

URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: December 8, 2004

TIME: 4.00 pm

PLACE: Committee Room No. 1, City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
Bruce Haden, Chair
Larry Adams
Robert Barnes (excused Item 3)
Jeffrey Corbett (present for Items 3 and 4 only)
Alan Endall
Marta Farevaag (excused Item 2)
Ronald Lea
Brian Martin

REGRETS: Mark Ostry
Steven Keyes
Margot Long
Jennifer Marshall

RECORDING SECRETARY: Carol Hubbard

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING	
1.	1211 Melville Street (575 Bute)
2.	2228 West Broadway
3.	1670/90 West 8th Avenue
4.	405 Skeena Street

1.	Address:	1211 Melville Street (575 Bute)
	Use:	Mixed
	Zoning:	DD to CD-1
	Application Status:	Rezoning
	Architect:	Hancock Bruckner Eng & Wright
	Owner:	Pinnacle International
	Review:	First
	Delegation:	Martin Bruckner, Peter Kreuk, Mike DeCotiis
	Staff:	Phil Mondor, Ralph Segal

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (6-0)

- **Introduction:** Phil Mondor, Rezoning Planner, introduced this application. The Panel unanimously supported a preliminary development application for the site in April 2004 and the Development Permit Board subsequently approved it in principle in July 2004. The Panel supported the complete application on October 27, 2004. The application proposed a 34-storey tower with six or seven townhouses fronting Melville Street and a three-storey retail and office podium along Pender and Bute Streets. Total FSR was 6.6, which included a 10 percent density transfer, and a height of 336 ft.

The subject rezoning application is to increase the floor area on the site by 52,600 sq.ft. in an additional three floors in the residential tower. This additional floor area is to increase the retail and commercial floor space (from the 18,088 sq.ft. in the existing development application to 52,600 sq.ft.). The proposal is for two large retail floor plates of about 20-25,000 sq.ft. each. This proposition is strongly encouraged by Planning staff in response to recent Council policy that Bute Street between the waterfront and Georgia Street become a high street to provide a neighbourhood commercial centre and some destination retail space for the growing residential community in Triangle West and Coal Harbour.

The 52,600 sq.ft. is proposed to be transferred from across the street to the east (1178-1196 West Pender Street, fronting Bute Street), which is in a different sub area of the Downtown District where the maximum permitted FSR is 7.0. However, it is a very small site and cannot accommodate the large floor plate retail being sought in this neighbourhood commercial centre. This area of the downtown is also in urgent need of child daycare space and it has been determined that a fairly large, two-storey child daycare facility can be accommodated on the West Pender site. Planning staff are therefore prepared to recommend a transfer of density from the West Pender site to 1211 Melville Street.

Ralph Segal, Development Planner, noted a development application for the 1178 West Pender Street site is scheduled for review by the Panel on January 5, 2005. The subject rezoning application seeks a maximum density of 8.2 FSR and a height of 372 ft. There is no change to the form proposed in the Development Application other than the addition of three residential floors and expansion of the two main floors of commercial retail space. Mr. Segal noted the applicant is continuing to incorporate the Panel's previous comments into the scheme, in particular with respect to the treatment of the podium.

The Panel's advice is sought on whether the site can accommodate the additional height and density being requested, as well as comments on the detailed design of the podium.

- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Martin Bruckner, Architect, described the proposal in greater detail and responded to questions from the Panel.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - Design development to Pender Street podium to ensure an appropriately urban expression of CRUs including consideration of signage and consideration of smaller scale elements;
 - Design development to ensure appropriate scale and rhythm relationship between this project and the flatiron building, especially at the podium level.
- **Related Commentary:**

The Panel unanimously supported this rezoning application and was satisfied that this site can accommodate the additional height and density. It was noted that this will be fairly significant building in the cityscape but some Panel members considered the extra height to be an improvement over the development application scheme because it adds some variety to an area which already has a number of towers of similar height. Most Panel members did not consider the additional view impacts to be significant.

The Panel also considered the rezoning to be very supportable for the neighbourhood benefits it achieves. There is no doubt the destination retail and the daycare are very worthwhile additions to the area. It was noted that the scheme may create some challenges for the donor site that will need to be addressed when that application comes forward.

The Panel was generally satisfied with the design development direction being taken for the podium, although stressed that it needs further work. Some Panel members had some concerns about the approach suggested by the sketches noting the tendency for larger retailers to impose their corporate image on the streetscape. The applicant was cautioned against the emergence of a "big box" appearance on Pender Street and urged to ensure that a smaller scale expression prevails. Some Panel members expressed strong support for the more robust podium which they considered to be very appropriate for this very large project.

Suggestions for the podium treatment included:

- the wrapping of the retail onto Melville Street might be handled in a more interesting way in terms of how it blends into the residential character of Melville;
- further thought should be given to the angle of the retail canopies on Bute Street;
- further consideration should be given to the treatment of the knife edge corner at Bute and Pender where glass rather than solid wall would create more interest on the Bute Street side.

It was noted that transition of this development to the adjacent flatiron building will need careful consideration to ensure the two projects mesh appropriately, particularly at the podium level.

Given the Panel has now reviewed this project five times (including an initial non-support), one Panel member urged the applicant to ensure that care is taken to achieve a coordinated presentation with all the design details properly documented when the proposal is returned to the Panel at the next Development Application stage.

The Panel commended the City for taking the initiative to address off-site issues that impact the community in general. Such broader thinking will achieve much welcome public benefits for the whole neighbourhood.

2. Address:	2228 West Broadway
DE:	407977
Use:	Mixed
Zoning:	C-3A
Application Status:	Complete after Preliminary
Architect:	Hancock Bruckner Eng & Wright
Owner:	665428 BC Ltd.
Review:	Third
Delegation:	Jim Hancock, Colleen Dixon, Sheldon Chandler, Jim McLean, Chris Phillips
Staff:	Mary Beth Rondeau

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (5-0)

- **Introduction:** Mary Beth Rondeau, Development Planner, introduced this complete application. The Panel supported the preliminary submission in May 2004 and the Development Permit Board subsequently approved it in principle in July 2004. The proposal is for a London Drugs store on the ground floor and a grocery store slightly below the street grade, with residential use above. The Development Permit Board supported the requested maximum permitted density of 3.0 FSR and a maximum height of about 78 ft.

Ms. Rondeau briefly reviewed the issues raised by the Panel and the Board at the preliminary stage. The Panel's advice is sought on the applicant's response to the conditions of preliminary approval, including:

- whether the project has earned the discretionary increased density and height;
 - rear lane treatment and setback;
 - retail street resolution including scale of weather protection and entries;
 - Vine Street treatment including setback, vertical feature and treatment of public corner plaza;
 - sustainable design issues.
- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** The developer, Jim McLean, introduced the design team and Jim Hancock, Architect, briefly described the revisions to the scheme in response to the conditions of the Development Permit Board and the Panel's previous comments. Chris Phillips briefly reviewed the landscape plan and noted that public art will be incorporated into the architectural façade to enhance the public realm. Colleen Dixon addressed the sustainability measures, and the design team responded to questions from the Panel.
 - **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - Design development to enhance the autonomy and differentiation of the residential entries relative to the retail frontage;
 - Consider relocation of grocery store entry further eastward, if practical;
 - Design development to the loading bay materials and lighting to enhance the quality of the loading bay.
 - **Related Commentary:**

The Panel unanimously supported this application and generally considered it to be very well handled. The Panel considered the requested height and density to be well earned by the design approach taken to break up this large block, the successful integration of the uses, and for the project's sustainability initiatives.

The Panel acknowledged the significant improvements made to the treatment of the lane. Some concerns remained about the large loading dock, although acknowledging its necessity for the commercial uses. The applicant was urged to consider a high level of finishes and lighting in this area to soften its impact on the neighbourhood. Treatment of the loading dock should be residential rather than industrial in appearance.

The improvements made to the Vine Street frontage were strongly endorsed by the Panel. Extending the pavement up to the building will make it much more usable by the general public, including the corner plaza. The corner specimen tree was also strongly supported. It was noted that moving the westerly building away from Vine Street creates more breathing space, both for the Vine streetscape and for the small building across the street. The Panel found the corner plaza and bistro to be one of the most successful aspects of the project.

The Panel strongly urged that the Broadway streetscape and character be further refined. Suggestions and comments included:

- Relocating the westernmost residential entry to Broadway contributes positively to the Broadway streetscape;
- There needs to be greater variety and distinction between the residential and retail entries;
- London Drugs should be encouraged to make their windows as permeable as possible;
- Attention should be given to coordinating the entries with the pattern of street trees;
- There may be a conflict between the grocery entry and the bus stop;
- The Broadway streetscape could benefit from a higher quality of materials, perhaps more brick and less painted concrete;
- Recommend the grocery store entrance be located further to the east to be more mid-way between the residential masses (similar to the London Drugs frontage);
- Interior lighting adjacent to the street will be very important to the quality of the streetscape;
- The smaller retail units should be deeper to make them more workable.

Other minor comments included a suggestion for the vertical elements to be slightly more disengaged from the mass behind (as suggested in the rendering). Also, a comment that the roofs may be somewhat weak given they will have a prominent profile from the street.

The Panel welcomed the inclusion of sustainable design features and strongly urged that the applicant seek up to LEED silver certification.

- **Applicant's Response:** With respect to the grocery store entry, Mr. McLean noted there are some very practical considerations for making it work as proposed. He said they can continue to work on it but moving it further to the east would be very difficult.

3. Address:	1670/90 West 8th Avenue
DE:	408976
Use:	Residential (11 storeys, 49 units)
Zoning:	C-3A
Application Status:	Complete
Architect:	Gateway Architecture
Owner:	Prima Properties Ltd.
Review:	First
Delegation:	Tom Morton, Michael Cox, Michael Patterson
Staff:	Mary Beth Rondeau

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (6-0)

- **Introduction:** Mary Beth Rondeau, Development Planner, presented this application in the Burrard Slopes C-3A neighbourhood. The proposal is for all-residential use, which meets the intent of recent policy for a predominantly residential neighbourhood. The application seeks 3.3 FSR, comprising the maximum permitted 3.0 FSR plus a ten percent heritage density transfer. The proposal responds well to the guidelines for the area. A setback of 12 ft. is proposed for the 8th Avenue frontage and 10 ft. on Pine Street. Materials are concrete and masonry.

The advice of the Panel is sought on the following areas:

- whether it earns the requested density;
- massing and general setback treatment including the corner plaza.
- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** The design team briefly described the design rationale and responded to questions from the Panel.
- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - Design development to the east elevation to simplify and clarify the rhythm and stepping strategy of both massing and openings;
 - Increase the relationship between the west curved wall and the townhouses below including consideration of continuing the curved wall to grade while maintaining the townhouse use behind;
 - Increase the visual separation between the tower and the townhouse on the north side.
- **Related Commentary:**

The Panel unanimously supported this application and thought it earned the requested height and density, including the additional ten percent heritage density transfer. In general, it was thought to be very handsome and suitable for the area.

The Panel found the project to be very thoughtful in a number of ways, including the treatment of the parking and the amount of amenity on the site, both private and public. The project makes a good contribution to the public realm, including the double row of street trees.

There was strong support for the treatment of the amenity space, its overall usability and good relationship to the children's play area.

The Panel found the building expression to be the weakest aspect of the proposal, particularly the east elevation. Panel members appreciated the way the building is carved to respond to view considerations but would have preferred to see the curved wall come all the way down to the ground. There was thought to be a need to separate the townhouses much more from the tower on the north side. In general, the Panel thought the expression should be simplified, including reconsideration of the angle enclosed balcony which seems to be foreign to the vocabulary that has been developed for the building. There was also a suggestion to reconsider the alignment of the window patterns, and to consider better quality materials for the east elevation given its high exposure from the Fir Street on-ramp. Another minor suggestion was to return the brick of the upper two levels of the townhouse so that it mirrors that suggested on the other three townhouse units.

The Panel strongly supported the corner plaza treatment, including the water feature. There was a word of caution, however, concerning the ongoing maintenance of water features, and a recommendation to consider deleting the secondary water feature in favour of one main water feature with better quality equipment to increase its longevity. The Panel also strongly supported the soft courtyard amenity. There was one suggestion to bring the guard rail to the edge of the west elevation. Additional planting on the roof was also recommended.

Overall, the Panel found that thoughtful and intelligent decisions had been made on the project and commended the applicant team. The Panel also appreciated the completeness of the presentation documentation and general attention to the landscape elements and details.

4. Address:	405 Skeena Street
DE:	408783
Use:	Mixed
Zoning:	C-2/C-1
Application Status:	Complete
Architect:	Rositch Hemphill
Owner:	Aragon Group
Review:	First
Delegation:	Keith Hemphill
Staff:	Bob Adair

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (4-3)

- **Introduction:** Bob Adair, Development Planner, introduced this application. The site, located at the corner of East Hastings and Skeena Streets, measures 260 ft. x 102 ft. The context includes RS-1 zoning across the lane to the south and continuous commercial development on both sides of Hastings Street. The proposal is for a mixed use building with commercial use at grade and three levels of residential above. There is also residential at grade at the rear, facing the lane, for about half the length of the site. Parking access is from the lane. There is also access to the adjacent McDonald's parking lot from the lane. Existing parking for McDonald's will remain on this site, under the Hastings Street frontage. There is also an open loading space at the rear on the lane. Proposed density is 2.52 FSR. Materials are architectural concrete at the base and a combination of hardi plank and vinyl siding on the upper levels. At the suggestion of staff, the application proposes pulling the massing of the building forward on Hastings Street in return for a better relationship to adjacent residential across the lane. This will require a relaxation of the height angle regulations in this zone.

The advice of the Panel is sought on the following:

- relaxation of the height angle at the Hastings Street property line in exchange for reduction of massing at the rear;
 - overall scale, including the handling and articulation of the massing along East Hastings Street, noting the length of the site;
 - Skeena street elevation expression;
 - Lane elevation in terms of impact on the adjacent single family development and the exposed ramp and loading;
 - Livability of the ground floor rear units.
- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Keith Hemphill, Architect, described the design rationale, noting the most difficult aspect of the site is its severe slope, which is further exacerbated by new requirements for handicap accessibility. As well, there is a requirement to provide lane access to the adjacent McDonald's site. After describing the project in greater detail, Mr. Hemphill responded to questions from the Panel.
 - **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - Design development to the recessed lane units to enhance light access, security, privacy, and horizontal separation from the lane;
 - Landscape design development to increase pedestrian amenity including the possibility of street trees along Hastings Street and the lane, and the addition of a planted sidewalk boulevard adjacent to Hastings;

- Consider moving the upper floor further north to reduce street-side deck space in favour of south-facing deck space; also consider enclosed balconies and visual simplification above grade on Hastings Street;
 - Increased detailed variegation, e.g. canopies, recesses and colours on the Hastings Street retail, including consideration of some vertical appurtenances.
- **Related Commentary:**

The Panel supported this application with a number of concerns.

The severe restrictions on the site were acknowledged by the Panel as well as the inherent nature of the C zones which have to deal with the transition between a busy commercial area and single family residential. This project is also challenged by the strict height limit of the zoning, the topography of the site and the need to provide parking access to the neighbouring McDonald's restaurant. Given these limitations, the Panel thought the applicant had made a reasonable massing response. It was noted the stepping and ramping of the central corridor has produced in a wider and more interesting corridor which is of benefit to the building.

Relaxation of the height angle regulation was unanimously supported by the Panel in order to achieve a better relationship to the neighbouring residential neighbourhood across the lane. Some Panel members recommended pulling the building even farther forward on Hastings Street to improve this relationship even more.

The Panel's main concerns were with the Hastings Street frontage. Suggestions were to strengthen the pedestrian scale at the lower level and respond more to the vehicular scale at the upper levels. Given the 260 ft. length of the frontage greater animation was recommended, including the introduction of coloured canopies and variation in the rhythm to strengthen the retail component. There were concerns about the overhang of the balconies on the fourth floor and its impact on units below. It was strongly recommended that enclosed balconies be considered for the Hastings frontage, noting it is north facing and on a very busy street which will severely reduce the livability of open decks. Enclosed balconies would also contribute to calming down the upper façade on Hastings.

The Panel was very disappointed with the lack of landscape and street trees on Hastings Street and strongly urged that these be provided along with street furniture and possibly some paving patterning. There was also a suggestion to consider creating a physical barrier, perhaps with bollards, to help shield pedestrians from the traffic.

There was support for the strength of the corners on the Hastings façade but a suggestion that this approach should be reversed on the lane façade so that the neighbourhood perceives a three-storey mass on the corners.

The Panel found the Skeena Street elevation to be quite successful in its landscape response although with some comments that the façade is somewhat flat and plain. There were suggestions to add some articulation to this facade, including richer materials around the entry. It was suggested this elevation could respond to either the Hastings or the lane expression. The addition of a bench for public use was recommended.

The Panel was disappointed with the landscape response on the lane and recommended improvements including the addition of trees. This will add to the livability of the units on the lane by providing some visual separation from the houses behind.

The Panel had concerns about the deeply recessed lower units on the lane and strongly recommended further design development. Some Panel members indicated support for the second floor overhang and thought they might even benefit the lower units in terms of providing weather protection. There were concerns about security and privacy of these units and suggestions to increase landscaping and add screening to make the patios more livable.

Other suggestions included provision of a stop sign and landscaping at the McDonald's entrance, and reconsideration of the use of vinyl siding.

It was noted the landscape plan was not included in the project documentation. More contextual information would also have been helpful.

Some Panel members would have preferred this building to be higher, noting that shadowing is not an issue on Hastings Street. It was noted that the regulations in this zone are causing severe difficulties in some instances where adherence to a number is no longer relevant. It was suggested that this zone is in urgent need of review by the Planning Department, noting also that it currently is contrary to what the neighbourhood is seeking in the Hastings/Sunrise Vision.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Hemphill expressed appreciation for the constructive commentary. He agreed with the comments about the public realm treatment and acknowledged it is not well represented. He noted they are in negotiations with Engineering about specific items, including the degree of street trees on the Skeena elevation. Mr. Hemphill said he appreciated the advice about the articulation and agreed there is room to deal with the grade level on the lane elevation, possibly adding some screening of the patios. He said he will make every effort to incorporate the Panel's suggestions.