
URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: February 11, 2009

TIME: 4.00 pm

PLACE: Committee Room No. 1, City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
John Wall, Chair
Albert Bicol
Douglas Watts
Bill Harrison
Richard Henry
Martin Nielsen
Mark Ostry
Maurice Pez
Walter Francl
Gerry Eckford
David Godin

REGRETS: Tom Bunting

**RECORDING
SECRETARY:** Lorna Harvey

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING	
1.	1450 McRae Avenue

Chair Wall called the meeting to order at 4:15 p.m. and noted the presence of a quorum. The Panel considered the application as scheduled for presentation.

1. Address: 1450 McRae Avenue (formerly 1402 McRae Avenue)
 DE: 412659
 Description: New 15 unit multiple dwelling over one level of underground parking having vehicular access from McRae Avenue.
 Zoning: CD-1
 Application Status: Complete
 Architect: Formwerks Architectural
 Owner: Brian Bell
 Review: Second (after Rezoning [June 20, 2007])
 Delegation: Brian Bell, Arthur Bell Holdings
 Jim Bussey, Formwerks Architectural
 Paul Sangha, Paul Sangha Limited Landscape Architecture
 Staff: Sailen Black

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (10-0)

- **Introduction:** Sailen Black, Development Planner, noted that the property is at the corner of Granville Street and West 16th Avenue. The property was originally zoned First Shaughnessy and was rezoned to permit sixteen townhouses units. The basic form of development remains the same since the rezoning stage with a couple of exceptions. Mr. Black described the context for the surrounding area. In terms of the rezoning, in general, aspects of the First Shaughnessy guidelines and the ODP were preserved. One of the conditions of the rezoning to address concerns regarding the proximity of the new building to the heritage house was that the new block should be at least sixty-two feet away from the Nichol House. Council had recommended the applicant investigate the breaking up of the run of the five units into two buildings, which has been done. There is now a separation between the two buildings and a bit of a step back and the distance is approximately sixty-two feet away from the Nichol House. Mr. Black stated that there has been a fairly high level of community interest regarding the project.

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

- Treatment of the grade along the street frontage including landscape and architecture;
- Relationship between the Nichol House and the new configuration of the two uphill buildings;
- Expression of the individual buildings in terms of character, detailing or other fine grained aspects of the design.

Mr. Black took questions from the Panel.

- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** Jim Bussey, Architect, further described the project noting that the Shaughnessy Design Panel had reviewed the project a couple of times. The project makes a transition between the residential and south Granville Shopping District. The mass of the housing will follow the curve of the street which left the opportunity for a lush internal garden. A neo-Georgian style has been chosen for the design and is compatible with several houses in Shaughnessy. The flat roof was chosen to avoid any massing conflict with the Heritage A Building (Nichol House). Mr. Bussey thought the style lent itself to a New York or European permanence with the curvature on the street presenting a rhythm and set of details which follows traditional patterns and is appropriate in the Shaughnessy context. Mr. Bussey described the proposed materials and the changes since the Panel last saw the project. He noted that 41 parking spaces will be provided

including two handicap stalls and six visitor parking spaces. Regarding sustainability, Mr. Bussey noted that they will achieve a Gold Standard for Built Green. This will include geothermal, dual flush toilets, and Energy Star ratings.

Paul Sangha, Landscape Architect, described the landscape plans noting that trees will be introduced along the perimeter edge that should reach 30-40 feet in height. He described the courtyard space adding that the water will help to generate some white noise to buffer traffic sounds from Granville Street. Mr. Sangha described how the grade change was handled through the site and use of retaining walls.

The applicant team took questions from the Panel.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - Consider concealing more of the retaining wall along MacRae Street, improve the quality of wall materials or varying the height;
 - Design development to the rear of the townhouses to improve the relationship of the balconies to the building mass;
 - Consider developing more outdoor useable space on the roofs;
 - Rotate the single family house (building C) to be perpendicular to the street and improve the gateway expression between the adjacent buildings; and
 - Design development to the parking entrance and the auto court.
- **Related Commentary:** The Panel supported the proposal and thought there was an improvement in the design since the last submission.

The Panel thought the density was appropriate noting that it was the right site in Shaughnessy for type of project. The Panel saw the project as a transition from Granville Street's retail activity to a purely residential neighbourhood. Several Panel members had an issue with the retaining wall along MacRae Street noting that the use of good quality materials would be important. They also thought the wall should be concealed more or the height should be varied a bit.

The Panel thought the relationship between the existing heritage building and the project was well handled. Several panel members liked the traditional neo-Georgian expression and felt the applicant had found a good way to express it. Several Panel members didn't like the long balconies and thought the formality of the architecture broke down on the backside of the townhouses. Also, one Panel member suggested that a gap or brick reveal be provided between adjoining townhouses.

Several Panel members thought the single family corner piece on the north-east corner should be rotated perpendicular to the street to help it relate better to the entrance and as a way to complete the curve along McRae Avenue. Several Panel members thought the weakest part of the project was the auto court entrance with one Panel member suggesting the parking entrance be more perpendicular to the street so there isn't a dark entrance looking to the street.

The Panel liked the fact that the project had a lot of greenery and liked the organic response with the curve of the street. They also thought there was a lot of good useable outdoor space but felt that there was a lost opportunity in not fully developing the roofs for an outdoor amenity space. One Panel member thought the water feature should be more natural while a couple of Panel members thought the space should be more formal. Another panel member suggested adding a seating element in middle of the courtyard as a place to pause or a gathering node. Several Panel members suggested using mature plantings in the onset of the project.

The Panel thought sustainability had been well handled.

- **Applicant's Response:** The applicant team had no comments.

BUSINESS MEETING

- The Panel will choose a new Chair and Vice Chair at the next meeting.
- The Panel were notified that the incoming members will be present at the next meeting (February 25). They will be able to offer commentary but will not vote. At the following meeting (March 11) the new members will take the place of the members of the Panel whose term has expired.
- Committee Room #1 will start renovation on Feb 16th and future UDP meetings will be in the Council Chamber until the renovations are completed.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 6:35 p.m.