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## URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

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**DATE:** January 27, 1999

**TIME:** 4.00 p.m.

**PLACE:** Committee Room #1, City Hall

**PRESENT:** MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:  
Joyce Drohan (Chair)  
Patricia Campbell  
James Hancock  
Joseph Hruda  
Peter Kreuk (excused Item #1)  
Sean McEwan  
Jim McLean  
Norman Shearing (excused Item #2)  
Peter Wreglesworth (present for #1 and #2 only)

**REGRETS:** Sheldon Chandler  
Per Christoffersen  
Geoff Glotman

**RECORDING  
SECRETARY:** Carol Hubbard

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ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING
1. 1177 West Pender Street
2. 1055 West 41st Avenue
3. 1983 Blenheim Street

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1. Address: 1177 West Pender Street  
DA: 403824  
Use: Mixed (17 storeys)  
Zoning: DD  
Application Status: Preliminary  
Architect: Musson Cattell Mackey & Zeidler  
Owner: Shorehill Investments Ltd.  
Review: First  
Delegation: Mark Whitehead, Jim Paul  
Staff: Mike Kemble
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**EVALUATION: SUPPORT (7-0)**

- **Introduction:** This application was presented by Mike Kemble, Development Planner. The site is located in the Downtown District, in a transition block between the Central Business District and Triangle West. Maximum permitted density is 7.0 FSR (6.0 office, 1.0 retail or other), maximum height is 300 ft. The application involves two sites. The westerly site contains an office building (to be retained) and the easterly site is for the proposed new development. The application seeks a transfer of unused density (2.0 FSR) from the westerly site to the easterly site, as well as a ten percent heritage density transfer based on the combined area of both sites, for which a single site covenant will be required. The combined site frontage is 132 ft.

The proposal is for a 17-storey office building with retail at grade on Pender Street and some retail on Hastings Street. The proposed height is 240 ft. and total density approximately 8.8 FSR. The tower floor plate size is 9,400 sq.ft., set back at the corners to allow views through. There is also a certain amount of terracing and sculpting on the upper portion of the building. Following a description of the proposal, Mr. Kemble noted the areas in which the advice of the Panel is sought, namely, the grade level treatment and pedestrian amenity on Pender and Hastings Streets; tower massing (separation from its neighbours, tower width, and whether this site can successfully accept the additional density); and general landscaping treatments.

- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Mark Whitehead, Architect, briefly reviewed the proposed development and the design rationale.
- **Panel's Comments:** Following a review of the model and posted drawings, the Panel commented as follows:

The Panel unanimously supported this preliminary application. It was generally felt it had the potential to be a very good project. The Panel supported the proposed height and density, and thought the north-south pedestrian route through the block would be a valuable open space amenity for this neighbourhood.

With respect to the grade level interfaces, the Panel felt there were opportunities for much better continuity between the proposed new building and its neighbour to the west, particularly given the common ownership. At present, there seem to be some rather arbitrary relationships in the façade treatment that should be reconsidered to tie the two buildings together more strongly. Continuity in the landscape treatment was also encouraged, including extending the street trees to the adjacent site.

Given the prominence of this block in the downtown, the Panel suggested there is a good opportunity here to develop a comprehensive streetscape that will knit the local fabric back together, noting also the new hotel development that is happening at the easterly end of this block.

There were several comments made about the massing of the retail component on Pender Street which was thought to be too small and out of scale with the context. The architectural expression at the lower levels was considered a weak point.

There was general support for the tower massing, with encouragement for reinforcement with choice of materials and detailing. There was one suggestion for a stronger horizontal relationship with the neighbouring building. There was also an endorsement for the current heights of the Pender Street massing which helps to make the transition to the higher neighbouring buildings. One Panel member recommended a more exuberant approach to the treatment of the mechanical penthouse.

Concern was expressed about the potential for success of the proposed retail on the Hastings Street side. The lack of a secondary entrance to the building lobby from Hastings was also thought to be a missed opportunity for enlivening this street.

There were some concerns expressed about the tightness of the 36 ft. separation, and a suggestion for design development in those places where windows face windows.

With respect to landscape, the Panel thought the second floor roof decks would not be well used. It was suggested they be treated more as landscaped areas for visual amenity. With respect to the walkway, it was suggested it could be broken up and made less linear. In general, it was suggested this project might take a more aggressive approach to its landscape treatment, in keeping with a few buildings in the area which feature very strong landscaping.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Whitehead said he appreciated the Panel's comments which he found very helpful. He agreed they will be looking at the streetscape and will respond to the Panel's comments about the massing on the lower levels. With respect to the 36 ft. separation, he noted it will still be possible to see beyond the buildings on either side. This will be analysed further as the project proceeds. They will also follow up on the landscape details.

2. Address: 1055 West 41st Avenue  
Use: Mixed  
Zoning: CD-1  
Application Status: Rezoning  
Architect: Neale, Staniszki, Doll, Adams  
Owner: Louis Brier Home & Hospital  
Review: First  
Delegation: Jerry Doll, Kim Perry, Ken Levitt, Hershey Porte  
Staff: Lynda Challis/Eric Fiss
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**EVALUATION: SUPPORT (7-0)**

- **Introduction:** Lynda Challis, Rezoning Planner, introduced this application to permit an addition to the existing Louis Brier Home & Hospital. The site is in the Oakridge-Langara area and is bounded by Oak Street, Osler Street, 41st Avenue and a lane. The site currently contains a 2-storey care facility and surface parking for 82 vehicles. The neighbouring RS-5 zone development consists of 2 - 2½-storey single family homes. The proposed rezoning would add a 3-storey mixed use building to the site, in the area currently occupied by surface parking. The building will contain 60 units of congregate housing and multilevel care units, an adult daycare and common areas. 106 parking spaces are provided in one level of underground parking. The Oakridge-Langara policy statement suggests a maximum height of 40 ft. along Oak Street and 30 ft. along Osler Street.

Staff support the proposed uses and density. The proposed height of 35 ft. is greater than suggested in the policy. However, at the time the Oakridge-Langara policy was developed the site was zoned RS-1, which is reflected in the suggested maximum height of 30 ft. Since that time the site and the surrounding area have been rezoned to RS-5. Staff support the increased height.

The areas in which the advice of the Panel is sought relate to the setback along 41st Avenue, landscaping, in particular the existing mature trees and hedge, and the relationship of the building to the residential streetscape along Osler Street. The Development Planner, Eric Fiss, requested the Panel's comments on the disposition of the density on the site.

- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Jerry Doll, Architect, noted this project will be funded entirely from private sources. He briefly described the project and Kim Perry described the landscape plan.
- **Panel's Comments:** Following a review of the model and posted drawings, the Panel commented as follows:

The Panel unanimously supported this rezoning application. The Panel strongly supported the proposed use and acknowledged the lack of government funding for the project. The Panel also agreed that a project of this type warranted the proposed density and felt this was likely the only way it could be accommodated.

The applicant was commended for the high quality of the design. The architectural expression was considered to be quite neighbourly and compatible with the adjacent RS-5 zone while being distinct from the existing building on the site. One Panel member noted that while it would be possible to reduce the slope of the roof in order to lower the overall height it would adversely affect its visual

quality and was not recommended. Given the length of the building along Osler it was recommended that every effort be made to further break down the scale of this elevation.

There were mixed comments about the setback along 41st Avenue. It was generally thought to be a bit tight, although the efforts to retain the large tree at the end were appreciated. One suggestion was to reconfigure the building to have its main address and entry court on 41st Avenue, and to consider more carefully how the tightness of this condition could be improved. While the Panel supported retaining the tree, it was also suggested that perhaps this should ultimately be a neighbourhood decision.

The majority of Panel members thought the setback on Osler Street was quite tight, but acceptable. One Panel member commented that it really only impacts one house on Osler, and the proposed new brick wall and hedge provides an attractive outlook. One Panel member said he would support a recommendation to increase the setback on Osler if the neighbours were strongly opposed.

With respect to the floor plans, it was noted there are a number of internal dens or bedrooms with no windows.

The Panel expressed regret about the loss of the mature hedge, although acknowledged the rationale for its removal in terms of creating a sense of security for the residents. There were several suggestions to look for opportunities to relocate some of it elsewhere on the site, particularly on the lane side. There was strong support for the proposed low wall and hedge treatment, which will go a long way to alleviating the loss of the original hedge. It also has the added benefit of providing some noise attenuation. In general, the Panel felt quite positively about the landscape and open space treatment.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Doll said the Panel had some good suggestions about the building frontage which will be taken into consideration. The possibility of retaining or relocating portions of the hedge will also be investigated. He explained that the issue of reconfiguring along 41st will be more difficult to deal with, noting they are trying to establish a residential treatment facing Osler Street. He explained that access to the adult daycare is actually through the underground parking garage and the entrance on 41st is intended more as its street address.

3. Address:	1983 Blenheim Street
DA:	403776
Use:	Mixed (4 storeys, 22 units)
Zoning:	C-2
Application Status:	Complete
Architect:	Creekside Architects Ltd.
Owner:	Marpole Development Ltd.
Review:	First
Delegation:	Don Andrew
Staff:	Scot Hein

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**EVALUATION: SUPPORT (4-3)**

- **Introduction:** Scot Hein, Development Planner, presented this application in the C-2 zone. In accordance with Council's June 1998 directive, the Panel's advice is sought on architectural quality and general design response to the zoning and guidelines. Following a brief description of the site, Mr. Hein reviewed the proposal which is for a 4-storey mixed use building containing 22 residential units with approx. 3,000 sq.ft. of commercial use along West 4th Avenue and about half way along Blenheim Street.

The advice of the Panel is sought in the following areas:

- FSR, noting that it is a corner site and that the upper guideline limit of 2.2 residential refers to the three upper floors (2 additional units at grade in this application);
  - residential use fronting Blenheim and aspects of privacy/recessed open space/landscaping;
  - the general approach to massing, facade articulation/modulation and corner expression;
  - rear yard setbacks; and
  - general landscape quality.
- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Don Andrew, Architect, noted they were able to negotiate with the owners of the adjacent property, now under construction, to share the parking ramp, which has allowed for an improved the appearance of the back of the building. He briefly described the project and the design rationale.
  - **Panel's Comments:** Following a review of the model and posted drawings, the Panel commented as follows:

The Panel supported the proposed FSR. It was felt that a corner site such as this can accept this density, and this proposal illustrates that it is appropriate. The advantage of the shared ramp condition was noted. The general quality of the building was also supported, with a number of comments. The Panel's main concerns related to the form and character of the building, and the residential use on Blenheim Street.

The Panel had mixed views on the architectural expression, some feeling it is adding yet another character statement to the already very eclectic mix along 4th Avenue, and others that it is probably appropriate for its context. There were a few specific comments about the façade treatment. The vertical expression of the windows at the second and third floors was considered confusing because it

fails to reflect what is happening inside. The Panel also found troubling the symmetrical treatment of the north and south façades, given they have completely different conditions. It was generally felt that some of the elements should be looked at more carefully, in particular the cornice which could be heavier and more articulated, and the glazed canopy at the street level. One Panel member thought some of the problem might be resulting from the rigid adherence to the 40 ft. height in order to avoid reporting to Council (on this as well as other C-2 projects), which is unfortunate because the building needs some articulation at the roof. A major concern with the architectural expression was also to do with the relationship to the adjacent building to the west where it was felt that a lot more was needed to make a better connection. At present this relationship is unresolved. There was also some discomfort with the appropriateness of the highly urban expression in this Kitsilano neighbourhood which has more of a residential expression. The painted window trim was questioned.

Several Panel members felt this building warranted stronger treatment at the corner, noting its important role in defining the edge of the park.

There were mixed opinions on the setback. Some supported the setback as proposed and the fact that it maintains the integrity of the block. Others were concerned about the impact on the rear yards across the lane, both in terms of perception and actual overshadowing. There was a recommendation to study this aspect of the setback in C-2.

With respect to the residential units on Blenheim Street, the Panel seriously questioned whether they could be successful. The privacy and livability of these units is seriously compromised. Several Panel members suggested that professional offices or some kind of live/work use would be a much better alternative in this location.

Regarding the landscape, several Panel members suggested the boulevard along Blenheim could be extended towards 4th Avenue, with an additional street tree and possibly other landscape elements along the border. The amount of planting on the second floor decks could also be increased to help buffer the two uses and help to give the lane a more residential character. Increasing the size of the planters will help reduce the impact for the residences to the north. Pocket planting at the lane was also recommended. In general, the Panel felt the lane needed a much softer treatment. Several Panel members commented that the lanescape appears to have benefitted little from the advantage of the shared ramp, and suggestions were made to remove one of the parking stalls.

It was noted that further work is needed on unit plans for the B units, and a suggestion that more could be done with the fan light in unit E1.

The applicant was complimented for the use of concrete in this project.

- **Applicant's Response:** With respect to the lane treatment, Mr. Andew stressed the proposal is a big improvement over the usual situation which has a parking ramp at the lane, noting they are still required to provide exits from the building, garbage areas and loading bays. He agreed it could be more sensitively treated, although the loss of a parking space would have a very negative impact on the project. He agreed they could review the size of the planting at the second floor terrace on the lane. They could also undertake a section study to determine the impact on the residential neighbours to the immediate north. He noted the residential use at the ground floor has been driven by the guidelines and they would support an alternative use in this particular location.