

URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: January 18, 2006

TIME: 4.00 pm

PLACE: Committee Room No. 1, City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
Alan Endall, Chair
Larry Adams
Nigel Baldwin
Robert Barnes
Shahla Bozorgzadeh
James Cheng (Items 2 & 3 only)
Marta Farevaag (Items 1 & 2 only)
Ronald Lea (Items 1 & 3 only)
Margot Long
C.C. Yao

REGRETS: Edward Smith
Peter Wreglesworth

**RECORDING
SECRETARY:** D. Kempton

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING	
1.	2901 Wall Street
2.	818 West 10 th Avenue
3.	1155 East Broadway (VCC King Edward Campus)

BUSINESS MEETING

Chair Endall called the meeting to order at 4:15 p.m.

1. Address: 2901 Wall Street
DE: 409890
Use: Residential (2 x 3-storeys, 64 units)
Zoning: C-2
Application Status: Complete
Architect: Merrick
Owner: 326754 B.C. Ltd.
Review: First
Delegation: Greg Borowski (Merrick Architecture), Jonathan Lodee (J. Lodee Landscape Architecture)
Staff: Mary Beth Rondeau

EVALUATION: NON-SUPPORT (8-0)

- **Introduction:** Mary Beth Rondeau, Development Planner, introduced this conditional application on a C-2 zoned site which fronts onto the industrial working waterfront. Ms. Rondeau described the site context noting that the C-2 zoning on this site makes a good transition between the residential and industrial uses that surround it. Referring to the model, Ms. Rondeau described the all residential, multiple dwelling proposal which, at 1.53 FSR, is well below the maximum FSR.

Concerns from the neighbourhood perspective are with regard to loss of views, the number of proposed units and the traffic associated with that. An extensive view analysis was conducted from neighbouring houses and a slot has been created so that some of the neighbours will maintain their views of the water. Ms. Rondeau stated that this form and density is the result of numerous meetings with the public. She also noted concern from the neighbours that this building may become transitory due to noise issues.

Ms. Rondeau stated that staff have significant concerns related to the acoustics and industrial noise that may impact future residents on this site. There is a berm against the parking wall with acoustical baffles built-in to dampen noise (both high and low frequency) and also to absorb vibration and sound. Ms. Rondeau said that staff are seeking structural isolations within the parking structure of the building to mitigate noise impact. There is still an outstanding acoustical issue with regard to low range vibration.

Ms. Rondeau described some of the other proposed methods to deal with noise impact such as handrails, soffits which will have acoustical mitigation on the underside, soft landscaping on the patios, different types of glazing, double layer or bay windows and inboard bedrooms. Ms. Rondeau said that staff are generally satisfied with the proposed form, architectural resolution and materials.

The advice of the Panel is sought on the following:

- The views and response to views with respect to the surrounding neighbourhood.
- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** Greg Borowski, Merrick Architecture, reviewed the proposal noting that this scheme was achieved after considerable community consultation. He stated that it has been a challenge for the existing residents to accept any loss of view at all as a result of this proposal. Mr. Borowski explained that with multiple dwellings, as

proposed, there will be view slots provided versus having single family homes on this site which would leave almost no view at all between houses.

The general orientation of this project is towards New Brighton Park with a cadence that comes across as a series of modules to be compatible with the houses in the neighbourhood. Mr. Borowski said that acoustical mitigation has been difficult on this site. There is a provision for mechanical ventilation, air conditioning, incase it is too noisy for residents to open their windows. The stepping back of the massing should help to manage some of the noise.

John Lodee, Landscape Architect, described the landscape plan including the plans for a green roof and greener streetscape. There are also plans for the initiation of a portside greenway which will be a community amenity.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**

- Reconsideration of the lower level units to increase livability and to consider the possibility of providing some form of double wall enclosure on the north face to increase the acoustical separation and also provide more access to natural light;
- Consider a more obvious common access to the central open space, as well as increasing the usability and animation of that open space;
- Street trees could be more continuous and larger along Wall Street;
- Consider including an interior amenity area, preferably adjacent to the common open space in the centre;
- Further consideration to the handling of the parking entrance of off Wall Street, perhaps to make the entry lower.

- **Related Commentary:**

The Panel did not support this application. There was consensus that the overall response to views had been well handled and well considered. The Panel was quite complimentary about the Wall Street frontage and character.

It was felt that a more detailed model would have been helpful to better understand the detail and materiality of the building. Some panel members suggested that the lower deck area on the north side should have a simple planting scheme rather than relying on the residents to provide plants.

The Panel had concerns about the livability of the lower level with the long hallway, internalized bedrooms and narrow rooms. One Panel member offered specific suggestions to help increase the livability of the lower level by giving consideration to placing some of the basement uses on the roof, dropping the ground floor by 2 ft., and dropping the floor to floor height. The Panel member also suggested carving the lower floor with the land form so that it is not just a northeast facing concrete deck across a sound berm. It would be nice to give the residents on the lower level the same amenities as those in the units above such as open space and breath-ability.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Borowski said the comments regarding better access to the central amenity space are helpful. He questioned the comments regarding the livability of the lower level stating that in his experience units planned in that manner with a tighter connection between the units and the railway have been successful.

2. Address:	818 West 10 th Avenue
DE:	409911
Use:	Mixed (6-storeys)
Zoning:	CD-1
Application Status:	Complete
Architect:	Musson Cattell MacKey Partners
Owner:	Vancouver Coastal Health Authority
Review:	First
Delegation:	Mark Whitehead (MCM), Dr. John Steeves (ICORD)
Staff:	Sailen Black

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (6-1)

- **Introduction:** Sailen Black, Development Planner, presented this application for the Medi-Tech 3 area within the Vancouver General Hospital (VGH) site. He noted that the VGH precinct guidelines envision the reestablishment of greenspace and as a result, much of the density on the site ends up at the edges. The proposed building itself is not within the CD-1 zoning; however the public realm and the first 3 ft. of setback are within the CD-1. Recent guidelines and a Master Plan for this area have been established with the general goal being a massive renovation and reinvigoration of the area.

This proposal, which includes environmentally friendly building strategies, is for a spinal cord research area which is very significant in the context of VGH and internal collaboration. Referring to the model, Mr. Black reviewed the proposal in detail noting that this is an important project for the area and will set the bar for this use and subsequent Medi-Tech buildings that will be developed in the future.

The building mass is stepped back to improve shadowing on West 10th Avenue with a total height of 24.4 m. to the parapet. The design incorporates an internal circulation ramp which provides animation and contributes to sunlight penetration of the ground floor spaces. Mr. Black reviewed the parking strategy for the site, noting the proposal for 10 fully accessible stalls and another 20 accessible stalls on the east side. The majority of parking will be on the ambulatory care side of the site and in future, as Heather Pavilion is developed there will be underground parking. The parking, as proposed, is incompatible with the Master Plan so at this time Planning staff do not support the parking.

The advice of the Panel is sought on the following:

- Comments on whether the proposal has achieved the urban design goals in this precinct;
 - The building massing;
 - The treatment of the façade and grade surfaces at the pedestrian level.
- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** Mark Whitehead, MCM, described the uses that will take place on this site and stated that it is hoped that this will be the world's most accessible building. With respect to the issue of parking, Mr. Whitehead said that an enclave of disabled parking has been created with no traffic around it so that wheelchair users can move about easily. He stated that parking for this project has been difficult from the outset and that the initial proposal for parking under the building was moved to save

costs. The program is for parking to come on stream three years from now and one year after the building is constructed. Both Mr. Whitehead and the VCH representative said that there will not be a parking shortfall on this site.

Mr. Whitehead reviewed the material palette, public interface and animation.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**

- Develop a clear and definitive solution as to how parking will be handled and secure it through a covenant or legal agreement so that it will not be challenged in the future;
- Further consideration to fully explore the potential for symbolism;
- Further consideration to the detailing of the atrium, ramp and vertical circulation elements, including more obvious access and clear articulation of the elevators and stairs, and potential for animating elements within the atrium;
- Design development to the atrium space with respect to use of colour, lighting and finishes;
- Further exploration of the detail of the exterior skin of the building to develop texture and interest.

- **Related Commentary:**

The Panel supported this application and felt that the urban design goals had been achieved. The Panel liked the symbolism that was being expressed. One Panel member said that a sustainable approach or more greenness would be welcomed.

Several Panel members suggested flipping the ramp or possibly making it asymmetrical. It was also suggested that all means of public circulation such as the ramp, elevator and stairs should be oriented to the public space to make it as rich a public space as possible and provide a sense of orientation.

The Panel strongly recommended that the parking issues be resolved and offered comments which included:

- there may be a challenge in the future if the disabled parking is placed close to the building and then moved as the next phase develops. The disabled parking could become a valuable asset and it would be difficult to change the location later on;
- something should be done to ensure that the greenway carries through. It would be a shame if the willow greenway was not provided in the future;
- it is not clear where the disabled parking will be located in Phase 2, perhaps consideration should be given to permanently locating those spaces on Willow Street;
- it would be nice to have direct access to the building from the disabled parking spaces at the back;
- either the parking lot is designed as a temporary lot to be removed within a couple of years or, if there is a chance that it will stay, it should be well designed now as a shared pedestrian/vehicular space;
- consider moving the parking eastward and delete the parking lot beyond.

Applicant's Response: Mr. Whitehead said that he will explore some of the Panel suggestions regarding revealing more of the vertical elements, exit stairs and elevators. The parking issue is difficult although there have been discussions with the City about keeping the parking on Willow Street and the applicant said he would like to see the 20 disabled spaces remain on Willow Street long term. Relocating the parking to the east has its own set of problems with the result of people driving through, which is not ideal. Mr. Whitehead said he appreciated the Panel comments and will take all the comments into account.

3. Address:	1155 East Broadway (VCC King Ed.Campus)
Use:	School
Zoning:	CD-1
Application Status:	Workshop
Architect:	Stantec
Owner:	VCC
Review:	First
Delegation:	Reiner Fassler, Larry Wadell
Staff:	Anita Molaro

- **Introduction:**

Anita Molaro, Urban Design Planner, introduced this workshop discussion and provided a brief history of the process for the policy statement, rezoning and CD-1 By-Law for this site.

Ms. Molaro said that Phase 1 of this project will be submitted in the form of a complete application soon. There has been a reduction in the scope of Phase 1 since the rezoning process in 2005. Ms. Molaro described the main objectives for the overall campus plan noting that Glen Drive is seen as an important pedestrian link to Broadway south and the future False Creek Flats to the north.

Referring to the model, Ms. Molaro described the north/south spine circulation pattern. She said that a Phase 1 objective, under the Policy Plan and rezoning, was to have the north/south spine that linked up to Broadway also connecting to 7th Avenue which would be a new neighbourhood focused street.

Ms. Molaro said the Broadway presence is an important issue to improve the campus presence. The existing campus has confusing circulation elements and the spine concept is important and integral to the overall concept. Staff would like to maintain the essence of the spine concept with something that could be built upon in the future.

The advice of the Panel is sought on the following:

- Comments on the spine concept and how it can work to maintain the important linear link between the two sites;
- Comments on how to address wayfinding off of Broadway;
- Comments on the Glen Drive frontage in terms of loading uses and how the frontage will be addressed;
- Comments on the Glen Drive frontage in terms of permeability and the relationship of the massing to the neighbouring residents.
- The urban design response to 7th Avenue;
- Views, with respect to the overview of roofscapes and the view cone.

- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:**

The applicant team described the changes to the scope of Phase 1 and rationale behind those changes. In terms of the overall organization of circulation, the applicant said they are very committed to the spine concept which will be an important link from Broadway to the Skytrain

station. The applicant said that rather than a linear concept there will be an atrium running through the project that is linked to study spaces, the bookstore, etc, and this will be a node that, over time, will be enhanced.

The applicant said that Phase 1 of this project will include Health Sciences as a core component but due to a shortfall in funding they have had to develop larger floor plates to save money in order to maintain the organizational spine concept.

The applicant described the layout and uses of the proposed building noting that natural light and the major circulation spine concept were major drivers in the design. The issue of an accessible roof was also very important. The roof is only visible from the college itself or other higher structures that may be built in the future but the Broadway experience is not impacted by the roofscape.

- **Panel Commentary:**

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

- Consider more animation on 7th Avenue, perhaps retail oriented;
- expression of the Glen Street elevation will be important as it relates to the residential context across the street;
- proposed massing seems massive and does not relate well to the scale and grid of the surrounding neighbourhood. Suggestions were made to explore articulation of the building massing in plan and section;
- language of the massing being proposed does not seem to fit with the balance of the massing being considered in the future;
- explore the expression of the building in an east/west direction perhaps overlaid with a more hierarchical tartan grid of circulation;
- consider offsetting the floor plate to minimize the gap providing access to the loading area off of Glen Drive;
- expression of the spine is minimized with the narrowness of the atrium.

The proposed building materials were discussed. A variety of ideas regarding the spine concept and organization were discussed, as well as the expression of the buildings.