

## URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

**DATE:** July 7, 1998

**TIME:** N/A

**PLACE:** N/A

**PRESENT:** Joyce Drohan (Chair)  
Patricia Campbell  
Sheldon Chandler  
James Hancock  
Joseph Hruda  
Peter Kreuk  
Sean McEwan  
Jim McLean

**REGRETS:** None

**RECORDING  
SECRETARY:** Georgia Dahle

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### ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING

1. Vancouver Trade and Convention Centre - Portside: 500 - 800 Canada Way and 900 Canada Place Way
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1. **Address: Vancouver Trade and Convention Centre - Portside  
500 - 800 Canada Way and 900 Canada Place Way**

Zoning: CD-1

Application Status: Development Agreement Application

Architect: Musson Cattell Mackey & Zeidler

Owner: Greystone Properties Ltd./Marriott International Inc.

Review: Second, Stage Three

Delegation: F. Musson/B. McKay/A. Erickson

Staff: R. Segal/R. Jenki

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**EVALUATION: SUPPORT (5-2)**

**Introduction:**

Rob Jenkins, Central Area Planner, presented the historical chronology of the site and the current agreement between Greystone Properties, the Vancouver Port, and the City of Vancouver. Mr. Jenkins explained the complexity in which this proposal is being considered. Although this proposal is being pursued similarly to a rezoning application, it is in fact a Development Agreement Application. Consideration of this proposal will be through a larger consultation process between the City, the Port, and Greystone. Numerous public information meetings have taken place with several focus groups evaluating topics including traffic, employment, housing, and urban and plaza design.

Ralph Segal, Development Planner, presented this application. Components of the previous Stage Two application were discussed. This stage had included the previous Panel Chairperson, Nigel Baldwin, as the Panel's representative. The site is located next to the current Trade and Convention Centre to the west, and the East Lands, part of the undeveloped Port Lands property, to the east. The East Lands proposal will be considered at an Official Development Plan level at a later date. The proposed plaza, which will link all three sites, should be considered as one of the most prominent public spaces of the city.

Mr. Segal reviewed the current application, and its relationship to the current Canada Place convention centre facilities. The 1000 hotel room proposal by Marriott is an integral part of the expanded convention centre, which also includes, the main hall with the proposed plaza, and additional retail space above. The height of the proposal is limited by the Port Lands Policy, which states a maximum height of 300 ft. Council has indicated support for relaxing the height to 350 ft. The hotel "wing" is proposed as a means of accommodating the 1,000 room requirement by Marriott. Along with the current proposal is the renovation to Canada Place. The renovations will include a new grand entrance, the extension of Canada Place Pier with the addition of the third cruise ship berth, new pedestrian walkways around the entire centre and the Cordova Connector. A future Phase Two to the east of the new Convention Centre is less defined at this moment, but is a part of this submission forming a positive edge on alignment with Cambie Street.

Mr. Segal explained that one aspiration in the development of the Port Lands is to eventually deal with the grade difference, initially caused by the rail tracks and to allow development to get down ultimately to grade. Ensuring that a high quality pedestrian network is achieved has been an important aspect of the proposal. A waterfront walkway and bicycle route are crucial elements to the overall success. The pedestrian walkway system includes a floating dock along the water's edge. Access to a new Seabus facility includes movable walkways and escalators.

Advice from the Panel is sought regarding several issues:

- hotel massing;
- the potential diminishment of specific views through the site;
- the retail element along Canada Place Way;

- the building massing for the Phase two tower, specifically, the tower orientation and the relationship to the hotel; and
- the Canada Place extension: realizing that the sails icon should not be compromised.

Mr. Segal, in reply to a question from a Panel member, indicated that there will be various pick-up and drop-off points for visitors, tourists, and delegates. A porte-cochere entrance will be situated at the front of the hotel, as well as bus and taxi drop-off for hotel guests. A main car drop-off will be located close to the convention centre entrance. Parking under Canada Place will be redesigned to provide for more efficient movement of buses and taxis during peak periods both for the cruise ships and during conventions. Bus lay-bys have been proposed for the front of the convention centre along Canada Place Way. Both the City Engineer and the applicant's Traffic Consultant have been working closely, in an attempt to mitigate potential problems.

**Applicant's Introductory Comments:**

Bob McKay of Greystone, reviewed the proposal and its relationship to the current convention centre and the proposed revamping of the facilities. He explained that with the addition of the third cruise ship berth, customs, baggage, and passenger handling will all be relocated onto one level. A downtown airport check-in is proposed for the lobby to assist tourists and reduce unnecessary waits at the airport. The proposed extension and construction will be maintained by all three parties. The Vancouver Port will handle the loading and unloading of the ships, the Province will maintain the convention centre, while a partnership between the Marriott and Greystone Properties will handle the hotel, its ballroom and meeting rooms. Mr. McKay briefly explained the changes to the proposal since Phase Two and how the proposal will relate to both the East Lands and to Canada Place.

One of the main changes to the proposal has been the reduction of the hotel footprint. Other significant considerations for this proposal include the retail space and the plaza, both allowing for a more prominent and distinct area between the new and the old. The expansion of the retail pavilion is also a significant change from the previous Stage Two proposal, as this alteration could assist in the long-term success of a year-round plaza. The tower has been reduced in height to meet the Port Lands Policy, but with the support from Council to relax the tower height to 350 ft. The projected completion of the project is 2002, with the new construction being targeted in 2001 and the retrofitting of the existing Canada Place facilities finished in 2002.

Frank Musson, Architect, explained that one of the key components for the proposal was that the sails not be compromised with future development. He explained how the alterations to the convention centre would work to enhance the current proposal and successfully complement the current facilities. With the proposed relocation of the front entrance, the IMAX theatre at Canada Place will become the key destination area and focal point for the existing facilities. Mr. Musson stated that the proposed transportation changes, specifically in reference to the Seabus, Skytrain, and pedestrian traffic would all be improved with the new configuration of the facilities. The heliport will remain near the site to ensure time efficiencies. As well, the cruise ship traffic will be streamlined to reduce unnecessary travel time for tourists.

Arthur Erickson, Architect, discussed the various activities that could take place in the plaza, noting that limiting the types of activities could hinder the success of this space. The three thematic considerations for the plaza are; 'The Theatre of the Sea', 'The Garden of B.C.', and 'The Grand Plaza of B.C.'. Mr. Erickson noted some of the opportunities and constraints for the plaza. He pointed out that in Vancouver's climate water could play an important role in reflecting the often subdued natural light of the sky.

**Panel's Comments:**

The Panel generally supported this application. It was felt that a proposal of this magnitude has the opportunity to create THE outstanding public space in the city, and that this space should be a driving element of the project.

The Panel's principal area of concern was over the easterly "wing" of the hotel. The taller blade-like portion of the hotel was unanimously supported, but it was felt that the wing needed serious modifications. The majority of the Panel felt this massing should be redistributed to define the plaza more strongly. Some members questioned whether some redistribution of mass from the hotel to the Phase Two tower was a possibility.

There was a general concern about the Phase Two building. Most members felt its response to Gastown was not strong enough and deserved closer consideration. It was agreed that without Phase Two the easterly edge of the convention centre development could be quite problematic. Panel members found it difficult to comment on the plaza as no specific designs or proposal had been submitted. The convex building forms at the edges of the plaza, especially the circular base of the hotel, appear to work against the desired sense of containment. The plaza demands a stronger perimeter treatment to create a more clearly defined outdoor space. A few members suggested that continuous weather protection (perhaps even spanning easterly and westerly gateways) could also be an effective means for weaving the buildings together.

The porte-cochere and the lobby of the convention centre were discussed. These two very powerful, functionally-related elements should be re-examined in an attempt to better connect the two.

The Panel unanimously supported the notion of the 'Theatre of the Sea' and the use of water for the plaza. Several members also encouraged the applicant to explore aspects of the hard surfacing as a means of integrating the space into the project. Concerns were voiced over the activity on the plaza and the need to create a multi-purpose plaza to ensure that activities were not limited in inclement weather. Little support was given for the treatment of the water's edge. The floating walkway was seen as a weak element of the proposal, and some members suggested it be more strongly integrated with the Convention Centre's pre-function area, increasing its appeal as a public amenity. It was also felt that the awkward transitions from the water's edge to upper levels should be reconsidered to provide more attractive level changes that contribute to the overall character of the project.

Several members suggested preserving the Granville Street view corridor. While recognizing that it would be difficult, preserving the view of the mountains is seen as important. Opening the retail in some way, possibly by redirecting the porte-cochere, was encouraged. A stronger visual and physical connection with Granville Square was encouraged. Granville Square plaza could play a support role to the much grander new plaza. The Panel had some concern regarding the linkages of the new plaza and a revitalized Granville Square as it relates across Canada Place Way. It was encouraged that a larger, more prominent pedestrian arrival point be created, specifically to link the sequences together as a whole, as seen in the applicant's earlier submission. Given the growing importance of the linkages between open spaces in this part of the downtown, it was recommended that the City carefully consider the larger network of public spaces in this area, particularly with respect to the quality of the pedestrian experience.

Given the pinched view created by the new ship berths at the northerly end of the Canada Place Pier extension, one member suggested a stronger element at the end of the pier should be considered to provide more of an 'event' here.

Recognizing this was early in the process, several Panel members expressed concern that the renderings seemed to indicate a character for the new buildings very similar to Canada Place. With

the opportunity of a landmark building and perhaps one of the city's most significant public spaces, the Panel advised that the project warrants a unique expression reflecting this.

**Applicant's Response:**

Mr. McKay stated that the shaping of the buildings was severely restricted by the view corridors, and if it was the direction of the Panel to see the building change, more flexibility and support should be given for relaxing view corridor requirements. The view corridor also restricts weather protection elements across the plaza. The floating section of the walkway is needed to help accommodate boat moorage on a temporary basis.