noted the presence of a quorum. There being no New Business the meeting considered applications as scheduled for presentation.

- | | | |
|----|---------------------|--|
| 1. | Address: | 800 Griffiths Way - GM Place |
| | DA: | 411483 |
| | Description: | To develop a 22 storey office building at the southwest corner of the GM Place Arena connected to the existing underground parking and to the arena concourse at various levels. |
| | Zoning: | CD-1 |
| | Application Status: | Complete |
| | Architect: | Busby Perkins + Will |
| | Review: | First |
| | Delegation: | Peter Busby, Busby Perkins +Will
Jim Huffman, Busby Perkins +Will
Jane Durante, Durante & Kreuk |
| | Staff: | Ralph Segal |

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (5-0)

- **Introduction:** Ralph Segal, Development Planner, described the proposed commercial tower on the south-west corner of GM Place. Mr. Segal noted that the mechanical penthouse will go to the view cone height. He added that it is now Council policy to seek a higher proportion of office space in the downtown for a more balanced environment.

Advice from the Panel on this application is sought on the following:

1. Overall tower massing and contextual fit, with specific feedback on:
 - a) Whether the tower's somewhat greater width is acceptable in respect to the previous approved Form of Development;
 - b) Whether the tower's overall height, including upper mechanical volume, is appropriate in respect to the By-law height of 91 m. (300 ft.), to which may be added the typical rooftop mechanical.
2. The quality of the Public Realm interface on:
 - Expo Boulevard (including cantilevered upper-level walkway)
 - Griffith's Way
 - Georgia Viaduct
3. Appropriateness of the Telescoping Spires (intruding into the view corridor).
4. Overall quality of the architecture.

Mr. Segal took questions from the Panel.

- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** Peter Busby, Architect, further described the proposal noting the different uses in the project, including space for retail and cultural amenities. The bottom five floors of the tower will be connected to GM Place for circulation and access to the retail and restaurants. No new parking has been included in the proposal as there is sufficient in the arena. Mr. Busby noted that it will be a very high performing building in terms of environmental issues.

The applicant team took questions from the Panel.

- **Panel’s Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - Consider better resolution of the interface between the new building and the existing arena; and
 - Consider more design development to the landscape design of the plaza and the adjoining public realm.
- **Related Commentary:** The Panel unanimously supported the proposal and commended the applicant team for the level of quality in the presentation.

The Panel did not have a problem with the overall tower massing and contextual fit and thought it was an elegant and well resolved design. The Panel thought the mechanical volume, from an architectural point of view, was well worked out and would create an incredible office space. The Panel thought the finished “crown” was more majestic than the way other buildings are topped off in the city. The Panel thought it was a sleek design and did not think the additional width was a problem. They also thought the height impact on the adjoining buildings would be negligible.

The Panel thought the outboard walkway was an exciting space and would add more daylight to the walkway area. They also thought the screening of the loading areas was a huge improvement for the public realm along Expo Boulevard. Several Panel members commented on the amount of the hard landscaping in the entry plaza and suggested adding some greenery or a water feature to improve the life and character of the space.

The Panel thought there needed to be more resolution in the how the tower integrates to the existing stadium facades as they thought it looked disjointed.. The Panel had some concerns regarding the interface to the viaduct and thought it was disconnected from Georgia Street. They also questioned the traffic circulation suggesting that it needed to be improved.

The Panel supported the spires at the top of the tower and did not have a problem with them intruding into the view corridor. One Panel member would like to have seen the view corridor diagram be included in the presentation. The Panel agreed that this would be an iconic building and would improve the surrounding area.

The Panel was impressed with the applicant’s commitment to sustainability initiatives.

- **Applicant’s Response:** Mr. Busby apologized for not giving the landscape architect the opportunity to make a presentation. Jane Durante, Landscape Architect, noted that there had been a lot of discussion on the landscaping for the plaza with an attempt to make it an elegant and robust space. She added that there will be little planters along the edge of the walkway and that the landscaping for the most part will be a minimalist style. Mr. Busby thanked the Panel for their comments.

2.	Address:	1304 Howe Street
	DA:	Rezoning Inquiry
	Description:	To rezone from DD to CD-1, to permit a residential tower with height of 300 feet (30 storeys) above a commercial/residential podium. Total FSR would be increased from 5.0 to 7.0 through transfer of heritage density. Important context is the study which is in progress for the removal of the Granville Loops and redevelopment of City-owned lands (proposed in 2002 Downtown Transportation Plan).
	Zoning:	DD
	Application Status:	Rezoning
	Architect:	IBI Group - HB Architects
	Review:	Second (First Review: May 9, 2007)
	Delegation:	Martin Bruckner, IBI/HB Architects Drahan Petrovic, IBI/HB Architects Jane Durante, Durante & Kruek David Evans, Cressey
	Staff:	Phil Mondor/Anita Molaro

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (6-0)

- **Introduction:** Phil Mondor, Rezoning Planner, introduced the application for a site in the new area that is being developed in the Granville loops area which is at the north end of the Granville Street Bridge. The area is being rezoned from DD to CD-1.

Richard Johnson, Planner, gave a short presentation on the Granville Loops study area. He noted that the area is located in Area C of the Downtown Official Development Plan (ODP) but was not included in the ODP. The main objective is to provide an improved roadway connection and “gateway” to Vancouver.

Anita Molaro, Development Planner, using the context model, described the future development for the area. She noted that the proposal had not been supported at the previous Panel in May 2007. The Panel was concerned with the distribution of the mass and thought it should be more slender. Also the Panel had concerns with the parking access and public realm interface. In response the applicant has added some additional height to the building and reduced the floor plates. As well the applicant has sculpted and shaped the building for a more slender expression and has also relocated the parking and loading access. The podium set back has been increased by three feet for a total of nine feet and a continuous glass canopy has been added. The retail has been wrapped around the corner and the outdoor amenity space has been moved to the roof of the smaller building at Drake Street.

Advice from the Panel on this rezoning application is sought on the following:

Does the Panel support the urban design response developed for this site and its relationship within the surrounding context taking into consideration:

- Siting;
- overall form of development including tower form/massing/height and proposed density (7.0 FSR);
- public realm interface/street wall/scale and articulation:
 - Howe/Drake/Rolston
- Site access; and
- Landscape.

Mr. Mondor, Mr. Johnson and Ms. Molaro took questions from the Panel.

- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** Martin Bruckner, Architect, further described the proposal. He noted that the tower location was planned to have the minimum eighty foot separation from any future development on the adjoining site. In reshaping the tower, the applicant has increased the separation of the tower from the Best Western Hotel. Mr. Bruckner noted there is only one place that the parking ramp can be located on the site.

Drahan Petrovic, Architect, described the response to the different orientations. He noted that on the south-east façade two feet wide overhangs and balconies are planned and on the south-west façade there will be five feet wide overhangs which will be either balconies or sun-shades.

Jane Durante, Landscape Architect, described the landscape plans noting the changes to the outdoor amenity space on the roof of the smaller building.

The applicant team took questions from the Panel.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - Provide more active uses on Howe street, consider expanding the retail space and moving the fitness centre to another level;
 - Consider design development to the parking access to reduce conflicts with pedestrians both crossing the plaza and entering the building; and
 - Consider on-street loading to allow for parking access off Rolston.
- **Related Commentary:** The Panel unanimously supported the proposal and commended the applicant on the significant improvements to the project, but continue to have significant concerns about the proposed ground floor uses

The Panel agreed that the tower siting was where it should be on the site, and the overall massing of the tower worked. Several Panel members thought the Granville Street facade was the most improved. However, several Panel members thought there still needed to be some design development to the project.

The Panel still had an issue with the public realm interface on Howe Street, and thought the fitness centre was not a good use on the ground floor as it did not animate the street. They thought the applicant was giving up a whole block with the design and that Howe Street could support retail or other active uses given the planned future residential in the neighbourhood. The panel had concerns, that the planned amenity space and parking ramp would create dead space along Howe Street.

Several Panel members thought the public realm interface at Rolston Street was well done and felt like a little residential community. The Panel agreed that shifting the exterior amenity space to the roof of the smaller building was a good move as it improves daylight access.

The Panel was concerned with the location of the loading bay with several Panel members suggesting the loading and parking ramps should be consolidated. One Panel member thought the parking access point was better suited off Rolston Street and thought the residents would get use to the one-way street. Most of the Panel supported not having an internal loading bay. One Panel member noted that the loading spaces would not work for the residential occupants and there would be a problem getting in and out of the elevators as the area is too constrained. Also moving and delivery trucks need to be nearer the elevators.

Some of the Panel had concerns with the entry plaza and thought the applicant needed to rethink the circulation in terms of how pedestrians and vehicles will access the site. Also the Panel thought the applicant needed to look at the buildings that will be developed to the south and how the plaza will be a natural pedestrian route to Pacific Boulevard, and this should not be compromised by the parking access

One Panel member thought the terracotta tiles should come down to the ground more but thought it looked nice at the entrance area. The Panel thought the canopy design was a huge improvement in forming a base for the building.

Several Panel members commented on the sustainability initiatives and thought the applicant had done a good job.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Bruckner thanked the Panel stating that he appreciated their comments and that he had an idea as to how he would change the parking access.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 6:46 p.m.