

URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: July 27, 2011

TIME: N/A

PLACE: N/A

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
Helen Besharat (Chair)
James Cheng
Jeff Corbett (Excused Item #1)
Jane Durante
Jim Huffman
Arno Matis
Geoff McDonell (Excused Item #1)
Alan Storey

REGRETS:
Robert Barnes
Gregory Borowski
Alan Endall
Scott Romses
Norm Shearing

**RECORDING
SECRETARY:** Lorna Harvey

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING	
1.	845 Avison Way
2.	217 East Georgia Street
3.	138 East Hastings Street

BUSINESS MEETING

Chair Besharat called the meeting to order at 4:25 p.m. and noted the presence of a quorum. There being no New Business the meeting considered applications as scheduled for presentation.

1. **Address:** 845 Avison Way
DE: 414859
Use: Relocated Arctic Canada habitat, revitalized and expanded BC coast exhibits, and new linking pools between the exhibits; new main entrance and admission, gift shop and integrated food services for both Aquarium patrons and Park visitors; new plaza spaces accessed by new pedestrian routes, revised free public viewing and new service, office and laboratory spaces.
Zoning: RS-1
Application Status: Complete
Review: First
Architect: Musson Cattell Mackey Partnership
Mark Thompson, Musson Cattell Mackey Partnership
Delegation: Margot Long, PWL Partnership, Landscape Architects
John Nightingale, Vancouver Aquarium
Staff: Anita Molaro

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (5-0)**Introduction:**

Anita Molaro, Development Planner introduced a proposal for an expansion and revitalization of the Vancouver Aquarium as part of a phased master plan. She explained that there was previously a proposal to modify and expand the aquarium, which the Panel supported in 2008. However that project did not proceed and as a result the applicant came back to the Panel with a new application. There are a number of consistent features of the earlier proposal with this revised proposal including some of the basic architectural treatments including collecting and enclosing the building under a consistent language. The revised proposal consists of relocating and revitalizing some of the habitat areas and linking pools between exhibits. Also included are a revised free public viewing, new service, office and laboratory elements and a substantial change for a new entry pavilion and open space. Also there will be a new integrated food services area for both the Aquarium patrons and park visitors and replacement of the Park washrooms. Avison Way will also be upgraded and improved.

Advice from the Panel on this application is sought on the following:

- The main entry experience and plaza as a public space;
- Public realm interface along Avison Way;
- Elevation treatments including interface with the public nature of the park;
- Material treatments being proposed - alucobond, architectural concrete, curtain wall windows, glass canopy, green screen system.

Ms. Molaro took questions from the Panel.

Applicant's Introductory Comments:

Mark Thompson, Architect, gave the Panel an overview of the plan noting that most of the members had not been present for the previous proposal. He noted that there is a significant

parking area and circulation on the west and east of the Aquarium. There is a large constraint on the site because of the existing tree network that they are expanding into and as a result they spent a lot of time working with the Parks Board. The existing buildings and pool network that will be revised was also part of the challenges. Mr. Thompson noted that the existing front entrance is challenging and is understated and hard to access. There has been a significant program change and has presented lots of new opportunities. Mr. Thompson described the changes noting that the front door of the Aquarium will be more accessible. There is an exterior plaza planned that has been relocated to Avison Way and there will be an aquarium open space inside the admission location as well as food services which will be at the front of the building looking onto the park. There is also an exhibit at the front with a ticketing location and a water feature planned. This also includes a larger arctic habitat and some linking pool and then a new BC habitat. Mr. Thompson added that they came up with some guiding principles so that the project could relate positively to the environment. He also described the proposed materials and how the curved walls would be addressed. The main material is alucobond with a special spectral paint surface. Mr. Thompson described the sustainable strategy and indicated that they are now able to use the whole building as an energy system which hasn't been done anywhere else.

Margot Long, Landscape Architect, described the landscaping plans and indicated the project worked well in that they aren't expanding into the forest area. She noted that they are using the grade to help create amphitheatre terraces in certain areas. The main principle of the Aquarium is to celebrate BC water and nature so they tried to create a variety of outdoor spaces by using paving patterns that reflect water dropping on ponds. They are looking at using paving material with recycled glass and there is a plan for recirculating the rain water. Granite will also be used in the landscape and they will be creating simple larger areas for a variety of different activities. All the ornamental trees will be removed and replaced with native trees.

John Nightingale indicated that the program changes related to the salmon stream as they wanted to be able to show the hatchery and tie it into the BC Exhibit so the public gets access to the BC Salmon Story. He added that the new program goes a long way in filling in one of the gaps in the Aquarium's presentations.

The applicant team took questions from the Panel.

Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:

- Design development to add more weather protection at the entrance;
- Consider reducing the height of the wall at the entrance;
- Consider adding a canopy at the pool side;
- Consider reducing the potential for solar reflection and glare on the west side.

Related Commentary:

The Panel supported the proposal and congratulated the application on a beautifully done project and presentation material and thought it would be a great setting in the park. They also thought the landscaping was well done.

Several Panel members thought there needed to be more weather protection for people queuing up to get into the Aquarium as well as a way to soften the scale and visual impact of the long blank wall. One Panel member suggested bringing the roof down and expressing the wall to help with the scale. They also thought there needed to be a canopy on the pool side which would help to reduce the visual impact of the 4-storey high wall and allow people to stand and watch the exhibit in inclement weather. A number of Panel members thought the restaurant was too far away from the loading bay and hoped there was a better way to make that work.

A couple of Panel members had some concerns with the entrance experience and felt that the rotunda area seemed tight and restricted. They noted that people will congregate in the area and it could get crowded and they would have no where to sit but the floor. One Panel member mentioned that the metal columns would need to be well detailed as they were going to be visible.

The Panel supported the proposed materials and agreed that the use of natural materials was appropriate with one Panel member suggesting that since alucobond was expensive that for the money using natural stone might be a better idea. One Panel member thought the metal surface would represent the sea more and several other Panel members liked how the material changed colours. Another Panel member was concerned that on sunny days there might be too much solar reflection and glare especially on the west side. The Panel also supported the use of wood for the soffits.

Applicant's Response:

Mr. Thompson thanked the Panel and thought they had made some great comments. He said they would work to make the project better. Mr. Nightingale remarked that they wanted to have a fairly neutral backdrop so that people will take in the exhibits and not the architecture and that is why the wall is so high. Also it is an arctic exhibit and needs to maintain a certain temperature.

2.	Address:	217 East Georgia Street
	DE:	414728
	Use:	The proposed is a 9-storey, 26 unit residential building with retail and parking at grade.
	Zoning:	HA-1A
	Application Status:	Complete
	Review:	First
	Architect:	Birmingham and Wood Architecture
	Owner:	Panther Group
	Delegation:	Sandra Moore, Birmingham and Wood Architecture Inge Roecker, ASIR Studio Brian Roche, Panther Group Brian Low, Panther Group
	Staff:	Anita Molaro

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (7-0)

Introduction:

Anita Molaro, Development Planner, introduced the proposal for a 9-storey residential with commercial at grade building in the Chinatown district. Ms. Molaro described the context for the area noting the parkade across the lane. She added that it is a unique site with a lane on one side and at the rear of the site. She explained that the site does present a unique opportunity to develop a form that is somewhat typical of the area and that takes advantage of its lane frontage.

Ms. Molaro explained that the Chinatown's zoning and guidelines were recently updated and approved by Council this past February. The guidelines recognize the unique heritage fabric but also want to encourage contemporary new development that is responsive to the community's established cultural and historic identity. She added that the guidelines do not support literal replicas of historical design rather they aim to facilitate creative architectural expression and encourage a variety of high quality development. The aim is to still uphold the sense of place in Chinatown that respects the architectural pattern, scale, rhythm, identify and authenticity while also including liveability and neighbourliness.

Ms. Molaro noted that the HA-1A zone is unique in the city as it does not have a limiting FSR. The amount of density is based on the permitted height as well as the massing and liveability objectives set out in the guidelines. The proposal is consistent with the new zoning. The guidelines ask for there to be a cornice expressed at the 70 foot high mark similar to the adjacent building. The 70 foot high street wall is a strong element they are trying to emphasize. The guidelines talk about having some sort of setback between the 70 feet and the 90 feet and should be around three meters. This is to contribute to a coherent streetscape and language and to mediate the scale of the additional height up to 90 feet.

The new zoning also requires a seven meter setback in the rear yard in buildings where residential uses are provided. Ms. Molaro noted that this can be relaxed subject to addressing the aspects of the new guidelines. If a courtyard is provided, that is an interior courtyard, then that residential space can be pushed back down to the minimum two meter setback in the rear yard. This is to ensure a reasonable level of liveability across the lane with existing and future development. She added that the application is seeking the relaxation with no setback while also benefiting from its unique corner condition without the provision of the internal courtyard.

Ms. Molaro explained that the guidelines façade composition directions are not to mimic or replicate heritage facades but that new buildings have a level of complexity and engaging architectural expression compatible with the heritage character of the area. Aspects such as storefront width and configuration, transoms above store windows, fenestration patterns and cornice lines are the elements that should be included but in a modern way. New buildings should have clearly defined streetwall massing with distinctive upper and lower street facades, upper facades articulated with windows, projections and or balconies, roof cornices well integrated with the building composition creates skyline interest. Historic proportions should be employed using strong vertical elements and segmenting the façade, vertical windows and recessed balconies. The upper massing above 70 feet should be visually subordinate to the principle façade. Guideline material recommendations are brick, masonry, terra cotta, pressed metal, wood, specially treated concrete and other compatible material can be considered. The proposed materials are aluminum glazing, steel clad paneling, steel railings, cornice, shutter and parapet details. Staff are excited about this project as it is the first under the new Chinatown Guidelines.

Advice from the Panel on this application is sought on the following:

- Building's overall design including its streetwall scale and proportion including its compatibility with the heritage character of Chinatown:
 - In response to the guideline to emphasize the 21.3 m (70 ft) streetwall
 - In response to the guideline for subordinate upper massing above 21.3 m (70 ft) to an overall height of 90 feet (exclusive of the cornice).
- Rear yard massing response to the guideline for a minimum 2 m (6.5 ft) rear yard setback for residential uses:
 - Noting potential interface with future development, privacy, sightlines across the lane.
- Articulation of facades and material treatments:
 - In response to guideline recommendations for proportions for strong vertical elements, vertical windows, and recessed balconies.
 - High degree of wall surface texture and architectural detailing inspired by the richness of detail commonly found in the historic fabric of the area.

Ms. Molaro took questions from the Panel.

Applicant's Introductory Comments:

Inge Roecker, Architect, further described the proposal and stated that the site is unique because it faces two lanes but she added that it is an opportunity to potentially improve the lane that could also be used for bikes. Ms. Roecker described the architecture and explained that it follows the historic pattern of the street described as "Chinatown Architecture". Also, there aren't any balconies in the small units but the larger ones have a step out balcony. She noted that due to the size of the property it is not possible to add underground parking so instead there will be four surface parking stalls at ground level with one stall for a car share program. Also, a basement is being proposed that will contain bicycle parking and residential storage.

The applicant team took questions from the Panel.

Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:

- Consider removing the cornice at 70 feet;
- Consider adding a canopy on the front façade;
- Design development on improvement of the garage doors on the lane;
- Design development to widen the corridor in front of the elevator;

- Consider the design of the balconies.

Related Commentary:

The Panel supported the proposal and thought it worked well on the site.

The Panel supported the relaxation and the setbacks and agreed that the building would be un-buildable if the guidelines had to be followed. One Panel member noted that the guidelines might be more suitable for mid-block sites. Another Panel member remarked that the site doesn't need the courtyard because it has the lane. The Panel liked the articulation of the façade and supported the proposed material choices. However, a couple of Panel members were concerned about cleaning the building given the moveable screens. The Panel thought it was a strong building and didn't need a cornice line at the top. Several Panel members thought the cornice at 70 feet actually could deplete the distinct character of the neighbourhood. One Panel member noted that the slenderness of the site made the proportion of the building elegant.

The Panel thought there should be a canopy on the front façade for rain protection. They remarked that other building on the street seemed to have exterior canopies. Several Panel members thought all the garage doors along the lane made for an unfriendly façade. They suggested adding frosted panels to let light into the area or setting one of the bays back into the building to break up the façade. One Panel members was concerned that there might not be enough room for trucks to turn into the back lane from the side lane. Another Panel member thought the corridor space in front of the elevator was too shallow at 3' 7" for moving furniture in and out of the building.

A couple of Panel members had concerns with the balconies with one Panel member suggesting that the ones on the north side of the building would take away from the livability of the suites as they will reduce the amount of light penetration into the units and that it would be better to add them to the southern side. A couple of other Panel members thought the balconies should be wider while another Panel member thought they could be used as shading devices on the south side.

Some of the Panel would like to see the amenity space on the roof be more useable. The Panel supported the sustainable strategies but would like to see them indicated in the design rationale.

Applicant's Response:

Ms. Roecker thanked the Panel for their time.

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3. **Address:** 138 East Hastings Street
DE: 414810
Use: A new 6-storey mixed-use building having an overall height of approximately 77 feet; commercial uses at grade and a total of 97 dwelling units above (which includes 18 social housing units as defined and required in Downtown-Eastside/Oppenheimer Official Development Plan); 1 underground level of 43 off-street parking spaces with access from the lane; and a total FSR of 3.68.
Zoning: DEOD
Application Status: Complete
Review: First
Architect: Studio One Architecture
Owner: 0725105 BC Ltd.
Delegation: Tomas Wolf, Studio One Architecture
Jonathan Losee, Jonathan Losee Ltd., Landscape Architect
Staff: Scot Hein
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EVALUATION: NON-SUPPORT (0-7)

Introduction:

Scot Hein, Development Planner, introduced the proposal for a 6-storey mixed-use project. He noted that it is an important site on the Hastings Street corridor and will be the first new development initiative near the important intersection of Main and Hastings Street. While regretting the loss of the Pantages Theatre, he noted that staff view the proposal as an opportunity for a well considered "background and complementary" streetwall building while delivering mixed tenure housing opportunity under the requirements of prevailing zoning. He emphasized that, as the first site to be developed, it should be carefully considered. Mr. Hein highlighted three substantive issues that staff appreciated advice from the panel on. The first issue related to the site's role, and success, towards extending and completing an opportunity for mid-block passages that will facilitate pedestrian movement and interest while connecting to the south/Chinatown which has been an aspiration of the city and community for many years under the Silk Road Initiative. The application proposes a mid-block passage from the lane to Hastings Street. Staff seek advice on the design of the passage, including CPTED considerations. Mr. Hein also sought advice on the related question of proposed ground level uses, including those fronting Hastings Street, the passage and the lane.

Secondly, Mr. Hein sought advice on the general form of development, proposed as a courtyard form, and the related architectural expression. He specifically sought advice on the panel's expectations for design quality of the street and lane fronting facades, including materiality and detailing. He asked the panel if the proposal met their standard for support recognizing its contextual importance near important heritage, and other, distinguished buildings.

Thirdly, Mr. Hein sought specific advice on the scheme's general livability, especially the courtyard oriented units and those fronting the lane.

Mr. Hein took questions from the Panel.

Applicant's Introductory Comments:

Thomas Wolf, Architect, further described the project and explained that the over all design was shaped by the program. The program calls for a mixed-use development that would introduce residential units and commercial units to the neighbourhood. The project needed to be economical and the residential units need to be affordable. Mr. Wolf noted that it is the oldest part of the city and is currently evolving. The commercial component comprises of twelve units. Mr. Wolf noted that the owner has contacted the local artist's community to see if there is any interest in occupying some of the commercial units. There will be five storeys of residential in the front and four in the back with 97 units in total. Mr. Wolf described the architecture and noted that in order keep the costs reduced the building will be of wood frame construction. Seventy-nine units will be sold as affordable housing and eighteen will be social housing. Mr. Wolf stated that the design was drawn from the historic image of the area. He also described the material and colour palette and explained that they will be using swiss pearl with textured metal and that the top floor would introduce strong cornices. The lane is connecting East Hastings through the courtyard and will be used as a public open space that will help to add more light into the lane. The residential lobby is situated in the lane. Mr. Wolf indicated that they will be providing 43 parking stalls in the underground parking for the residents as well as biking stalls off the lane for the public.

Jonathan Losee, Landscape Architect, described the landscape plans for the project. He stated that there are three components to the landscaping: the streetscape, interior courtyard/mews and the outdoor courtyard for the residents on the second floor. The streetscape is a refreshment of what is already there with new sidewalks and some new street trees. The courtyard will have some paving patterns and will be animated with restaurant/coffee shop uses.

Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:

- Design development for a more contemporary expression to the building;
- Consider using other materials than hardi panel for the exterior;
- Consider increasing the width of the courtyard;
- Design development to improve the viability of the commercial units.

Related Commentary:

The Panel did not support the proposal but recognized that it was a challenging project.

The Panel acknowledged that the applicant had done a good job of addressing the issues and that the mid block interconnection was a good objective. They realized that it could become an interesting mode of pedestrian movement through the area although it might be a little early in that process since there isn't a connection at the moment. One Panel member noted that the success or failure of the pathway was going to depend on the amount of natural light into the area.

Several Panel members thought that the use of wood frame would work and that the applicant had done a good job in terms of modulation and breaking up of the massing. Most of the Panel thought that the building's elements could be expressed as contemporary rather than making the building look like it had been there for 100 years. The Panel thought the materials wouldn't stand up well and thought the hardi panel should be replaced with masonry, stone or metal to make it have more permanence. A couple of Panel members suggested using lesser materials in the lane to help the budget and hardi panel might be used there. The Panel thought the width of the courtyard could be improved with better visibility which would also improve the daylight into the area. A couple of Panel members suggested using lighter colours as a way to get more light into the space.

Several Panel members thought the stairs might be internalized into the end of the lane buildings which would make for less shadowing in the courtyard including improving the stair material.

Several Panel members were concerned with the viability of the commercial units not being exposed to the street considering there are a number of commercial units in the area that are empty. One Panel member suggested putting glazing into the floor to add light into the parkade.

Although the Panel realized that there wasn't a lot of room for landscaping one Panel member thought more greenery could be added to the lane. Also, a couple of Panel members were worried about the viability of the plants in the courtyard considering the lack of light and thought the applicant should rethink the use of growing berries.

Applicant's Response:

The applicant had no further comments.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 7:20 p.m