

URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: January 5, 2005

TIME: 4.00 pm

PLACE: Committee Room No. 1, City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
Bruce Haden, Chair
Mark Ostry (Item 1 and Item 2 intro only)
Larry Adams
Robert Barnes
Jeffrey Corbett
Alan Endall
Marta Farevaag (excused Item 2)
Ronald Lea
Margot Long (Item 1 only)
Jennifer Marshall
Brian Martin

REGRETS: Steven Keyes

**RECORDING
SECRETARY:** Carol Hubbard

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING	
1.	1178 West Pender Street
2.	290 East 51st Avenue/6810 Main Street

1. Address:	1178 West Pender Street
DE:	408949
Use:	Mixed (28 storeys, 146 units)
Zoning:	DD
Application Status:	Complete
Architect:	Hancock Bruckner Eng & Wright
Owner:	Pinnacle International Lands
Review:	First
Delegation:	Stanley Kwok, Martin Bruckner, Peter Kreuk
Staff:	Ralph Segal

EVALUATION: NON-SUPPORT (0-10)

- **Introduction:** Ralph Segal, Development Planner, presented this application in the Downtown District. The zoning permits a maximum FSR of 7.0, of which the maximum permitted residential FSR is 3.0. The application proposes 7.7 FSR which includes a ten percent heritage density transfer. Just under 4.0 FSR (52,600 sq.ft.) of commercial density is being transferred from this site to the neighbouring 1211 Melville Street site (the Ritz), the rezoning application for which was unanimously supported by the Panel on December 8, 2004. City policy encourages retail commercial space in this part of the Downtown and this transfer of commercial density is supported by staff because it allows for larger retail tenancies on the 1211 Melville site.

This application also proposes a daycare as a community amenity contribution, in exchange for which additional residential density of 4.0 FSR is being sought to the total maximum 7.0 FSR (plus 0.7 heritage density transfer). A small amount of commercial space is also included at grade on the West Pender Street frontage. The City has identified the need for a daycare in this part of the downtown and supports its inclusion in this development.

The main issues relate to whether this site can accommodate 7.7 FSR and the separation from The Melville which does not meet the 80 ft. separation normally sought for downtown towers. It was recognized there would be a tower of this site when The Melville was developed.

The advice of the Panel is sought on the following:

- Whether the site can accommodate 7.7 FSR;
 - Tower separation, particularly with respect to privacy issues;
 - General tower form response to the site, including both the triangular opportunity and the streetscape view on Pender;
 - Reinforcement of the Bute Street high street concept;
 - The daycare.
- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Martin Bruckner, Architect, described the design rationale and the applicant team responded to questions from the Panel.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - Re-shape the tower to maintain, or come very close to, the 80 ft. separation for all inhabited space;
 - Consider moving the east tower façade further east and/or increasing the building height;
 - Consider more emphasis on the flatiron form in part by stronger architectural emphasis on the Bute/Pender corner;
 - Design development to the soft and hard landscape at grade especially on Bute Street;
 - Maximize sun access to the daycare exterior;
 - Include outdoor amenity space for the residents (could be accomplished by a time-share strategy with the daycare or development of the roof.)
- **Related Commentary:**

The Panel strongly supported the daycare and found the spaces very well thought out. The daycare parking and drop-off arrangements off the lane were also strongly supported. It was suggested the arrival to the daycare needed some attention, with the addition of some weather protection recommended for the third floor exterior access. Most Panel members thought the daycare outdoor spaces would have good sun access, although one Panel member recommended detailed shadow analysis to confirm, noting that mid-morning and mid-afternoon are generally critical times for outdoor play.

The Panel was unable to support this application due to major concerns about the proposed density and the proximity of the tower to The Melville. The Panel did not believe the 80 ft. minimum tower separation should be compromised and possibly set a precedent for other developments. It was stressed that the 80 ft. separation has been a long-standing policy in the downtown and is one of the reasons Vancouver has a very livable mix of towers in the downtown. Most Panel members thought 7.0 FSR could still be achieved on this site, as well as the extra ten percent heritage density, but did not think it had yet been demonstrated. Reshaping the current form will be required and a clear demonstration provided that all the constraints of the site can be adequately addressed. Adjustments reflecting more of the flatiron form to the west were recommended. It was suggested that relocating some of the massing to the east would offer a better balance of compromise between privacy and maintenance of the view corridor. There was a suggestion that shifting the tower eastward would enable the daycare to be relocated more to the west for better light and sun access. One Panel member also suggested some of the density could be accommodated in a shoulder to the tower, which would also allow for the daycare to be higher, with better light access. In addition to the privacy issues raised by the tower's proximity to The Melville, one Panel member also thought it looked too crowded and took away from the prominence of The Melville as a special building in this area of the downtown.

The Panel was disappointed there was no semi private outdoor space provided for the residents and suggested this could be addressed by a time-share arrangement with the daycare to share some of its outdoor space. The roof could also be developed for semi private outdoor amenity space.

The Panel found the public realm treatment to be generally well handled and was pleased to note the attention now being given to the Pender streetscape. There was a call by one Panel member for the public realm generally to take precedence, including continuous street trees without gaps at private entrances. The applicant was commended for the thorough landscape plan. A very strong landscape presence was recommended for Bute Street. More landscaping in the lane was recommended as well as providing greater activity and surveillance in the lane. There may also be an opportunity to strengthen the pedestrian connection across the lane. Another suggestion on the ground plane was that it seems a missed opportunity to create two parallel walkways on Bute rather than opening up to a single plaza.

There were no concerns about how the project addresses the Bute "high street" concept, although one Panel member noted the various plans all show different approaches to the corner. A strong response to the corner and the triangular shape of the site was recommended. Some Panel members suggested taking cues from the flatiron building to the west in terms of its formal relationship to Pender and Bute Streets.

Other comments/suggestions about the architectural expression included:

- the curve along Pender Street is so slight it is almost unnoticeable and could be dispensed with;
- the architectural resolution of the lane elevation seems weak;
- there could be a stronger formal relationship between the south side of the building and the laneway;
- the tower expression is not unified; perhaps the tower massing needs to come to the ground or the tower/podium relationship expressed more boldly;
- reducing the width of the tower front to back will make the building more dynamic and make the whole tower expression more exciting;
- the diagonal trusses on the canopy seem a bit overpowering;
- the tower needs greater clarity in terms of the patterning of the elements on both the south and north elevations;
- wrapping of the front façade around the side elevations is a bit disappointing - the sides are interesting because of their proportions;
- there is a need for greater order and relationship to the tower; some of the elements on the façade seem somewhat arbitrary;
- the entry to the residential tower on Pender Street is a bit bland;
- the podium should have a stronger, more unified look so that it is very distinct from the tower.

2. Address:	290 East 51st Avenue/6810 Main Street
DE:	409020
Use:	Community Centre
Zoning:	RS-1
Application Status:	Complete
Architect:	Bing Thom
Owner:	City of Vancouver
Review:	First
Delegation:	Bing Thom, Chris Phillips, Arno Matis
Staff:	Bob Adair

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (7-0)

- **Introduction:** Bob Adair, Development Planner, introduced this application for a new Sunset Community Centre. The site comprises about four city blocks between Main and Prince Edward and 51st and 53rd Avenues and is under the jurisdiction of the Park Board. It currently contains a greenhouse facility and works yard for the Park Board and the Sunset Ice Rink. The existing community centre will be demolished when the new facility is built. There is also a neighbouring school which makes use of the community centre. The surrounding area is mostly single family residential and to the north on Main Street is the end of the Punjabi market C-2 zone.

The facilities include a gymnasium, multi purpose spaces, fitness centre and a youth activity centre. The main entry is at the westerly end of the east-west axis. There is a surface parking lot accessed from West 53rd Avenue. To the north is a plaza which provides some view into the greenhouse area. The southern end of the spine terminates in a passive green open space for recreational use.

Materials include concrete structural walls for the spine and some of the exterior walls and an extensive glazed and spandrel panel wall system. The roof is a membrane system.

The advice of the Panel is sought on the following:

- Macro circulation patterns; access from the surrounding residential neighbourhood and the existing school and ice rink;
 - Concept and handling of the plaza at the northwest corner;
 - Siting of the main entry on 52nd Avenue;
 - Roof system and its visibility from the surrounding neighbourhood.
- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Bing Thom, Architect, briefly reviewed the overall planning concepts and the applicant team responded to questions from the Panel.
 - **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - Design development to the northwest corner (while maintaining trees, if possible) to recognize pedestrian desire lines and the adjacent urban condition of Main Street;
 - Design development to improve parking drop-off to shorten the unprotected walk;
 - Reduce opaque planting along street edges to improve sight lines to the park;
 - Clarify the entry strategy with respect to emergency use, daily use or ceremonial use;

- Consider increasing the distance between the westernmost greenhouse and the building;
- Consider a green roof as part of the sustainable design strategy.
- **Related Commentary:**

The Panel unanimously supported this application and commended the architects and the City for embracing such a forward-looking project. The new community centre will be a welcome addition to the neighbourhood.

The Panel's concerns related to access and site circulation. The good macro analysis done in this regard was acknowledged but the Panel thought it had not yet been sufficiently carried through to the next stage. In particular, the east-west axis which has been set up needs to be resolved in terms of the future east-west connections. It is currently offset and is one of the weakest parts in the site planning. The pick-up and drop-off from the parking lot was also thought to need more design development to shorten the distance to the entry and/or provide some weather protection. Some Panel members found the entries a bit confusing and unclear which was intended to be the primary entry. There was a recommendation to give greater consideration to the neighbouring commercial area of Main Street, opening up the Main Street entry more to the street in a more urban fashion.

The Panel found the plaza at the northwest corner in need of better resolution with respect to its connection to the main entry to the building, noting that this will likely not end up functioning as the main entrance. There were also concerns about the permeability of the north plaza and the need to ensure it is well lit at night. The concept of bringing the nursery out to the street and expressing the use and history of the site was strongly endorsed. There was a suggestion to consider making some greenhouse space available for local community gardeners.

The Panel applauded the commitment to sustainable design but was disappointed that it does not include a green roof. The applicant was urged to make all or part of it "green", particularly in the context of the nursery.

One Panel member questioned whether there might be greater articulation of the components (the five "leaves") in addressing orientation and program to give the building more presence. With respect to the two axes running through the building, there was a recommendation to increase its width to 8 - 10 ft.

Some Panel members found the relationship of the gymnasium to the first greenhouse to be a bit tight and awkward, suggesting the removal or relocation of this smaller greenhouse would also contribute to improving the east-west access.

The Panel strongly supported the green space for community use but emphasized that must be permeable to be safe. In this regard, the dilemma of maintaining the existing hedge was acknowledged. This will need careful study to ensure that unbroken expanses of the hedge can be preserved while ensuring security of the green space.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Thom thanked the Panel for its insightful comments and said they are committed to resolve the issues.