
URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: January 22, 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
Jeffrey Corbett
Gerry Eckford (excused 610 Granville Street)
Richard Henry
Joseph Hruda (not present for vote on 610 Granville Street)
Reena Lazar (present for 790 Hamilton Street only)
Stuart Lyon
Kim Perry
Maurice Pez (excused 3663 Crowley Drive)
Sorin Tatomir
Ken Terriss

REGRETS:

RECORDING
SECRETARY: Carol Hubbard

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING	
1.	790 Hamilton Street (CBC)
2.	3663 Crowley Drive (3640 Vanness)
3.	610 Granville Street

BUSINESS**Outstanding Design Award**

Discussion on this subject resumed from the meeting of January 8, 2003.

Ralph Segal, Development Planner, reiterated the concern raised by the Planning Department with respect to the Panel's proposed Outstanding Design Award:

- there is potential for confusion if a project receives the award but the Planning Department or the City is unable to support it;
- the Planning Department's preference is for an award system which has established evaluation criteria, with the award(s) taking place at a special meeting at year end;
- the strength of the Panel's usual commentary may be weakened if an award is given at the same meeting it is first reviewed.

The following points were made in the Panel discussion that followed:

- if the Planning Department's concerns can be overcome in such a way that it would not be possible for it to be used by an applicant in the process, would there still be opposition to the idea of having the Panel make any kind of formal recognition?
- the Panel was trying to avoid formality by having a spontaneous award when a project is first reviewed so that it then has the seal of commendation as it proceeds through the approvals process;
- there are a lot of interesting, very livable buildings in Vancouver; it is a beautiful city, but there seems to be a lack of particularly beautiful buildings. The intention of the award was to elevate the "delight" aspect of architecture. The Panel spends a lot of time criticizing architecture but far less on giving substantial recognition to exceptional projects. However, the Panel's role is not to work at cross purposes with the Planning Department but to advise it, and it would not be appropriate to pursue the award in the way it was originally proposed if it causes problems to the Planning Department and its process;
- the Panel could maintain the award with some sort of compromise involvement, e.g., the Planning Department having a vote on the matter, or there may be some other process that the Panel could be involved in;
- the Panel recognizes the difficult task the Planning Department has with its process and in the long run it would be a mistake to pursue this award program without the Department's blessing;
- it is not uncommon for a perfectly adequate - but far from exemplary - design to receive the Panel's unanimous support because there is no reason not to support an adequate design. For this reason, an award for exceptional design would be desirable;
- it should be clear that it is strictly a design award and not to gain some advantage in the approvals process;

- the idea of the award should not be abandoned but the details need to be worked out to be able to implement it;
- the intent of the original proposal was to streamline recognized projects through the system, which is what the Planning Department is concerned about - having an award after a project is built is a nice idea but completely different from what this award was intended for;
- it would be unfortunate to have to wait until a project is built before it gets recognition; it is important to at least identify a project as being, from a design point of view, meritorious - not necessarily to help it get through the process;
- given there are very few projects that might receive recognition it is unlikely that many of those applicants would attempt to take unfair advantage of the award; my concern is that we may squash a nice idea for a very limited number of instances where it might become problematic for the Planning Department;
- in whatever way the award transforms itself, the intent I would like to maintain is that it is an award for something exceptional, which is not something that can be evaluated on the basis of a series of objective criteria: it is an emotional response to something which is beautiful;
- what is important is the vote aspect of the award, recorded as a separate motion, rather than some kind of seal attached to project itself. It gives the Panel the opportunity to provide recognition to be recorded in the minutes;
- suggest we try the award and work with it to see what the implications are; hopefully it will become more meaningful for the Planning Department over time;
- the Planning Department need not necessarily give special consideration to a project because it has received an award from the Panel; encumbering the award with process will kill it - it must be an emotional response and whether it is recognized by a seal or in the minutes is unimportant;
- it is important that we are expedient in the way it is done and that it be handled at the end of the meeting and not a year or two years later;
- if the seal aspect of the award is dispensed with in favour of a citation in the minutes only, this might alleviate the Planning Department's concerns;
- the affect on the role of the Urban Design Panel, as set out by Council, needs to be taken into consideration; concern that we have another role as judges of a beauty competition.

In discussion, the Panel reached no conclusions and agreed to defer the matter for further deliberation at the next meeting.

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| 1. Address: | 790 Hamilton Street (CBC) |
| DA: | 407189 |
| Use: | Mixed (addition) |
| Zoning: | DD |
| Application Status: | Prelim |
| Architect: | Henriquez & Partners |
| Owner: | Alex Fakidis-PW & GSC |
| Review: | First |
| Delegation: | Richard Henriquez, Ivo Taller, Jeff Phillips |
| Staff: | Ralph Segal |
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EVALUATION: SUPPORT (11-0)

- **Introduction:** Ralph Segal, Development Planner, presented this preliminary application to develop the CBC parking lot for a new Government of Canada building. After reviewing the site and its immediate context, Mr. Segal briefly described the project, noting it will be seeking LEED gold certification for its energy efficiency and sustainability qualities.

The primary issue on which the advice of the Panel is sought relates to height. The application seeks a relaxation of the 150 ft. height limit to approximately 295 ft., resulting in a 26 ft. intrusion into the view corridors from 11th/Cambie and 12th/Cambie. Comments are also sought on the pedestrian realm around the building perimeter.

Staff response to other aspects of the scheme has been very positive, particularly with respect to the public realm additions and improvements. In general, the entire knitting of the block with the existing CBC complex as well as knitting the block with the surrounding context has been very positively addressed. With the exception of height, the proposal complies with the Downtown zoning regulations.

- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Richard Henriquez, Architect, reviewed the proposal in greater detail and described the project rationale. Jeff Phillips described the "green wall" system and the plant materials, and the design team responded to questions from the Panel.
- **Panel's Comments:** The Panel enthusiastically endorsed this proposal and offered unanimous support.

The Panel unanimously supported the height and strongly recommended that the Development Permit Board relax the height to allow the requested 295 ft. The Panel was also unanimous in the opinion that the intrusion into the view corridors is of minimal consequence. It was acknowledged the issue is likely to be contentious; however, given the exceptional standard of the design, the trendsetting aspects of the LEED gold certification and that the forested roof will be a wonderful addition to the skyline, the Panel urged that the intrusion be permitted for this building.

The applicant was strongly commended for the proposal to seek LEED gold certification. Given there are very few LEED gold buildings in North America, the Panel hopes this project will encourage other Vancouver developers to strive for the same standard. A suggestion was made that there be some kind of education program for the general public to learn about the technologies being used.

There was some commentary about the “green wall” system. Some Panel members questioned its omission from the westerly façade and questioned the appropriateness of the metal brise-soleil element on the north elevation. It was generally thought closer attention should be given to responding more closely to the climatic context of each façade. One Panel member had some reservations about the experimental nature of the green wall system in terms of its ongoing maintenance and the unattractive aspect that the back of vines might present to the building occupants.

The green roof system was strongly supported, and a Panel member questioned whether public access to the rooftop had been considered. It was recommended that careful attention be given to the final shape, proportion and detailing of the elevator penthouses which at the moment are unresolved and detract from the dynamic 45 degree roof angle.

The Panel’s response to the public realm was very positive, especially the link to the Queen Elizabeth Theatre plaza. One Panel member expressed the hope that this project might provide some impetus for the redevelopment of the Queen Elizabeth plaza, the redesign of which could take its cues from this plaza. A comment was made that the Robson Street mid-block link is not as strong as it could be.

Some Panel members thought more of the green system needed to be expressed at grade level with more planting. As well, some of the elements on the southwest corner plaza seem somewhat undersized, and the tall tree in the lower plaza detracts somewhat from the simplicity of the roof slope.

Concerns were expressed about the success of the concourse between this building and the CBC complex. The applicant was urged to deal with this in a more positive way to give it greater animation. A comment was made that it will likely only be used by occupants of this site rather than being a public walkway, and one Panel member had serious reservations about the safety aspects of this elevated walkway at certain times of the day.

A request was made for the Panel to see all the building materials and detailing at the complete stage, and a suggestion that the Federal Government and the City should work together to bring some public art into this project.

The applicant team was commended for an exemplary proposal and a beautiful design.

- **Applicant’s Response:** Mr. Henriquez thanked the Panel for its advice and said the comments are well taken.

2. Address:	3663 Crowley Drive (3640 Vanness)
DA:	407190
Use:	Residential (24 storeys, 243 units)
Zoning:	CD-1
Application Status:	Complete
Architect:	Foad Rafii
Owner:	Concert Properties Ltd.
Review:	First
Delegation:	Foad Rafii, Maurice Pez, Randal Sharp
Staff:	Bob Adair

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (7-2)

- **Introduction:** Bob Adair, Development Planner, presented this application. The proposal comprises a 24-storey residential tower with a 4-storey wing to the east. In 2001, at the request of the developer, Council approved a Text Amendment to the CD-1 Zoning to redistribute the allowable FSR to put more floor area into the high rise structures and decrease the midrise elements. The revised zoning has two “signature” towers, taller than any of the other towers in Collingwood and oriented at 45 degrees to the regular Collingwood grid to face the major park to the south. The Text Amendment also achieved more open space on the site. The second signature tower is not included in this proposal and will be a separate submission.

The proposal appears to comply with the zoning regulations. The guidelines call for the two signature towers to emphasize their slenderness and reduce the apparent size of their floor plates. The main issue identified by staff relates to the expression of the tower. The main elevation facing the park is the widest elevation and it lacks architectural elements that carry through from the ground plane to the top, which may be working against the guideline objective of slenderness and articulation. There is also concern that the overall approach to the detailing results in a somewhat heavier expression than suggested by the guidelines.

In summary, the Panel’s input is sought on:

- tower expression;
 - the intersection of the highrise and lowrise components;
 - expression of the townhouse entries; and
 - the nature and use of the driveway and its insertion in front of the building.
- **Applicant’s Opening Comments:** Maurice Pez, Concert Properties, provided an overview of the project and responded to the Panel’s questions.
 - **Panel’s Comments:** The Panel strongly supported this application.

With respect to the tower, the Panel did not consider it to be a signature building in any way. Nor is it a slender building, which is difficult to achieve given the size of the floor plate. However, recognizing the constraints imposed by the zoning and guidelines, the Panel suggested there was little else that could be done. A number of concerns were expressed about the Text Amendment requirement for the 45 degree angle which seems to be contributing to the problems. One Panel member found it inappropriate for this tower to be a signature building and suggested the future building across the

street has greater opportunity to become a landmark in this neighbourhood. The Panel suggested there are ways to reduce the apparent bulk of the building, including adding more glass at the corners, as well as improving its expression with the addition of brise-soleil elements. There was a recommendation to eliminate the little glazed balcony shoulders at the lower part of the tower. With respect to the top of the tower, a suggestion was made that, given the attention that has been given to its detailing an accessible roof garden would be a nice addition. Another opinion on this feature was that it could be simplified and the savings used elsewhere in the building. One Panel member suggested rethinking the entry sequence to give the building more signature, e.g., increasing the height of the lobby to a two storey space. Another member thought the building entry needed major improvement, noting the obstruction of some of the main floor unit's view and the flat canopy underneath is too complex and is adding to the heaviness of the building.

The Panel had serious concerns about the intersection between the tower and the lowrise component, particularly at the back. One suggestion was to add a step down next to the tower. Concerns were expressed about the rear of the low rise which will never see sunlight due to the location of the tower.

Some Panel members thought the ground level units go a long way to look like townhouses. Others suggested a need for improvement to make them feel more like front doors. With respect to the low rise units facing the mini park, there was a recommendation to have windows other than bathroom windows overlooking this area.

Most Panel members had no serious concerns with the driveway/potential loading area. One suggestion was to reduce the amount of paving in favour of a small garden. Another comment was that if it had less of a shape of a driveway and a little more of a shape of a plaza then it might feel more pedestrian and little less car oriented.

The landscape plan was supported and there was endorsement for the children's play area being accessible from outside as well as inside the project. The relationship between patios at grade has been handled reasonably well and the transition between public and private space is good.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Pez said they didn't interpret the guidelines as requiring these two towers to be signature buildings. The fact that they have been turned on their axes and are bigger makes them buildings of note and the guidelines seek articulation to enhance their slenderness, which they believe they have started to do. Mr. Pez said they would like to develop this further and will pursue the Panel's suggestions. He also agreed more work needs to be done in the areas discussed by the Panel and will continue to work on these issues.

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3. Address: 610 Granville Street
DA: 407219
Use: Mixed (35 storeys)
Zoning: CD-1
Application Status: Complete
Architect: Architectura
Owner: MacDonald Dunsmuir St. Dev. Ltd.
Review: First
Delegation: Alan Endall, Malcolm Elliot, Gerry Eckford
Staff: Jonathan Barrett
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EVALUATION: SUPPORT (8-0)

- **Introduction:** Jonathan Barrett, Development Planner, presented this application. The Panel reviewed the project at the rezoning stage when it was unanimously supported. Mr. Barrett briefly described the project and its immediate context, and noted there were a variety of conditions applied at the rezoning stage which have been met. Retention of various heritage resources and elevator access to the ALRT station are among the major public objectives that this project has achieved.

Planning staff have identified no major issues with respect to this complete development application.

- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Alan Endall, Architect, briefly described the design rationale and responded to the Panel's questions.
- **Panel's Comments:** The Panel unanimously supported this application and was very complimentary about the way the design has progressed and improved since the rezoning stage. The Panel looks forward to seeing this beautiful project come to fruition.

There was very strong support for the residential use in this location which will help to rejuvenate this part of Granville Street.

There was a minor criticism about the Seymour Street façade where it was suggested there could be greater distinction between the two building volumes, perhaps introducing another step or considering a change of glazing colour.

The landscape plan was fully supported.

The applicant was commended for the very high quality presentation materials.

- **Applicant's Response:** The design team thanked the Panel for its input throughout the various stages of the design.