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## URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

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**DATE:** July 11, 2001

**TIME:** 4.00 p.m.

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

**PRESENT:** MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:  
Tom Bunting, Chair (excused Item #3)  
Gerry Eckford  
Alan Endall  
Bruce Hemstock  
Joseph Hruda (Chair for Item #3)  
Jack Lutsky  
Maurice Pez  
Sorin Tatomir

**REGRETS:** Lance Berelowitz  
Jeffrey Corbett  
Walter Francl  
Richard Henry

**RECORDING  
SECRETARY:** Carol Hubbard

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ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING	
1.	955-969 Burrard Street
2.	1225 Richards Street
3.	2900 East Broadway (Phase II)

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| 1. Address:         | 955-969 Burrard Street - WORKSHOP                               |
| Use:                | Mixed   |
| Zoning:             | CD-1  |
| Application Status: | Rezoning  |
| Architect:          | Davidson Yuen Simpson   |
| Owner:              | YMCA and First Baptist Church                                   |
| Review:             | First   |
| Delegation:         | Ron Yuen, Dane Jansen, George Rodger, James Cheng, Robert Lemon |
| Staff:              | Jonathan Barrett/Phil Mondor                                    |
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- **Introduction:** Phil Mondor, Rezoning Planner, introduced this preliminary rezoning application. It is a joint proposal by the YMCA and First Baptist Church to rezone their two properties to help fund new facilities and services for both organizations. Staff consider the proposed land use to be entirely appropriate. The increased density being sought, however, is very significant, effectively doubling the redevelopment potential of the site. As well, some significant increase in maximum permitted building heights is being proposed. Because of the ambitious density increase being requested the proposal will be presented to City Council with an Issues Report to seek Council's direction and advice. Existing policies will need to be considered as well as how well the site accommodates the density in terms of form of development, and how the proposal fits the neighbourhood context. Because the proposal is preliminary the plans are schematic and the various options explored by the applicant are included in the presentation material.

Members of the Panel, staff and the applicant team assembled around the model for further review of the proposal. Mr. Mondor briefly described the site zoning context and the development proposal for the site. Jonathan Barrett, Development Planner, reviewed the four options being considered. An informal general discussion and question period followed. In particular, the Panel was asked to consider the following issues:

- shadowing and view impact
- vehicular and pedestrian movement systems
- how the character fits in with the neighbourhood
- whether any other options might be considered
- whether further material analysis is necessary

- **Panel's Comments:** The Panel was generally supportive of the direction this project is going. Following are some of the points made:

**Use:**

- compelling uses that the Panel would want to see continue on these sites.

**Density:**

- it is a very aggressive proposal in terms of the amount of density being sought;
- the detail and resolution will determine whether this amount of density will work;
- comfortable with the density shown - it seems to fit okay;
- there is a lot of density but it seems to fit okay, however, the numbers are huge and cause some unease - how it is treated in terms of the built form in more detail will make it easier to evaluate;
- agree it is aggressive;

- there is a lot of building on the site which calls for articulation of building form and careful tower design. They deserve to be manipulated in a way that maintains view corridors and recognizes and allows for the proximity from one building to another;
- this is super aggressive - doubling the density and doubling the height which is worrisome. It would take a lot of convincing, with many other options explored.

**Options:**

- there are probably a few other options that can be considered;
- comfortable with the applicant's preferred option;
- the options are a little bit "what if", with no substantiation in terms of justification of the density being presented - it needs to be proven out in a more detailed and rational argument;
- like the preferred option tower siting because there is an arc of towers forming around the two churches, set back enough that they create a backdrop to the churches;
- pleased with the townhouse approach which begins to recall the earlier row houses in the West End;
- prefer the options that push the towers away from the West End; more comfortable with having the density along the Burrard corridor;
- this is four separate projects, with the church site being a little more straightforward. A larger floorplate might be considered so that the building has some flexibility in terms of size and height;
- preferred option for the Y would be Option C with building fronting the street, and D for the church with the series of courtyards;
- in the lower realm, have a problem with massive 7-storey podium that stretches half way down the block; wonder why that couldn't have courtyards as well, with some carving out to develop more courtyard and a softer figure ground for the podium;
- the 7 storeys on Burrard - whatever is done there ought to be pulled back in some semi respectful way to the existing facade;
- the church site should be less aggressive in terms of massing, taking some of that density and putting it on the Y site; there should be much less height on the Nelson site, respecting the scale and character of the West End;
- there are options with more height -- if this project proceeds would like to see an option that considers the bigger city form issues with some analysis from different view points in the city as to why you couldn't build a lot higher. Bring the building forward to strengthen this weak point of Burrard Street.

**Lane and Open Space Treatment:**

- like the idea of the lane being developed as a mews; the detailed treatment will be very important;
- the ministry building provides some transition of scale between the church and the tower mass behind it, but perhaps the townhouse vocabulary along the lane could be more continuous as opposed to the five or six storey mass of the ministry building that abuts the church at that point. Maybe the overall mass of that building could hold itself away from the church more;
- support the proposal for the lane (we have yet to see a good example of this concept in the city);
- there is no open space shown that really adds to the neighbourhood;
- the mews needs a lot of effort put into it in order for it both be the main vehicular entry/exit point as well as a pedestrian corridor. Perhaps some of the building podium elements could be reduced somewhat to create more cloistered and intimate open spaces around the base;
- the parking and vehicular circulation system needs to be given a lot of consideration;
- lanes have been neglected but can be a very positive attribute;
- the townhouse base along the mews is a nice idea.

**Heritage:**

- would prefer a fresh start on the Y - it will be very problematic to make the facade work well;
- a good opportunity to save and revitalize two strong Vancouver institutions;
- not a favourite downtown landmark building but if it is going to be saved the problem is with the base of the existing building;
- struggle with the notion of saving the heritage facade of the Y and how you make it work, e.g. the present relationship between the Y and the church seems comfortable but adding storeys to the Y could be problematic - perhaps the additional storeys could be stepped back;
- the Y tower should have its own identity and presence. The heritage facade stuck on a 7-storey building is going to be much more challenging from an architectural point of view. It will also be a challenge to achieve visibility;
- setting back the Y tower from Burrard is appropriate because it holds back from the Y's heritage facade.

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2.	Address:	1225 Richards Street
	DA:	405502
	Use:	Mixed (25 storeys, 185 units)
	Zoning:	DD
	Application Status:	Complete after Preliminary
	Architect:	Rafii
	Owner:	Bosa Ventures Inc.
	Review:	Second
	Delegation:	Chuck Brook, Foad Rafii, Jane Durante
	Staff:	Ralph Segal/Anita Molaro

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### EVALUATION: SUPPORT (7-0)

- **Introduction:** Anita Molaro, Development Planner, presented this complete application, last seen by the Panel in February 2001 and approved in principle by the Development Permit Board on ??, 2001. The main issue with the preliminary submission related to shadowing on the proposed new park. In response to this concern, the height has been reduced to 220 ft. This was achieved by lowering the tower by one floor and reducing the floor-to-floor heights by a small amount. A fourth floor was added to the Davie Street podium. The proposal includes 3-storey townhouses on Richards Street, retail on Davie Street with two-storey residential above, and semi private open space off the lane. Staff are satisfied with the massing resolution proposed and at this complete application stage are reviewing materials and execution of the details.
- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Foad Rafii, Architect, noted there was a minor change in the open space plan.
- **Panel's Comments:** The Panel unanimously supported this complete application. The Panel found the project very nicely resolved in its massing and detail, and considered all the earlier issues to be addressed. The loss of the floor does not appear to have negatively impacted on the tower's proportions.

The Panel had some minor concerns related to the blank wall at the lane which it was felt could be better articulated. A number of Panel members also commented on the prevalence of lane entries in the Downtown South and suggested they need greater emphasis, particularly when all the remaining properties have been redeveloped in this manner. It was felt the lane entries are too subtle, with all the emphasis on the street elevation.

The Panel supported the simplicity and strength of the semi private open space on the roof terrace and strongly recommended that similar treatment be given to the Davie Street podium. Overlook is an important consideration in the Downtown South and the roof decks are a valuable resource for overview as well as for usable outdoor space.

- **Applicant's Response:** Chuck Brook thanked the Panel for its suggestions.

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3. Address:	2900 East Broadway (Phase II)
DA:	405863
Use:	Office
Zoning:	I-3
Application Status:	Complete
Architect:	Bunting Coady
Owner:	2725312 Canada Inc.
Review:	Second
Delegation:	Tom Bunting, John Cordonier, Randall Sharp
Staff:	Scot Hein

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### EVALUATION: SUPPORT (6-0)

- **Introduction:** Scot Hein, Development Planner, introduced this application and reviewed the history of the project. Phase 1 has already been approved and is now under construction. This complete submission is for the balance of the site. The zoning permits 3.0 FSR for high technology/light industry/information technology uses. Outright permitted height is 60 ft., conditional to 100 ft.

Following a brief description of the previously approved scheme, Mr. Hein noted that the areas of concern at that time included: the clarity of the parti (lack of internal open space), extent of surface parking, lack of streetwall on Renfrew Street, relationship and quality of the southwest corner to the new Skytrain station, and the extent and quality of views through and over the site. Mr. Hein then reviewed the new proposal, noting the Development Permit Board had requested the exploration of different options for site planning on the southerly two-thirds of the site. The advice of the Panel is sought in the following areas:

- the revised site planning, noting adjustments to parking and open space configuration;
  - the additional FSR and height being sought vs. the preliminary submission (location and extent proposed) noting view impact or improvement;
  - the north-south stair terminus;
  - Renfrew Street edge treatment noting retention of existing retaining wall and public realm opportunities/constraints.
- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Tom Bunting, Architect, explained the advice of the Panel and the Development Permit Board led them to the current direction and they believe it is a vast improvement over the initial scheme. The biggest determinant in the design of this site has been the existing building that is being retained. The bulk of the area has now been pushed from the east to the west, eliminating one building. There was also an opportunity to reconsider the open space and a larger courtyard plaza has been created on the lower end. Surface parking has been reduced considerably. The Landscape Architect, Randall Sharp, briefly reviewed the landscape plan.
  - **Panel's Comments:** The Panel unanimously supported this application.

The Panel commended the applicant on the very positive direction being take on the overall site plan. Significant improvements in the spatial structure were noted, including the disposition of the buildings, a greater diversity of spaces, less emphasis on cars, and the introduction of a larger central space. Moving the buildings closer to Renfrew Street was also considered to be a very positive move. As well, the Panel commented positively on the quality and character of the architecture which it thought was going in the right direction with its high tech imagery.

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Most of the Panel's comments focussed on the project's open spaces and organization of pedestrian movement. Given this project is intended to accommodate 6,000 employees the pedestrian structuring of this large site will be very important. There needs to be a very thorough examination of the whole way-finding concept for the scheme, with clear identification of paths and entry points. At the moment it is somewhat confusing. Special attention should be given to the flow of pedestrian movement as it links to the project from the Skytrain station. There were concerns expressed about the link through building 6 where it was felt there needed to be a more spatial connection from the corner. The connection from the southwest plaza to the central north-south area needs to be strengthened with an outdoor connection, and the indoor connection through building 6 should be really clear and very strong. There were also questions about whether the water feature is having a negative effect by creating a barrier to movement through the plaza.

Strengthening the pedestrian route from the Skytrain station was stressed. Attention should also be given to the intersection at the Renfrew plaza since this will likely be the primary pedestrian access point.

There were comments about the lack of a clear hierarchy between the north-south and east-west axes and the weak termination of the north-south axis at the south end of the site. The south stair and how it links to and across the plaza also warrants further review. Some Panel members commented on the "sameness" of the open space, suggesting there needs to be greater differentiation in treatment of the spaces, using different plant materials and/or paving patterns to create some cues to identify each area. It was suggested the open spaces seem a bit like left over spaces rather than being considered at the outset as essential elements of the overall composition.

With respect to landscape materials, the landscape architect was encouraged to ensure there is an appropriate balance of evergreen and deciduous species.

Views appear to have been considered more carefully than before and the view studies indicate improvements. It was strongly recommended that careful consideration also be given to the roofscape treatment in terms of view impact. Rooftop mechanical elements should be very sculptural and reflect the high tech nature of the site.

The Panel welcomed the proposal to bring the buildings closer to Renfrew Street which helps to disguise the podium-and-pod vocabulary. Several Panel members thought the buildings may have been moved too close to Renfrew Street, suggesting elimination of the retaining wall and allowing more space, perhaps including a double row of trees.

One Panel member thought something had been lost in the articulation of the buildings facing into the central court, especially on the north-south axis. While they seem fairly linear and strong there might be some smaller notches to give some relief to the north-south axis.

A suggestion was made by a Panel member to look at bringing down the park from the Broadway level at the northwest corner, if possible, given that Broadway is a fairly hostile environment.

A comment was made that the vehicular arrival appears to be less emphasized than the pedestrian arrival. Given that many people will still arrive by car, how they emerge out of this large parking lot should perhaps be celebrated a bit more.

The Panel agreed a site of this size presents quite a challenge, particularly with the overlay of building above existing structures, and in this respect it appears to have been very well handled. The challenge will be providing spaces and relationships that encourage use over time.

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