

URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: July 14, 2010

TIME: 4.00 pm

PLACE: Committee Room No. 1, City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
Bruce Haden (Chair)
Robert Barnes
James Cheng (Excused Item #2)
Jeff Corbett
Jane Durante
David Godin
Vladimir Mikler
Scott Romses
Alan Storey

REGRETS:
Jim Huffman
Oliver Lang
Steve McFarlane
Maurice Pez

**RECORDING
SECRETARY:** Lorna Harvey

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING	
1.	960 Kingsway
2.	Review of Little Mountain Housing Site Planning

BUSINESS MEETING

Chair Haden called the meeting to order at 4:10 p.m and noted the presence of a quorum. The Panel discussed possible conflicts of Panel members with the second proposal. It was decided that the Panel would confirm with the applicant who will be excused. The Panel also agreed that the documentary film maker could film the second application's presentation.

The Panel considered applications as scheduled for presentation.

1. Address: 960 Kingsway
DE: RZ/DE413541
Description: To rezone this site to allow for a 6-storey building with retail at grade and 40 rental units under the STIR program
Zoning: C-2 to CD-1
Application Status: Rezoning/Complete
Review: Second
Architect: Matthew Cheng Architects Inc.
Delegation: Matthew Cheng, Matthew Cheng Architect Inc.
Bryan Marthaler, DMG Landscape Architects
Staff: Grant Miller and Dale Morgan for Sailen Black

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (8-0)

- **Introduction:** Grant Miller, Rezoning Planner, introduced the proposal, noting that the proposal has come back to the Panel with revisions to a concurrent rezoning and development permit application for a C-2 site on Kingsway at East 19th Avenue. The rezoning is to allow the development of a 6-storey mixed-use building with commercial at grade and guaranteed market rental residential units above. The use and density has not changed. Mr. Miller noted that the site falls within the Kensington Cedar Cottage Vision Area and specifically the Kingsway/Knight Neighbourhood Centre Area. The application was made under the Short Term Incentives for Rental Program (STIR). The STIR program was adopted in June 2009 and provides incentives for the private development of guaranteed rental units. The incentives include: DCL waiver for rental units, parking requirement reduction and additional density consistent with policy and attention to urban design.

Mr. Miller added that the site is at the western end of a nine block section of Kingsway, centered on Knight Street between St. Catherines and Commercial Streets. An area planning process resulted in up zoning in the area from RS-1 to RT-1 or RM-1. While no changes were proposed to the C-2 zoning on Kingsway at the time, more vision participants supported the consideration of an additional storey or two on mixed-use developments than opposed where public amenities could be achieved.

Dale Morgan, Development Planner, noted that a redesign was recommended by the Panel to reconfigure and simplify the massing. Staff are interested in keeping a fairly generous setback at the lane because of the low density residential nearby. The new scheme has the same height and density as well as the same materials as was seen in the previous scheme. The side wall has been addressed with alternating brick with hardy panel. The applicant has eliminated two of the enclosed balconies on the upper floor to provide some architectural relief. The top floor is set back and there is provision for a small common amenity area. The main entry has been differentiated with a weather canopy.

Mr. Miller and Mr. Morgan took questions from the Panel.

- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** Matthew Cheng, Architect, further described the architectural plans for the proposal.

Bryan Marthaler, Landscape Architect, described the landscaping plans noting that they tried to dress up the patios and added some elevated planter walls and stairs for access to the backyard planters. They are adding an area so the residents can have a vegetable garden. Open metal railings will be added on top of the planters. The streetscape will include high quality pavers and as well another tree will be planted.

The applicant team took questions from the Panel.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - Design development to the Kingsway entry to increase its prominence;
 - Design development to refine the consistency of material palette and architectural expression;
 - Consideration to adding a canopy to the rear entrance
 - Consideration to either expand or remove the roof top amenity space.
- **Related Commentary:** The Panel supported the proposal noting that the building form was improved since the last review.

The Panel supported relocating the entry on Kingsway but felt it could be a bit more distinct. One Panel member suggested changing the canopy to reinforce the entry. Also, a couple of Panel members felt the elevator could be better defined in the lobby. The Panel supported keeping the rear entrance to the building but felt the canopy that was in the previous proposal should be maintained to keep it from looking like a back door.

A couple of Panel members thought that a better solution could be found for the bike storage. Another Panel member noted that the stairwell could be used as a primary circulation mode and therefore should be made more inviting to use.

Several Panel members thought the 6th floor amenity space was useless as it was too small and should either be enlarged or removed. One Panel member suggested given the space over to the units at the front and rear of the building.

A couple of Panel members thought the top floor (penthouse) could be a bit stronger and most of the Panel felt that changing the colour and material would help with the expression of the building.

The Panel agreed that the landscaping had been improved since the previous review. One Panel member suggested the outdoor amenity space on the roof be enlarged and a planter added to make it more inviting to the residents. There was also some concern with maintenance for the landscaping.

Regarding sustainability, it was suggested that the applicant apply for LEED™ certification. One Panel member suggested having the roof structure be able to support future solar panels.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Cheng thanked the Panel for their comments.

2. Address:	Review of Little Mountain Housing Site Planning
DE:	Non-Voting Workshop
Description:	To review site plan options proposed by the proponent's architect
Zoning:	RM-3A/CD-1
Application Status:	N/A
Review:	First
Architect:	James Cheng Architect
Delegation:	James Cheng, James Cheng Architect Chris Phillips, Phillips Farevaag Smallerberg, Landscape Architect
Staff:	Ben Johnson

EVALUATION: NON-VOTING WORKSHOP

- **Introduction:** Ben Johnson, Planner, introduced a proposal regarding the Little Mountain Housing site. He noted that the objective was to seek the Panel's advice and input on four site plan scenarios for the Little Mountain Housing development. The site presents some unique challenges and opportunities and staff are looking to the Panel for thoughts and ideas to help guide the creation of the right plan. He added that they will be coming back to the Panel in the future when it comes time to address questions of massing, height and form.

In November 2009, Council approved a policy planning program for the Little Mountain site as well as a cost-recovered program to create a Development Framework which establishes principles and objects relating to: land use; density, building forms and heights and character; public benefits; transportation; sustainability and development phasing. The Development Framework will guide any future rezoning of the site. The program reflects the terms of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed between the Province and City in 2007 which lays out certain expectations about the redevelopment. The program began with open houses in December 2009 and is intended to take approximately a year to complete. In November 2009, Council approved a policy planning program for the Little Mountain site. Staff has worked closely with a 40-member community advisory group since January. Most recently there was a pair of open houses to share the site plans as well as the background material and guiding principles.

The project was built in 1954 with 224 social housing units. The developer will be required to build 234 new social housing units at a LEED™ gold standard. The Riley Park South Cambie (RPSC) Community Vision from 2005 identifies a four storey maximum for development on the site. The EcoDensity's Green Rezoning Policies apply to the site and essentially open the book on explorations of greater heights and densities so long as a realistic 4-storey option is explored. Other elements of the Green Rezoning Policies that apply include: LEED™ Gold architecture; sustainable planning; TDM strategy; waste management; rainwater capture and district energy.

The area has a rich amenity with an Olympic curling venue will be demised into a community centre and library at Hillcrest Park. There is an adjacent city-serving aquatic centre that will open shortly. As well the site is surrounding by a wide variety of parks and we there likely will not be a park dedication on the site. Council has formally indicated that a new Little Mountain Neighbourhood House would be a suitable community amenity for the project and there is substantial demand for a daycare in the area.

Mr. Johnson noted that existing City priorities and policies and public input gathered to date have allowed staff to develop a series of guiding principles to be used to evaluate

proposals as they come forward. They fall into four categories: urban design and built form; transportation; sustainability and complete community. Mr. Johnson noted that the urban design principles are relevant to the Panel and the following is what has emerged: respectful transitions to the surrounding neighbourhoods; integrate the development with the community and build on existing connections; maintain and enhance the permeability of the site; preserve views from the top of Queen Park towards Mount Baker and consider views through the site towards the park and North Shore Mountains; reflect the "memory" of the site in the design, pattern, movement, social history and significant trees. In terms of the principles relating to transportation it is expected that the development will minimize traffic impacts on the greenway/bikeways; minimize traffic impacts on surrounding neighbourhoods; prioritize pedestrians and cyclists over cars on site. Some local-serving retail on Main Street is supported and combined with the neighbourhood house and daycare this could provide a "Village Centre". The balance of the guiding principles will apply to sustainable design; affordable housing and community amenities.

Mr. Johnson noted that a number of issues have emerged in the process to date with a number relating directly to urban design. These include height, density and compatibility; sense of inclusion; memory; traffic impacts; bikeways and greenways; impacts on Queen Elizabeth Park. Mr. Johnson gave the Panel an overview of the information received at the Open Houses

- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** James Cheng, Architect, stated that they brought the proposal to the Panel as early as possible as it is a complex project. They went through a series of workshops with the community to see how they would like to use the site. They used those findings and worked with the advisory group and generated a set of diagrams. They were asking the Panel to point out anything they might have missed in the four schemes that they devised. The first scheme is the urban grid that extends through the site to become part of the urban fabric. The second scheme introduces traffic through the middle of the site connecting East 36th Avenue and James Street with pedestrian paths. The third scheme keeps cars on the edges and out of the entire site. The last scheme has a network of pedestrian paths through the site. Mr. Cheng asked the Panel if there were any of the schemes that could work or if there were other ones that they hadn't thought of for the site.

Chris Phillips, Landscape Architect, noted that the public space is the driver for the landscaping. The neighbourhood is well serviced by many amenities such as retail, parks and a community centre. They are currently finishing their traffic and pro forma studies. They also have an arborist who has just gone through the site and will make a report on condition of the existing trees. They have also just finished the retail study as they want to make sure that retail doesn't overwhelm the neighbourhood. They will also be looking into a neighbourhood district energy system.

Ben Johnson, City Staff, gave an overview on the open houses and what was liked and disliked about all the schemes. For the most part the people who came to the open houses liked the connection through the site in Scheme #1 but found it boring. They would like to see a sense of the history of the site and they didn't like the traffic impact on the lane. As well they thought the village centre was chopped up with too many things going through the area. The open house visitors preferred Scheme #2 of all the schemes. They thought it didn't impact East 37th Avenue and Ontario Street and reflected the memory of the site. Also they liked that it will preserve the trees on the site and will connect with the existing roads. As well it has a strong village centre. They did have a concern regarding traffic as they thought the street could become a short cut through the site. For Scheme #3 they liked the fact that this scheme had lots of public spaces but didn't like the traffic impact on the single family homes behind the site. They also didn't like that it had no interior

access. This was the least liked of all the scenarios. For Scheme #4 they liked that there wasn't a road going through the whole site and that there was access to East 37th Avenue. They however didn't like the access onto Ontario Street and that there was an impact on the bike and pedestrian paths.

The applicant team took questions from the Panel.

- **Related Commentary:** The Panel acknowledged the applicant for seeking advice so early in the development state and their desire to maintain the open space and the connectiveness of the original development. Some Panel members noted that understanding of the site isn't about the distinction of Little Mountain but is more about the angle of the buildings and the amount of open space that was created. They noted that the existing trees and open spaces are the memories that are going to be a reminder of the previous development. They also stated that there has to be a way to go further in finding a creative solution for the site with a number of family spaces, the size and number of non-market housing and social housing units. It was suggested that taking a look at the lessons of South East False Creek and how important solutions such as the Neighbourhood Energy Utility were to the area.

Scheme #1: Most of the Panel agreed that this scheme was a little boring. They noted that it will have lots of access to parking and get much of the traffic off the street but it doesn't show any creativity or excitement. It would also have to have some traffic calming as the Panel had concerns that it being a short cut was considerable. There is a problem with this scheme in that almost all the public space is in the circulation areas. There is no opportunity for a village centre to stand out either. One Panel member liked the notion of the streets being green spaces. Despite these challenges, some panel members noted the scheme could be very urban.

Scheme #2: The Panel felt that this scheme plays directly on the existing geometry and Main Street but will not impact the existing single family residents. A couple of Panel members suggested incorporating this scheme with Scheme #4 so that there would be some what of a village like street. That combination could create some wonderful gathering spaces with a wide diversity of space. The lane street is interesting and the lane way housing is timely. One Panel member suggested the housing come up to the street edge as it is in the Olympic Village for more sense of community. However another Panel member noted that there could be problems in terms of parking and traffic around the outside of the site.

Scheme #3: This has the most interesting opportunity for the configuration to really change the right of way and incorporate lane way housing into the project. The circulation has a lot to offer for the pedestrian and cyclists but offers little for car traffic. The village square seemed fragmented and more welcoming from the outside and not from the inside of the site. One Panel member noted that the scheme relied too much on the lane and forces the neighbourhood to reconsider their backyards. Another Panel member noted that it didn't have a good interface with the park and has too big an impact on the neighbourhood in general.

Scheme #4: Although the Panel though this was an interesting idea to be a completely pedestrian site, they did not think it was workable. They thought it seemed more like a campus with a green commons and buildings in the park. One Panel member noted that there was lots of opportunity for a historical context and that public art and even an outdoor theater or other gathering amenities could be added into the scheme.

It was also noted by the Panel that the site was a large one, and phasing consideration would be critical. The site could accommodate different urban design strategies in different parts.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Cheng thanked the Panel for comments noting that they intend the social housing to blend into the site. He said they appreciated the points and they will go back and do some research with the community and come back with an enriched scheme.

Adjournment

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 7:10 p.m.