

URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: July 19, 2006

TIME: 4.00 pm

PLACE: Committee Room No. 1, City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
Margot Long, Chair
Nigel Baldwin
Albert Bicol (Items 1 and 2 only)
James Cheng
Eileen Keenan
Bill Harrison (Items 2 and 3 only)
John Wall
Peter Wreglesworth
C.C. Yao

REGRETS: Shahla Bozorgzadeh
Tom Bunting
Walter Francl

RECORDING SECRETARY: Carol Hubbard, Raincoast Ventures

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING	
1.	Langara College
2.	275 East 8th Avenue
3.	Southeast False Creek Sub-Area 2A (Workshop)

1. Address:	Langara College
Use:	Master plan rezoning for campus expansion
Zoning:	CD-1 Amendment
Application Status:	Rezoning
Architect:	IBI - Hilde Heyvaerts
Owner:	Langara College
Review:	First
Delegation:	Stephen Teeple, Chris Phillips, Laurie Schmidt
Staff:	Daniel Naundorf, Anita Molaro

EVALUATION: SUPORT (5-2)

- **Introduction:** Daniel Naundorf introduced this application for a 25-year Masterplan to meet the needs of the current and future student population of Langara College. The Panel reviewed the concept in September 2004 and the Panel's advice at that time has helped to formulate and organize the principles of the site. These have been incorporated into a Policy Statement that was adopted by City Council in March 2005. The form of development presented with this rezoning application generally reflects the design objectives laid out in that policy statement. City staff and the applicant recently completed the public process around this application and feedback was generally positive. Total floor area being sought in this rezoning application is 25,200 m² and it will be developed in phases over next 25 years. Density will increase from the current 0.62 FSR to 0.94 FSR at completion. The Rezoning Text Amendments will set the maximum building envelope for each phase of the expansion.

Focussing on the form of development issues, Anita Molaro, Development Planner, described the scheme and the major objectives of the policy statement. The advice of the Panel is sought on density, height and setbacks, and whether the overall objectives for the campus have been achieved.

- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** Stephen Teeple, Architect, reviewed the concept and the goals of the master plan. He stressed that most of the environmental initiatives occur in the first phase and are definitely not an add-on but part of the experience of the building. Chris Phillips, Landscape Architect, described the landscape plan and the connections through the campus, noting they have worked with and building upon the extensive existing landscaping on the site. The applicant team responded to questions from the Panel.
- **Panel's Consensus:**
 - Recommendation for higher density;
 - The overall plan is well executed;
 - The edges need the most work in terms of interface with the park, the property to the east and the golf course;
 - The open space and connectivity objectives are not helped by the ring road and parking on one side;
 - Some concerns about getting more sunlight into the quadrangle and making a better visual connection to the golf course;
 - Suggestions that the setbacks could vary and perhaps some of the landscape buffers are too large;
 - Suggestions to move more of the density on 49th Avenue to open up the centre more;
 - The Panel would have liked to see some resolution of the easterly site;
 - The sustainability objectives might be a bit weak in how they work with the plan.
 - The ring road was problematic and cut off campus to park.

- **Related Commentary:**

The Panel had no concerns with the proposed height and density and the majority of Panel members thought the FSR should be increased. Increased height in some places was also recommended. It was noted there will undoubtedly be pressure in the future to increase capacity on the site and this should be planned now.

There was a comment that the term of the masterplan is too short for an educational institution on such a tight, urban site. While the proposal quite successfully achieves the goals of the policy statement there are some limitations affecting the scheme. It was suggested there could be greater consideration for more generic academic space growth and possibly taking a look at the whole site and considering how to deal with what is on the site now, what the ultimate goal is, and how to create a strong legible plan and a stronger organizational vision.

The Panel generally found the interior of the scheme to be very well considered. Some Panel members thought the large buffered edge was at the expense of the campus and that allowing some additional height might provide more breathing room and offer more flexibility in the future. Providing more breathing space around the library will also reinforce it as the real gem of the campus.

The Panel was encouraged by the quality of the new library building and hoped the subsequent components will be of similarly high standards, particularly around sustainability. It was noted there is opportunity to have a very cohesive campus build-out that has a strong identity while having subtly differentiated buildings. One Panel member was concerned about the future relationship of the creative arts building to the new library and how it will be addressed architecturally.

The way the campus addresses 49th Avenue from the Canada Line station has many good qualities and very good potential. There was a suggestion to move the athletics building forward to the main line of the creative arts building to create more of an edge to 49th, not necessarily set back as much as shown noting it will be more visual than used. This would give more breathing room and allow more student use in what could be a series of nicely contained cloister spaces. It was recommended to keep the south buildings low to maintain maximum light and sun exposure to the courtyard. One Panel member questioned extending the mass of building B along to the multi purpose building and suggested perhaps shifting the axis, similar to the new library and creative arts building, which would allow the campus to feel more permeable.

Connectivity to the streets and through the campus is quite legible and well worked out. Some Panel members found it unfortunate that the building to the south blocks the green space of the golf course from inside the campus. Having more openness to that southerly edge, which greater height would allow, would enable advantage to be taken of that relationship and add strength to the masterplan. There could have been more density quite comfortably built into the scheme on that side of the site which would facilitate greater permeability.

The Panel had some concerns about the commitment to sustainability, especially compared to the library building which sets a very high standard in its expression of sustainability. It was noted the creative arts building has very large west and east facades where greater northern exposure would be preferable. A possible solution might be a T-shaped building. The applicant was also strongly urged to carefully analyse the micro climate which could be affected by all the buildings. The way energy is dealt with should also be built into the scheme at the masterplan level. There was a comment that not all of the sustainability objectives are reflected in the masterplan.

The Panel thought it would have been helpful to see how the easterly parking lot will build out in the future. With respect to the other edges it as noted the south and west setbacks seem to be predicated on the ring road which may have less importance in the future. It is unfortunate that it cuts off the campus from its neighbouring green spaces. In general, the Panel's main concerns with the project related to its edges. One Panel members questioned whether it would be possible to have a flexible setback on the south and west sides pending future traffic studies.

One Panel member was concerned about the existing building on the site in terms of CPTED issues and noted this will need to be carefully considered. Another member also thought the building failed to contribute to the new arrangement and suggested it needs to be addressed in the masterplan to give some idea of what will happen on the east end of the site.

- **Applicant's Response:** Laurie Schmidt, Brook Development Planning, said they have tried to de-emphasize the ring road, particularly the southern road which will be one-way. It also takes traffic away from Ontario Street which is a designated greenway and bikeway and very important to the neighbourhood. He noted that until changes are made to emergency access the road will have to remain. As the masterplan progresses and the parking studies are completed it will allow parking to be removed along the southern perimeter in the future, although at present the college has a commitment to provide a certain number of parking spaces which have to be maintained. Mr. Schmidt added, the potential for the eastern edge of the campus is beyond the 25 years of this masterplan. With respect to the density, Mr. Schmidt noted the college relies on funding from the Ministry of Education and can only budget so far into the future. Mr. Teeple said he agreed the edges are difficult but noted they are shown only in concept at this stage.

2. Address:	275 East 8th Avenue
DA:	DE 410347
Use:	Residential
Zoning:	C-3A
Application Status:	Complete
Architect:	Neale Staniszki Doll Adams Architects
Owner:	The Eden Group of Companies Ltd.
Delegation:	Larry Adams, Ken Wong, Brian Beresford
Staff:	Mary Beth Rondeau (for Dale Morgan)

EVALUATION: NON SUPPORT (0-8)

- **Introduction:** Mary Beth Rondeau, Development Planner, presented this application in Mount Pleasant, C-3A zone. The proposed use is all-residential at nine storeys with a penthouse, and townhouses along 7th Avenue and Scotia Street. The site is located at the corner of Scotia Street and East 7th Avenue. Ms. Rondeau briefly described the project and the site context.

Following a brief review of the C-3A regulations and guidelines, the Panel's advice was sought on the following:

- whether the application earns the requested density and height as well as the conditional residential use;
 - whether the massing relationship to the neighbouring RM-4 massing across Scotia Street should be improved;
 - whether views from the MetroVista tower to the south across 8th Avenue should be improved;
 - whether the two public open spaces should be improved to make the Scotia Street space more public and the Brewery Creek space to have greater residential presence.
- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** Larry Adams, Architect, briefly described the design rationale and pointed out that ten percent of the site is devoted to public amenity on the south side of the site. He said they have met with the MetroVista residents and have tried to maximize their views as much as possible. Mr. Adams noted there is a limited sustainability agenda. Brian Beresford briefly reviewed the landscape plan and the applicant team responded to questions from the Panel.
- **Panel's Consensus:**
 - The increased height and density is not supported;
 - The height is generally not an issue overall but how the massing is distributed on the site;
 - The site may not be able to support the requested density;
 - Support for the location of the tower on the site but suggestions for stepping or varying the setback;
 - Strong support for the Brewery Creek public open space with recommendations for a better relationship and interface with the adjacent townhouses;

- Design development is recommended to the open space at the corner of Scotia and 7th Avenue with comments that resolution of the tower expression and building interface at this corner could help improve the space;
 - Suggestions to connect the two open spaces;
 - Concerns about the resolution of the massing and suggestions to redistribute some of the height to the townhouses;
 - Preservation of private views is not an issue and should not take priority over good urban design;
 - Design Development is recommended to the lane, both the landscape and architecturally, to provide a better response for this neighbourhood;
 - The building expression needs to relate more contextually with the neighbourhood;
 - Concerns about the corner expressions;
 - Recommendation for a more robust sustainability strategy which could help to resolve some of the other issues.
- **Related Commentary:**

The Panel did not support this application.

There were no concerns with the proposed all-residential use.

While there were generally no concerns with the proposed height there were concerns about the building expression which emphasizes the mass rather than slimming it. The building also fails to satisfactorily address the corners. It was noted that a triangular site such as this is challenging but is also an opportunity to do something different. The Panel did not think the project related well to its context. There was a suggestion that there could be a massing resolution that is both modern and contextual.

While there was support for the proposed siting of the tower there were recommendations to include some stepping or vary the setbacks.

The Panel was generally very supportive of the Brewery Creek open space and thought it would be a good amenity for the residents as well as the general public. There were, however, strong recommendations for the adjacent townhouses to have a better relationship to the space.

There were some concerns expressed about the open space at the corner of Scotia and 7th although conflicting advice as to whether it should be more public or private. In general, further design development is required to this corner to improve its usability.

The Panel did not believe this project should go to extraordinary lengths to preserve private views at the expense of good urban design. In this regard, some Panel members recommended reversing the heights of the two lower flanking components so that the four-storey form is on 7th Avenue to provide a better transition to the neighbouring 60 ft. industrial zone, with a two or three storey form on Scotia Street for a better relationship to the neighbouring 35 ft. RM-3 zone. The Panel generally found the massing relationship across Scotia Street to be too harsh. One Panel member recommended stepping back the fourth floor on Scotia Street rather than reducing the height.

With respect to the rooftop treatment, there was a recommendation for a much lighter expression, both for the mechanical penthouse and the penthouse itself. One Panel member also strongly recommended exploring use of the rooftop for urban agriculture.

There were major concerns about the very limited sustainability aspects of this proposal, most notably that the building facades fail to respond to their orientation. It was suggested that with the amount of glazing proposed the project may not meet the City's energy by-law requirements. It was stressed that there can be minimal cost implications to producing a sustainable building.

With respect to materials there was a comment that the few bands of brick on the building do little to strengthen its quality. It was suggested it should either have a substantial amount of brick or none at all. The brick on the townhouses was supported.

Design development to the lane was recommended to make it more sympathetic to the neighbourhood, with suggestions that it could be very animated and provide a link between the Brewery Creek open space and the adjacent community centre at 1 Kingsway.

The Panel acknowledged that this site has a challenging context to deal with which calls for a great deal of finesses that is currently not evident. The Panel thought that while the public open space is a good contribution towards earning the requested density, in this case the overall massing solution fails to warrant it. There were also suggestions that it may not be possible to achieve this much density on the site.

- **Applicant's Response:** With respect to the lane treatment, Mr. Adams noted that, unusually, part of this lane is privately owned. As well, there is a five-storey blank wall on the 1 Kingsway property at the lane.

3. WORKSHOP:	Southeast False Creek Sub-Area 2A
Use:	Mixed-use Residential/2010 Olympic Athletes' Village
Architect:	Millennium
Owner:	City of Vancouver
Review:	First
Delegation:	Roger Bayley, Stu Lyon, Paul Merrick
Staff:	Karis Hiebert, Jody Andrews

Karis Hiebert, Central Area Planner, introduced this workshop, noting it has been requested by the applicant, following the Panel's last review of the scheme on June 7, 2006. The rezoning application is expected to go to Public Hearing in October 2006. Ms. Hiebert briefly described the evolution of the scheme and noted that some shift in land use has occurred since the Panel's last review.

The massing and heights were briefly described and height variations from those indicated in the ODP were noted. The resulting additional density is to accommodate the introduction of modest market housing.

Ms. Hiebert briefly reviewed the Panel's previous concerns and sought the Panel's comments on the overall massing, the building form, height and height relationships, and general urban design.

Stu Lyon, Architect, said they have been working closely with the principles of the ODP and with Planning staff to reach the current stage of the project. The applicant team now seeks further feedback from the Panel prior to submission of the final rezoning application.

Following a tour of the village in a slide presentation, staff and the applicant team responded to questions from the Panel.

Summary of Panel's Comments:

- General support for the overall approach including the proposed land swap;
- Greater resolution is needed on Site 4 with respect to the potential loss of animated waterfront;
- General support for the overall density;
- Support for the introduction of modest market housing, with some concerns about its distribution on the site;
- Mixed views on the massing adjacent to the Salt Building;
- Concerns about rooftop treatment and articulation and scale variation;
- Some concerns about the retail and commercial strategy including the scale and number of anchors to ensure there are sufficient CRUs and doors on the plaza;
- No major concerns with sustainability given it is a major driver of the project;
- The Panel would like to have a short presentation on or receive a copy of the public realm plan with the final submission material.

Comments and Questions Arising from the Panel Discussion:

- the design team has responded well to the Panel's earlier advice;
- Legibility of the streetscapes is improving but work is still needed on the north-south streets;
- The general massing and relationships between buildings is becoming clearer. It needs some fine-tuning in some places but is generally moving in the right direction;
- The ground plane and retail is much more clear although there are some concerns about the retail being dominated by the big box anchors;
- Part of the sustainability strategy should be to provide space for small shop owners who live in the community;
- There seems to be a strong benefit to relocating the community centre;
- Concern about Site 4 being totally residential which could be disruptive to the ground plane and counter to the objective for an active waterfront edge; suggest consideration for public or retail use, similar to Coal Harbour;
- Concern about the major west façade on Columbia Street which will be the most public face of the project - encourage the design team to look at a much more playful architectural response. It should be quite different from the eastern side of the block;
- The symmetrical massing is not working for the scheme;
- There seems to be insufficient separation between the buildings on Lot 2 resulting in livability issues;
- Four storeys on Lot 4 feels too heavy and over scale;
- The ground plane interface with the major public realm is a concern;
- It feels like all the density and height has been moved closer to the water and what remains on the other side is the nonmarket housing. While the economic reality is recognized it should be more interwoven into the site otherwise there is a danger of ghettoization;
- Stepping down the tower east and west next to the parks seems counter-intuitive;
- Support more height further to the south and stepping down;
- The clarity and legibility of the plan has come a long way;
- There is an intriguing mix of residential unit types;
- The Salt Building requires stronger definition and the previous solution was better;
- The massing on the easterly street should step down;
- Support the variable heights and massing throughout the site;

- Some concerns about having all the nonmarket housing at the back;
- Stress the importance of the relationship of the interface of the commercial and residential;
- The street edge and how it works will be critical;
- The spaces between the buildings are more important than the buildings themselves;
- The variety of the edges is the most important component;
- The roofscapes offer good livability;
- Support the new location of the community centre;
- Main concern is the texture and grain of the plan;
- Strongly recommend any north-south opening is carried through by having a gap in the building, which will help the finer grain and texture on the waterfront;
- Block 4 could be articulated much more and by splitting it, it could support the height on the western edge;
- Support moving the community centre;
- Question the location of the gymnasium on the corner; careful consideration will need to be given to blank walls at ground level; suggest raising it with the daycare or other active use at grade;
- It is a big loss to step the building away next to the Salt Building. This central space is the most important space in the whole site and everything should be done to make it recognizable as the heart of the village; pulling the buildings away weakens the Salt and the space;
- Question whether Salt Avenue should be closed and have the Salt Building fully engage the plaza;
- Consideration should be given to the public realm to make it a stronger festive space;
- Stress that when the buildings are being designed the building expression should be more vertical than horizontal;
- All the buildings are flat-top and massive - more time needs to be spent on articulating the buildings in the skyline;
- Appreciate the work done around the Salt Building and support the current response;
- Like the increased variation in building heights and the bookend massings;
- The east-west streets are much improved;
- The general direction for the retail strategy is good but the supermarket need not be opposite the plaza to bring people in. It has too much frontage on the plaza which should have more CRUs;

- Support for the concentration of retail into one area which is likely the best use for the Salt Building and the neighbourhood to make it part of the retail strategy;
- Regarding the density, there are several places where there is one too many floors, which is pushing the limit. One is the middle blocks at the ends of 3 and 10 which seem too high and not enough differentiation between front and back buildings; 7 plus 2 floors is too much in the plaza - some of that density could be returned around the Salt Building; there are several places where the density is being pushed; not sure the extra density can be achieved;
- The new street for the supermarket trucks is troubling; it is very narrow and has a high, flat streetwall;
- Regret the loss of at-grade semi-private space;
- Some fine modelling of the upper floors will be required to improve shadowing on the streets;
- Concerns about the segregation of market and nonmarket housing; it needs to be better blended;
- The gym need to be carefully looked at;
- Site 4 needs much more work to determine the best solution at grade and the inner courtyard; it has the opportunity to be something unique and a real feature building;
- Concerned about the scale of the plaza; it needs a larger variety of retail to truly animate it;
- Salt Avenue should be treated like the plaza in terms of landscape and paving;
- Building heights around the Salt Building are now too low;
- Greater attention should be given to the westerly façade which is very visible and the signature for the whole area; it should be treated as one big compositional element;
- Concerned about the impact of the flat roofs on the skyline and whether the mass needs to be broken down more.