

URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: January 17, 2007

TIME: 4:00 pm

PLACE: Committee Room No. 1, City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
Walter Francl, Chair
Nigel Baldwin
Albert Bicol
Shahla Bozorgzadeh
Tom Bunting
Eileen Keenan
Margot Long
Bill Harrison
John Wall
C.C. Yao

REGRETS: Peter Wreglesworth
James Cheng

**RECORDING
SECRETARY:** Lorna Harvey

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING	
1.	1205 Howe Street
2.	2714 Prince Edward Street
3.	5429 & 5439 Willow Street

BUSINESS MEETING

Brent Toderian, Director of Planning gave a brief update on the Canada Line.

The Panel discussed the problem with light-locked bedrooms and asked the Director of Planning if the City was proposing new guidelines.

Chair Francl called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m. and noted the presence of a quorum. The meeting considered applications as scheduled for presentation.

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| 1. Address: | 1205 Howe Street |
| DE: | 410934 |
| Use: | 14-storey mixed-use retail/residential building. |
| Zoning: | DD |
| Application Status: | Complete |
| Architect: | Howard Bingham Hill |
| Review: | First |
| Delegation: | John Bingham, Peter Kreuk, George Steeves, Craig Birston |
| Staff: | Mary Beth Rondeau |

EVALUATION: NON-SUPPORT (2-7)

- **Introduction:** Mary Beth Rondeau, Development Planner, presented the complete application for a residential tower over a podium incorporating commercial retail along Davie Street with the main residential entry and townhouses along Howe Street. The proposed height is approximately 165 feet due to a view cone. Parking for all uses will be provided in underground parking accessed from the lane. An outdoor seating area is proposed along Howe Street for retail/restaurant use. Referring to the model, Ms. Rondeau described the proposal.

The advice of the Panel was sought specifically on the following:

1. Has the building massing and bulk been resolved given the 5.46 FSR density including .46 of Heritage density.
2. Townhouse interface and design resolution.
3. Variations from the Guidelines:
 - 90 feet tower width to 93 feet width;
 - 6,500 square foot floor plate;
 - floor to floor heights - 10 feet clear ceiling height per floor.

Ms. Rondeau took questions from the Panel.

- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** Mr. Bingham, Howard Bingham Hill Architects, briefly reviewed the project in greater detail. Peter Kruek, Landscape Architect described the landscape plan. The applicant team responded to questions from the Panel.
- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - Major concern with the number and the liveability of units with internal bedrooms;
 - Consider reducing the floor heights, particularly from the eighth storey and up, to insert another floor and reduce the floor-plate;
 - Consider design development to some of the accent features on the tower to integrate them more convincingly into the building design; and

- Consider design development of the townhouses to reduce or remove the fin walls.
- **Related Commentary:** The Panel did not support this application.

The majority of the members felt that the building massing was competently done and that the height was generally supportable. The 6500 SF tower floor-plate was not seen as a major issue but the planning of the suites, issues of privacy between suites and the placement of the tower core, did not seem to be well enough resolved to satisfy the Panel that the density could be supported.

The Panel had major concerns about the long, deep units and the number of interior bedrooms which would offer significantly reduced natural ventilation and light. They agreed that there would be a lack of privacy and made for non-sustainable units. Several Panel members said they would not support a scheme that had more than 50% interior bedrooms. It was also felt by several members, that the number of suites with interior bedrooms could be halved by changing the floor plan of the suites. It was also noted that a 6,500 SF floor-plate was not an unusually large floor-plate for a residential tower and should be able to yield suites with windows to all bedrooms.

The Panel generally liked the ten foot ceiling heights. One Panel member, however, noted that by going to nine foot ceilings from the eighth floor and up, the tower could probably accommodate another floor, thereby allowing for a smaller tower floor-plate and improved access to daylight.

Panel members questioned the fin wall/privacy screen between townhouses and believed that they could make the suites too dark. The five foot grade separation at the townhouse entries was considered a good feature for privacy and most Panel members thought that the townhouses were well resolved architecturally. Another Panel member suggested repeating the red accent colour on the townhouses.

Most of the Panel agreed that the amenity space and associated open space was well considered and an appropriate response. The Panel thought the landscaping was well resolved. One member suggested a green roof on the penthouse to improve the overlook.

Several members of the Panel liked the way the building met the ground and the use of materials. One member of the Panel liked the amount of glazing for the view and light but suggested there might be too much solar gain. Several members noted that the red corner accent and the green fin accent on the tower seemed to be weak elements in the tower design composition.

Several Panel members noted that there was a missed opportunity in the design of the streetscape as mandated by city engineering and would like to see additional landscaping and street trees with less concrete in the public realm. Several Panel members liked the proposed seating area outside but would like to see some design development to the entry as it seemed confined and uninviting.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Bingham thanked the Panel for their comments. He agreed that the issue of the overlook and the greening of the roof was a positive idea and had been overlooked in the design. He agreed that the internal bedrooms could be reduced.

2. Address:	2714 Prince Edward Street
DA:	410898
Use:	9-storey residential with parking for Biltmore Hotel on site.
Zoning:	C-3A
Application Status:	Complete
Architect:	Linda Baker Architect
Review:	First
Delegation:	Linda Baker, Paolo Gradowski
Staff:	Dale Morgan

EVALUATION: NON-SUPPORT (1-8)

- **Introduction:** Dale Morgan, Development Planner, presented the complete application which is a proposed development zoned C-3A with a 232' frontage along Prince Edward Street and approximately 100' deep. The property is adjacent to East 11th and 12th Avenues and is located in the Mount Pleasant area. The development consists of 101 units over four levels of underground parking. The applicant is requesting a building height relaxation as well as an increase in FSR. Mr. Morgan noted that the site is currently a surface parking lot for the Howard Johnson Hotel and the current 97 parking stalls have been incorporated into the proposed development as a separate parking facility with a separate entrance ramp, additional lobby and elevator. Referring to the model, Mr. Morgan described the proposal.

The advice of the Panel was sought on the following:

1. **Earning:** Has this application earned the discretionary increases in height and density, through its contributions and enhancements to the public realm and through exemplary design?
2. **Massing & Height:** Does the building massing sensitively relate to its varied context? Should the taller massing have additional stepping, notably along the lane elevation? Is the building perhaps too high relative to its RM-4 neighbours?
3. **Materiality:** Comments are requested on the proposed materiality; should more brick and/or glass be introduced at the higher floor levels?
4. **Liveability:** Comments are requested on the liveability and suitability of the dwelling units with borrowed light bedrooms located inboard from an exterior wall, noting how this enables a larger, more open living space.
5. **Urban Design:** Given the prominence of the site relative to East 12th Avenue and Kingsway, does the proposal successfully relate to this important intersection? Comments are also requested on the landscape treatment at the terminus of the Prince Edward Avenue and the location of the hotel parking entrance off of Prince Edward Avenue, noting the functional requirements and proximity to the hotel.

Mr. Morgan took questions from the Panel.

- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** Linda Baker, Architect, briefly reviewed the project in greater detail. Ms. Baker noted that the site is bounded by different zonings. The base of the building has been developed with townhouses with connections to the public realm. The building has been stepped to transition down to the lower scale residential to the north.

Paolo Gradowski, Landscape Architect, described the landscaping for the project noting the sustainable features which will include the partial retention of rain water, drought tolerant landscaping and an automatic high efficient drip irrigation system. Also there will be an opportunity for urban agriculture on the roof decks.

The applicant team took questions from the Panel.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - Mixed opinions as to whether the requested density is earned;
 - Consider some design development to the building massing for the upper floors, which the Panel found quite bulky and a poor response to neighbouring buildings such as the Biltmore Hotel;
 - Consider a change of materials using less painted concrete, particularly on the east facade;
 - Concern about the liveability in some of the units with internal bedrooms, particularly the two bedroom suites;
 - General concern about the landscaping in the public realm especially the park area along 12th Avenue.
- **Related Commentary:** The Panel did not support this application and thought considerably more design development was required to make the scheme work.

Concerns were expressed regarding the building having earned the extra height although most members of the Panel thought the height would work. The Panel agreed that it was a challenging site. The massing of the townhouses and the lower floors of the building was seen as very successful, but felt that the building form above the townhouse podium should be developed in a more modern, asymmetrical idiom that referenced the neighbouring Hotel. One Panel member felt that the overhangs didn't work on the east and west orientations and vertical fins could be added to screen the sun. It was stressed that the concrete band above the townhouses seemed too heavy and could be reduced in scale to reduce its visual impact. The Panel also felt the rear lane elevation could be further developed to compose and detail the window openings in a manner that was more consistent with the other three elevations.

The Panel felt the outdoor spaces were generally successful. The weakest space was felt to be the north rooftop plaza, which needed to either be more carefully programmed or should be turned into garden space for the residents. The Panel generally liked the plaza on the south side but would like to see it connected directly to the indoor amenity space. The Panel thought it would be essential to incorporate more planting to soften the edge on the rear lane and that the front terraces could be more generous. Some of the Panel felt the trees could be larger along Prince Edward Street. The Panel was concerned about the water feature in the park along 12th Avenue and suggested finding another solution, since it is unlikely that it will be approved by Engineering. Several members of the Panel would like to see the uppermost roof be a green roof. There were also some liveability concerns regarding the townhouses on 12th Avenue, since the road may be widened at some future date.

The Panel was concerned about the number of inboard bedrooms, particularly some of the two bedrooms units, although the Panel agreed that the loft layouts worked well. Most of the panel liked the generous layouts of the private patio and decks of varying sizes.

The Panel felt the ground plane was quite successful and liked the relationship to the street. Several members felt there was good use of materials and especially liked the use

of brick although several members didn't like the painted concrete and would encourage the applicant to find another material. The amount of concrete on the central portion of the east elevation was seen to be excessive. Brick was suggested by some Panel members as a substitute.

The Panel had no concerns with the parking entrance for the hotel and felt it was in the right location and well designed. The Panel felt that the parking circulation was well thought out.

- **Applicant's Response:** Ms. Baker thanked the Panel adding that they will look at eliminating the internal bedrooms wherever possible. Regarding the public realm on Prince Edward, Ms. Baker advised that they will look at it again and work with Engineering to create an acceptable plan. She agreed that they would look at the 5th level plaza landscaping and would be willing to add more trees in the public realm. Regarding the horizontal band, Ms. Baker advised that it was a result of the planters on the edge of courtyard but would look at making it slimmer. Ms. Baker added that they are open to adding more brick along the lane and reducing the height.

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3. Address: 5429 & 5439 Willow Street
DA: RZ
Use: 10 townhouse units.
Zoning: RS-1 to CD-1
Application Status: RZ
Architect: Stuart Howard Architect Inc.
Review: Second review (First review, November 8, 2006)
Delegation: Stuart Howard, Senga Lindsay
Staff: Dale Morgan
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EVALUATION: SUPPORT (7-2)

- **Introduction:** Abigail Riley, Rezoning Planner, presented the rezoning application which comprises of two lots which forms a site of 120 feet wide by 120 feet deep. The site is within an area identified as a high priority for redevelopment and the plan is for stacked townhouse and ground-oriented low-rise buildings.

Dale Morgan, Development Planner described the site in further detail noting the changes in the design since the previous submission to the Urban Design Panel in November.

The advice of the Panel was sought on the following:

1. Previous Issues: Has the revised scheme satisfactorily addressed the previous areas of concern identified by the Panel, namely:
 - The shared integration of parking and open pedestrian space,
 - Lack of private and semi-private open space, neighbourliness and
 - The apparent height and density?
2. Massing: Comments on the revised massing, in particular, the extended planter box and the stepping of the building form for the rear facing units?
3. Materiality: Comments on the revised material, noting the previous material proposal was predominately brick, for both front and back units and was supported by the panel?
4. Vehicular Access: Should the access from the lane be one point of access or two, as suggested in the RM model?

The planners took questions from the Panel.

- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** Stuart Howard, Architect, reviewed the project in greater detail stating that the applicant team had taken the Panel's comments seriously. He described the refinements to the design, noting the changes in materials, the change in the rear elevation of the site as well as the layout of the vehicular access.

Senga Lindsay, Landscape Architect, described the character of the planting regarding privacy issues. She noted that they choose trees with broad leaves to give some privacy to the patio areas.

The applicant team took questions from the Panel.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - Consider removing the planter boxes from the upper floor windows;
 - Consider using the previous material proposal which was predominately brick for both the front and back units;
 - Consider adding roof decks to the flat roofs; and
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- General concern about the landscaping in the private and semi-private spaces.
- **Related Commentary:** The Panel supported this application noting that the design for the site was much improved.

The Panel felt the density was better handled in this scheme particularly with the rear units and had no concerns regarding the height of the units. The Panel agreed that the lane elevation was a bit of a problem but had been improved. They agreed that the liveability of the units was also improved.

The Panel agreed that the two accesses to the courtyard was the better approach and made for a suitable entry. The Panel agreed that the courtyard could be more neighbourly and open to shared use by the residents. It was suggested that the success of the courtyard will come down to how it is detailed. The Panel was concerned about planting in the pavers as they felt car traffic would destroy the plants and would like to see either granite or permeable paving.

Some of the Panel felt it was a lost opportunity not to use the flat roofs for decks and preferred the pitches on the edge rather than the flat roofs. Most of the Panel liked the previous design with the brick gables and felt the siding was an unfortunate change of materials. One member of the Panel liked the planters as it gave the facades a more North American look but most of the Panel would like to see no planters at all with one member suggesting some sort of individual porch expression.

Several members of the Panel felt it was unfortunate that the private spaces had been turned into guest parking. There was general concern regarding the lack of private and semi-private spaces and felt that all opportunities to add private decks or patio space should be explored.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Howard thanked the Panel for their comments and stated that they would be happy to add roof decks on the lower section but were concerned about the overview to the neighbours. He added that the design of the courtyard is to make it more neighbourly and have tried to keep the balconies on the upper floors to a minimum.

The meeting adjourned at 8:10 PM