

URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: February 2, 2005

TIME: 4.00 pm

PLACE: Committee Room No. 1, City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
Bruce Haden, Chair
Mark Ostry
Larry Adams
Robert Barnes
Jeffrey Corbett
Alan Endall
Marta Farevaag
Ronald Lea
Margot Long
Jennifer Marshall
Brian Martin

REGRETS: Steven Keyes

**RECORDING
SECRETARY:** Carol Hubbard

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING	
1.	900 West 28th Avenue
2.	2520 Manitoba Street

1. Address:	900 West 28th Avenue
DE:	409086
Use:	Hospital
Zoning:	CD-1
Application Status:	Complete
Architect:	Musson Cattell Mackey Partnership
Owner:	Children & Women's Health Centre of BC
Review:	First
Delegation:	Mark Whitehead, Michael Aeberhardt, Ken McKillop
Staff:	Scot Hein, Vicki Potter

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (9-0)

- **Introduction:** Vicki Potter, Project Facilitator, introduced this application. In 1999, Council approved the Master Plan for the Children & Women's Health Centre, intended as a general guide for the future development of the site. The subject application represents the first two phases of development, located at the northwest corner of the site. The Master Plan identified four phases of development and the floor area within each phase and each project on the site. The four phases are linked to parking requirements that are triggered at different phases of development. No additional parking is proposed in the current submission. Ms. Potter noted that staff have been working with the applicant for about two and a half years on this portion of the site with respect to the distribution of the total site floor area.

Scot Hein, Development Planner, explained there has been an adjustment of the massing footprint and highlighted the following areas in which the advice of the Panel is sought:

- whether the revised master plan massing arrangement is supportable;
 - diagonal design response to the tight condition with the ambulatory care building;
 - the additional height requiring a Text Amendment;
 - architectural expression.
- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Mark Whitehead, Architect, noted the increased height (from four to five storeys) is to accommodate the rooftop mechanical equipment necessary for the laboratory building. It has not been possible to contain it within the allowable ten percent of roof footprint. Mr. Whitehead briefly reviewed the context and noted a number of neighbourhood meetings have been held and the residents are supportive. Following a description of the proposal and the landscape plan, the applicant team responded to questions from the Panel.
- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - Consider removal of the rooftop screen (if appropriate with final mechanical layout);
 - Consider increasing the differentiation between the north and south facades;
 - Design development to the entry to encourage pedestrian amenity and the notion of campus;
 - Design development to parking access roads and building edges to decrease overall pavement (if possible), increase greenery, increase landscape buffering to the building, provide drop-off and generally enhance the conceptual clarity of the ground plane, even if it means a minor reduction in parking;
 - Design development to the southeast corner of the building and adjacent ground plane to enhance the relationship to the ambulatory care building. This may or may not

leave a similar dimensional relationship of the buildings, but should address at a minimum the ground level condition and pedestrian amenity.

- **Related Commentary:**

The Panel unanimously supported this application. The architectural expression was considered to be quite interesting and the project well thought out and resolved.

The Panel had no major concerns with the revised massing arrangement and some Panel members found it an improvement over the previous master plan. There were, however, concerns that the proposal now lacks the feeling of campus that existed previously.

The additional height to accommodate the mechanical penthouse was of no concern to the Panel given it causes no view obstruction for neighbours. However, there was some discussion about whether the mechanical equipment needs to be screened at all because it adds unnecessary mass and weight to the building. Some Panel members thought it would be better to expose the stacks, in keeping with the existing buildings on the site, and completely remove the screen. This would, however, require some attention to ensuring the equipment is as orderly as possible to avoid it being unsightly. It was noted it will not be seen from ground level in any event.

With respect to the relationship with the ambulatory care building, the majority of Panel members found the separation acceptable and thought the difficulty related to the ground plane treatment and how the buildings address each other rather than the distance between the buildings. The road reconfiguration has created an awkward situation for creating a sense of campus and improving the pedestrian environment in this area. There were suggestions to look at creating a little more space between the buildings and improving the pedestrian environment by directing the sidewalk beneath the building overhang. The main concerns related to the roadway in front of the building which is very tight with the trees jammed into a very narrow strip. Removal of one or two parking spaces was thought necessary to improve the relationship and bring the trees out more from the building. This would create a softer landscape and add to the sense of campus. Other suggestions included the use of tree islands. It was stressed that wayfinding is critical for a hospital campus and visitors must be able to easily identify where the front doors are. For this reason, it would be preferable if there was no parking at all directly in front of the entrance and to strengthen the sense of entry.

One Panel member questioned the glazing colour and suggested it need not be in the same family of glass as the other buildings on the site.

It was noted the north and south elevations have the same expression. It was recommended that consideration be given to trying to get more light access on the north façade by removing the horizontals and to optimize solar access on the south façade.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Whitehead thanked the Panel for the well considered comments that will be taken into account.

2. Address:	2520 Manitoba Street
DE:	408554
Use:	Mixed, 7 storeys
Zoning:	C-3A
Application Status:	Complete after Preliminary
Architect:	Downs Archambault
Owner:	677002 BC Ltd.
Review:	Second
Delegation:	Alan Shatwell, Al Johnson, Pawel Gradolski
Staff:	Mary Beth Rondeau

EVALUATION: NON-SUPPORT (2-8)

- **Introduction:** Mary Beth Rondeau, Development Planner, presented this application. The proposal was reviewed and supported by the Panel at the preliminary stage and it was subsequently approved in principle by the Development Permit Board. This complete submission has reduced the height from seven to five storeys and redistributed the massing to the less view sensitive area to the east of the site. The program is unchanged, with ground floor commercial use and market residential above. There was considerable input from neighbours to the south and the revised massing is at the direction of the Development Permit Board. Density is now 2.85 FSR and the height is 58 ft.

The Panel is asked to confirm that the proposal has earned the requested height and density and to provide any comments in particular with respect to the commercial frontage.

- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Al Johnson, Architect, noted there has been a lot of public involvement with the neighbours which has led to the lowering of the building. He briefly described the revised scheme, noting the amount of glazing on the east side has been minimized and the Manitoba street frontage has been redesigned. Pawel Gradolski described the landscape plan and the applicant team responded to questions from the Panel.
- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - design development to the eastern wing to either more completely integrate its architectural language with the main corner block or simplify its expression to emphasize its difference from the main corner block. This exploration should take into consideration the livability of the units.
 - design development to the ground plane, particularly the resolution of the streetscape at the corner and enhancing lanescape.
 - consider moving the amenity space to a better location.
 - consider the addition of a roof deck.
- **Related Commentary:**

The Panel was quite disappointed with this submission and found it lacked the clarity of the earlier scheme. Several Panel members commented that they thought the preservation of some private views were being considered at the expense of the project's overall urban design clarity which would benefit the general population for years to come. This solution is a considerable compromise to the overall livability of the building. An observation was made that the previous, 7-storey building was better for the neighbourhood because it had much greater porosity, particularly at street level. The Panel was therefore unable to support this

complete application and, unlike the original scheme, did not believe it had earned the height and density being requested. It was also noted that this development is clearly inheriting problems arising from the neighbouring Elements building.

The Panel still considered the 5-storey element to be quite handsome but the lower, easterly component quite weak. There were concerns about the stepping of this portion of the building and with its architectural expression. Some Panel members thought it should blend in more closely with the 5-storey massing; others thought it could be expressed differently with a greater sense of separation between the masses.

It was noted that this version will also be a big loss to the residents of this building, with the replacement of the previous great amenity space on the roof with an unsatisfactory amenity area off the lane which also creates privacy problems for the neighbours. The Panel strongly urged that some communal amenity be provided on the roof, given there is very little good outdoor amenity space. The environmental initiatives of the project were acknowledged but the Panel thought some of the green roof could be converted to amenity space while addressing neighbours' concerns. The Panel was also disappointed with the interior amenity space.

The inclusion of a deck to Unit J1, level 2, was recommended and a comment that the K unit is not very livable with an awkward, long corridor to get to the living space.

There was a recommendation to consider unpainted concrete rather than painted because it works better with the brick.

The Panel had no concerns with the commercial frontage and generally found the treatment of the storefronts along Broadway to be fairly well done.

Concerns were expressed about the streetscape treatment at the corner which seems to be fighting between the Broadway character and the residential Manitoba character. It was suggested that further consideration be given to creating an appropriate transition corner treatment.

There was a recommendation to increase the caliper size of the street trees to a minimum of 3 inches and to generally increase the size of all plant material.

With respect to the lane, there was a recommendation to consider having some separation between the loading bays of this and the adjacent development, possibly with landscaping or a tree to help to break up the large expanse between the two openings. General improvements to the appearance of the parking entry and loading were also recommended.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Johnson said the comments are valid. He said it has been an interesting process with influences for many directions and it is somewhat of a compromise solution as a result. He agreed they can work towards achieving greater clarity in the project.