

URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: February 10, 2010

TIME: 4.00 pm

PLACE: Committee Room No. 1, City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
Martin Nielsen, Chair
Gerry Eckford
Jane Durante
Bruce Haden
Richard Henry
Oliver Lang
Vladimir Mikler (Excused Item #1)
Mark Ostry (Item #1 only)
Maurice Pez
Douglas Watts (Excused Item #1)
Robert Barnes (Non-voting)
Jim Huffman (Non-voting)
Jeff Corbett (Non-voting)
Scott Romses (Non-voting)

REGRETS:
Steve McFarlane
David Godin
James Cheng

**RECORDING
SECRETARY:** Lorna Harvey

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING	
1.	745 Thurlow Street
2.	5912 Oak Street

BUSINESS MEETING

The Panel elected the new Chair and Vice Chair for 2010. Bruce Haden will be the new Chair and the Vice Chair will be selected at the next meeting.

Chair Nielsen 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: 745 Thurlow Street
DE: RZ/413483
Description: 25 storey office tower including retail use at grade.
Zoning: DD
Application Status: Complete
Review: First
Owner: Bentall LP
Architect: Musson Cattell Mackey Partnership
Delegation: Mark, Bruce Hemstock, Chris
Staff: Ralph Segal and Alison Higginson

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (7-0)

- **Introduction:** Alison Higginson, Rezoning Planner, introduced the proposal for a concurrent rezoning and development application. The rezoning requests a text amendment to the CD-1 bylaw for the site which was approved at a public hearing in 2008. The rezoning would increase the allowable density from 15.4 to 16.1 FSR by adding one complete level of office floor space. The additional floor which equates to approximately 19,000 would be accommodated within the form of development through reductions in the interstitial space in the office floors. Staff are supporting the rezoning based on the policies of the Metro Core Jobs and Economy Use Plan which encourages and supports the provision of additional job space in the downtown core.

Ralph Segal, Development Planner, further described the proposal noting the reduction in the floor to floor dimension has allowed for the accommodation of the additional storey. There is a view cone passing over the site which sets the height of the building. In a recent consideration by Council of the view corridors, Council decided that the present view cones will be maintained. Mr. Segal noted that the slight increase in density is not an urban design issue in the context of Metro Core seeking job space and predicted that Council would grant the increase in density. Mr. Segal described the architectural plans regarding suite layouts and he noted that the massing was basically the same as seen at the rezoning stage by the Panel. The building will have a unique form with two massing elements and differing treatments, a rectilinear element and a canted element with triple glazing and target of LEED™ Gold certification. The public art plan has been given a preliminary approval and it envisions a coloured programmable lighting array carefully integrated into the architecture both on the façade of the building and in the ground plane.

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

1. Has the proposed detailed architectural expression advanced appropriately for this prominent site?
2. Do the Thurlow and Alberni streetscapes/public realm treatment contribute to the animation of the highly pedestrianized precinct?

Ms. Higginson and Mr. Segal took questions from the Panel.

- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** Mr. Whitehead, Architect, further described the proposal noting the massing will represent the use inside. He added that there was a desire to bring more office space to the top of the building as a statement of function as well as to provide a better proportioned massing. The area has a lot of rectangular buildings and they felt this building would be a foil to some of the buildings behind the site. He also noted that retail is planned for the third floor. The podium is canted back as a counter point to the mass above. Mr. Whitehead described the curtain wall and other planned architectural elements of the building.

Bruce Hemstock, Landscape Architect, noted that the ground plane is a combination of working with the street expression and bringing a lane expression together to create a high quality landscape. On the lane there will be exposed aggregate concrete as well as concrete and will function as a service place but will also encourage pedestrians use. The glass canopy will collect rain water which will drain into an element in the ground plane. At the entry, three different colours of granite as well as basalt will be used to encourage movement from the street into the lobby. An outdoor patio space on the second level with some outdoor space for the restaurant will be created. There will be a green roof on the top of the building with an outdoor gathering area that has been broken up into different spaces. He noted the sustainable initiatives will include the collection of storm water that will be stored within the building for re-use.

The applicant team took questions from the Panel.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - Consider developing a full scale model of the glazing to work out detailing issues;
 - Design development to the Alberni Street ground plane;
 - Consider more passive environmental strategies.
- **Related Commentary:** The Panel supported the proposal.

The Panel supported the additional floor area as they felt it wouldn't impact the massing of the building. They thought the architectural expression had advanced enough for the site and that it was a cohesive project and that all the elements on the building seemed coordinated with the exception of the Alberni Street treatment. Several Panel members were concerned with the angled wall as they thought there could be some detail issues with the vertical mullions. They liked the variation in the glazing of spandrel to clear to the different coloured glazing which they felt would help to differentiate the two masses. However, they felt a full scale mock up was needed on site to gauge the transparency and character of the glazing and how the two curtain wall elements would come together.

Several Panel members noted that it would need to be a work of art on the inside of the building because that is what will be visible from the street. Another Panel member was concerned with the closeness of the Shangri-La building and suggested the applicant look at ways to mitigate privacy between the residential and office uses.

A couple of Panel members thought the building was too masculine and a bit on the chunky side although it may be the nature of the program fitting on the site. One Panel member thought the scale and size of the LED fins deserved some study and thought they might be too small relative to the scale of the building.

There was some concern regarding the ground plane on Alberni Street. The Panel noted that the treatment was different from the other elevations and felt it should have the same

architectural language. A Panel member suggested the LED lights on the building could show up in the landscape treatment which would help to animate the ground plane. Another Panel member was concerned with the cantilevered face of the building with the second level deck and the potential for vertigo in people using the space. It was suggested that a trellis or tree canopies over the seating area would make for a more comfortable space. The Panel members liked the landscape noting there was a continuous thought to the patterning and as well various outdoor rooms had been created. The one area on the upper floor that needs a little more development is the relationship between the interior amenity space and the outdoor space. The only door to the outside from the actual amenity space is on the north side and there is no connection on the south side.

It was noted that there is no expression of restaurant on the third floor and one Panel member suggested a change in the expression that would suggest restaurant use. It was also noted that the window washing equipment needed to be considered for the building.

The Panel supported the environmental strategies but a several Panel members thought more passive strategies could be added rather than relying on the triple glazing and use of shading devices on the building to make for better energy performance.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Whitehead noted that the window washing system had been considered. He thanked the Panel for their comments and said he appreciated them and would be moving forward with the project.

2. Address:	5912 Oak Street
DE:	Rezoning
Description:	To construct a 2.5 storey row house complex.
Zoning:	RS-1 to CD-1
Application Status:	Rezoning
Review:	First
Owner:	Listraor
Architect:	Formwerks Architectural Inc.
Delegation:	Jim Bussey, Formwerks Architectural Inc. Kim Barnsley, Formwerks Architectural Inc. Damon Oriente, Damon Oriente Ltd. Craig Rowland, Listraor
Staff:	Nicky Hood and Ann McLean

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (5-2)

- **Introduction:** Nicky Hood, Rezoning Planner, introduced the proposal for a rezoning application on a site on the east side of Oak Street south of West 43rd Avenue. The applicant is requesting a rezoning from RS-1 to CD-1 to allow for the development of 27 rowhouses with an FSR increase from 0.60 outright or 0.7 conditional to 1.0. The site is comprised of four lots that when consolidated will be approximately .75 of an acre. The zoning to the north, south and east of the site is RS-1. Properties to the north of the site from West 43rd Avenue to West 41st Avenue are developed with religious and cultural institutions and to the east are single family homes. To the south on Oak Street there are currently single family homes, but all the properties between West 43rd Avenue and West 46th Avenue are in the same Oakridge/Langara sub area as the subject property that anticipates rezoning to ground oriented multi-family development. The lots to the west on the far side of Oak Street have been rezoned to CD-1 to allow for rowhouse development and many of those projects are now completed. The site is located in a sub-area of the Oakridge Langara Policy and is designated as high priority to rezone for ground oriented multi-family dwellings. Ms. Hood noted that there isn't any policy issues related to the project and the Panel was asked to comment on the form of development.

Ann McLean, Development Planner, further described the proposal for a 27 unit townhouse development comprising of four buildings with six units in each of the north and south buildings and seven units in the building on Oak Street and eight units in the building at the lane. The development will also have one level of underground parking which will provide two stalls per unit and most units will have direct access to the parking level.

Ms. McLean described the Oakridge Langara Policy Statement noting that this part of Oak Street has the potential for a high-volume of pedestrians and as a result will require a higher quality of pedestrian amenities such as landscaping and benches. The proposal is requesting a maximum height of thirty feet while similar rezonings in the area have achieved thirty-five feet. The Policy also recommends a "domestic multi-family character and small-scale residential ambience" with pitched roofs and other residential characteristics common to the area.

Ms. McLean described the architecture noting that the proposed buildings will have a 2 1/2 storey expression with pitched roofs and a traditional residential expression. They will be set back from the street and the lane with a 15 foot setback on the south property line with a varied landscape approach and a retaining wall. A four foot retaining wall and planter is planned at the lane. The buildings will be separated by a landscaped courtyard

and the units will be approximately 1,300 square feet. The project proposes achieving BuiltGreen Gold.

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

- The relationship of the proposed buildings to each of the four site edges;
- Whether a satisfactory approach is achieved in addressing the corner at Oak Street and West 43rd Avenue; and
- Amount and design of open space on the site.

Ms. Hood and Ms. McLean took questions from the Panel.

- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** Jim Bussey, Architect, further described the proposal noting that the project will have a Craftsman expression because it is wide spread through the area and is sympathetic to the context and does provide some variety from neighbouring developments. The design will have a handmade approach with a rich expression and a green vocabulary. Mr. Bussey noted that they are planning to integrate some stone into the brick work and will use metal bracket ties to give a more authentic look to the design. The buildings will have large over hangs which is suitable for Vancouver's climate. Mr. Bussey also noted that the two end units will be expressed on the street so that it is not a highly repetitive form.

Damon Oriente, Landscape Architect, noted that they have worked around the architecture trying to create useable interior and private spaces. On the east side on the lane, there will be access to the parking as well as two pedestrian accesses into the site. They have been off-set to avoid a direct site line and have tried to stagger the width. The lane will have a terraced wall stepping back with a planted edge and another wall up to the patio spaces. The south side will have a planted cedar hedge with a brick wall. Mr. Oriente described the proposed planting material for the site. On Oak Street, they are planning to incorporate a wall that will step back. On the corner both buildings will have trellises as well will have more dense plantings. On the interior, a nice walkway is planned with a two foot planting edge and there will be planters on the patios.

The applicant team took questions from the Panel.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - Design development to the corner treatment at West 43rd Avenue and Oak Street;
 - Consider moving the Oak Street units closer to the street to enlarge the courtyard space;
 - Design Development to support communal functions of courtyard space and stronger connection of open space to individual units.
- **Related Commentary:** The Panel supported the proposal although they thought there was room for improvement.

The Panel supported the form, use and density and felt it was well done. The Panel agreed that some more work could be done with the architecture as they there was not enough differentiation on the four edges of the site although they thought the materiality and the way the elements were executed would be important. They felt the lack of differentiation created issues with the corner treatment and the open space and as well did not distinguish the front from the back of units. Most of the Panel felt the units on Oak Street should be moved closer to the street in order to give more room in the courtyard or the applicant could take that one step further in terms of allowing some articulation in that street wall.

Most of the Panel thought the unit planning was well done although they thought it was a mistake to make the multi-family units look like the single family units. For the most part the Panel did not like the false architectural elements, particularly the fake chimneys as they felt the design should respond to actual functional requirements.

The Panel supported the landscape plans but felt the courtyard could be made larger to provide space for community gatherings as well as a focal point. One Panel member suggested adding a play area for the children. Several Panel members thought there could be some design development with the landscaping at the corner at West 43rd Avenue and Oak Street and that the trellis was a meaningless gesture. The Panel also felt that the opportunity of the rear yards of the house hadn't been exploited.

The Panel thought the sustainability initiatives needed to be considered in the early stage of the design and not as an after thought. One Panel member noted that the pitched roof lines were desirable but felt they were too complex.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Bussey said that they had received a lot of input from the Panel agreed that there were some minor issues to address around the courtyard and would respond to the Panel's concerns.

Adjournment

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 6:30 p.m.