
URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: January 9, 2002

TIME: 4.00 p.m.

PLACE: Committee Room No. 1, City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
Tom Bunting, Chair (present for Item 2 only)
Walter Francl, Chair (Item 1)
Jeffrey Corbett
Lance Berelowitz
Gerry Eckford (excused Item 2)
Alan Endall
Bruce Hemstock
Richard Henry
Joseph Hruda
Jack Lutsky
Sorin Tatomir

REGRETS: Maurice Pez

**RECORDING
SECRETARY:** Carol Hubbard

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING	
1.	1011 Richards Street
2.	8982 Hudson Street

1. Address:	1011 Richards Street
DA:	406304
Use:	Residential (23 storeys, 184 units)
Zoning:	DD
Application Status:	Complete
Architect:	Hancock Bruckner Eng & Wright
Owner:	Polygon Development 65 Ltd.
Review:	First
Delegation:	Jim Hancock, Andre Chilcott, Joe Fry
Staff:	Jonathan Barrett

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (9-0)

- **Introduction:** The application was presented by Jonathan Barrett, Development Planner. He briefly reviewed the immediate context of the site. He noted a recently approved application for the adjacent 1010 Richards Street included a ten percent heritage density transfer, for which the floorplate size was relaxed. Similar density transfer and floorplate relaxation are sought for this application. This site is restricted by view cones which has determined the location of the tower at the corner of Nelson and Richards Streets. Mr. Barrett briefly reviewed the proposal and noted the following areas in which the advice of the Panel is sought:
 - whether the increase in the floorplate can be accommodated in this context;
 - whether the location of the tower meets livability standards;
 - whether visual interest is provided by the proposed amenity space along Nelson Street;
 - livability issues relating to the proposed single storey townhouse units with two storey units above;
 - general character of the building;
 - whether this proposal conforms to the emerging landscape pattern for Nelson Street;
 - whether the “bamboo slot” at the corner addresses CPTED issues and whether it appropriately completes the Nelson Street facade and screens the view down the lane.
- **Applicant’s Opening Comments:** Jim Hancock, Architect, noted the proposed amenity space on Nelson Street is similar to that provided on 1010 Richards Street. It will display art and will be very open and transparent. Andrew Chilcott briefly described the intent of the project and Joe Fry provided some comments about the landscape plan.
- **Panel’s Comments:** The Panel unanimously supported this application.

The Panel strongly supported the floorplate size as proposed and thought the tower was located appropriately on the site. It exceeds the Downtown South guideline recommendation for tower separation and causes no livability concerns. One Panel member thought the relationship of the townhouse facade to the tower facade along Richards Street could be resolved better where the spandrel panel of the tower’s first floor is effectively the cornice for the top of the townhouse.

Some Panel members commented that the siting of this tower is contributing to a uniquely defined urban corner, in marked contrast to the usual pattern of politely staggered towers in Downtown South. It was suggested that a future fourth tower should be required to impose itself on the corner, creating a dramatic statement at this important and busy intersection.

The majority of Panel members had concerns about bedrooms on the ground floor of the single storey

units and did not support them. Some suggestions for dealing with them, if they are retained, included, creating a secure forecourt to the bedrooms, using dark coloured glass, and increasing the amount of landscaping. It was noted the raised terrace for these units is very narrow. With some manipulation this could be expanded, providing a more significant separation and privacy barrier as well as creating a more usable private outdoor space for the ground floor units. Another suggestion was to do some interlocking stacked units to get the bedroom onto the second level. Another concern expressed about the one level units was the single storey expression it creates along Richards Street.

With respect to building character, the Panel appreciated the quality of materials being proposed and generally thought the architectural quality was very good. There was, however, some disappointment with the treatment of the top of the tower which Panel members thought could be strengthened and improved with more sculpting at the mechanical penthouse level. The Panel supported maximizing the transparency of the building which gives it a clean, contemporary look. The images shown on the display boards were appreciated and the applicant was encouraged to continue in this direction and pursue some of the details illustrated.

Concerns were expressed about the proposed amenity space on Nelson Street and there were mixed opinions as to whether it will successfully animate the street, although most Panel members thought the space was very attractive and found it a strong, simple statement. One Panel member was concerned that the amenity space is below street grade. There were some expressions of regret that retail is not considered viable in this location, and a suggestion that a café or bistro would provide more public interest.

The Panel liked the quality of the landscape plan and generally supported the “bamboo slot” opening up the corner of Nelson and Richards, although there were some concerns about its security. One Panel member commented that it is an interesting way of dealing with the lane edge. There was also a suggestion to reconsider this space, retaining the landscaping but introducing an access route through it to the lobby to improve the northern entry point.

Some concern was expressed about the modest amount of outdoor space for the second floor townhouse units, with a suggestion that a narrower but deeper terrace on each side of the units would provide more usable space. The circulation for the units accessed off the courtyard roof was also felt to be quite tortuous, with a suggestion to consider reworking the route from the elevator lobby to the north of the amenity space rather than south of it. This might also facilitate the creation of a more meaningful sized patio for the second townhouse out from the tower. Another suggestion was that the roof area would work well as amenity space with the two storey and single storey units reversed.

Overall, the Panel found the project to be a commendable addition to what is emerging as an interesting and prominent place in the downtown fabric.

- **Applicant’s Response:** Mr. Hancock thanked the Panel for its comments. He said they generally agree with the points made. They would like to sculpt the top a little more; the townhouses will be discussed further with staff to arrive at a solution that works for everyone; they will also work with staff on the corner treatment.

2. Address:	8982 Hudson Street
DA:	406323
Use:	Residential (5 storeys)
Zoning:	C-2
Application Status:	Complete
Architect:	Nigel Baldwin
Owner:	Aragon Development Group
Review:	First
Delegation:	Nigel Baldwin, Thomas Woo, Gerry Eckford
Staff:	Eric Fiss

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (9-0)

- **Introduction:** Eric Fiss, Development Planner, presented this C-2 application located at the foot of Hudson Street next to SW Marine Drive, adjacent to Airport Square and the Arthur Lang Bridge exit ramps. The proposal is for a multiple dwelling containing 134 residential units, all of which have 10 ft. high ceilings. There are two levels of parking accessed from Hudson Street. The main entrance is on Hudson Street. The site currently contains a stand of mature trees along Hudson Street and a setback is proposed to retain these trees. The site is a somewhat larger than typical C-2 sites. The building is U-shaped to capture southern light and there is a 70 ft. wide courtyard. The main issues on which the advice of the Panel is sought are:
 - the appropriateness of an all-residential scheme in this harsh environment;
 - height, noting that most of the building is at the 55 ft. height limit conditionally allowed in C-2;
 - appropriateness of the 4-5 storey architectural expression;
 - livability and usability of the outdoor open space;
 - heritage.

There are currently three buildings on the site, one of which is a Heritage B structure, most recently used as a homeless shelter. While the applicant has determined it is not economically viable to retain the building, the Panel's opinion is sought on whether the site could accommodate more height if the building could be retained through a Heritage Revitalization Agreement.

- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Nigel Baldwin, Architect, said this is a very difficult and challenging site and noted he considers the existing trees to be of greater heritage value than any of the buildings on the site. He described his design rationale. He noted the C-2 residential guidelines allow consideration of 55 ft. height for exceptionally wide or deep sites. He said he has attempted to keep the building fairly simple. The key to making this site livable is the open space and this could not be achieved with retention of the heritage B structure. He stressed they are not interested in pursuing an HRA. Gerry Eckford reviewed the landscape plan.
- **Panel's Comments:** The Panel unanimously supported this application and commended the architect on a thoughtful design approach in a very difficult location.

Most Panel members supported the use but some members found the residential use questionable in this location. Nevertheless, it was considered to be a very good solution within the context of the C-2 zoning, and a very well designed building.

The strategy for addressing the livability - orienting most units east-west with virtually no openings to

the south onto the busiest orientation - is exemplary. There was one recommendation to pay very close attention to the south-facing units where some rooms have windows directly facing the bridge. The suggestion was to consider having an operable window which is not directly facing the bridge and providing some kind of screening which partially covers the opening but allows the window to be opened a certain amount for natural ventilation.

The Panel had no concerns at all about the proposed height and several Panel members thought it could go much higher. There is certainly no benefit to lowering it. The H-shape configuration with the central courtyard is the correct solution and the additional height helps this to some extent because it results in reduced site coverage. The 10 ft. ceilings will also contribute to the livability of the units.

It was noted that an outright 3.0 FSR, 40 ft. mixed use building would result in a building that is at least as bulky as this, if not bulkier. The 55 ft. height also ensures that it will not be a woodframe building even though this is affordable housing.

The materials and architectural expression were fully supported. It was not thought to be necessary to differentiate the expression of the top floor, in fact it would detract from the architectural expression sought to be achieved. There was a suggestion to cover the top floor access passage and to enclose the upper balconies to mitigate noise. One Panel member found the Marine Drive elevation somewhat severe and suggested something like corrugated panelling might be considered.

Some Panel members found the front entry to the building somewhat understated. As well, the Marine Drive elevation could have a little more substance given it is the front of the building and in the context of being somewhat of a gateway building in this location.

Given the relatively long distance from the end suites to the parking garage, one Panel member suggested consideration be given to having an elevator in each building element.

The Panel did not consider heritage to be an issue. The applicant's argument that retention is not a viable option was fully accepted and supported.

The Panel found the outdoor open space very well handled. It complements the primary objective of creating a more amenable and livable semi private open space in the central courtyard. There are some very thoughtful gestures in the treatment of the western and eastern edges of the site. The berm, the water feature and the trees along Marine Drive are all very commendable. One Panel member had a concern about the raised courtyard being able to accommodate the tree roots, suggesting consideration be given to having fairly substantial tree containment elements and a flush courtyard.

While fully supporting this application, one Panel member expressed regret that the City has not rezoned this site to allow 100 ft. height. It is on axis with the bridge and could have been a strong visual marker for the millions of people entering the city in this location.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Baldwin commented the Marine Drive elevation has been particularly challenging. He said he felt he had no other choice with the north facade given the C-2 setback regulations.

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