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## URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

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**DATE:** January 28, 2009

**TIME:** 4.00 pm

**PLACE:** Committee Room No. 1, City Hall

**PRESENT:** MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:  
John Wall, Chair  
Tom Bunting  
Gerry Eckford  
Walter Francl  
David Godin  
Bill Harrison  
Maurice Pez  
Douglas Watts

**REGRETS:**  
Albert Bicol  
Richard Henry  
Martin Nielsen  
Mark Ostry

**RECORDING  
SECRETARY:** Lorna Harvey

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ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING	
1.	3351 West 4 <sup>th</sup> Avenue

**BUSINESS MEETING**

Chair Wall called the meeting to order at 4:15 p.m. and noted the presence of a quorum. There being no New Business the meeting considered applications as scheduled for presentation.

1. Address: 3351 West 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
 DE: 412584  
 Description: To construct a 4-storey retail/residential building with eight mechanically accessed parking spaces at the rear having lane access.  
 Zoning: C-2  
 Application Status: Complete  
 Architect: Lang Wilson Practice in Architecture Culture  
 Owner: Intelligent City Capital Corp.  
 Review: First  
 Delegation: Oliver Lang, Lang Wilson Practice in Architecture  
 Jeff Cutler, Source2Place Design Inc.  
 Staff: Ralph Segal/Sailen Black

**EVALUATION: SUPPORT (7-0)**

- **Introduction:** Ralph Segal, Senior Architect/Development Planner, introduced the proposal which is across the street from McBride Park on West 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue. The lot is 33 feet wide and presents a significant challenge yet and opportunity to provide a range of housing that might fall into the more affordable category. Mr. Segal described the context for the area noting that the block could redevelop in the future. The development will have ground floor commercial. Mr. Segal noted that the commercial frontage on the remainder of the block is viable. The design calls for a courtyard which has the advantage of adding light and natural ventilation to the suites. Mr. Segal described the zoning guidelines for C-2. The building envelope calls for a three storey massing and a fourth floor setback with the rear elevation having a series of terraces. The proposal seeks a relaxation of the top floor setback on the front façade to the property line. Some height relaxation is also sought by the applicant. Useable roof decks are proposed with some urban agriculture. In terms of liveability of the suites, they are being configured to gain flexibility so that they can be well used by the residents. The courtyard is not very generous but it does step back at the upper floors to maximize the amount of light. Mr. Segal noting that a stacking system will be used to allow for six parking spaces and a loading bay is required for the retail.

Advice from the Panel on this application is sought on the following:

- Is the front setback and height relaxation being sought supportable;
  - Is the overall fit of the proposal with the urban context of the West 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue streetscape supportable;
  - Is there an impact of the development on adjacent residential sites;
  - Does the blank party wall condition need improving;
  - Does the design contribute to pedestrian interest and amenity;
  - Is the overall liveability of the suites supportable?
- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** Oliver Lang, Architect, further described the proposal noting that they addressed liveability, sustainability and affordability in the design of the project. The challenge was to make the suites liveable with light and air and to allow for parking on site. Regarding sustainability, Mr. Lang noted that they are looking at geothermal, adding as much outdoor green space as possible and sliding screens on the

south facing façade. They also planned the suites to have two sides and so the courtyard topography became important. He added that costs have been reduced through prefabrication and as well using a stacking system for parking.

Jeff Cutler, Landscape Architect, described the landscape plans noting that it is a small urban lot. Most of the landscaping is in the courtyard and Mr. Cutler noted that they will be using shade tolerant plantings as the courtyard will not receive a lot of light. The back decks will have some tall ornamental grasses in the planters with a green roof on the top courtyard as well as some gathering spaces.

The applicant team took questions from the Panel.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
  - Consider further design development to the street façade including the integration of signage, stronger definition of the residential entry and passive solar shading for south facing units;
  - Consider adding more colour to the building;
  - Consider CPTED issues for the rear lane exit;
- **Related Commentary:** The Panel supported the proposal and thought the building was a unique and refreshing infill for the neighbourhood. They noted that the building form fits in with the varied context on 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

The Panel agreed that it was a highly supportable scheme with lots of innovation and a great design. The Panel supported the height relaxation and site setback relaxation as they thought it would not be a hindrance to the neighbouring building. The Panel noted that detailing would be crucial in order to make for a successful project. One Panel member suggested a bit more articulation on the top floor setback to soften the façade.

Although the Panel acknowledged that the courtyard was tight, they thought it was workable and thought that screens and plantings would add privacy. The Panel thought the suites were very liveable and that there was an opportunity to provide for some affordable units. A couple of Panel members noted that the applicant needed to do something with articulating the residential entry as they felt it was awkward. However, another panel member thought that the pedestrian interest would be defined by the architectural details.

Some of the Panel suggested the applicant add more colour on the building as they thought it would appear austere with all the glass and steel facing the street. One Panel member suggested using wood windows. Another Panel member thought the sidewalls needed to be crisp and clean as they would be seen from other buildings. There was also some concern regarding CPTED issues.

The Panel supported the proposed parking stalls for eight cars with several Panel members suggesting six might be enough. Most of the Panel supported the use of a mechanical system for parking but a couple of Panel members suggested the applicant look at other solutions too with a couple of Panel members noting that it wasn't the most friendly solution for the neighbours because of the possibility of machinery noise. Most of the Panel felt a loading bay was not necessary noting that most commercial establishments use street parking. Staff noted that a loading bay was required by Engineering Services even though it wasn't included in the proposal by the applicant. A couple of Panel members also noted that there needed to be some lane access to the garbage if there was a restaurant in the building.

Several Panel members noted that the south façade needed some shading. Also a couple of Panel members noted that the applicant needed to consider signage and how it will integrate with the architecture.

Regarding the landscaping, the Panel supported the plans with one Panel member suggesting that street trees should be added. The Panel agreed that the applicant had a good sustainable strategy for the project with several Panel members noting the roof access.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Lang thanked the Panel adding that they will take care of the details. They are trying to address the affordability issue for this part of the city. Mr. Cutler also thanked the Panel for their comments noting that this could be a prototype for more affordable housing.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 6:02 p.m.