
URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: January 26, 2000

TIME: 4:00 p.m.

PLACE: Committee Room #1, City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
Joseph Hruda (Chair)
Sheldon Chandler (Excused for Item 4)
James Cheng
Per Christoffersen (Excused from Item 3)
Paul Grant (Present for Items 3 and 4)
Roger Hughes
Sean McEwan (Excused for Item 4)
Gilbert Raynard (Excused from Item 3)
Norman Shearing

REGRETS: Patricia Campbell
Keith Ross
Joe Werner

RECORDING: Louise Christie

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING
1. 1239 W. Cordova (Harbour Green)
2. 1299 W. Cordova (Harbour Green)
3. 1529 W. Pender
4. 1114 Comox

1. & 2. Combined:

Address:	1239 & 1299 West Cordova Street
DA:	404441 & 404757
Use:	Residential
Zoning:	CD-1
Application Status:	Preliminary
Architect:	Hancock Bruckner Eng & Wright
Owner:	Delta Land Development
Review:	First
Delegation:	Jim Hancock; Chuck Brook; Bruce Longereis, Chris Phillips
Staff:	Mike Kemble

EVALUATION: (5 - 1)**Introduction:**

Development Planner, Mike Kemble, introduced this preliminary application for two proposed towers on sites 2A and 2B, between Bute and Jervis Streets, part of a future family of five towers, adjacent to Harbour Green Park,. There is a slight downward slope from Cordova Street toward the park, and westerly from Bute to Jervis Streets. In November, 1999, the comments of the Panel were mixed when an application for one tower on the easterly portion of the site did not receive support. There is a statement in the Official Development Plan which would allow a 10% increase in the height of one tower, but staff adhere to the zoning and guidelines and there is nothing allowing such an increase. The Development Permit Board can always allow a relaxation to exceed the guideline. Considerable discussion in advance of the vote concerned the precedent that would be set by approving the 15 percent increase in the height of one tower with a slim profile, versus the need to change the Harbour Green Neighbourhood Guidelines. The CD-1 zoning sets the maximum height limit at 99 m. but the guideline limit of 72 m. affects the one easterly tower. This application is proposing a 10 percent increase (3-storeys) above the guideline height for the tower next to Bute Street. If approved with the relaxation of height, in terms of the shape and form of the towers, it would apply to the whole site. In the middle of the site is the circular vehicular drop-off court with water feature in the centre and parking entry. There is a strong 3-storey townhouse base for the two towers and the project respects the 'build-to' edges contained in the guidelines. The towers are longer in north-south direction and appear to be slimmer than the guidelines but this needs confirmation as there are no tower dimensions.

Tower 2A is 35 storeys, 325 ft. in height, and tower 2B is 28 storeys, 259 ft. in height. The proposal is for a total of 273 units: 141 in tower 2A with 20 townhouses for total of 161 units, and 92 with 20 townhouses for a total of 112 units in tower 2B. Tower 2B is the intended first phase and that is why they are separate applications. There have been extensive view studies. Amenity space is mainly on the ground and second floor levels of both towers. A previous concern was the lack of green space. The Panel's comments are requested primarily on the overall design parti of the concept of this proposal versus the Harbour Green guidelines. Following the Panel review of this application, staff intend to meet with the adjacent property owners concerning the revision of the guidelines. A second issue is the towers' massing and expression and their street base treatment and interface. The tops of the towers appears bulky, particularly tower 2A. A third issue is the circular drop-off court and the amount of landscaping and usable open space, such as a children's play area for the families.

Applicant's Opening Comments:

Mr. Hancock started by pointing out that the applicant had come back with a two tower scheme. In terms of phasing, the short tower, 2B, would be first to test the market. The open space is six or seven

acres. For the parkade entrance, there is one cut into the courtyard which is not visible from the street, an attraction to older buyers who are security conscious, and also giving better control of the entrance. The terrace zone at the base is the main issue. For people lower down it is better to make the base slimmer, putting that area into the height, and give a view of the water to a greater number of people. The view analysis overall is a net positive, but specifically for the lower levels of the surrounding area which see significant improvement.

The applicant was asked about the overall concept of the five towers. He replied that a group of multi-disciplinarians was gathered to design this spectacular site. A foreground of the City was created with a maritime theme, hence the curves in the towers, differentiating this place from its urban backdrop. Staff clarified that, if the Panel supported this application, the new urban design expression would result in the likelihood of amendments to the design guidelines which would then require Council approval.

- **Panel's Comments:**

The Panel was supportive, although there was hesitancy as they questioned whether the guidelines needed to be changed for these superlative buildings, or if attractive projects could be accommodated as exceptions. As it was moving in a new direction, a member said this scheme deserves the chance to challenge the guidelines. Citing recent poor examples built in the neighbourhood, members agreed the towers should be slimmed to improve the views and the skyline when seen from the water. But one Panel member was very concerned - strict adherence to a guideline does not guarantee excellence in design. He thought there was room within the current guidelines to achieve the density and look, and allow architectural inspiration with freedom of expression. He explained that the background of the guidelines was for a bigger urban design objective. They allow a view scale all the way down Thurlow Street, which is the pedestrian link to the waterfront walkway and the park. He went on to say the towers are not slimmer than the guidelines, the density is pushed out by the amenity space being kept in and the project lacks pedestrian scale.

The height increase was supported because of the slenderness and elegance of the towers and this concept being respectful of the views from other buildings, although a couple of members thought the increase may not be necessary. The sculptural design part of the five towers, reflecting the sails of the convention centre, was seen as ambitious. There was a concern that five similarly designed towers could be monotonous so there had to be room for individuality of expression within the family of five towers. There was reservation that the concept may be too large when it embraces the entire precinct.

Creating a lighter foil in front of other buildings considered significant by their form, shape and authenticity was a concern. The top penthouses need work and refining, especially for tower 2A.

The courtyard/open space was perceived as dominated by the car, whereas landscaping can contribute to livability. The area needs to be more open to the street or a vertical, gated community will be created. One member thought the public should be able to walk through, especially in daylight hours, as long as CPTED principles were adhered to. Spreading the massive hard surface in the interior along the street edge, or providing more deciduous trees and texture and colour were considered necessary by a number of the panel.

One member thought the continuity of the townhouses was excellent but they needed to be strengthened in vertical scale as a backdrop to the park. Other members thought they should be stacked, to create additional rhythm, and there should be more greening at the entries to the townhouses. One member suggested a donation or contribution from the applicant could be made to a

near-by park for the children's play area, rather than a token play area within the open space.

- **Applicant's Response:** He thanked the Panel for providing excellent comments that will be very helpful.

3.	Address:	1529 West Pender Street
	DA:	404754
	Use:	Mixed
	Zoning:	CD-1
	Application Status:	Complete
	Architect:	Busby & Associates
	Owner:	3170497
	Review:	First
	Delegation:	Peter Busby; Peter Webb
	Staff:	Mike Kemble

EVALUATION: (5 - 0)**• Introduction:**

The Development Planner, Mike Kemble, reviewed the history of this site at the corner of Nicola and Pender Streets, where it merges into Georgia Street. Originally the site was part of the Coal Harbour Marina Neighbourhood but this complete application is dealing with a refinement of the previously approval for rental housing, which was a zoning incentive for the developer to provide rental housing in that area. The tower massing is virtually the same as unanimously supported at the rezoning in 1997 with slight differences in how the outside skin is massed. Basically, the tower is the same slim lozenge shape which minimises impacts on north-south views. The 2-storey podium base has commercial use on both levels on Pender Street, and fronting on Hastings Street are live-work townhouse units. He placed the site in context, noting its visibility from Georgia Street.

At the rezoning stage there were several design conditions raised. The first was to provide more variety in the size and the layout of the residential units, including provision for more private open space. More variety of unit size is provided by this application. The second issue was the usability of the podium level and deck areas. Flexible, private open space has been designed to maximize use for residents and to improve the appearance from above. The third was improvement to the face of the westerly podium wall, which will be faced by a future residential tower. A major proposed change is on the Nicola Street side; which shows three loading bays adjacent the parking entrance near the corner of Hastings Street. Of concern is the large blank wall next to the street edge. The pedestrian canopy on Pender Street has been lowered to 10 ft. above the sidewalk.

The Panel was asked to comment on five questions, the first on the Nicola Street edge treatment. By articulating the concrete wall and reducing the three loading bays (possibly eliminating one), the scale could be broken up as a more pedestrian friendly edge needs to be developed. The second issue is the tower massing, approved at previous stage. The third is the scale of the Hasting Street townhouses. A suggestion is more use of masonry materials at the lower level, to better respond to the neighbourhood guidelines. The fourth is the open space. As there are 50 units which are 2-bedroom there is the potential for families, so should there be provision for children to play on top of the roof area. The last issue is the slight increase in podium height, one metre above the guideline height, to accommodate the relationship between the commercial space and the townhouses, noting that this increase has little effect on views.

• Applicant's Opening Comments:

Mr Busby explained some possible changes to the Nicola Street facade to respond to staff concerns. He then elaborated on the complication which would be caused by relocating the loading bay. The

residential lobby will be a very visible to distinguish it from the commercial component. The exterior envelope has been simplified to achieve a sense of timelessness similar to the Crown Life Building across the street on Georgia. This project is a rental tower and longevity is important so the solution is straightforward and simple. A high degree of articulation is provided on the townhouses with the materials and details such as handrails. The two sides of Hastings Street will have a relationship responding to the grade orientation and pedestrian scale of the lower level units. The minor relaxation in height requested for the podium is necessary to make the office floor plan workable with respect to the Hasting Street townhouses. The Official Development Plan has conditions on specific sites with respect to the family unit requirements and this one is not designated. Though there are 2-bedroom apartments, renters are not expected to be families in this downtown, professional urban building.

Mr. Webb explained the background for the rental tower which has a covenant on title for perpetuity and the units may not be strata-titled and transferred, the exception being the townhouses on Hastings Street. The City was asked for certain relaxations to make the development cost effective. The units are middle market, affordable rental.

- **Panel's Comments:**

The Panel fully supported this application commenting on the simplicity and elegance of the solution to provide rental units cost effectively. In terms of the massing, a suggestion was to allow the centre of the tower to read through for the top floor east and west wings. Two Panel members thought the sketch presented by the applicant at the meeting of a design solution resolved the issue on Nicola Street, and others were concerned that, because it was rental, the three loading bays may be necessary. Members said the combination of glass and wood is a good accent to the area and the townhouses do not need masonry. The comments on the open space were positive and it was felt that no special consideration was needed for children. The requested height relaxation for the podium was supported. Minor comments were made about refining the tower top, and about the Pender and Hastings Streets' elevations which needed to be woven together better on Nicola Street.

4.	6:30 pm	Address:	1114 Comox Street (Mole Hill)
		DA:	404742
		Use:	Residential
		Zoning:	RM-5B
		Application Status:	Complete
		Architect:	Sean McEwen
		Owner:	City of Vancouver
		Review:	First
		Delegation:	Sean McEwan; Norm Hotson; Don Luxton; Peter Kreuk
		Staff:	Scot Hein

EVALUATION: (5 - 0)

- Introduction:** The City, who owns the houses and has an innovative partnership with the Province, has a strong role in this complete application for financing renovations, and ongoing operation with Molehill Community Housing Society and B.C. Housing. There has been a lot of public process. Both Council and staff are highly supportive. The project has been to the Heritage Commission and will return with more detail. The site is a full block in the West End, with Victorian/Edwardian streetscapes of the 34 houses built between 1888 and 1942, of which five privately owned. Phase I is renovation of 10 houses. The 68 units of affordable housing of various sizes will recognize the form and sensitivity of the existing walls in these houses. The new aspect of construction is egress stairs on the rear. Amenity uses for the community will be located in the lane. The block is flanked by the 'book-ends' of a 1910 apartment at the west end, and the future project of Dr. Peter's Hospice to the east on Comox Street. The Panel's input is sought early in the process on the new construction and integration with the existing heritage houses, particularly the stairs; the notion of block planning, as relates to the four versions of the Comox Street closure; landscaping of the historical streetscape, a proposed request for a parking relaxation; and also, the proposed uses indicated, as well as others ideas, like infill opportunities. Suggestions on the relationship with Nelson Park would assist in further discussion with the Park Board
- Applicant's Opening Comments:**
 Mr. McEwan said Phase 1 of Mole Hill Housing is the first 10 houses on the block and there are another 16 City-owned houses for Phase II. B.C. Housing is involved. The idea evolved that all the houses should be preserved in situ: none of them should be moved, nor any spot demolishing of non-heritage houses on the block take place. The intact streetscape is important as the houses were built as working houses, and some of them have been lodging houses for 100 years, which is a tradition to be built on. A similar block of houses was demolished to make the open space of Nelson Park. They have benefited from benign neglect and have interesting heritage interiors to preserve, while creating as many livable units as possible with private bathrooms and some cooking facilities. Undeveloped basement can be a 2-or 3-bedroom garden units, a potential for family occupation; 2-bedroom units on the main floor; studio and one-bedroom on the second, and then there is the attic.

Mr. Loxton said they can achieve a high level of heritage authenticity, particularly with the street facade. The 'True Colours' program of the Heritage Conservation Foundation researched the original colour schemes of each house and found a consistent palette for the Victorian (lighter bodies with dark trim) and Edwardian (darker bodies and light trim) buildings which will be used to bring back the original appearance.

Mr. McEwan spoke further to the alterations - the applique of stairs for emergency access. There are two options: one attaches decks, dedicated to one unit or common, and the second to locate the decks

in the area of the side yards which would have less visual impact on the rear elevations of the houses.

Mr. Hotson said developing a block plan that creates more of a community focus to the 'living lane' (33 ft. in width versus standard 20 ft.) is the objective, addressing safety and security issues. There is a daycare in a trailer owned by B.C.B.C. which could be moved to the existing home with a big yard. Then, with that lot vacant, there is a cruciform shape of pathways intersecting the block site and a community square could be at the centre. Improvements are to be done to the sewers which may be an opportunity, as funds are not in place for the lane restoration. Currently, the overhead wiring is a jungle on both sides of the lane. Undergrounding is expensive but the wires could possibly be combined on one set of poles. Both outdoor and indoor spaces are possible for a number of activities.

Old garages can be recycled and new ones built for car repairs and maintenance; tool and potting sheds; communal laundry; and recycling, etc.

The Comox elevation is important because it the a wide open space in front of it, Nelson Park. The block as a whole and its heritage streetscape with the pattern of street trees, sidewalks and curb lines, is what needs to be considered, in the context of the east-west flow of traffic in the area. A major issue is the parking and a formal parking relaxation may be requested. Some of the current residents are members of the existing West End car co-op, and, eventually, the 180 to 200 units are anticipated to require the relaxation for one space per six units for a total of 30 parking spaces. The landscape concept is being generated by historical postcards - simple with formal hedges, picket fences, etc. and there are a number of significant trees to be retained. The backyards will have low privacy fences pulled back from the lane. The lane has to continue to operate on a day to day basis, for utilities, servicing, possibly deliveries, etc. so some kind of traffic calming measures will need to be used.

Should Comox remain as a functioning street and what form and character it might take? There are four versions for degrees of reduced traffic, from no change to complete closure to vehicles. There are varying viewpoints for this significant streetscape and destination in the City.

- **Panel's Comments:**

The Panel was fully supportive for this fine example of integrating social needs, historical preservation and innovative development planning. There was a suggestion that the approach to the stairs could be whimsical, with a finer sense of detail, and they could in the side-yards to let in the sun.

There were two versions of stairways: one set designed and executed similarly, and the other sets individual responses to their context, and there was concurrence with Heritage Commission's opinion.

A member said infill was important as more housing is needed to generate funds to keep the project going. The Chair commented that the 'bookends' at each end of the block were a real challenge in terms of privacy and livability interfaces, and other members said the Dr. Peter project needs to be designed sensitively as it will have a big impact but stepped-up in scale to relate to the inordinately large St. Paul's Hospital. The seismic upgrading was an excellent idea. A member said the lane was the backbone of the development, - the more life pumped into it, the less traffic- and another that it should be kept as narrow as possible but left open. Two members said the garbage was a critical issue and should be enclosed on the lane. The block planning was considered necessary and funding should be there. Another comment was that this project would be big revenue generator for the City as the location would be good for shooting movies - so take the wires down. A parking relaxation was supported, as was Option 2: removing some of the parking and narrowing Comox Street to widen the boulevard as keeping the street tied to the history of the houses is important. A question was asked if Comox was wide enough to go with angle parking. The Chair commented that Option 5 for Comox Street, as referred to verbally by the applicant, was a good solution, particularly with narrowing the pavement at the entry points and introducing landscaping so people would know they have entered a different realm. A neighbourhood in Portland was referred to as a successful example

of this technique. He also suggested the through-links become pedestrian streets to the lane which is where the activities are, with side access to the neighbouring houses (with area appended from the adjacent 33 ft. vacant lot) but still ensuring safety and privacy with hedges and fencing - like paths to the sea-side with narrow widths of 4 ft. One Panel member suggested there should be a plaque to explain to people that the project was accomplished with public money and the community's energetic input.

- **Applicant's Response:**
The applicant thanked the Panel for their comments.