
URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: July 24, 2002

TIME: 4.00 p.m.

PLACE: Committee Room No. 1, City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
Joseph Hruda, Chair
Helen Besharat
Stuart Lyon
Kim Perry (excused Item #2)
Maurice Pez
Sorin Tatomir
Ken Terriss

REGRETS: Jeffrey Corbett
Gerry Eckford
Walter Francl
Richard Henry
Reena Lazar

**RECORDING
SECRETARY:** Carol Hubbard

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING	
1.	2015 Trafalgar Street
2.	555 Homer Street (Dunsmuir House)
3.	1001 Homer Street

1. Address:	2015 Trafalgar Street
DA:	406810
Use:	Mixed (4 storeys)
Zoning:	C-2
Application Status:	Complete
Architect:	F. Adab
Owner:	Trafalgar Enterprises Inc.
Review:	First
Delegation:	Fred Adab, Chetan Bagga, Randall Sharp
Staff:	Bob Adair

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (4-2)

- **Introduction:** The Development Planner, Bob Adair, presented this application in the C-2 zone. The site is at the southwest corner of 4th Avenue and Trafalgar Street. The proposal is for a 4-storey mixed-use building containing ground floor retail facing 4th Avenue, one residential unit at the corner of the lane and Trafalgar Street, and three storeys of residential above. Total residential density is 2.2 FSR and total overall density is 2.9 FSR. Proposed materials include Ariscraft, brick and stucco.

Staff believe the project is generally well thought out and organized, and seek the advice of the Panel in the following areas:

- use, noting that to achieve the maximum residential density of 2.2 FSR, high standards of architectural design and materials are required.
- height: maximum permitted height is 40 ft. (with an additional 5 ft. allowed for sloping sites); the application seeks a relaxation of 2 ft. in the northeast corner and 4 ft. in the southwest corner. The site slopes about 7 ft. from northeast to southwest. Height relaxations require Council approval.

The Development Planner noted there was a previous development permit on this site which did not proceed to building permit. It sought a 2.5 ft. height relaxation, which was achieved by stepping the residential floors.

- massing at the rear: the C-2 guidelines call for 15 ft. setback from the property line for residential on the second floor. Because of the circumstances of an older building occupying the southern half of the lane, both this application and the previous application set back the building approximately 8 ft. from the rear property line to achieve manoeuvring space in the lane.
- quality of materials at the southeast corner of the building and whether some reduction in mass at the upper floor of this corner might be a better response to the lower neighbouring building.
- corner residential unit: staff support residential at grade in locations adjacent to neighbouring residential use across the lane but question the livability of this unit.
- overall detailing.

- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Fred Adib, Architect, noted the adjacent building to the south has an east-west orientation with no major side windows. He described the areas in which the application seeks the height relaxation as a result of the slope of the site. He briefly reviewed the overall design rationale. In response to a question from the Panel, the landscape architect, Randall Sharp, confirmed the intention is to retain the existing large mature tree on Trafalgar Street. It is on City property.
- **Panel's Comments:** The Panel supported this application. There was general support for the use, massing and height. Most Panel members also thought the standard of design and materials earned the relaxations being sought, although with some reservations about the detailing.

Height

The height relaxation was supported, noting it causes no view or shadow impact on neighbouring buildings.

Rear Massing

The 8 ft. setback from the property line was considered appropriate, and additional stepping of the building at the rear property line was thought to be unnecessary. A comment was made that the vocabulary of this building does not lend itself to further stepping, in any direction.

Standard of Design

In general, the materials chosen are very good but careful attention will need to be given to detailing to ensure the success of the building. Concerns were expressed about the stucco at the rear, and in particular the transition from brick to stucco at the southeast corner which will be difficult to detail. Suggestions were made to change the stucco to brick as it turns to the back of the building. One Panel member also recommended reconsidering the colour of the stucco.

Some members of the Panel questioned the corner element on the building and felt it detracted from the overall design. It was suggested the building would be more successful if this element was toned down or eliminated altogether.

Ground Floor Residential Unit/Southeast Corner

The Panel had no concerns about the ground floor residential use at the southeast corner. However, serious concerns were expressed about the livability of this unit. Concerns included the transition from retail to residential at the lobby area, the bedroom window next to the main entry, and treatment of the two windows on the lane side. A suggestion was made to frame the windows with brick and to provide built-in planters for the residents. Another recommendation was to consider an enclosed porch around the unit.

Noting the exposure of the building created by the setback of the building across the lane, a suggestion was made to return whatever major material is chosen to at least as far as the first major break before the loading area. The blank wall on the lane will be very visible from 4th Avenue, calling for careful attention to the quality of material and detailing.

Residential Entry

A number of concerns were expressed about the main residential entry needing to respond to privacy access issues, both from the street and the internal lobby. While much articulation is provided on the retail frontage, access to the residential off Trafalgar seems to have been ignored. As well as being difficult to identify, the size of the lobby is too small.

Existing Tree

One Panel member took issue with the fact that the existing mature tree, which is a major asset of the site, has been ignored in the presentation, and it appears the project has been conceived without input from an arborist.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Adab said most of the Panel's areas of concern can be addressed. He agreed the ground floor residential can be considerably improved.

2. Address:	555 Homer Street (“Dunsmuir House”)
DA:	406781
Use:	SNRF (8 storeys)
Zoning:	DD
Application Status:	Complete
Architect:	Neale Staniszakis Doll Adams
Owner:	Salvation Army
Review:	First
Delegation:	Jerry Doll, Kim Perry
Staff:	Scot Hein

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (4-1)

- **Introduction:** Scot Hein, Development Planner, presented this application for a Special Needs Residential Facility (SNRF) containing 230 beds, related amenities and one level of underground parking. The site is located mid block on Homer Street between Dunsmuir and Pender Streets. He briefly described the immediate context, noting that this project needs to accommodate a 25 ft. x 50 ft. right-of-way for BC Hydro vehicles and their servicing. The BC Hydro headquarters are directly across the street on Homer to the east and there is a 9-storey heritage “B” building across the lane to the north. Lots 17 - 19 directly south of this site are restricted to surface development only because there is a 230 KVA feeder line below. The zoning (DD, Sub Area C) allows for 5.00 FSR and 300 ft. height. The site is 150 ft. x 120 ft. and slopes upward from the lane approximately 6 ft.

Mr. Hein noted this is a very important proposal for the city. It is being developed by the Salvation Army to provide affordable housing, targeted towards the homeless and homeless at risk. It will include outreach and drop-in services, men’s emergency shelter beds, women’s services and emergency shelter beds, transitional beds and a 30-bed Corrections Residential Facility. Common and support functions for residents and clients are on the ground and second floors, with the programmatic functions fronted on Homer Street to provide as much pedestrian interest as possible. Floors 3 - 6, oriented towards the landscaped courtyard, contain the residents’ sleeping rooms and emergency shelter beds. Floor 7 contains women’s services and Floor 8 is for administration.

The proposal meets the intent of the guidelines. Areas in which the advice of the Panel is sought relate to:

- appropriateness of this site for SNRF use;
 - general arrangement of programming in the building, especially with how the ground-oriented activities are positioned and front Homer Street;
 - architectural expression;
 - landscaping.
- **Applicant’s Opening Comments:** Jerry Doll, Architect, noted this is a unique project for the city because it integrates programs with housing. He briefly described the functions that will be accommodated in the building and Kim Perry, Landscape Architect, briefly reviewed the landscape plan.
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- **Panel's Comments:** The Panel was generally very enthusiastic about this project and commended the applicant team on the excellent presentation materials. The Panel found it a very skilfully handled design, both programmatically and architecturally.

There was unanimous support for the proposed use. A comment was made that this site is ideally suited for the use because it is in a transition area of the downtown and the users of this facility also will be in transition.

The general arrangement of the program was acknowledged to be quite complex and it was noted that there has been a lot of thought given to how it is laid out. With respect to the Homer Street frontage, most Panel members thought the activities at street level are appropriate. Given the overall program it was thought there was no better alternative use in this location.

The Panel found the landscaping generally very well handled, with some softening of the surface treatment in the courtyard recommended.

The Panel's main concerns related to the penthouse level and the Homer Street elevation at pedestrian level.

Several Panel members expressed concern about the screening at the top of the building, preferring to see the mechanical units either stand alone or the screening set back from the edge. It was generally thought that the penthouse screening takes away from the overall composition and fights somewhat with the Heritage B building to the north.

With respect to the Homer Street pedestrian level, there were concerns expressed about the blank walls where it was felt more thought needed to be given to the materials and detailing, particularly in relationship to the neighbouring heritage building which has a rich sense of detail at ground level.

Some Panel members thought it was a lost opportunity to ignore the relationship to the park on the southwest corner where it might be possible for a dining facility to overlook the park as well as bring in more natural light to give it some human quality.

While the Panel found the building to be very well resolved it was thought to be lacking in warmth and animation. It also fails to express what is happening inside the building. Although partly an institutional facility, it has the flavour of a corporate or educational building and fails to also reflect its major residential uses. This also applies to the interior courtyard where the windows look somewhat institutional. As well, the dining area seems too hard and symmetrical. This area could also be improved with the introduction of more natural light, perhaps via skylights.

One Panel member questioned whether the lane and Homer Street elevations should be treated the same.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Doll agreed with the Panel's comments about the mechanical louvres on the roof. He noted they have not yet resolved the expression along the base of the building and how it will be detailed. With respect to the concern that the building looks too institutional, Mr. Doll said that programmatically it is not possible to provide opening windows in a facility of this type. He agreed, however, that they can introduce further articulation into the windows. He advised they can work with the majority of the Panel's comments, including the possibility of introducing skylights at

the courtyard level to provide natural light to the dining area.

3. Address:	1001 Homer Street
DA:	406854
Use:	Residential (23 storeys, 130 units)
Zoning:	DD
Application Status:	Complete
Architect:	Hancock Bruckner Eng & Wright
Owner:	Polygon Imperial Landing Ltd.
Review:	First
Delegation:	Andre Chilcott, Jim Hancock, Chris Philips
Staff:	Scot Hein

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (4-2)

- Introduction:** Scot Hein, Development Planner, presented this application in Downtown South (New Yaletown). The proposal is for a 24-storey market residential tower and includes four townhouses fronting Homer Street, amenity space fronting Nelson Street and three levels of underground parking. The application seeks a transfer of heritage density of 10 percent for a total of 5.5 FSR. The project generally meets the Downtown South Guidelines with respect to setbacks and height, including the minimum 80 ft. tower separation. Separation of over 121 ft. is achieved from the Domus tower to the south and 84 ft. from the tower directly to the west. As a result of the heritage density bonus the floorplate size (5,500 sq.ft.) is 10 percent larger than typical in Downtown South. The width of the tower fronting north-south streets is 94 ft. maximum, 87 ft. average. The Guidelines indicate optimal widths of 75 - 85 ft. Proposed height is 240 ft. The zoning allows up to 300 ft.

The advice of the Panel is sought in the following areas:

- general advice on the site and the proposal's appropriateness to receive the ten percent density bonus from the heritage "bank";
 - general advice on the approach to how the additional density is being accommodated;
 - urban design performance of the Nelson-fronting facade with respect to how the amenity spaces are being handled, including programming;
 - transition in podium massing to the adjacent development to the south (Domus);
 - general approach to landscape and public realm treatment;
 - specific advice on tower placement, i.e., the three towers being in the same alignment.
- Applicant's Opening Comments:** Jim Hancock, Architect, explained the building has a 1930's luxury club theme which they believe fits very well in the context, with contemporary buildings to the west and more solid buildings towards Yaletown. He briefly reviewed the design rationale. With respect to the amenity space on Nelson Street, Andre Chilcott, Polygon, briefly described the amenities in the two neighbouring Polygon towers, noting that retail is recommended in the Downtown South Guidelines but is not a requirement. Since Nelson and Smithe are major arterials they are not successful retail streets. The theme of the amenity in this building is a hotel lobby with a "city club" atmosphere. They believe it will be used extensively by the residents to provide animation on the street, particularly at night. The landscape architect, Chris Phillips, noted the Downtown South guidelines for streetscape are quite prescriptive and an attempt has been made to provide some variation on Nelson Street.
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- **Panel's Comments:** The Panel supported this application. There was a lot of positive commentary about the character of this building, with concerns relating mainly to the top and the base of the building where it was thought that further design development was required.

With respect to tower placement and separation the Panel agreed the proposal is the best solution for this site.

The Panel very strongly supported the public realm treatment which it thought was very well handled. The landscape architect was commended for using the Downtown South principles but interpreting them in a different way to provide some variety and relief from the hard edges with the introduction of a combination of hard and soft materials.

The courtyard treatment was considered appropriate. One Panel member questioned whether it would have been possible to have more low level residential facing the courtyard. Another member noted that the stair at the back is unfortunate because it obscures the view into the courtyard.

With respect to the podium massing and its relationship to Domus, the Panel was unanimous in thinking it was unnecessary to match the height of the neighbouring building. It was also thought to be unnecessary to raise the end townhouse parapet to pick up the transition with Domus. One Panel member thought the resolution of where the tower meets the two-storey base needed further design development to give it more strength.

With respect to materials, several Panel members recommended carrying the materials around the base, with the same material on both sides. One Panel member thought the Homer Street townhouse elevation was a lost opportunity, suggesting that much more is needed in the detailing. The success of having black granite next to brown painted concrete was also questioned.

The Panel fully supported the urban design treatment along Nelson Street and the "city club" amenity, with some reservation, but noting that this solution is likely all that can be done since it was agreed that retail use is not feasible in this location.

Most Panel members thought the project earned the requested heritage density transfer. However, several Panel members expressed disappointment that it fails to live up to the examples shown on the image board. The buildings illustrated all have rather exuberant tops with at least four storeys of transition, which this project lacks. It was felt that, given the zoning permits up to 300 ft., much more could have been done to celebrate the top of this tower to give it more excitement and thrust.

Disappointment was also expressed with the way the base has been handled, with a dichotomy noted between the very grand entrance on Nelson Street and the somewhat mean feeling on the other, at the lane.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Hancock agreed they can lower the end townhouse. With respect to the top of the building, he agreed it can be embellished more given they have the extra height to work with. He also agreed with the comments about the detailed treatment of the townhouses. He added, they are striving for a dignified building rather than an exciting one, although agreed there is always room for improvement. Mr. Chilcott noted the 5,500 sq.ft. floor plate is in keeping with surrounding towers and is largely dictated by marketing considerations. A slimmer tower is not economically feasible.