

## URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

**DATE:** February 15, 2006

**TIME:** 4.00 pm

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

**PRESENT:** MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:  
Alan Endall, Chair (Item 1), (excused Item 2, 955 Burrard Street)  
Larry Adams, Chair (Items 2-5)  
Nigel Baldwin  
Shahla Bozorgzadeh  
James Cheng (arrived 4:35 p.m.)  
Marta Farevaag  
Ronald Lea  
Margot Long  
Peter Wreglesworth (excused Item 2, 955 Burrard Street)  
C.C. Yao

**REGRETS:** Robert Barnes

(Edward Smith resigned)

**RECORDING SECRETARY:** Carol Hubbard, Raincoast Ventures Ltd.

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ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING	
1.	100 Keefer Place (600 Abbott)
2.	955 Burrard Street (YMCA)
3.	King Edward Station (4063 Cambie Street)
4.	41 <sup>st</sup> Avenue Station (650 West 41 <sup>st</sup> Avenue)
5.	49 <sup>th</sup> Avenue Station (6488 Cambie Street)

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1. Address:	100 Keefer Place (600 Abbott)
DE:	409456
Use:	Mixed (2 towers, 33 and 35 storeys, 458 units)
Zoning:	CD-1
Application Status:	Complete after Preliminary
Architect:	IBI/HB Architects
Owner:	Henderson Land Development Ltd.
Review:	Second
Delegation:	Jim Hancock, Hilde Heyvaerts, Barry Downs, Peter Kreuk,
Staff:	Ralph Segal

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

- **Introduction:** Ralph Segal, Development Planner, introduced this application which was approved in principle by the Development Permit Board in May 2005. The preliminary submission was previously unanimously supported by the Panel with concerns noted about the width of Tower B at 120 ft.+ , recommendations to increase the width of the Skytrain guideway setback and to increase its landscaping, and to pursue a sustainability strategy. Staff believe the complete application responds well to the Panel's previous comments and to the conditions applied by the Development Permit Board.

Input from the Panel is requested on the following:

- overall progress/design development from the Preliminary to this Complete submission;
  - response to various Public Realm edges all around the site (detailed treatment):
    - Keefer Gardens and Steps
    - Keefer Circle and Keefer Street
    - Abbott Street
    - Expo Boulevard
    - Costco lane and Skytrain guideway
  - Tower B proportions (i.e., adjustment to tower width)
  - Tower A response to prominent Abbott/Expo Boulevard corner and Firenze F2
  - Tower A interface with mid-rise.
- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** Hilde Heyvaerts, Architect, briefly reviewed the design development that has taken place since the preliminary stage, and Peter Kreuk and Barry Downs described the evolution of the landscape plan. Ms. Heyvaerts also reviewed the proposed materials and the design team responded to questions from the Panel.
  - **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
    - The gap between Tower A and the mid-rise component should be increased, although not necessarily eroded by stepping or carving the streetwall building. It was stressed that it should be a clean break to maintain the simple massing of the mid-rise block element;
    - A finer order of resolution is warranted to most of the street front elements including the townhouse components and the base of the mid-rise podium;
    - Suggestion that the base of Tower A should come more cleanly to the ground. It currently appears detached and truncated;
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- Further design development is recommended to the Abbott/Expo Boulevard corner to create more public pedestrian space at the intersection and allow for pedestrian desire lines and movement across the corner plaza. The need to circumvent a water feature should be avoided;
  - Recommendation to introduce a more substantial semi public open space at the garden level at the base of Tower A;
  - Suggestion that the radiating lines from the paving patterns should extend through to the base of the tower and the corner plaza at Abbott and Expo Boulevard;
  - While the courtyard landscape approach shows great promise the Panel would like to see more definition with respect to the paving materials and commitment to the quality of the materials;
  - Consideration should be given to the potential for adding additional soft landscaping in the courtyard.
- **Related Commentary:**

The Panel unanimously supported this submission. It was acknowledged to be a very complex and ambitious project which the Panel considered to have evolved quite well since the preliminary stage. The narrowing of Tower B was acknowledged and appreciated.

While many of the components are beautifully resolved there was concern that the project lacks an overall vocabulary to tie all the pieces together. It was suggested that the townhouses and the ground level podium façade need to be taken one step further in design development to have a smaller order to them. The various elements could have more order and consistency. The Abbott Street elevation of the mid-rise lacks richness and seems less well resolved than the courtyard side. As well, it was suggested the use of brick appears somewhat appliqué and not integral to the massing. There was a comment that brick is not essential for good streetscape.

With respect to the landscape plaza it was questioned whether there was too much hard surface for a residential courtyard and suggestions to introduce some green in the centre to provide some relief. The Panel expressed concern that the landscape materials are too vague for a complete submission and noted that the character of the courtyard will depend heavily on the quality of the materials. There should also be a strong commitment to providing the necessary structural support to make the landscape plan work and this should be prescribed at the dp stage. The use of water to address sustainability issues was acknowledged. One Panel member expressed regret at the lack of connection between the landscape area and the amenity in Tower A and suggested deleting a unit in favour of more amenity to improve the overall livability of the tower.

There was a recommendation that the tower lobbies would benefit from further development, especially at the corner of Abbott and Expo Boulevard which is a very prominent intersection. The resolution of the geometry is very interesting and might be improved by extending the radiating paving patterns through the tower lobby so that it can be appreciated from the corner.

The Panel was generally very satisfied with the mid-rise component and the podium. It was emphasized that the purity of the mid-rise component should not be eroded in design development and that the gap between it and Tower A should be increased to allow more breathing room. The Panel liked the “floating box” appearance of the mid-rise.

There was a question whether the parking is adequately resolved, particularly for the retail component.

One Panel member suggested there is opportunity for twisting Tower A. There was also a suggestion that the expression of Tower A could be improved at the penthouse level which appears somewhat foreshortened.

The Panel was satisfied with the interface with the Skytrain.

It was noted that the Costco lane will need to have attractive screening.

In general, the Panel thought the project had some really good ideas but they could be further edited and simplified.

- **Applicant's Response:** Jim Hancock, Architect, thanked the Panel for its good analysis and said he concurred with many of the suggestions. Mr. Downs agreed the materials will need to be high quality.

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2. Address:	955 Burrard Street (YMCA)
DE:	409971
Use:	Mixed (42 storeys, 281 units)
Zoning:	CD-1
Application Status:	Complete
Architect:	Stantec/Endall Elliot
Owner:	YMCA of Vancouver
Review:	First
Delegation:	Alan Endall, Doug Hamming, Peter Kreuk
Staff:	Francisco Molino

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Alan Endall and Peter Wreglesworth were excused for consideration of this application due to conflict of interest. The Item was chaired by Deputy Chair, Larry Adams.

#### **EVALUATION: SUPPORT (5-2)**

- **Introduction:** Francisco Molino, Development Planner, introduced this complete application after rezoning, noting there are three major components to the project involving two parcels of land. He briefly described the scheme and sought the advice of the Panel on the proposal's response to the rezoning conditions and to the overall form and character.

Specific comments are requested on the following:

- west façade and relationship to the building to the west;
  - use of materials and east façade articulation to convey a slender tower expression;
  - sculpting of upper floors and top of the tower;
  - Barclay Street elevation of the new YMCA building. Specifically regarding the building's relationship to the street, particularly at the sidewalk level;
  - Proposed treatment of the lane and the lane façade of the new YMCA building;
  - Overall treatment (articulation, materials, colours, etc.) of retained heritage building, the new YMCA facility and the base of the residential tower;
  - Proposed modifications to the existing brick entrance portal on Barclay Street (heritage and functional issues);
  - Proposed glass roof of atrium between the heritage building and the new structure (atrium narrows as its height increases).
- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** Alan Endall, Architect, briefly reviewed the project and described how it has evolved since the rezoning stage. He also outlined the sustainability features being incorporated into the scheme. Peter Kreuk, Landscape Architect, reviewed the landscape plan and the design team responded to questions from the Panel.
  - **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
    - The Panel noted a loss of clarity in the expression of the elements since the rezoning stage, largely concerning the transparency of the atrium space and how it relates to the YMCA;
    - The additional floors on the YMCA have created a lack of reference to the heritage building which is not being treated with as much respect as was shown at the rezoning stage;
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- Some members of the Panel expressed concerns about the revisions to the tower expression since the rezoning submission. The chevron shapes and the proportions at the top of the tower require further design development;
  - Design development is recommended to the top of the heritage building. It is strongly recommended to reconsider the trellis along the Burrard Street elevation by either removing it or treating it in a way that contributes more to the dignity of the building.
- **Related Commentary:**

The Panel agreed that this is a very complex scheme and while it has been generally very well handled the project has lost something since the rezoning stage. The Panel confirmed its support for the siting of the elements on the site including the location of the tower. Preservation of the heritage building and its function as the entry was also strongly applauded noting the importance of its relationship to Burrard Street.

Concerns were expressed that the new YMCA component with the additional programming now appears to be overwhelming the heritage building. It is important that the heritage building is preserved in a way that gives the appearance of being able to stand alone and maintain its integrity. The heavy rooftop trellis is not contributing to this objective and is detracting from the heritage detailing. While the need for screening is recognized it could be less obtrusive, possibly glass.

It was recommended that the outdoor amenity space associated with the daycare and family development centre should be resolved simply and the trees eliminated. It should be green and livable without detracting from the strength of the heritage building.

The transparency of the atrium connector between the YMCA and the heritage building has been severely weakened since the rezoning scheme which had the interior activities exposed to outside view. The YMCA component now seems bulky and unresolved which some Panel members found quite disappointing. The additional programming in the YMCA building is clearly creating some challenges. There were suggestions that the daycare centre might be moved back a bit to reduce its impact on the heritage building on Burrard Street. There was also a comment that the piece at the end that is two storeys higher than the heritage building makes it read more like an intrusion than a bookend. It was suggested that it might help if there was more emphasis on the YMCA as a building and the atrium as a connector noting that on Barclay Street the whole building appears as a link. The need to match the brick at the end might then be unnecessary.

With respect to the tower there was a comment that it is unfortunate that the proportions have been compromised for two storeys. As well, the top is less successful on its east and south elevations and the east façade has lost much of its proportion, calling for further design development to recreate some of the tower's original proportion and continuity. It might not be necessary to take the strong chevron shapes as high as shown.

The Panel recommended bringing the strength of the materials to the base on the lane to make it read more as a street.

There was a minor comment that while the balconies are well handled at the corners those on the west façade seem misplaced.

In general the Panel found this to be an excellent project but it was thought to need a lot of refinement. There was also disappointment about the erosion of the clarity of the scheme since the rezoning stage.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Endall stressed that it has been very challenging to accommodate the complex programming requirements of the YMCA on this site and he agreed that this has led to an erosion in clarity. He agreed to give careful consideration to the Panel's comments and to work to make the building more sympathetic to the heritage façade. He noted that the addition of the daycare was on the advice of the City and is consistent with the YMCA's mandate to provide daycare in the downtown.

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| 3. Address:         | King Edward Station (4063 Cambie Street)   |
| 4.                  | 41st Avenue Station (650 West 41st Avenue) |
| 5.                  | 49th Avenue Station (6488 Cambie Street)   |
| Use:                | Transit Station                            |
| Application Status: | Workshop                                   |
| Architect:          | Hotson Bakker Boniface Haden               |
| Owner:              | InTransit BC/RAVCO                         |
| Review:             | First                                      |
| Delegation:         | Chris McCarthy, Allen Parker, Norm Hotson  |
| Staff:              | Anita Molaro                               |
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These three Canada Line transit stations were presented concurrently, noting they are tied together by their proximity to the Cambie heritage boulevard while each having its own unique context and built form opportunity.

- **Introduction:**

Anita Molaro, Urban Design Planner, introduced this workshop discussion and briefly explained the City's role which is to provide advice on issues relating to the alignment, stations, station entries and connectivity. Each of the stations will be taken through a design advisory process which is based largely on the typical major development application process. The stations will be reviewed by the Panel in the form of a workshop and reported to the Development Permit Board for advice only since the stations do not require a development permit.

In addition to the design advisory process around each of the stations, City staff will be undertaking a Precinct Planning Exercise to ensure appropriate bicycle and pedestrian access and dealing with traffic, parking and other issues in and around the stations.

Public consultation for all the station design and precinct planning work takes place through two open houses, the first generally held a week before the Urban Design Panel workshop. The subject stations were presented to the public at an open house last week. The second open house will illustrate an advanced design proposal, tentatively scheduled for late March, and Development Permit Board review in April.

The early concepts were to help the public understand the scale and mass of the stations within their immediate context. Since the detailed design of the stations is in its early phase this workshop is an opportunity for the Urban Design panel to provide creative urban design and architectural advice into the station designs as they are being developed.

**King Edward Station** is an existing C-2 site. The station could be built as a separate entity or integral to a mixed-use development.

**41st Avenue Station** is on the plaza at Oakridge. It may or may not be integrated into an expanded redevelopment of Oakridge Mall, the timing of which will likely not coincide so it will, at least in the short term, be a stand-alone element.

**49th Avenue Station** is within a low-density residential neighbourhood with a high degree of sensitivity with its contextual fit.



City urban design objectives for the station designs on which the advice/comments of the Panel is sought:

- achieve a strong sense of publicness, conveyed through the highest quality architecture, also highlighting access and openness;
- achieve good connectivity/accessibility for transit users and pedestrians;
- achieve a safe environment both within and around the station;
- achieve high quality public realm interface with high amenity sidewalk areas with active edges providing pedestrian interest and weather protection;
- allow for future commercial/retail opportunities within or near stations.

These stations are an opportunity to be a statement of public architecture and an extension of the public realm for many years to come. The Panel is asked to consider and advise on the public nature of these stations given the highest quality architecture is the goal. What is the enduring quality that should be captured and how much of the local context should be included?

- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:**

Allen Parker, SCN Lavalin, briefly described the process to date. He noted the stations must be in operation by 2009 and the overall budget has been established and is fixed. The alignment is fixed and the location of the stations and their functions and configurations have been established. He stressed there is commitment to creating a coherent architectural identity while responding to each station context. Three basic principles are (1) the human experience, (2) the architectural philosophy should be rooted in what is unique about Vancouver's natural context, and (3) the system should have a quality of timelessness.

Norm Hotson, Architect, briefly reviewed each of the stations, referring to posted drawings. He noted the emphasis on the transition in light quality between natural and artificial light, the shaping of the tunnel, materiality and ceiling systems. There will also be references to the role of the Canada Line in connecting the airport and the seaport, e.g., allusions to airplane wings, ships' hulls, whale ribs, etc. The use of steel and engineered wood and curved roof elements will also be explored.

- **Panel Commentary:**

The following comments/questions arose in the general discussion that followed:

- whether there is the budget to integrate these stations in terms of precinct planning;
- Serious concern that the public realm around the stations will be unfunded and forgotten;
- Emphasis that it is not about the architecture but about the place;
- Concern about the ventilation shafts in the public realm and a suggestion to locate them away from the stations. The ventilation shafts should be small sculptural objects that contribute to the neighbourhood;
- Express the ventilation shafts and make them a piece of the structure;
- The urban design needs to communicate wayfinding, e.g., Langara College at 49th is an important destination that must be identified;

- The stations should be as clean and simple as possible; treat them as sculptural objects with an entry and a stair - possibly a glass wedge, highly transparent; this will minimize impact on adjacent development when they are not integrated into a building. It will also reduce costs and allow more resources to be concentrated below ground for the longer term;
- The underground experience is more important than the above ground structure;
- Lighting is very important;
- We should learn from the Millennium line which has beautiful stations that fail at the ground level at the expense of the public realm and everything around them;
- Discussion about the plaza dimensions in front of the station, particularly at 41st;
- There needs to be a strategy to make 41st/Cambie a better intersection;
- Given the temporary context of these stations they should be as simple as possible - no big gestures;
- Be pragmatic about the stations and concentrate on the underground experience to make it livable;
- There is little local context to draw on; just make it a legible entrance;
- Is there a budget for public art?
- Who is responsible for the design of the exit stairs to the boulevard?