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URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

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**DATE:** February 19, 2003

**TIME:** 4.00 p.m.

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

**PRESENT:** MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:  
Walter Francl, Chair  
Helen Besharat  
Richard Henry  
Reena Lazar  
Kim Perry  
Sorin Tatomir  
Ken Terriss

**REGRETS:** Jeffrey Corbett  
Gerry Eckford  
Joseph Hruda  
Stuart Lyon  
Maurice Pez

**RECORDING  
SECRETARY:** Carol Hubbard

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ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING
1. 495 West 7th Avenue (2290 Cambie)
2. 901 Mainland Street
3. 1980 Foley Street (655 Gt. Northern Way)
4. 5621 Dunbar Street

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1. Address:	495 West 7th Avenue (2290 Cambie)
DA:	407204
Use:	Commercial (4 storeys)
Zoning:	C-3A
Application Status:	Complete
Architect:	Kasian Kennedy
Owner:	Canadian Tire Real Estate Ltd.
Review:	First
Delegation:	Michael McDonald, Joanne Stich, Mary Chan-Yip
Staff:	Mary Beth Rondeau

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### EVALUATION: NON-SUPPORT (1-5)

- **Introduction:** Mary Beth Rondeau presented this application for a new Canadian Tire store in the block bounded by Cambie Street, 7th Avenue, Yukon Street and 6th Avenue. The development site comprises the entire block with the exception of the existing Post Office at the corner of 6th Avenue and Yukon Street. An east-west lane that currently bisects the site will be closed and re-routed around the Post Office building. The entry to the Canadian Tire retail store is about 2 ft. above grade on 7th Avenue. The second floor contains a garden centre, accessed from parking off 7th Avenue and there is a “movator” from the main to the second floors. The auto service centre is located at the corner of 7th and Yukon, accessed off the lane. Parking and loading is off 6th Avenue. There is an existing bike route on 7th Avenue which will become a Greenway connecting to the bikeway at Ontario Street.

Ms. Rondeau noted this neighbourhood is expected to undergo significant change within the next few years, including the development of Southeast False Creek with an additional 10,000 new residents and waterfront amenities. The guidelines for Cambie Street call for a 25 ft. setback to provide a major promenade down to the waterfront. Both vehicular and pedestrian traffic is expected to be significant.

An application has been recently made to redevelop the existing car dealership to the immediate north of this site at 7th Avenue and Cambie.

The C-3A zone permits an outright density of 1.0 FSR and 30 ft. height, which may be increased up to 3.0 FSR and beyond 30 ft. The proposal seeks approximately 2.65 FSR and height ranging from approximately 48 ft. to 55 ft. Relaxation of the density and height regulations may be earned in a variety of ways, including the general massing and architectural resolution, pedestrian amenity and provision of public open space. The Central Broadway guidelines suggest there should be a 30 ft. high podium streetwall, stepped back to a 90 ft. principal building, consistent with the intent that Cambie Street should be lined with principal buildings as a major gateway to the Downtown.

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

- variation from the Guidelines;
  - integration of the street to the building, i.e., the above-grade entry, noting that a significant rest area would be desirable for the bikeway;
  - treatment of the setback on Cambie Street;
  - treatment along 6th and 7th Avenues;
  - treatment along Yukon, noting a 3 ft. landscaped setback has been provided on the XL Loft development at 8th and Yukon Street;
  - the proposed rooftop parking;
  - the blank corner at 6th and Cambie;
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- the appropriateness of the image of the development.
- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Michael McDonald, Architect, described the proposal. There are three levels of Canadian Tire and the main level is accessed from the corner of 7th and Cambie. There will be a retail tenant at the corner of Cambie and 6th Avenue, accessed from 6th Avenue. Below, at the same level of the retail tenant, is loading, and below that, one level of underground parking and Canadian Tire warehousing. Along the Cambie Street frontage a movator, glazed with fritted glass, extends to the upper garden level. Mr. McDonald noted that because the rooftop parking and the underground warehouse are counted in FSR, the actual mass of the building is more the equivalent of about 1.6 FSR. The proposed height preserves views for neighbouring residents. A positive aspect of the acquisition of the existing lane in the site assemblage is the elimination the lane exit onto Cambie Street. He stressed this site is at the bridgehead in a very vehicle oriented area and the scale of the proposed development and the edge condition are appropriate. He suggested that small retail along Cambie is inconsistent with the bridgehead location. Mr. McDonald noted they were not aware until today that a plaza is envisaged in connection with the bikeway. He noted they have provided a setback on 7th Avenue to accommodate the bikeway and he saw no reason not to create a plaza at the corner of 7th and Cambie, as suggested.

Mr. McDonald noted the proposed use is a purpose use retail and this area is very appropriate for a commercial node. He also noted the site is in a very transitional location. He stressed the proposed Canadian Tire store is intended to serve the local market and is not a regional outlet. With respect to the treatment of the rooftop parking level, Mr. McDonald noted the mechanical equipment has been consolidated and screened. As well, the edges and a small portion in the middle have been landscaped to improve views across the building. With respect to the image of the development, Mr. McDonald said they believe the scale is appropriate in this location. The proposed fritted glass along Cambie provides a lot of transparency and the movator provides activity. He briefly described the proposed materials, some of which is a new plastic material that is part of Canadian Tire's corporate package. Mr. McDonald stressed that the design is very transparent and not typical of Canadian Tire's suburban stores.

The applicant team responded to the Panel's questions.

- **Panel's Comments:** The Panel did not support this application.

The Panel generally supported large scale retail in this location and saw no benefit in seeking the 90 ft. height recommended in the guidelines.

The Panel recognized the importance of the 7th Avenue bike and pedestrian route. The emerging link from Broadway to Southeast False Creek was also stressed, with a recommendation that this development should respond appropriately by engaging with this pedestrian circulation route. It was felt that a lot more work needs to be done at the ground level, i.e., grade access and points of entry. Comments were made that it is a mistake to consider this as a predominantly vehicular route. A rest area and more informal landscape treatment at the corner of Cambie and 7th was thought to be desirable. A recommendation was also made that Canadian Tire take advantage of the bike route by creating a small plaza that encourages cyclists to stop, including the provision of benches, bike racks, a water fountain and an air pump.

The Panel stressed that this is a very key location, and had concerns that the proposal does not set a very good precedent for this important connector route. There were serious concerns expressed about

the architectural expression of the building and that its response is too suburban. The Panel did recognize that some appropriate moves have been made - in particular the transparent fritted glass facade on Cambie Street with exposure of the motor was acknowledged to be a major departure for large retail developments of this nature. At the same time, a comment was made that opportunities have been missed to introduce more fenestration, including above overhead doors. There are many more opportunities in this design to be able to see activities inside. A comment was made that this is a fairly upscale image for Canadian Tire and it could be adapted to an appropriate image for this location. The Panel acknowledged the design challenge of such a project but thought much more should be done to create a finer grain of scale to improve the experience for people driving and walking by. Several Panel members cited the new Future Shop on West Broadway, which has small CRUs on the ground floor and the main retail above, as a good example of how to deal with large retail development in an urban environment.

Several Panel members commented on the negative impact this proposal would have on its future neighbour to the immediate north (The Grosvenor). It was felt that the proposal is being somewhat insensitive to what promises to be a very elegant, contemporary building next door.

Concerns were expressed about the treatment of the 6th and Cambie corner and strong recommendations made that it be more transparent.

The Panel's most serious concern about this proposal related to the overall image of the building. The signs are far too big and there are too many of them. It was noted that Canadian Tire is already so well known that it does not need to advertise itself quite so aggressively. As shown, the signage was found to be more like highway signage and quite inappropriate for this urban location. One suggestion was to use a creative approach: make the signage much smaller and higher and make an art piece of it so that it becomes a recognizable icon for people coming down Cambie Street. The Panel was strongly opposed to the intrusive nature of the corporate image on this important street.

The Panel strongly supported the rooftop parking as an appropriate urban solution and appreciated the efforts to screen it. However, the Panel thought a lot more could be done with the roof in terms of environmental sustainability. One Panel member urged the applicant to consider experimenting with different sustainability methods, noting that a roof of this size could make a valuable contribution to ongoing research in green roof technology. A suggestion was made to consider the roof as a landscaped roof with parking within it, rather than a parking lot that includes a few trees. Lighting is another aspect of the rooftop parking that needs to be carefully considered so that intrusion on nearby residents is avoided.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. McDonald commented that the Panel has recognized all the issues they have faced. He said they acknowledge there is more to be done and see it as a work in progress. There are moves they have considered, including treating the Canadian Tire entrance in a similar way to the retail entrance at the corner of 6th and Cambie and putting the entries at street level, separate from the main floor. He thanked the Panel for its comments.

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2. Address:	901 Mainland Street
DA:	407235
Use:	Residential (3 towers, 725 units)
Zoning:	DD
Application Status:	Preliminary
Architect:	Buttjes
Owner:	332392 BC Ltd.
Review:	First
Delegation:	Dirk Buttjes, Jane Durante
Staff:	Jonathan Barrett

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### EVALUATION: SUPPORT (6-0)

- **Introduction:** Jonathan Barrett, Development Planner, presented this preliminary application. The site comprises three quarters of the block bounded by Smithe, Homer, Nelson and Mainland Streets. The site includes loading docks and a City-owned site having a narrow frontage on Nelson Street and containing four existing buildings, one of which is a Heritage “C” property. The developer proposes to purchase the City-owned site and use its density in the new development. The proposal also includes a public park at the corner of Nelson and Mainland Streets, to be handed over to the Park Board. City-owned public parking (approximately 150 spaces) is proposed for below the park. Another major feature of the proposal is a public right-of-way through the site from Smithe to Nelson Streets. An earlier proposal for an opera facility on Smithe Street has since been abandoned in favour of live-work units, for which a rezoning will be required. As well, an initial proposal for townhouses facing the park has since been amended in favour of retail use.

The proposal calls for approximately 700 dwelling units in three towers and townhouses along Mainland and Homer Streets. Floor plates are approximately 6,500 sq.ft., which is more than the 6,000 sq.ft. recommended in the Downtown South Guidelines. The tower widths of about 97 ft. also exceed the guideline recommended 90 ft. A key consideration is whether the towers, which incorporate the density taken from the City-owned site and the public park, are too big and imposing in the context. There are a number of important public benefits to this proposal: retention and servicing of the existing buildings, the public park, public parking and the public right-of-way.

- **Applicant’s Opening Comments:** Dirk Buttjes, Architect, noted this is a very large site and there is no lane which makes it a bit easier in terms of parking efficiencies and tower setbacks. The site slopes from Smithe and Homer down to Nelson and Mainland and the right-of-way which comes off Smithe Street will terminate at an elevator and stairs providing access to the park level. The elevator will also serve the uppermost level of the civic parking. Mr. Buttjes briefly described the design rationale and Jane Durante, Landscape Architect, reviewed the landscape plan. The design team responded to the Panel’s questions.
- **Panel’s Comments:** The Panel unanimously supported this application.

The Panel supported the proposed floor plates and tower widths as a satisfactory trade-off for the significant public benefits of the scheme. Some Panel members would have preferred the towers to be taller and slimmer. Most Panel members supported the proposed tower heights and saw no need for greater variety in height.

The siting of the towers was supported, noting it achieves the best location for the public park. Its corner location makes the park much more public and accessible than if it were between the two towers on Mainland. While improved livability might be achieved with a more generous space between the towers it would compromise the park, both in proprietary terms and for sun access.

With respect to the park, it was stressed that Nelson is a busy, noisy street and this should be taken into account in developing the park so that its usability is not compromised. Programming the park space will be an important consideration for the Park Board.

It was stressed that considerable design development is required to the base of the buildings. Several Panel members questioned the proportion of the townhouses in relation to the towers and suggested there needs to be more FSR in the base.

The Panel supported the right-of-way through the site. The Panel found the creation of the different spaces that result from the break in the landscaping, exposing the topography of the site, to be very successful. The applicant was encouraged to pursue this aspect of the project.

Some Panel members thought the proposal should respond in some way to the streetwall character of Homer Street. There was also a suggestion that the townhouses should reflect the Yaletown character. It was noted the Yaletown vocabulary is also absent from the tower. The tower entries could also be strengthened.

The proposal for live/work studios and for retail facing the park was strongly supported.

In general, the Panel found the scheme to be very well thought out and encouraged the applicant to continue developing it to the next level. The Panel appreciated a project of this scale being submitted as a preliminary application.

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3. Address: 1980 Foley Street (655 Gt. Northern Way)  
DA: 407227  
Use: Commercial (two 9-storey towers)  
Zoning: CD-1  
Application Status: Complete  
Architect: Musson Cattell Mackey  
Owner: QLT Inc.  
Review: First  
Delegation: Peter Arbuckle, Mark Whitehead, Bruce Hemstock  
Staff: Scot Hein
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### EVALUATION: SUPPORT (6-0)

- **Introduction:** Scot Hein, Development Planner, presented this complete application. The proposal is the second application to date in the Great Northern Way lands (the former Finning CD-1) although the previous submission (360 Networks) was subsequently withdrawn. Mr. Hein made reference to the overall False Creek Flats Structure Plan, also approved by Council. It identifies the future patterning for the Flats generally and sets the Finning Precinct into context. The CD-1 design guidelines contain little qualitative information; however, further information has been secured through the servicing agreement to address public realm issues, i.e., the Great Northern Way Public Realm Plan.

A wide range of uses are permitted on the site, including the light industrial and high-tech proposed. The proposal complies with the maximum density of 5.0 FSR and 120 ft. height. Parking is required to be below grade but interim surface parking is permitted for phased development. The guidelines call for a 30 ft. landscaped setback along Great Northern Way, a sense of streetwall, and variety in massing and form. Generic building types are discouraged in favour of high architectural quality and articulation, as well as a genuine reflection of the interior programming given its campus setting. With respect to the balance of the Finning Lands, it is expected the overall structure plan and street systems will remain intact.

The issues on which the advice of the Panel is sought are as follows:

- massing and form of development, particularly as it relates to the proposed phasing;
  - public realm quality both at build-out and the interim treatment suggested for Phase 3 only;
  - architectural quality and expression;
  - landscape quality for the Gt. Northern Way edge, the Foley Greenway and the China Creek easement.
- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Mark Whitehead, Architect, explained the project will be built in two phases and the two buildings are roughly the same size. He briefly described the sustainable aspects of the project which is currently proposed to qualify for LEED silver. He briefly reviewed the design rationale, and the Landscape Architect, Bruce Hemstock, briefly reviewed the landscape plan. The design team responded to the Panel's questions.
  - **Panel's Comments:** The Panel unanimously supported this application. The massing and form were considered very appropriate and the applicant team was congratulated for an excellent, interesting project. A comment was made that the architecture is of international rather than local calibre.
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The sustainability aspects of the proposal were applauded. Bringing rainwater off the roof and diverting it to a body of water was thought to be an interesting gesture to the China Creek corridor. There was a strong recommendation from one Panel member for the project to aspire to LEED gold certification because it would also have a positive impact on the client's corporate image.

The Panel had very few criticisms of the proposal. Comments included:

- the colours might be more subdued than shown on the model;
  - the building might be further simplified;
  - consider extending the guideline recommended conifers along Great Northern Way, which currently end at Foley;
  - the new buildings seem poorly married to the original phases, with a recommendation that some relationship would improve the project;
  - the screen should be better integrated with building;
  - the bridges extending between the two phases could be more elegant if the span is trussed.
- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Whitehead said he appreciated the Panel's input and noted the Panel has identified many of the issues they have been dealing with. With respect to the relationship between the buildings, he noted they ultimately may not be connected in their operations and could be under different ownership.



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4. Address:	5621 Dunbar Street
DA:	407243
Use:	Mixed (4 storeys, 9 units)
Zoning:	C-2
Application Status:	Complete
Architect:	Robert Turecki
Owner:	R. Turecki
Review:	First
Delegation:	Bob Turecki
Staff:	James Boldt

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#### **EVALUATION: SUPPORT (4-2)**

- **Introduction:** James Boldt, Development Planner, presented this complete application to develop a narrow (37 ft. x 135 ft.) site at 40th Avenue and Dunbar Street in lower Dunbar. The proposal is for a mixed use residential/commercial building with ground floor office of 750 sq.ft. and nine residential units in three storeys above (three units per floor). Total FSR is 1.83, of which the residential component is 1.68 FSR. The C-2 zone currently allows 3.0 FSR although typically not more than 2.68 FSR is achieved, and on smaller sites such as this not more than 1.8 FSR is achieved. The height of the proposal is under the permitted 40 ft. There is a shared common lobby and secured parking. Mr. Boldt briefly reviewed the C-2 guideline recommendations and the proposed development.

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

- streetwall and massing;
  - exterior materials and finishes;
  - pedestrian retail frontage;
  - general livability of the residential units.
- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Robert Turecki, Architect, briefly described the proposal and responded to the Panel's questions.
  - **Panel's Comments:** The Panel supported this application and found it to be a modest, well done project given the limitations of the site.

The Panel found the streetwall acceptable given the immediate context. One Panel member suggested a second level could be implied with something transparent.

Some Panel members questioned the compatibility of the materials and cautioned that it will be a detailing challenge to deal with the interface between the metal and the wood. One Panel member questioned the appropriateness of metal cladding in this neighbourhood.

Concerns were raised about security at the recessed residential entry. One suggestion was to make it a European-style gated entry.

One Panel member questioned whether the side corridor could be eliminated by revisiting the two exits. A number of concerns were expressed about the relationship of the two units facing onto the small patio on the second level. One suggestion was to have fewer planters so that it is more open and flexible to use.

Serious concerns were expressed about the livability of the units. Some Panel members thought they would be impossible to furnish. It was recommended that careful consideration be given to window and fireplace locations in terms of furniture layout. Two Panel members were unable to support the application because the units were considered unlivable.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Turecki explained the metal siding is not intended to have a galvanized finish but will be a smoother, more sophisticated material in grey-silver colour. With respect to the livability issues, Mr. Turecki said he has designed many similar buildings which are successful and noted there are trade-offs in creating compact suites on a small site. The alternative of having two suites per floor is not an option because they would be too large. He stressed that he carefully considers the furnishing options, noting that, in some cases, the windows are raised to allow placement of furniture underneath. With respect to the horizontal angle of daylight, Mr. Turecki acknowledged a relaxation is being sought. Consideration is being given to reducing some overhangs to allow greater light penetration.

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