

## URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

**DATE:** February 4, 2004

**TIME:** 4.00 pm

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

**PRESENT:** MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:  
Stuart Lyon, Chair  
Helen Besharat  
Jeffrey Corbett  
Bruce Haden  
Brian Martin  
Kim Perry  
Sorin Tatomir  
Ken Terriss  
Mark Ostry  
Jennifer Marshall

**REGRETS:** Reena Lazar  
Eva Lee

**RECORDING  
SECRETARY:** Carol Hubbard

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| ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING |                       |
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| 1.                             | 4176 Alexandra Street |
| 2.                             | 6460 Main Street      |

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| 1. Address:       | 4176 Alexandra Street                      |
| Use:              | School                                     |
| Zoning:           | CD-1                                       |
| Applicant Status: | Rezoning                                   |
| Architect:        | CJP  |
| Owner:            | York House School                          |
| Review:           | First                                      |
| Delegation:       | Graham Fligg, Julie Paul, Terry Partington |
| Staff:            | Anita Molaro                               |

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**EVALUATION: SUPPORT (7-2)**

- **Introduction:** Anita Molaro, Development Planner, presented this application for a Text Amendment to an existing CD-1 zone. The proposal is to increase the density from 0.7 to 0.85 FSR to accommodate facilities located underground. The current CD-1, approved in 1992, provided a master plan for the development of the site but only half of the plan proceeded. The proposed Text Amendment is to accommodate an on-site performing arts centre including drama and music teaching and performance area below the athletic field. Off-street parking will also be constructed underground. While the proposal will increase the total floor area it will result in a decrease in site coverage and an increase in green space on the site. Some hard surface area will be retained to accommodate loading.

To address the issue of traffic, which is a major concern of the neighbours, part of the strategy of the site planning is to consolidate access to the site on the Alexandra Street frontage by introducing a lay-by that will accommodate about nine vehicles, and to focus the primary entry to the site from Alexandra Street.

Staff have no significant issues with this application and seek the Panel's advice in the following areas:

- the site planning approach;
  - the strategy of locating below grade FSR;
  - the form of development including the integration between the two existing buildings;
  - landscape treatment.
- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Graham Fligg, Architect, explained the design rationale and noted it is intended to be a fairly "quiet" addition to the school. In response to a question from the Panel, he said the height of the fence is not yet determined but it is intended to be a perimeter definition. He described the materials and colours and responded to the Panel's questions.
  - **Panel's Comments:** The Panel strongly supported this request for Text Amendment.

The Panel supported the applicant's approach to the site planning, and the proposal for locating new facilities underground was generally thought to be an excellent concept. The Panel was pleased to see the reduction in site coverage resulting from this strategy. One Panel member questioned whether any consideration had been given to under-grounding the gymnasium as well to achieve even more open space at grade. A comment was made that the strategy of locating FSR underground is one that should be encouraged in Vancouver because it causes little impact on the surrounding neighbourhood.

The Panel appreciated that there is very little visible parking on the site and supported the introduction of the lay-by in the traffic management plan.

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The Panel had a number of suggestions with respect to the form of development. In general, the Panel thought the form of development lacked resolution at the detail level. There were concerns about how the infill component connects with the existing buildings, making it look quite pinched and crowded. There were concerns about the integration of the roof forms in particular. Some Panel members thought the infill should not mimic the expression of the existing forms but read as a separate building. It was recommended that the infill should be a lot simpler, possibly with a flat roof, to provide a better relationship with the two existing, well proportioned structures. Careful attention should be given to the treatment of the garage entry. There was also a recommendation to give more attention to the surface promenade, possibly including weather protection between the two buildings. Detailed resolution of the porte cochere should also be given careful consideration as the design proceeds.

There was a strong recommendation to introduce more natural light into the below ground areas and the Panel thought there would be ample opportunity to achieve this in design development, with skylights and possibly a light well. There was a suggestion to consider some reconfiguration of the underground space to bring the daily use areas closer to the walkway and the more service oriented uses further back.

The Panel felt strongly that educational institutions should lead the way in embracing sustainability measures to provide a positive learning opportunity for students. It was stressed that the project should be a showcase in the way the architecture is resolved. It is an opportunity to exhibit West Coast architecture, and it should be creative, innovative and sustainable.

The Panel stressed the importance of landscape in a project such as this and was disappointed that this aspect was underemphasized in the presentation materials. The Panel will look forward to seeing resolution of the landscape plan at the development application stage. The perimeter treatment will need to be carefully detailed in this context, with careful attention given to detailing of fence posts. With respect to the athletic field, the Panel urged that it be as green as possible as opposed to artificial turf.

With respect to materials, the Panel would discourage the use of hardi plank because it does not perform well when used in longer lengths. The use of natural material is preferred. The extent of concrete being used around the entry might also be reconsidered given the context of the building.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Fligg thanked the Panel for its comments. He agreed with the importance of the landscape in the scheme and confirmed there is a landscape architect on the team. The detailing of the fence will be addressed in design development. Mr. Fligg said he also agreed with some of the comments with respect to linkages and integration with the existing mechanical areas.

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| 2. Address:       | 6460 Main Street    |
| DE:               | 408084              |
| Use:              | Mixed (two storeys) |
| Zoning:           | C-2                 |
| Applicant Status: | Complete            |
| Architect:        | IBI Group           |
| Owner:            | Claire & Dhillon    |
| Review:           | First               |
| Delegation:       | Tony Gill           |
| Staff:            | Bob Adair           |

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**EVALUATION: SUPPORT (9-0)**

- **Introduction:** Bob Adair, Development Planner, presented this application for a 66 ft. x 102 ft. C-2 site located on the east side of Main Street, mid block between 48th and 49th Avenues. The site is at the north edge of the Punjabi market area. The proposal is for commercial use on the ground floor with four 2-bedroom dwelling units on the second floor. Parking is at grade at the rear. Proposed density is 1.24 FSR. Exterior materials include concrete, clear glazing with spandrel panels, corrugated aluminum siding, and cedar trellises at the rear. The adjacent buildings conceal the side elevations.

The areas in which the advice of the Panel is sought relate to:

- whether or not part of the second floor should come to the street to create a stronger streetwall on Main Street; and
- treatment at the rear, noting the guidelines recommend secured parking for residential use including screening or partial covering of parking that cannot be underground.

In general, staff support the proposed form of development and materials.

- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Tony Gill, Architect, briefly explained the history of the project and the design rationale. He said they wanted to create something clean and fresh with good quality, low maintenance materials. With respect to parking, Mr. Gill noted it is a very tight situation because of the overall density, and pulling the façade out, as suggested, would add square footage and trigger the requirement for an additional parking stall. Enclosing the parking would likely result in the loss of a parking space. It is also not necessarily more vulnerable to break-ins. Mr. Gill responded to the Panel's questions.
- **Panel's Comments:** The Panel unanimously supported this application which it thought will provide a good complement to neighbouring buildings, particularly the attractive building on the corner.

The Panel did not believe it was necessary to bring the second floor out to create a stronger streetwall and thought it might diminish the clean qualities of the design. However, if the applicant decides to do this, the Panel suggested taking advantage of FSR exclusions for enclosed balconies and in suite storage space. There is also the possibility of increasing the height. Providing weather protection over the balconies was recommended. One Panel member noted the current configuration results in relatively narrow balconies in front of bedrooms, and they tend to end up as unsightly storage areas.

The Panel did not believe that covering the parking at the rear was necessary, noting that enclosed parking is no more secure than surface parking. However, the Panel felt strongly

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that the treatment of the lane area needs to be improved. The use of pavers instead of asphalt for a more sustainable project was strongly recommended. There is also the potential for planting some trees at the rear given there is no obstruction below to impede their growth. In general, the Panel thought much more attention should be given to the lane so that it sets a good precedent for future redevelopment in the area and starts to create the kind of lanescape the City aspires to. There was also a recommendation to consider screening the parking area from above to improve the overlook from the second floor. It was noted that the rear entry will likely be the most used by the residents so attention should also be given to the wall treatment.

The Panel recommended further design development to the residential entrance, including attention to light fixtures and handicap access. Some Panel members found the entry currently somewhat mean and narrow and lacking a sense of arrival.

Several Panel members recommended that careful consideration be given to signage so that it is not left to the tenants. Because the building is so crisp and well detailed it was thought important to incorporate signage into the design now. On the other hand, some Panel members cautioned that controlling the signage may not be a good precedent for future development because there is a danger it could become too sterile and diminish the currently vibrant, eclectic character of the neighbourhood. One Panel member found the metal and glass canopies, while very appropriate for the building, out of character for the neighbourhood.

The Panel liked the choice of materials, although one member cautioned that the punched metal weathers poorly. Another member suggested using the same material as the trellis for the balcony partition wall, to soften the appearance and allow greater light penetration.

The introduction of natural light to the upper hallway by way of skylights was recommended. It will improve livability and make the units more rentable.

Some members of the Panel suggested the unit layouts need more work to enhance their flow, possibly locating the bedrooms on either side of the living room. There was also a suggestion to make sure that furniture can be easily moved in and out.

With respect to the roof, there was a recommendation to screen the air conditioning units in some way.

In general, the Panel found the design refreshing and contemporary. The Panel commended the applicant for introducing a modern vocabulary to this block.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Gill expressed appreciation for the positive commentary. He agreed with the suggestions with respect to better quality paving at the back of the building. With regards to moving the units closer to the street, he noted a concern for privacy given the amount of glazing on the building.