
URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: January 10, 2001

TIME: 4.00 p.m.

PLACE: Committee Room #1, City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
Paul Grant, Chair
Lance Berelowitz
Tom Bunting
James Cheng (excused Item #2)
Bruce Hemstock
Roger Hughes
Jack Lutsky
Keith Ross
Sorin Tatomir

REGRETS: Alan Endall
Brian Palmquist
Gilbert Raynard

RECORDING SECRETARY: Carol Hubbard

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING	
1.	250 Howe Street (200 Granville)
2.	201 Burrard Street

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| 1. Address: | 250 Howe Street (200 Granville) |
| DA: | 405432 |
| Use: | Mixed (Retail/Office) (20 storeys) |
| Zoning: | CWD |
| Application Status: | Complete |
| Architect: | Musson Cattell Mackey Partnership |
| Owner: | The Cadillac Fairview Corp. Ltd. |
| Review: | First |
| Delegation: | Mark Whitehead, Kevin Redmond, Chris Phillips |
| Staff: | Ralph Segal, Mike Kemble |
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EVALUATION: SUPPORT (8-0)

- **Introduction:** The Development Planner, Ralph Segal, explained this proposal is largely an architectural re-vamping of a previously approved scheme. The project also involves the first phase of a renovation of the Granville Square plaza, on the Cordova Street side. The existing public passageway from Howe Street to the plaza is now an interior route, and an open passageway has been created beneath the tower from the Cordova/Howe corner, consistent with the previously approved application.

Following a description of the proposal, Mr. Segal noted the areas in which the advice of the Panel is sought, namely: the basic massing; the amount of retail; intrusion into the view corridor; weather protection along Howe Street; and treatment of the landscaped corner at the CP Station.

- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Mark Whitehead, Architect, briefly described the design rationale and noted the physical constraints that exist on the site. The massing of this revised scheme now contrasts the existing Granville Square tower in its appearance and picks up on the transition between the two grids. The building blocks no mountain views except for a very modest portion. Retail has been established on Howe Street and facing the corner beneath the building where the stairs start to rise. Parking is a difficulty for this site because of the CP rail tracks beneath it. No additional parking is being provided for this project but is being taken from surplus parking in other locations within the control of this developer. Converting the existing parking on Cordova Street to retail presents a number of physical constraints and is not being considered. It is also felt that this area will not support retail use. Instead, the proposal is to create a sculptural, landscaped wall to ameliorate the harsh conditions.

Chris Phillips, Landscape Architect, briefly described the landscape plan, noting a key objective is to improve circulation between the various connections on the site and give the plaza a strong orientation to the sun.

- **Panel's Comments:** After reviewing the model and posted materials, the Panel provided the following comments:

The Panel unanimously supported this application and the comments were generally very positive.

The Panel had no problem with the basic massing and height of the building and acknowledged the serious restrictions of the site. The proposal goes a long way to addressing an unfortunate urban design problem in the city. Some Panel members suggested going even further, by making the tower even more sculptural, to act as a foil to its heavier neighbour and buffering its impact. The

Panel found the approach of expressing the grids in the fenestration to be quite interesting and well done. There were, however, concerns that the use of the same colour green glass throughout will be too homogenous to reinforce the expression, with a suggestion to use a different coloured glass on part of the façade. A suggestion was also made to reconsider the scale of the 40 inch spacing of the curtainwall.

There was some uneasiness expressed about the wall along Cordova Street. The Cordova Street edge is a vast improvement over what exists now but the Panel had doubts about the success of the green wall. One suggestion was to add some art. Others preferred to see it as a large sculptural green wall, much less "busy" than indicated. The Panel unanimously agreed that retail would not work on Cordova Street. Of much greater concern was the lack of connection to the plaza at the pedestrian level on Cordova Street. It would be very beneficial if a way could be found to see into the plaza from Cordova Street, perhaps with a slope down to the street or making a wider stairway. The cut back at the CP Station corner was strongly supported and seen as a clear benefit to this site. A further suggestion was made that a gouge be created on the west side of the bridge as well to reinforce the connection between Cordova Street and the plaza.

While the Panel agreed that retail is not appropriate on Cordova Street, it was strongly supported on Howe Street. The Panel also unanimously agreed that weather protection should be provided on Howe Street.

The Panel thought the view corridor intrusion was too minor to be an issue and is earned by the massing being proposed.

There was considerable concern about the gap between this proposal and the existing building, particularly as it faces the plaza. It could be a very positive addition but should be hard landscaped since nothing is likely to grow there. Some Panel members would like to see a better resolved master plan for the plaza, showing how the first phase fits in with an overall strategy for the future plaza. At present there is a tenuous connection between the strong arc that is proposed and a small sliver connecting to a very large plaza. There was a strong recommendation from one Panel member to replace the existing 30-year old paving on the plaza because it is defeating the benefits of the proposed soft landscaping. The idea of closing off the connection to Howe Street across the plaza was not seen as a problem.

Consideration should be given to providing more trees on both Howe and Cordova Streets.

Overall, the Panel considered the proposal to be an exemplary scheme.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Whitehead said he appreciated the suggestions for refinement. Many of them have already considered and will be revisited.

2. Address:	201 Burrard Street
Use:	Mixed (Hotel/Retail)
Zoning:	CD-1 Amendment
Application Status:	Rezoning
Architect:	Baker McGarva Hart & James Cheng
Owner:	Marathon Developments
Review:	Second
Delegation:	Graham McGarva, Ron Lea, James Cheng, Dawn Guspie
Staff:	Phil Mondor, Mike Kemble

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (7-0)

- **Introduction:** Phil Mondor, Rezoning Planner, introduced this application, last seen by the Panel in a workshop in August 2000. The application seeks the following:
 - a change in the permitted land use on two of the lots at Burrard Landing, to replace office use by hotel use and some live/work use;
 - an increase in the height of the towers, from 375 ft. to 430 ft. and from 300 ft. to 450 ft.;
 - a decrease in the permitted floor plates for the two towers;
 - an adjustment to the development parcels established in the original 1996 rezoning;
 - retention of the residual density from Sub Area 1 of the Burrard Landing CD-1 on the balance of the sub area.

The hotel tower is now proposed to be somewhat taller (445 ft.) since the Panel last saw this project. In addition, the vehicular access has been altered, the sidewalks and setbacks have been increased, the ground floor animation has been improved through fewer blank walls surrounding the ground plane, and the street base corner of the westerly tower has been pulled back from Thurlow Street. Vehicular access to the hotel is now proposed to be from Canada Place Way and access for the office tower is now proposed to be from Cordova Street.

The CD-1 permits a total of two million square feet, of which 1.5 million square feet is permitted in this sub area, all commercial use. The application proposes to change about a million square feet of office space to hotel and live/work uses. In an issues report to City Council last Fall, the loss of this office space was raised as a potential issue. The applicant has subsequently submitted an impact analysis which concludes there will be no negative impact on the supply of office space in the downtown.

The project is proposed to be phased, with the office/live-work tower to be built first on the westerly part of the site. The hotel tower would proceed in Phase 2, but would depend on whether the trade and convention centre goes ahead on the site to the north. Active planning for a trade and convention centre on this site has been underway for some months but no firm commitment has been made to date. Uncertainty about the trade and convention centre also affects the elevations surrounding the site and needs to be taken into account, especially for achieving a pedestrian-oriented street base.

The Development Planner, Mike Kemble, briefly reviewed the concerns raised by the Panel in the workshop. The Panel generally supported the notion of two higher towers in this block and strongly supported the street reflecting the original alignment of the escarpment and the railway. The main concerns focussed on the lower levels of the development, particularly the streetscape and public realm areas to ensure it becomes a very attractive and public area leading to the

waterfront.

The proposed hotel contains 800 rooms in a 47-storey tower, stepped at the 35th and 40th levels. The floorplate has been reduced to about 15,000 sq.ft. at the lower level, further reducing to 13,000 sq.ft. and 10,000 sq.ft. at the higher levels. The width of the facades is 135 ft., with a total diagonal distance of 190 ft. The Panel's comments are sought in the following areas:

- tower massing, orientation, height, hotel floorplate, width and location;
- intrusion into two view corridors (from Queen Elizabeth Park and 10th/Cambie) and into the view from Portal Park;
- lower level massing and treatments;
- public realm treatment including the sidewalks around the site and the Thurlow plaza to the west.

Mr. Segal stressed that staff believe the view cone from Portal Park remains valid and the convention centre also will be required to respond to it.

- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Graham McGarva, Architect, briefly described the design rationale for the hotel site. He advised they are now considering bringing the hotel tower closer to Burrard Street, which would provide greater flexibility with respect to the ballroom. He explained their rationale for the intrusion into the view corridor, noting the hotel will now provide a marker for where the downtown edge meets the waterfront.

James Cheng, Architect, spoke to the office tower site. He noted it is hoped that by the time a development application is made a decision will have been made with respect to the trade and convention centre and there will be some certainty with respect to grade levels. A major issue they would like the Panel to consider relates to views from Portal Park, originally established as a look-out at the escarpment. They believe that, from a city-wide urban design perspective, the priority should be to preserve the street-end views, and the view cone from Portal Park should be rotated. With the higher elevations of the trade and convention centre plaza, the view from Portal Park will be sky and mountains, with the water no longer visible. With respect to Cordova Street, Mr. Cheng noted their proposal is for the sidewalk treatment to reflect the rest of Cordova Street rather than introducing a double row of trees in this location.

The applicant confirmed there is no possibility of a tower on the convention centre.

- **Panel's Comments:** After reviewing the model and posted materials, the Panel commented as follows:

The Panel unanimously supported this application for rezoning amendment.

The proposed use was fully supported and a comment was made that, in terms of sustainable development, there should be more of this kind of use in the downtown core.

While some Panel members commented on the difficulty of assessing this application with the uncertainty that exists with regard to the convention centre, the Panel was able to support it regardless of whether or not the convention centre proceeds on the site to the north. In particular, there was concern about the possibility of a tower on that site and it was suggested it might be worthwhile to look at the alternatives. It was recommended that the Planning Department consider the precinct in its entirety, even at a very schematic level, to determine the options that might be acceptable for distributing the residual density remaining in the area.

Normalizing the grid was thought to be an excellent strategy in order to keep the options open, with or without the convention centre. One Panel member commented there is now a great opportunity to design the entire Canada Place Way extension and encouraged staff and the applicant to take it as far as possible in terms of this being the last street in the entire grid.

The Panel found the proposed tower heights acceptable and had no problem with the minimal intrusions into the view corridors. The extra height was considered a fair trade off for the slimness of the towers, although one Panel member thought the hotel tower was too high at 450 ft. Another thought it could be lowered a bit and still be a marker at the end of Burrard Street, and another encouraged the applicant to make more of an architectural statement because the hotel tower seems quite reticent for what was described as a landmark icon.

The Panel supported the massing for the office/live-work tower, although one Panel member commented that it makes the hotel look a bit clunky and simplistic. It was felt the lower massing of both towers needs the most attention because it will define the Canada Place Way extension and Cordova streetscape. The Panel looks forward to seeing how the massing of each building, especially at the lower levels, relate to each other.

The Panel unanimously supported the applicant's rationale for re-orienting the view from Portal Park. It was agreed that things are changing in this area and this park will become one component of a series of spaces which may twist and turn more than originally envisaged. There were also comments that Portal Park is a leftover from another era and this proposal will be an improvement.

The view down Thurlow Street was thought to be more important. One Panel member suggested there is a design opportunity to look down to the convention centre and view a tilted plaza, in plan, noting it is not necessary to be able to see water at the end of every street. The creation of plaza space at the end of Thurlow was seen to be a much more important connection than the view from Portal Park.

The Panel was split on whether the hotel should be moved closer to Burrard Street. Panel members certainly felt there needed to be a lot more fine-tuning and architectural treatment of the Burrard Street façade, relating to the Marine Building. Podium heights and organization of the architecture and building mass along Burrard should relate more strongly to the Marine Building which needs to be treated as an icon, both from within the city and from the water.

There was support for the treatment of Cordova as an extension of what already exists. A double row of trees is less important than blending it in with the rest of the city. The single row of trees and widened sidewalks will benefit the whole Cordova/Canada Place Way corridor.

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